



## **BMC De Cymru South Wales Area Chair Report 2020/2021**

Being new into the position of Area Chair for the South Wales Area I must admit that it has been an interesting year getting to grips with the role as chair for South Wales Area and also being on BMC Wales Cymru Committee. On this basis I would like to thank all the South Wales Officers who have also supported me in my role and were instrumental in the smooth running of the South Wales Area.

As an area, South Wales suffered the effects of COVID with no face-to-face meetings or events, that saying, we must remain positive that a return to “normality” is on the horizon and hopefully 2022 will see face to face meetings and events return.

Since the last AGM we have three normal area meetings that have all been held over Zoom. Each meeting has had a decent turnout with a number of topics discussed during each meeting. For 2022 the intention is to do a mixture of virtual and face-to-face area meetings, the aim of this is to maintain overall engagement and to re-establish confidence in face-to-face meetings. This will hopefully strike a good balance and cater for individuals that like the convenience of virtual meetings and the ones that prefer to face-to-face meetings.

In addition to the regular area meetings the South Wales Area held a Bolting Policy Debate in February, was involved in a combined Wales Climate Project Debate in March and a BMC Wales Access and Environment Hustings where BMC members were able to put questions to representatives to the three main Welsh Political Parties.

In January during the latest Welsh Government Lockdown the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority took the extra ordinary decision to close large swathes of the National Park under the “The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Functions of Local Authorities etc.) (Wales) Regulations 2020”. The South Wales Area and BMC Cymru took exception to this action and worked together to quickly produce a response to Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, highlighting that this closure was not justified and stopped local people for enjoying the National Park safely and legally. Whilst our response did not lead to the instant re-opening of the National Park it did establish recognition of both BMC Cymru and BMC South Wales Area and the opening of future communications between these organisations.

The BMC Cymru Committee has also made great strides forward over the last year in establishing a BMC Cymru identity through the production of the BMC Wales Manifesto and recruiting a Policy and Campaigns Officer which will work alongside our Welsh Access Officer. In addition to this both North and South Wales Areas have invited a representative from Ramblers Wales in order to establish a closer working relationship going forward which would benefit both organisations.

Lastly, I could not end this report without mentioning the sad passing of Gareth Pierce during the year. Whilst I can't say that I knew Gareth well I do know and recognise the hard work he done for the BMC and was instrumental in the creation of BMC Cymru. A passion and work ethic which we can only try to emulate going forward.

Dorian Thomas

Cymru De/South Wales Area Chair