



NORTH EAST AREA ORDINARY MEETING

Meeting held online via Zoom
On Thursday 20 January 2022, at 7.00pm

MINUTES

Attendance:

Oli Lewis	Acting Chair	Franco Cookson
Simon Litchfield	Secretary	Graham Harkness
Jonathan White	Director	Lewis Hobson
Andy Syme	BMC President	Liz King
Rob Bishop	BMC Partnerships Manager	Chris Stone
Steve Blake		
Chris Bullock		13 in attendance
Mike Conlon		

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

In lieu of an elected Chair, Oli Lewis, acting as Chair opened the meeting. Apologies were received from: Mark Anstiss and Jon Punshon.

2. Quorum

It was noted that a quorum was present in accordance with [Article 28.6.1 of the British Mountaineering Council's articles of association (the "Articles")].

3. Minutes from the previous meeting held

Agreed and carried forward

4. Vacancies

The issue of vacant places on the committee was raised.:

Hillwalking: Liz King was elected as Hillwalking Representative. She will liaise with Paul M should he wish to undertake any responsibilities.

Access North: Steve Blake offered (and was accepted) to continue as Access Representative North.

There still remains unfilled positions. The area would welcome volunteers from the North East.

5. Meeting Attendance

The issue of attendance was raised owing to tendentially low numbers coming to area meetings:

- The meeting had been promoted on FB and Jonathan had contacted clubs.

Steve Blake said it was indicative that other than access issues, local are not overly interested in BMC matters. Franco concurred with this sentiment.

Andy Syme suggested that we may wish to have joint meetings with another area (as the North East area currently has no Chair). Both Yorkshire and Lakes were suggested as potential areas:

- Chris Bullock raised concerns about Yorkshire (after changes to the YSC that amalgamated the North East with Yorkshire had resulted in disquiet amongst NE parents and a perception that Yorkshire wanted to go alone. He suggested considering the Lakes instead (like the current Youth area set up).

- SB argued that should be qualified as an interim measure. It was confirmed that this was the intention.

Lewis Hobson raised the issue that many people (particularly indoor climbers) are simply unaware of the work that the BMC does.

Rob Bishop agreed that BMC needs to get better at shouting about the work that it does and directing people to where they can make an impact and gave examples.

Liz compared the situation with one previously faced by the RYA (sailing), who had faced similar amalgamation issues in terms of regional areas. She affirmed the view that while it may be one meeting there should be two committees (i.e. would still have NE Hillwalking reps etc).

AS agreed that it would be a temporary thing with two committees. Likewise he said that the BMC as a whole may re-think area meetings. For example, having certain niche national issues being discussed in larger online open forums, leaving local meetings to be more focussed on local issues.

- FC agreed about taking certain national issues with limited appeal out of local meetings, but questioned what there is to actually discuss, and what other areas talk about
- JW said areas vary widely in terms of discussions (giving various examples) and a variety of further meeting attendees talked about the varying agendas other area meetings that they have attended.

The debate shifted towards actual actions taken in the North East by the BMC, with the (acting) Chair asking what had been done locally?

- Simon gave examples, incl: crag clean-ups, NE festivals but noted:
 - o that the organisation of these have historically often fallen to a single person (such as Mark Anstiss and Franco)
 - o often meeting attendees are enthusiastic to agree ideas in meetings, but this is not always backed up with actions being taken
 - o while these events have been well attended, this has not converted into more attendance at meetings.
- FC: noted that many things happen in spite of the meetings.
- SL: noted that we had spent c.50 mins talking about attendance, and this is part of the problem.
- JW: summed up about this is about trying to shape how things should be done, do we want speakers, face to face meetings etc.

Two initial attempts of votes on the idea of amalgamation were made.

- Two dissenting members represented their views, one particularly focussed on Yorkshire.

In lieu of verbal consensus polls were taken:

Should this meeting take a vote on a temporary amalgamation with another BMC area or defer to the next meeting: 6 yes now, 0 no at the next meeting. Yes carried.

Should the North East Area amalgamate with another BMC Area temporarily? 5 for, 2 against, 2 abstain. Yes carried

Which area should the North East Area amalgamate with temporarily? 2 Yorkshire, 3 Lakes, 2 abstain.

Action: via Andy Syme the area will ask the Lakes whether they would consider the proposal.

The vote is conditional on another area accepting us.

6. Access North–

Storm Arwen SB: In negotiations with Scottish Woodlands re clearing of storm damage at NE Crags.

7. Hillwalking.

Storm Arwen: LK: Many trees are down. Would be useful to talk to Forestry Commission to find out when trees will be cleared, e.g. in Kielder, which affected the Spine Race and required a diversion. Liz will report back on the issue at the next meeting.

8. Youth and Competitions

YCS CB: Finals went well and were well organised by Mountaineering Scotland.

Boulder league Parents indicated appetite to start a boulder league. 5 centres signed up and will fit in between other competitions. Based on the Cumbrian boulder league. Friction Bouldering, a new centre opening in Gateshead is involved. The league would appreciate sponsorships.

9. Bolts

No further developments to report.

10. International Moors Festival 2022

As Alex Megos is now double booked, the idea of a festival has been pushed back to 2023.

11. Thanks

Thanks were extended to Oli Lewis for acting as Chair.

12. Date of next Area Meeting

This will be dependent on the outcome of a) the suggestion to amalgamate and b) the choice of date of the other area.