



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

6/7/2021

MINUTES - COFNODION

1. Croeso Welcome

After welcoming everyone to the meeting, the Chair asked Elfyn Jones to lead a tribute to Gareth Pierce who, until last year, had been the Chair of the BMC Board. Gareth died while walking on the Aran with fellow members of Clwb Mynyddu Cymru. Elfyn's tribute was followed by reflections by Dave Turnbull and Sian Shakespeare, emphasising Gareth's love of the mountains, his loyalty to his club, the intellect, commitment and dignity that he brought his position as Chair, and the important role he played in promoting Wales, and the Welsh language, within the BMC. The thoughts of the meeting were with his family and friends.

2. Apologies - Ymddiheuriadau None / Dim

3. Minutes/Cofnodion (Zoom – 27 April 2021)

Accepted as a true record. Proposed: Neal Hockley Seconded: Dan Lane

Matters Arising - Materion yn codi

a. Action: The Chair did express (to Paul Davies, then interim CEO) the meeting's disappointment with the suggestion that Officers should not attend area meetings during part-time furlough. PD reiterated the need to prioritise Officers' time. For the current round of meetings, Chairs had been asked to only request Officer attendance if there was a specific reason. Consequently, the Chair had asked for EJ's attendance, citing agenda item 5.

b. Freedom of Information request to Powys CC, not yet sent.

c. BMC Cymru is now a partner in Climate.Cymru.

d. Tarquin Shipley has not yet been successful in recruiting a second area rep., but has recruited an MT rep. for Members' Council.

Erratum: Choughs not coughs!

4. Fixed Gear – General Advice and Guidance

The final version of this long-awaited document was presented to the meeting, it having been available for scrutiny by members for two weeks.

The Chair summarised the process by which we had arrived at this point, highlighting the need for area-specific guidance driven by members' opinions, ever-rising climbing standards and developments in technology. He thanked the Fixed Gear Working Group for their hard work in bringing together a huge quantity of evidence and producing an agreed position statement based on a wide range of viewpoints. Although the Working Group was not prepared to modify or amend the document at this late stage, the Chair invited questions or comments ahead of a vote to accept or reject formal adoption of the document by area members.

Pete Johnson said that he disagreed with one particular paragraph in the document, which included the words '....no fixed gear be placed on first ascents of trad. lines'. He could not accept such a

recommendation when it was contrary to the practice of many prominent activists in the area, including himself. To include such a recommendation would discredit the document and therefore diminish its value to the climbing community.

Dan Lane (Chair of the Working Group) said that it was simply a recommendation, and that there were very few places where fixed gear could be said to be absolutely necessary.

Andy Boorman (author of the document) reiterated the notion that these are recommendations, not rules. Climbing is not a regulated activity. If first ascensionists do place fixed gear, the document offers guidance on ensuring that fixed gear is sustainable for future ascents. The document needs to be read as a whole.

PJ suggested the paragraph should be rephrased.

Martin Doyle (member of the Working Group), said that the document had to represent a broad church of members and some of those members strongly believed that we need to leave some rock for future generations. Fixed gear has the potential to turn any rock into a climbable route, hence the recommendation as worded.

The Chair asked PJ if the discussion had moderated his objection, and persuaded him to vote to accept.

PJ thought there was still a place for fixed gear on trad lines. A BMC document which says otherwise could lead to threads and pegs being removed. Any document at odds with current ethics will cause problems.

NH felt that threads differ from pegs significantly in their impact on the environment and the rock. Otherwise, the document was very clear and the Working Group had done an amazing job.

Dave Turnbull commended the Working Group on a first-class document. North Wales' geography/geology was so varied that the recommendations had to be high-level and general. Some of the Lleyn cliffs will remain unclimbable and we should say that those cliffs should not be bolted.

AB reiterated the importance of recommendations in the document about only placing fixed gear which is sustainable, especially in marine environments. The document leaves the door open to such fixed gear.

The Chair emphasised our responsibility to always be looking towards the future, rather than short-term gratification.

Steve Hobdell reminded the meeting that some routes are bolted, but later chopped when climbed free.

