



Cyfarfod - BMC Cymru North/Gogledd - Meeting held via Zoom.

27/4/2021

MINUTES - COFNODION

Attendance: 21 screens active at the meeting

1. Croeso Welcome

Two special 'guests' were welcomed; see agenda items 4 and 5.

No members present objected to the meeting being recorded for the purposes of writing the minutes, then to be deleted.

2. Apologies - Ymddiheuriadau 1. Elfyn Jones

It was explained that EJ had reluctantly decided that he was unable to attend in his capacity of Access and Conservation Officer for Wales due to the restrictions required of the government's flexible furlough scheme. Officers have been told that attendance at area meetings is 'not the highest priority for staff'. It was noted that Eben Muse (as newly recruited BMC Officer for Policy and Campaigns in Wales) was not subject to the furlough regulations.

Action: TJ, as chair, and at the request of the members present, to contact Paul Davies (Interim CEO) to express our disappointment at this directive.

Chair's note: TJ spoke to Paul Davies about this matter (during a Zoom call) on 28 April. PD confirmed the absolute need to use staff time efficiently during furlough, but stated that officer attendance at local area meetings had not been 'de-prioritised'. TJ subsequently emailed EJ and Dave Turnbull detailing the meeting's desire for officer attendance at N Wales meetings to be considered a priority. Lynn Robinson, as members' champion, also subsequently contacted PD on this topic.

3. Minutes/Cofnodion* (Zoom – 2 March 2021)

Accepted without correction: Proposed: Geoff Bennett, **Seconded:** Neal Hockley

Matters Arising - Materion yn codi

- i. The translated (into Welsh) Path Management document is currently being checked. Not yet on BMC Cymru website.
- ii. NH, TJ and Steve Williams (Clwb Mynyddia Cymru) agreed a final version of the Traffic and Parking consultation response, signed it, and sent it to Catrin Glyn at SNPA. There has been a promise of a second stage of consultation with organisations (including BMC Cymru) but nothing has been heard yet.
- iii. Snowdonia-Active have been thanked for their part in producing the Manifesto, and paper copies have now been distributed to Senedd members. BMC Cymru members wanting a paper copy will need to ask for one to be posted to them.
- iv. Andy Boorman and TJ have put together a 'Fixed Gear Working Group' and asked Dan Lane to be its Chair. (Report; agenda item 6a).
- v. BMC Cymru finally (one month overdue) received a response to its Freedom of Information request (re: January closures in Brecon Beacons NP). The response is not comprehensive or satisfactory, lacking any substantive case for closing access land. BBNP will be contacted again expressing disappointment and reiterating our position that open access land should not be closed without good reason, and especially not due to a concern that visitors might be ill-equipped. Although this is an issue geographically specific to S. Wales, it potentially sets a precedent affecting all hill-walkers resident, and visiting, Wales. A further Fol request will be sent to Powys CC asking for the minutes of the meeting where the closure decision was made.
- vi. Members in Wales can currently choose which region they choose to affiliate to, as there is no mechanism (on the Manchester membership database) for allocating on the basis of postcode, as there is in England. Peter Salenieks pointed out that area Chairs in Wales needed to be aware of this, whenever

organising a vote, to prevent any possibility of members voting twice on the same issue.

vii. Ross Worthington had written to Gwynedd CC about their proposal to require registration for 'events' on Yr Wyddfa. No response has been received!

4. Ramblers Cymru Bran Devey – Engagement and Communications Officer -The Agriculture White Paper

BD was welcomed, and he introduced himself and his role within Ramblers Cymru.

After the May 6th elections, pressure will be focused on campaigning for Welsh Government to amend the Agriculture White Paper. Currently the bill doesn't link payments to landowners with compliance to allow access. We have to get this right now, to prevent problems in the future. (NH highlighted the subtle difference between payments to landowners 'requiring access compliance', and 'paying landowners for access'. BMC Cymru supports the former, but does not want to condone the latter.)

BD wants BMC Cymru, and other organisations with common interests in access (Open Spaces, British Horse Society etc.) to be involved in this campaign.

EM felt that BMC Cymru could enthusiastically support the campaign; some emails on the issue has already been exchanged.

PS reported that the issue had been raised at the S Wales meeting – we need to work together to get more traction at the legislative level.

