

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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LONDON & SOUTH EAST AREA MEETING

Meeting held by zoom call
on Wednesday 14 July 2021 at 19.00

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies for absence - Attendance numbers 10

Chaired Chris Stone (CS) Minutes taken by Robert Dufton (RD)

No apologies received.

CS welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Caroline Worboys. Caroline is the senior independent director on the board of directors of the BMC. Caroline also lives in the LSE area. CW said how pleased she was to be able to attend the meeting.

CS asked the meeting to note that Gareth Pierce, until recently Chair of the BMC, had very sadly passed away two weeks ago whilst out hillwalking. On behalf of the meeting, CS expressed his sympathy to Gareth's family and friends.

CS introduced the area officers. RD Area Secretary (and along with CS a LSE Members' Council representative), Fabrizio Scaliogne (FS) and Tom Bennett (TB) Hill walking reps, Tim Croker (TC) Clubs Rep and Tanya Sage (TS) Youth.

There were no members of the executive attending.

2. Minutes of previous meeting held on 28 April 2021 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 14 April 2021 were approved (Y9, A0, N0, NVM 2).
There were no matters arising.

3. Southern Sandstone/Harrison's Rocks Management Group Update

CS gave a report. He invited Graham Adcock (GA) to supplement his report.

New single page for Southern Sandstone on the BMC website. <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/southern-sandstone>

James B from Tunbridge Wells MC asked about navigation to the new page. CS is aware of the issue of items dropping off the BMC website making them difficult to find which is why a simple URL was created for this page.

Forestry England have launched a survey about camping at Birchden Wood.
<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=6SXFBET5okyMVeR0AnLDvF7C-Udo2-IFhPRRIAGHeZUMDRUTTRKSIdZRVkzS0hSTFcZNTY1VU5KU4u>

Encouragement to use Bowles website to check availability of climbing. Hopefully they will allow more climbing there soon. <https://bowles.rocks/individuals-and-families/rock-climbing/>

Eridge update. GA reported on discussion with the site owners Sussex Wildlife Trust about the possibility of the Southern Sandstone group carrying out some conservation work to remedy the damage caused last year. And the possibility of renegotiation of access to achieve more climbing.

Harrisons Rocks clean-up work days weekend. Possibly will be held on 2nd and 3rd October 2021

HRMG 18th March 2021 meeting – minutes to follow.

Next Southern Sandstone Open meeting scheduled to take place on 18th October 2021. Details to follow closer to the date.

Next HRMG meeting 25th October 2021

Encouragement to all members when climbing on Southern Sandstone (or indeed anywhere) to check the RAD.

GA updated on review of Code of Practice on climbing Southern Sandstone concerning climbing in wet weather. Final draft will come to the open meeting on 18th October 2021.

Congratulated Bob Moulton as recipient of the George Band award for volunteering.

Bob has dedicated a lifetime of voluntary work to the BMC locally as well as in other areas of the UK. He has shown an exemplary and exceptional voluntary contribution to the BMC's work and as a Chair of the HRMG, Bob was involved with the BMC's acquisition of Stone Farm Rocks in 2002.

CS thanked Adrian and all members of the HRMG and volunteers.

4. Area Reps update

4.1. Clubs

Tim Croker, area clubs rep, gave a report.

TC reported on the first meeting of the LSE club network. Five members present including James B from TWMC. Discussion of: (1) challenges faced by clubs because of Covid; (2) membership recruitment; (3) how to foster collaboration. Jane Thompson BMC Clubs officer attended and reported on the First Aid course for club members that is being run in August. James B has requested JT to investigate improvements to the membership database (MSO) used by club reps to make it easier for club officers to see who has not renewed. TC encouraged members who were club members to encourage their club's BMC rep to take part. Next networking meeting will be held in October (date to be agreed by poll). CS thanked TC for organising the meeting.

4.2. Hillwalking

Fabrizio Scaliogne gave an update on behalf of himself and Tom Bennett.

He reported on discussions with Rose Gare-Simmons the newly elected nationally elected councillor for hill-walking on the Members' Council and Alex Messenger, communications manager at BMC. Suggestion of further encouragement/information about good practice in hill-walking to counter problems which may continue with increased usage as a result of more people going.

4.3. Youth

Tanya Sage the Area Youth Coordinator said that competitions had restarted with the British Bouldering Championship which was held in Sheffield last weekend. 12 participants had come through the youth pathway.

Discussions have taken place with other Area Youth Coordinators. Aspiration to run the Youth Climbing Series as close to normal with rounds starting in September/October and culminating with national finals in November.

Shauna Coxsey would be competing between 3-6 August 2021 at the Tokyo Olympics.

5. Board report and results of the AGM

CW said she was very pleased to attend this area meeting as she lives in the Chilterns. CW reported about the board and its work. The board, along with the new Directors Martyn Hurn and Andy Syme had been able to meet in person. More time was being spent on working collaboratively. Andy Syme (also President) was a pleasure to work with. The board had been shocked by Gareth Pierce's early death.