DL said that if a climb can be climbed trad, it should be, without fixed gear.

The Chair then moved to a Zoom Poll worded as follows:

It is proposed that the document 'Fixed Gear: General Advice and Guidance for North Wales (June, 2021)' should be formally adopted as the position statement of BMC Cymru (Gogledd/North).

Result:

Accept 14

Reject 0

Abstain 4

Non North Wales area members 2

A second proposal, from Dave Lyon, was then polled:

This meeting recommends that the Fixed Gear document stands for a period of five years before being brought before any future area meeting for reconsideration.

Yes 15

No 3

Abstain 2

EJ asked: Now that the document has been formally adopted, how will it be publicised?

Discussion resulted in the following four suggestions:

- TS to take to Members' Council.

- Peter Salenieks to email Welsh Clubs.
- Eben Muse to research where to post it on the BMC website for maximum exposure.
- TJ to notify on Facebook page.

NH added that there were other Welsh documents in need of a BMC home.

Action: NH will chase this up again with the Manchester Office through the Wales Committee.

EJ reminded the meeting that the office was very busy, and IT issues would be taking a back seat.

EM said that the clickability of Welsh-language versions of bilingual postings is still problematic. He would continue to push for improvement.

5. Reports:

Pwyllgor Cymru: Neal Hockley

There has not been a meeting since the last report, so nothing to add, other than sadness to hear of Gareth Pierce's death. Gareth had helped get the Pwyllgor running.

Access and Conservation: Elfyn Jones + Access Reps.

Access Officers are still furloughed, until September. It is impossible to keep up with the work.

- Peregrine/Kestrel on Shadow Wall, Llanberis Pass, and Razorbills on Castell Elen, but climbers are responding sensibly, and birds seem to be co-existing well with climbers.
- The more climbers get used to using the RAD the better.
- Maes Hafn – Landowner is amenable to climbers but has had problems with groups, dogs, music etc.
- Tremadog parking issues unresolved, and unsure of long-term intentions of the cafe-owners.
- New owners of Pant Ifan have suggested changes to access and charging climbers. EJ to visit soon.
- Most access routes in Eryri are now aggressively sign-posted 'No Wild Camping'. The terms wild-, fly-, and party-camping are poorly differentiated. We need to defend hill-camping in the form we practise it. Access forums can have little understanding of general access issues.
- The promises made by the previous Welsh Government with respect to the Access Reform Bill for Wales are under threat. The current legislative programme makes little mention of it. EM will need to pursue this.

Policy and Campaigns: Eben Muse

- The cross-parliamentary group for the outdoors now has a member from Plaid Cymru. The group has been set up to draw attention to issues like access and farming which affect our interests. Meetings planned for later this month, and for events in September.
- Having no business address in Wales results in BMC Cymru being regarded as just a branch office of Manchester. This needs to be tackled urgently.
- Some of the 'Respect the Wild' videos have been translated for SNPA, but the Park feels it doesn't condone camping in any form at the moment.
- In the process of producing a Welsh-only podcast (part of the Wild Horizons series) about Eifionydd. If anyone has suggestions for issues that need to be referenced in that podcast, please contact Eben.

Members' Council Rep.: Tarquin Shipley

- Competitions: Planning is well-ahead, but areas may feel they are not involved, as communication has been poor.
- Website: Lots of discussion about the accessibility of information.
- Membership: This is growing, but not in line with forecasts.
- Podcasts: Concerns raised with Andy Syme, outside of the Council meeting.

Director/Board Updates: Peter Salenieks

- Attendance of Directors at area meetings is a listening role, as well as a reporting role.
- Condolences have been sent to Gareth Pierce's family from the Board.
- Martyn Hurn (Nominated Director) and Andy Syme (President) are welcomed to the Board.
- Covid is having an impact on finances, especially income from insurance sales, and furlough is impacting all other aspects of the BMC's work. Hopefully lost capacity can be regained soon.
- We must continue to promote membership; recent promising months are not sufficient on their own. Membership packages are going to be reviewed.
- Clubs are open! Now enlisting the first 20 clubs to be included in the launch of 'Find your Adventure'. The first Welsh club in there – invitations open for other clubs – more information to follow.
- There is a proposal to increase membership subs. Some sensitivity around the topic; further work required.
- The Board is realigning and recruiting to strengthen staffing. Lorraine Brown has joined as Head of Performance and there is an opportunity coming for a Chief Commercial Officer.