Stephen Hobdell (and Lynn R.) pointed out that once a landowner 'charges for access' then they take on insurance liabilities.

- Collaborative working

There was a general welcome for the notion of collaborative working with Ramblers Cymru, wherever the was a common interest in doing so. Geoff Bennett suggested 'cattle on access land' could be such an issue. BD agreed.

5. Eben Muse (newly appointed) Swyddog Polisi ac Ymgyrchoedd yng Nghymru Policy and Campaigns Officer in Wales

EM was welcomed to the meeting and he explained his role within the BMC – to engage with the Senedd to achieve policy objectives in line with the interests of climbers and hillwalkers. Currently working to boost the profile of the manifesto. After the election, the aim will be to set up a cross-party working group for outdoor/hillwalking/climbing issues.

- Hysting Mynediad a'r Amgylchedd

- Access and Environment Hustings

Scheduled for the following evening, representatives of the three main political parties in Wales will take questions from hillwalkers and climbers in Wales, organised by EM on behalf of BMC Cymru – an important event at which a big turnout would indicate the strength of the outdoor lobby to politicians.

Chair's note: The Hustings was a very interesting and successful event, skillfully chaired by NH.

Participation just short of 50 screens.

6a. Progress of the Fixed Gear Working Party

Dan Lane reported on the diverse make-up and good progress of the FGWG. Three Zoom meetings have been held, and a draft document is being written, hopefully ready for consideration at the next local area meeting. Dan thanked Andy for his contribution in drafting the document.

Andy stressed the complexity of the issues, the huge variety of sources which guide the deliberations, and the fact that at the end of the day, it can be no more than guidance and advice.

TJ explained that he was advising and supporting the FGWG, as required, but felt it was right for him to step back now, having had plenty of input up to this point.

6b. Abseil Anchors – Tremadog

Abseil stations on Craig Pant Ifan have been renewed (independent of the BMC) and those on Bwlch y Moch were next on the list for renewal. However, climbers wanting to replace abseil stations have been asked to involve the BMC, as owners of the crag, before starting the work. Varied issues, including owner liability, ash die-back and alternative descents, all need to be built into the decisions as to how, when and where to place abseil stations.

In addition, some issues to do with abseil stations are still under consideration by the FGWG.

7. The All-Wales Climate Change meeting

- Report.

Peter Salenieks gave a brief report on this successful, first-of-its-kind, All-Wales meeting which presented and discussed the BMC's Climate Project. Mike Berners-Lee, a world expert on carbon footprints, and an

ex-Bangor University student, joined the meeting to give a mountaineer's overview of the issues and then answer questions. Cath Flitcroft, leading the project for the BMC, left at the end with numerous ideas, ready to inform future policy.

TJ said it was heartening to work so effectively as a 'Wales' team on such an important issue, although inevitably the 40+ participants were almost certainly all already convinced about the need to act now to limit global warming.

- Climate.Cymru.

Although this was on the agenda, it was missed by the Chair – apologies!

Chair's Note: Eben Muse will be investigating the pros and cons of signing up to climate.cymru, a newly-formed organisation which supports principles very closely aligned to those of the BMC.

8. Bouldering – Environmental damage

TJ had been contacted by a member dismayed by the recent stripping of moss-covered boulders in Parc Mawr, Nant Conwy, owned by the Woodland Trust. Such unacceptable environmental damage by boulderers (and climbers) was felt to be common across Wales, often illegal, and compromising the BMC's access efforts to promote the active outdoor community as responsible custodians of the environment. If it continues, it is only a matter of time before a climber faces prosecution.

EJ is planning an article highlighting the problem for Summit magazine or an on-line newsletter.

GB pointed out that the new Bouldering guidebook to N. Wales has a section dedicated to respect for the rock and the environment.

Dan Lane suggested that extensive 'gardening' could become part of the FGWG discussions.

9. Off-road motor-biking.

A number of incidents of illegal off-road motorbiking have been reported, especially in Cwmorthin (Eben says in S Wales too).

The National Parks and the Police don't appear to do much about it despite the extent of the damage caused and despite often knowing who the culprits are.

DL said that catching off-road bikes was very difficult as they can move around the hills so quickly.

The Brecon Beacons Nat. Park has a system available for reporting incidents on its website.

10. Reports:

Pwyllgor Cymru – Neal Hockley

Nothing to add to that already reported.