Covid was having impact on insurance sale income. Mitigation to reduce deficit. Flexi-furlough scheme for BMC staff will end soon. Discussion of new membership benefits package. Likely to be relaunched in early 2022. Marketing of membership is beginning to turn around decline. Proposal to possibly increase membership fee by RPI. Recruitment of new Chief Commercial Officer this was a new role viewed as an investment for the longer-term alternative revenue generation.

Paul Drew is the new Interim Chair. Nominations committee (on which CW sits) is meeting on 19th July to start the recruitment of a new permanent chair.

Support for clubs continuing, particularly on how to grow membership.

BMC wished Shauna all the best. The new BMC (GB Climbing) head of performance Lorraine Brown will be in Tokyo supporting SC thanks to additional Sport England funding

Ski-mountaineering was a candidate sport for inclusion in future Olympics.

A member asked a question about the membership benefits package. CW explained there could be more flexibility on insurance. The BMC needs a better understanding of the needs/wants of members.

There was a follow up question about marketing by BMC activity and if there any plans to have separate memberships, as that would be particularly challenging for clubs? CW said no plans to do this. The BMC has one membership offer but wants to promote/signpost it differently to different potential member groups.

CS thanked CW for her detailed and excellent report.

AGM

CS reported that all resolutions had been passed at the AGM. Most important of all was the change to the Articles so that the BMC now has a Members' Council in place of the National Council.

In terms of people the following had been elected:

Rose Gare-Simmons, Nationally Elected Councillor (NEC) for Hillwalkers
Steve Clark NEC for Rockclimbers
Aaron Hodgson NEC for mountaineers
Martyn Hurn, Nominated Director
Andy Syme was elected as President (and ex-officio a Director)

Council intended to co-opt Councillors for :
Constituency council for Mountaining Training candidates
Constituency council for club members
NEC for Indoor Climbing

6. Members Council update

CS reported on the new Members Council.

One full Members' Council meeting held so far in May. Next one this Saturday 17th July 2021. CS and RD were the LSE elected representatives. New process to get Council minutes out more quickly. Available at:

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-members-council-minutes>

AS as chair looking at new ways of working so the new Members' Council was not just the old National Council by another name.

New timetable for Members' Council with fixed weekends in four months. It has been suggested that we have a similar approach for area meetings i.e 3rd week Jan, 3rd week April, 1st week July, 3rd week October.

CS explained that the suggestion for area meetings was to hold two in person and two virtually. Saves some cost and increases opportunity for attendance across the large area. Good for accessibility. But it was recognised in-person meetings were more sociable and better for networking.

CS asked for feedback on the following:

Two in-person and two virtual? – Supported

Hybrid meetings? – Supported (CS/RD to explore providing a high-quality virtual provision)

Same day or changing day? – Alternating is more flexible. Preference for Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Plan to have next area meeting on 19th October as in-person with virtual i.e. hybrid. CS said he wished to hold a big meeting as first opportunity for in-person LSE area meeting since March 2020

Encouragement for all members to make suggestions about what they want to discuss at meetings, and ideas for speakers. We have a small budget. Possibility of areas sharing a speaker for a virtual meeting. Either suggestions now or please email us as you have ideas to:

LondonSE.Area@thebmc.co.uk

A review of MoU between Board and Members' Council is being considered.

AS was reviewing nature and format of the AGM. Intention is to shift to a weekend event with an AGM to make it into a great weekend.

7. Update from the Landscapes review

In May 2018, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) commissioned Julian Glover and an independent panel to consider how the management of our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) might be improved. The report, [the Landscapes Review](#), set out a series of recommendations, including that more should be done to support nature's recovery in these landscapes and for new designated landscapes to be considered.

On the 24th June the government announced the new Landscape Designation Programme which indicated that four areas will now be considered for greater protection two of which are in the LSE area:

- An extension to the Surrey Hills AONB – to consider including areas of high scenic quality including chalk grassland, parkland and historic features adjacent to the existing AONB.
- An extension to the Chilterns AONB – to consider many special features including chalk streams, magnificent beechwoods, native woodland and wildflower-rich hills, bringing nature closer to populations in North London.

Announced also was the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

[Natural England has set out their ambition](#) to develop new approaches that will drive nature recovery and improve people's connection with nature, particularly focusing in and around towns and cities. The programme will focus on improving people's quality of life, addressing inequalities in access and connection to the natural environment which have been well-evidenced through the Covid pandemic.

BMC welcomes Govt announcement. BMC still pressing for more details. Expected to be later this year when the Govt publishes its full response to the Glover review.

Any comments via CS who will send to Cath Flitcroft, BMC Access Officer.

8. Area "Noticeboard"

CS encourage members to flag up anything they wanted to raise.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date of next Area Meetings

The next area meeting would provisionally be held on Wednesday 19th October. Location tbc.

CS declared the meeting closed at 20.15

Minutes written by Robert Dufton