- We wish Shauna Coxey the best of luck in the Tokyo Olympics and note that ice climbing is to included at the next Winter Olympics.

Martin Doyle to PS: Access Officers are the most important front-facing aspect of the BMC's operation. Putting them on furlough, at a time when the hills are busy is a hard sell to me.

PS. The Board understands such concerns, but aspirations must be balanced by resources. Suggestions will be listened to. Volunteers have been engaged to fill some of the gaps.

Dave Turnbull: Furlough across all the staff was the fastest and easiest way to pull in government funding. Understood that it has been frustrating for EJ et al.

DT to PS: How is the new Board structure working?

PS. I'm optimistic. The Board is planning a year or two ahead now.

Mountain Training Cymru - Anne Vowles

- Experiencing a strong bounce-back of sign-ups for courses, but not sure if these is just post-poned or genuine new business.

- Two new Directors – Bryn Williams and Andy Bevan.

- Very concerned about the SNPA's 'No Camping' signage. Despite the Park's assurance that the signage is not aimed at Mountain Leaders, it is only a matter of time until a Leader refuses to take a group past hostile signs to camp.

6. Chair's Business:

BMC Wild Horizons Podcasts. TJ, TS, NH and EM all expressed dismay to various BMC Officers, about (i) the lack of 'welshness' in the first two podcasts (Cwm Idwal and Yr Wyddfa) and (ii) the total disregard for the local expertise of area reps. and volunteers. However, exactly the same issues have arisen with the third, 'Carneddau' podcast in which Niall Grimes interviews John Beatty. TS said it was as if TJ had been 'given the brush-off'. TJ said it might appear to be a small issue but it was symptomatic of some BMC Officers' lack of understanding of the Welsh context, and the importance of volunteers.

TJ asked ... "Where do we go from here?"

EM is in discussion with Niall Grimes about this podcast and the forthcoming Welsh-only Eifionydd podcast. We all need to keep up the pressure for Wales to be taken seriously.

EJ: This is all part of the absence of a strategy for the BMC in Wales; not an isolated instance. We need to educate officers and the Board, not beat them up.

PS: Counsels patient perseverance; Wales is not the only area of interest which gets frustrated eg. Clubs.

SS: Having just finished as the Welsh Policy officer for BBNP, the issue is not unique to Eryri. We need to be inclusive of local language, culture and issues. We must try to find solutions, such as working with the Prosiect Tirwedd Carneddau.

TS: Confirmed that co-operation with the Carneddau Project had been suggested, but ignored.

7. AOB – UFA

Dan Lane: Gwynedd CC has passed all responsibility for requiring events on Yr Wyddfa to register to Llanberis Community Council. The LLCC has already rejected one big event, the Marathon Yr Wyddfa, other large events may well be rejected too.

EJ: Reminded the meeting that the BMC has an Events Guidance document, adopted at a conference in the Lake District some years ago. We still stand by that guidance.

DL. Up for a decision soon is an event which only passes through Llanberis. To reject such an event has implications for accessing PRoW.

8. Date of the Next Meeting: Dyddiad y Cyfarfod Nesa':

Andy Syme has presented an 'Indicative Aligned Area Meetings Calendar' which intends to vary the days on which any given area holds its meetings, and to spread area meetings out over the 'Area Meetings Period'. This calendar also seeks to set meeting dates for a whole year to prevent any last-minute scramble for dates.

The meeting agreed to go with AS's IAMC, hence the following dates for the next four meetings:

Monday 25th October 2021 (includes the AGM)

Tuesday 18th January 2022

Monday 18th April 2022

Tuesday 5th July 2022

NB There are no meetings scheduled for September 2021

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

TJ 09/07/2021