



BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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North West Area Ordinary Meeting

Meeting held online via Zoom

Tuesday 27th April 2022, 19:00

Minutes

Attendance:

13 signed in (not all attendees were present for the whole meeting): Les Ainsworth (Lancashire Access Rep), Katie Allen (Area Co-Chair and **Chair for this meeting**), Bill Beveridge (Members' Council Rep), Bernard Bradbury, Paul Evans, Tim Greenhalgh, Agustin Guardiola (Area Co-Chair and **acting Secretary for this meeting**), Stuart Holmes (Area Youth & Walls Rep), Steve Riley, Carl Spencer (Members' Council Rep and Council Nominated Director), Andy Holland, Dudley Pritchard and Tom West.

1. Welcome, Quorum and Apologies

Katie Allen welcomed members to the meeting. The meeting was quorate in accordance with Article 28.6.1 of the BMC's articles of association. Apologies were received from Katie Coffield, Dominic Oughton, Steve Charles and Stuart Holmes (Stuart was able to join later).

2. Minutes and actions from the previous meeting held on 18th January 2022.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without comments.

3. Fixed Gear Meeting and Policy - Vote

- a) Katie Allen briefly mentioned the fixed gear meeting at Wilton on 19th March 2022; details of fixed gear at each route were not discussed but shown on screen.
- b) Les Ainsworth and Katie Allen gave thanks for crag cleaning at Wilton.
- c) Katie Allen went through the proposed Fixed Gear Policy. Les added a point about bolts needing to be added by people who know how to add them, and a point about bolts stubs left when bolts are removed which can be hazardous. Katie Allen mentioned that the language of the policy is subject to changes without changing the intent (for clarification, readability).
- d) Poll was opened and the policy was voted through.

4. Survey Results

Katie Allen went through the survey results.

Preference of meeting format is blended, both online and in person. Committee will look at facilitating this in future. Outdoor conservation is a common interest for future events. Weekend day time is the most popular time for events. Preferred locations were NW area and adjacent areas.

Events to be advertised early was raised as a comment, and to keep an eye on balance between interests represented by BMC (Climbing, Hill Walking, etc)

4 people stated interest in supporting the Access reps and informal meeting will be set up to discuss this.

Les Ainsworth asked where the survey was found. Sent out via newsletter and advertised on social media. Discussion about how to ensure more engagement in future and ideas for this are welcome.

Les Ainsworth is happy to have a meeting with potential volunteers.

Agustin said they'd been in touch with head office and in future it should be easier for the area committee to send condensed emails for content that requires high engagement.

5. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

None

6. Area Reps reports

6.1 Access

Les Ainsworth provided a quick run-through of the Wilton One fixed gear meeting; and thanked again for the clean crag.

Les Ainsworth provided an update on Lancashire access as follows:

- a) Hoghton estate owner contacted to say 2 climbers had been on the quarry during a complete ban on climbing until the peregrines have fledged. Claimed to be from the BMC and had permission, which is not correct. The RAD was up to date and there are clear signs.
- b) Second problem at Hoghton this year, when 2 people broke the lock (not knowing the combination) and took the gate off its hinges. And BMC action was slow, which the estate wasn't too happy about.
- c) Les Ainsworth was hoping to get better access to the quarry but it's not a good time now due to these issues. Removing combination and barbed wire, and to consider zoning for bird nesting restrictions.
- d) Ideas welcome on how to ensure people respect access rights.
- e) Katie Allen suggested to mention in access negotiation that improving access will mean more climbers who can police other's behaviour.
- f) Tim Greenhalgh mentioned they shoot ducks in the estate, and suggested this was the reason they didn't want people in the quarry. More extreme measures suggested by Tim Greenhalgh and dismissed by Les Ainsworth.

Les Ainsworth proposed some fixed gear changes at Egerton and asked for thoughts:

- a) Sparkin' Bush (HVS) on Grooved Walls: No protection on first 4m, 1 bolt suggested.
- b) Cherry Bomb Area: Investigate how to provide belays or lower-offs due to shale band which is difficult to pass and without effective belays.
- c) Mental Mantel (E3 5c): Has no protection and there has only been 1 lead since first ascent. Low peg and higher bolt suggested as retro fit.

Tim Greenhalgh expressed agreement for Cherry Bomb Area and Mental Mantel, wasn't familiar with Sparkin' Bush.

Stuart Holmes mentioned another option would be adding to the guidebook to do the start of Sparkin' Bush with a bouldering mat.

Katie Allen asked the people present to vote on the proposed changes.

Yes: Agustin Guardiola, Paul Evans, Tim Greenhalgh, Steve Riley, Les Ainsworth, Bill Beveridge, Andy Holland,
Abstain: Dudley Pritchard, Tom West, Stuart Holmes

Changes approved, Les Ainsworth assured these wouldn't change the grade of the climbs.

Tim Greenhalgh suggested 2 bolts on Mental Mantel instead of 1 peg and 1 bolt - this will be considered by the person placing the fixed gear.

Katie Allen discussed two further access points:

- a) From Will Points, Yorkshire Area Secretary: reports of slashed tyres at Running Hill Pits suspicion it may be the gamekeeper.
- b) From Phil Wickens: New Mills abseil tree has been cut down, still can be used for abseiling but part of the crag likely to fall apart when the roots holding it together die.

Steve Riley discussed some local points from Merseyside:

- a) Irby Quarry has a thriving "friends of" community and has been rejuvenated recently (Mark Hounslea has been involved).
- b) Parbold Quarry land agent in touch via UKClimbing.com saying climbers shouldn't be there, and RAD has been updated. In practice people have been climbing there without issues, officially don't go there, unofficially it doesn't seem to be an issue. There's a plan for landfill in the quarry.
- c) There's an active protest group that went quiet a year ago and Les Ainsworth asked if people can get involved as individuals instead of as BMC.