Access and Conservation – Access Reps.

Andy Boorman.

Llanddulas Cave – On-going complex issues here. Many landowners and interests involved.

Nesting - Some new and some old sites occupied after quiet periods of lockdown

Coughs –	Last but One Level (Penmaenbach)
	Lower St Tudno's (notice added)
	Mumbo Jumbo's Crag (notice added)
	Crescent Buttress (Hornby area)
	Lighthouse site (unconfirmed)
Peregrines -	Rainbow Slab (Dinorwig Slate)
	Main Cliff Gogarth
Tawny Owls -	Oakover area (Bwlch y Moch)

Please keep an eye on the Regional Access Database (RAD)

TJ reminded the meeting that irrespective of any voluntary climbing agreements, disturbing pergrines is always illegal.

Cromlech Boulders – Elfyn had received a complaint about the litter/excrement/toilet paper around the boulders, asking for the Nat Park to be requested to do something, eg. put in a composting toilet. Elfyn was reluctant to act, as the Nat Park reaction was likely to be to close the lay-bys. Geoff Bennett suggested that fly-campers, and walkers on Yr Wyddfa were greater culprits than boulderers.

Bran and Eben had both been speaking to Nat Park recently and the Park is concerned about the issue, linking it to managing parking and overnight van stops.

The wild-camping video, despite its clear message, could simply encourage more campers and make the situation worse.

National Council.

Tarquin Shipley – Many NC meetings recently – much work on R33 (recommendation 33 of the Organisational Review).

Take up of the new, specialist volunteer positions on NC has been low.

In future local areas will have one vote only – reps will need to agree how to cast the area vote.

TS is actively trying to recruit a second rep for N Wales area.

Peter Salenieks pointed out that the closing date for nominations to the the new NC posts had now passed.

There are audio/video interviews with candidates available (links in BMC Newsletter)

– please listen/watch before voting at the AGM.

Clarification that the Mountain Training post was intended to represent MT members, not the organisation.

Busy time for clubs as lockdown rules ease – club meets; huts reopening; skill-fade in student clubs etc.

Anne Vowles - MTCymru will wait for Pwyllgor Cymru to establish its new role before reviewing its relationship with BMC.

11. Chair's Business:

Manchester Office Matters. Nothing specific on the agenda from central office – but plenty going on:

Lynn Robinson – Virtual AGM takes place 9.00am Saturday 15th May. Board and Council are focussing on AGM preparation.

National Council will become the Members' Council.

Several positions on the MC are up for a vote to represent specialist groups.

Please attend and vote.

32 'Women in Adventure' festival films are now on YouTube. Please watch, be inspired and vote!

Paul Davies is the Interim CEO after Dave Turnbull moved into a 'Head of Access' role.

- Chair's note: Paul Davies has now been appointed as full-time CEO.

Lynn comes to the end of her 3-year term as President at the AGM. She thanked all members for their friendship and support. In turn, the meeting wanted to thank Lynn for her hard work and helpful approachability, as champion of the membership and volunteers.

Hill-walking podcasts

TJ pointed out that none of the N Wales area officers or volunteers had been approached before the making of the podcasts focussing on Cwm Idwal and Yr Wyddfa. This was a real opportunity missed on several levels – eg. to ensure that local sensitivities were appropriately addressed, and to usefully involve local volunteers.

Both TJ and TS have expressed their disappointment (to the Manchester-based officers responsible for the podcasts) at the absence of communication with the local area – the responses received did not convince TJ or TS that the problem had been fully appreciated.

The accumulative effect of SNPA issues.

TJ stated that BMC Cymru seemed to be accumulating a long list of issues which were not being well-addressed by the SNPA - Paths; Traffic; Parking; Tourism; Off-roading; Wild/Fly camping; Litter etc. Attempts to meet senior Park officers often come to nothing and can only address one issue at a time. Is there anything we can do about this situation?

Dan Lane agreed this was a genuine problem; the Park's assertions that they want to consult and collaborate were not evident in practice.

Chris Lloyd believed that the Park was out of its depth, overwhelmed by problems and not good at getting people to assist them.

11. **AOB – UFA**
None

12 **Date of the Next Meeting: Dyddiad y Cyfarfod Nesa':**

been released.

to be confirmed, because National/Members' Council dates have not yet

Tim Jepson. 11 May 2021