



British Mountaineering Council SOUTHWEST AREA

Quarterly Regional Meeting

Date, Time & Type of Meeting: Monday 25 April 2022 @ 7pm via Zoom
Chair: Mark Kemball, Secretary: Alan Dovey & Minutes: Philip Wilson

Attendees

Mark Kemball, Philip Wilson, Helen Wilson, Andrew Bullock, Thomas Reeves, Trevor Smith, Ian Butterworth, Adam Lowe, Barry Donovan, Annabel, Dave Turnbull, Pete Salenieks, Rik Meek, Colin Knowles, Mark Davies, James Mann, Kerrie Mott, Dave & Wynne-Jones

Apologies For Absence

Alan Dovey, Tony Bird (Somerset), Richard Nadine, Marty Hallett & Macca McManus

Agenda items

1. The previous minutes were agreed.
2. Avon issues - Colin Knowles reported:
 - a. Peregrines have moved their nest sites from last year Quarry 5 to Exploding Galaxy Wall, parts of the Unknown Area and some of the ramp (which is used as a feeding ground). Climbers are asked to respect the new restrictions in place and not climb there until the birds have fledged.
 - b. An inquest into a fatal climbing accident on the weekend of 5/6 June at Goblin Combe, Arkenstone area has been opened and adjourned by the Coroner. Avon Mountaineering Club is being supported by the BMC to provide any information that may be required.
3. Fairy Cave Quarry:
In Mark Courtiour's absence, Mark Kemball presented a proposal to consider belay bolts in Fairy Cave Quarry. The proposal reads:

Fairy Cave Quarry Belay Bolt Policy (2022). Belay bolts may be considered at the top of routes where it is not possible to top out due to seriously dangerous rock/rubble slopes above and there being no natural belay/abseil opportunities, especially where existing Ash trees have now died (due to Ash die back) and become unsafe. No bolts to be placed that can be used as runners on any climbs.

After a brief discussion, the proposal was voted on and passed unanimously: 16/17 with one abstention (one attendee arrived late and missed the vote). The work will proceed with decisions being made on a route by route basis.

4. Cheddar Gorge: As Mark Courtiour was absent, the discussion about how to manage the climbing in the Gorge was postponed to the next meeting.
5. Wintours Leap: Mark Kemball read a report from Tony Bird (Gloucestershire) to say, *"there has only been a couple of re-gearing trips out, the winter has inevitable limited opportunities. We are just about to 'enrol' a few more volunteers to get more effort out on the crag, so I may have more to say closer to the 26th April"*. Mark added that £1,800 has so far been raised for the re-equipment work, as well as donations of kit, static lines and pitons. Anyone interested in donating either time or money, or in information on progress so far, can email Tony Bird on wintoursleapgear@hotmail.com
6. Other access issues:
 - a. Sally-in-the-Woods. Mark Davies highlighted a problem here, as the new landowner has temporarily banned climbing as he is worried about liability issues due to loose rock. Mark Davies and Mark Courtiour have agreed to implement an annual photographic survey to check on the condition of the rock with the landowner. Mark Davies has agreed to carry out this annual work, which should mean the landowner will allow climbing at this venue from this point onwards.
 - b. The Isle of Wight Climbing Access The Needles: Marti Hallett reported via email that the work he had previously done to negotiate access to the Needles is now void as the National has just changed their Health & Safety consultants and as a result will not allow access over their land to the abseil point or climbing itself. Dave Turnbull said he would work with Marti Hallett to start negotiations with the new consultants to again try to sort this out. A note is to be made on the BMC Regional Access Database.
7. Dave Turnbull gave an update on the new access arrangements at Tintagel. English Heritage has agreed the following offer with the BMC:

Tintagel Proposal:

 - a. *Permission to climb must be sought 5 days in advance by contacting the Tintagel Castle email.*
 - b. *Climbers must demonstrate their competency by being members of the BMC; membership will be checked in advance with the BMC before permission to climb is granted.*
 - c. *Climbers must demonstrate they have public liability insurance to the value of £15million. This should include insurance against a member of the public seeking damages due to accident or injury arising from the actions of the climber. This is standard for all BMC members.*
 - d. *Climbing will be restricted to 4 climbers per day.*
 - e. *Climbs will be allowed in April, May, June, July & September only.*
 - f. *Climbers must arrange to access the climb before the site opens to the public at 10am. Normal admission charges will apply.*
 - g. *EH staff will accompany the climbers to the access point and notify the Duty Supervisor when the climbers are down and the island can be opened to the public (not later than 10am).*

Dave added that the BMC has offered English Heritage the use of a simple app (same as the one BMC developed for Cheddar) to allow them to check whether people applying to climb

are current BMC members. The entrance fee will still be payable. The meeting expressed its thanks to Dave, the rest of the BMC access team, Iain Peters and all others involved in negotiating this successful outcome. Well done!