6.2 Clubs

Dominic Oughton not present so Katie Allen went through the slides.

- a) Reminder of Find your Adventure and its social media engagement, and increase in membership. Still time for people to get involved.

6.3 Hill Walking

Steve Charles not present so Katie Allen and Andy Holland went through the slides.

- a) Essential Zoom sessions coming up - [information on BMC website](#)
Million Mile Clean 2022 - arranging clean-up in month of May 14-22nd - [info on BMC website](#):
Standards for upland pathway maintenance, examples sent to Steve Riley requested.
- b) Andy Holland gave a run-through of the events that have taken place. Gave thanks to Steve for organising 4 sessions at Winter Hill to remove rhododendrons and a couple of days planting 6200 sphagnum moss plugs
- c) Andy Holland led a walk in Forest of Bowland, attended by Alan Hinkes OBE.
- d) Hill walks in 2022 mentioned and people interested in leading one asked to contact Steve:
 - i) 10th June Winter Hill Explorer
 - ii) 3rd July Crowden Horseshoe
 - iii) 3rd Sept Wilton Fest
 - iv) 29th Oct Open walk with Rucksack Club, venue TBC
- e) Les Ainsworth asked about the fire damage at Winter Hill, Andy Holland said it's quite overgrown with grass and it is recovering.
- f) Reminder of future projects including moss planting, invasive species clearance after bird nesting season, construction of leaky dams as "Slow the flow project".
- g) Andy Holland asked people to email Steve if interested in the [Snowdonia conservation event](#) alongside national trust ranger team, free accommodation available first come first served. Facebook event will be created for this.

6.4 Youth and walls

Stuart Holmes gave apologies for the lack of slides, and said not much has happened.

- a) Junior British Bouldering Championships coming up - [information on BMC website](#)
- b) No walls complaints

7. Access and Steering Group Summary

Paul gave a quick update about what has been discussed by the steering group. Disclaimer that Paul has not attended the meetings but has read through the minutes.

Working group on Access Conservation and Environmental Sustainability (ACES) chaired by Dave Turnbull. 4 workstreams identified: Environmental education - core audience, environmental education - new audience, enhanced support for local activism, training & technical support.

If interested in being involved with this group, get in touch with Katie Allen or Agustin Guardiola and they'll put you in touch.

Paul went through the environmental education points, what we already do and how we can get involved in the future plans.

Stuart talked about a European climbing standard for signage etc.

Paul mentioned there are small grants available for local activism. And displayed the training online workshops.

8. North West events calendar - recap of upcoming events

Katie Allen gave a reminder of the upcoming events:

- (Zoom) Emergency skills - Wed 27 April @ 8pm-9pm
- (Zoom) Navigation - Wed 4 May @ 1pm-2pm
- (Zoom) Caring for the environment - Wed 11 May @1pm-2pm
- (Zoom) Multi-day hiking - Thurs 19 May @ 8pm
- Million mile Clean up ideally in month of May, 14th -22nd
- (Hill walk) 10th June Winter Hill Explorer
- (Hill walk) 3rd July Crowden Horseshoe
- (Hill walk) 3rd Sept Wilton Fest
- (Hill walk) 29th Oct Open walk with Rucksack Club, venue TBC

9. Members' Council Report

Bill Beveridge was not present at the last members' meeting.

Stuart Holmes asked about whether people would be interested in indoor climbing events for the winter, it was seen as a good idea and it was suggested to organise it with clubs.

Paul Evans suggested we organise speakers for future meetings.

Stuart Holmes asked Tim Greenhalgh about a film festival which hasn't been happening because of covid, Tim Greenhalgh is hopeful there will be one happening next year (January - February)

Carl Spencer provided this text as an update:

- There was an open forum on Wed 20th with the aim to have a Q&A session ahead of the AGM. That should negate the need for a board update at the area meeting itself given that there will essentially be a nationwide board update via that meeting just one week before.

Stuart Holmes mentioned potential changes to BMC Participation Statement; currently it says the BMC wouldn't positively encourage participation. Getting member feedback on whether it should be changed to the BMC would encourage participation.

Historical context provided, previous concerns were that encouraging participation would damage crags but this was before indoor climbing which means encouraging participation may not be a concern now.

Nothing has been decided yet.

Les Ainsworth made a point about this having been an ongoing issue and it being contentious.

Bill Beveridge, at the open meeting last week, at the most it attracted 21 people mostly from Members' Council, very few people from outside participated.

Agustin Guardiola read out a message from Carl Spencer:

- Mountaineering vision event happened, re-election of council nominated director, gala and volunteer awards in October, next council meeting in Llanberis 14th May including hill walking vision event.

Dudley Pritchard says it makes sense to try to get people on climbing walls to join as BMC members. Some might get onto crags but it might rejuvenate and ensure the long-term survival of the BMC without overloading crags. More members will help the BMC's ability to influence government policies.

Stuart Holmes confirms this will be sent out for further member consultations so it's not just voted through by ~20 people. And suggested a change to the articles might provide a clear pathway for someone who is interested in progression in climbing.

Les Ainsworth made a point that once someone is at a climbing wall they have already shown interest in climbing.

10. Any other business

Agustin Guardiola closed the fixed gear poll, 11 people voted 10 for yes, 1 abstain. Fixed gear policy passed.

Steve Riley said to get in touch if the RAD database needs updating.

11. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the scheduled date for the next meeting – Tuesday 28th June – format TBC but hoping to run it as a hybrid session.