

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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Minutes of Midlands Area Meeting 28th April 2021 7.30pm start ONLINE VIA ZOOM

Present: Andy Potter (Chair), Rosi Yule (Surbiton and Kingston MC), Richard Law (Wrekin MC), Ian Wyatt (Solihull MC), Claudia Sarner (Bowline CC), Andy Harper (Bowline CC), Phil Simister (Solihull MC), Lynn Robinson (joined 8:30pm).

Max 8, of whom 6 were present for 100% of the meeting. As far as can be ascertained this included 3 female attendees & 0 BAME.

- 1. Welcome and Apologies:** Andy Potter welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from David Jones and Roger Fanner. Lynn Robinson has a meeting clash will aim to join when she can.
- 2. Minutes of the previous meeting:** Agreed.
- 3. Hillwalking Update:** No update as David unable to make the meeting at the last minute.
- 4. Access Update:**

a. East area general:

Andy Harper (access rep East Midlands) – People starting to go out more now lockdown lifting. Andy has been out a lot recently and sadly seen lots of litter. Situation with litter in Cademan is improved though. No access issues in Cademan (no complaints).

Email from Biffa about Charnwood quarry saying stay out. Biffa concerned BMC endorsing climbing, Andy spoken to Rob and updated RAD and replied to Biffa. Heard from locals that presence of people in various quarries has been higher (not specifically climbers). More activity from wardens/security staff turning people away from various quarries. Charnwood is becoming overgrown due to lack of climbing activity on the routes.

Hinckley and Bosworth council have said no to endorsing climbing at Markfield. Diving club have been given key to Markfield quarry water area, Andy trying to get this extended to climbers. Claudia noted that this was the original arrangement that a key would be available to be used by groups. Concern from Rosi as to whether the council will remove belay stakes. Rosi knows Chief Exec of the council could be a potential alternative way to engage with the council. Discussion about the signage at Markfield quarry and whether these actually reflect the council's position. Claudia noted that there were previous agreements with the landowner (Tarmac) before council took ownership.

b. Beacon Hill:

Andy Harper (access rep East Midlands) – Official statement is to restrict access to part of Beacon Hill country park (Jewel Hill) between April and August for conservation purposes. Andy has spoken to senior ranger and information provided has been selective. Type of ground nesting birds has not been revealed. Area has been closed because it is easiest area to close in Beacon Hill. New species of birds have been found nesting there along with snakes but details on specifics have not been forthcoming. Andy has made it clear to wardens that climbers are very disappointed as the crags are key venues for local climbing. Wardens apparently unaware of climbing being commonplace, although within first few days of closure there were boulderers from Birmingham found climbing in the restricted area. Senior Warden appears concerned about impact on climbing and a booking system has been suggested. An offer to meet Andy onsite has been given but not yet confirmed.

Ian suggested making a Freedom of Information Act request for details of newly discovered species in the area. Rosi noted that the signage appears permanent and doesn't give an end date for the restriction. Rosi highlighted the need for people to access the countryside and angry at this restriction. Andy Harper has been speaking to Roy Denney and found there has been changes to

Bradgate Park management which Beacon Hill is closely linked with. Concern that the people in charge may not be experienced with the situation on the ground or with the actual usage of the parks.

Rob Dyer has made some suggestions about how to handle the situation. Rosi said she will be writing to local councillors about the closure. Claudia shared link to Beacon Hill history information on the Leicestershire Country Parks website, this highlights the site being acquired by the council to preserve its value as a public open space. Discussion about ways to approach the situation. Claudia expressed concern at not doing anything which might undermine attempts to secure access, e.g. people commenting on social media which could be used as ammunition to justify restricting access.

c. West area general:

Richard Law (access rep West Midlands) – Emails exchanged with people looking to investigate climbing at Titterstone Clee a quarry in Shropshire which is partly disused. Hanson own the quarry and they are intending to rework the quarry in the future. They consider it part of the active quarry and Hanson have said no to permitted access. The rock in the quarry is also not really suitable for climbing.

Bird nesting restrictions on Pontesford Rocks just outside Shrewsbury (peregrines). Shropshire wild life trust have requested a ban until 15th July which the BMC is supporting. Locals are keen on looking after the birds and will approach climbers who are in the area during the ban.

5.Clubs Update:

Ian Wyatt (clubs rep) – Third Midlands club networking meeting held. 8 different clubs represented this time which is a good turnout. People are starting to find it more useful. Shared info on changing constitutions for electronic voting.

The clubs committee has a 2021 strategy out. 4th May there will be a webinar for clubs at a national level (although date may change as not yet circulated and short notice). Potential membership in 'online collectives', looking at how to draw these into the BMC and clubs.

6.National Council Update:

Claudia Sarner (national council rep) – AGM is coming up on 15th May. 8am playing film 'big bang'. Meeting starts 9am. Info will come out at least 14 days before. Quite a few elections this year. Claudia/David and rest of national council have been working to redefine the council as the Members Council. The aim is to make the council more representative of members. We have new director appointments to ratify. Final stages of recruitment for CEO are underway, press release soon. BMC have got £1million+ from UK Sport to develop competitive climbing. Lots of the staff are still furloughed. Paul Davis has offered a briefing to share more info on this with area officers. Lynn is standing down is president as of the AGM and passed on her thanks to the area reps and officers. Work is being done to improve how the council meetings run and improve efficiency.

7.BMC Office Update:

Lynn Robinson (president) - Women in adventure films now available on BMC website. Winners to be announced as ShaFF in July. Wild Horizons podcasts presented by Niall Grimes about Hillwalking available and highly recommended. If anyone has idea to be included in the podcasts, then contact Alex Messenger at the BMC. Andy H highlighted question from friend about diversity in the BMC and inclusion of this in the Podcast.

Claudia - Asked meeting to pass the word around on a survey at Leeds Beckett University called *Your Movement Matters* and it's all about understanding who is and who is not participating in the different styles of walking and climbing (<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/survey-your-movement-matters>). Discussion followed about diversity in the BMC particularly as representation of different backgrounds in the BMC doesn't reflect that of wider society. Lynn highlighted the BMC equity steering group with 5 subgroups looking at different focus areas.

1.AOB:

Andy Potter (Chair) – Highlighted the proposal for a more structured approach to timing of area meetings.

Written by Andy Potter, Area Chair