8. Board Update: Pete Salenieks gave a Board update which is attached.
9. Dartmoor Festival: This has had to be cancelled due to personal circumstances for some of the organising committee. If anyone has any questions on this, please contact Mark Kemball via email.
10. Hill Walking Rep: Tony Bird is stepping down from this role for personal reasons. Thanks to Tony for all his hard work, particularly his assistance in the recent review of Dartmoor byelaws undertaken by the Dartmoor Park Authority.
11. West Penwith Access Rep: Dave Hope is stepping down from this role. Thanks to Dave Hope for his hard work, Iain Peters agreed to take over the role.
12. Dartmoor:
 - a) BMC contributing £1k to path improvements at Haytor.
 - b) Wild Camping: Areas for wild camping are currently set by the Dartmoor Park Authority, including land that is privately owned within the park boundary. Alexander Burwell a private landowner who owns the Burwell Estate is challenging this ruling via a Judicial Review. He wishes to ban wild camping on his land. This affects a large area of private land near Ivybridge. The Dartmoor Park Authority is opposing this. See this link to current permitted wild camp areas: <https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/about-us/about-us-maps/camping-map>.
 - c) Vixen Tor: Iain Peters reported that the Dartmoor Park Authority are to hold a consultation regarding access.
13. Belay Stakes: Iain Peters reported that belay stakes are available. A list is to be compiled of the routes and areas involved, together with a list of volunteers to place them. For further information please contact Mark Kemball & Iain Peters.
14. Any Other Business:
 - a) Dave Wynne-Jones complained about over enthusiastic rock removal on trad routes such as the removal of long-standing chock stones with a crowbar. This has resulted in over sanitised routes with altered character. It was agreed that this is an education issue.
 - b) Fairy Cave: Ian Butterworth reported that the entry combination code is to change from the 1st May 2022 (to be made available on the BMC Regional Access database and publicised in the climbing media). He urged climbers not to damage the fence and gate by climbing over at this time should they not have the new code. An unknown person has defecated in the layby which is being blamed on climbers. Iain feels this is unlikely and is more likely someone caught short passing through the area.
 - c) Path Work: James Mann reported that the National Trust is to carry out path renovations to the Black Slab area at Bosigran and to the belay ledge currently supported by a failing scaffolding board at the Left-Hand Slab at Baggy Point Promontory.
 - d) Range West Briefing Pembroke: Although outside of the southwest Dave Turnbull reported that he is negotiating with the army to re-instate these briefings online as

opposed to in person (as was done successfully during Covid) moving forward. This will make the briefing more convenient to attend for non-local climbers.

15. Type & Date of Next Meeting: The next meeting in September will be by Zoom. The one in November will be a physical meeting. Dates, times and a venue (for the latter) are still to be finalised.

Minutes compiled by Philip Wilson

Appendix: BMC Area Meetings April 2022

Talking Points for Directors

1. 2022 AGM

The AGM will be held on the evening of Wednesday 18th May starting at 19.00. As explained in January, reluctantly the Board decided that the AGM will be virtual this year ... and we look forward to reinstating a full AGM weekend in 2023.

We want to engage with you, be able to explain what the BMC has delivered in 2021 and provide an insight into the future. So, please ensure that you attend and vote – you will need to register and if not participating in the meeting itself, then you will need to allocate your proxy votes.

2. Addition to Objects within the Articles

We will be proposing the addition of an *“Object”* to the Articles as follows:

“Encourage and promote membership of the BMC to Mountaineers and those interested in mountaineering”. This will be put forward as a separate resolution.

We are doing this in order to ensure that we can grow membership, and thus become more representative of the millions of people in England and Wales who already enjoy our sports – activities. Our intent is that this will help us engage with under represented groups in within our sports – activities – for instance women and girls and ethnic minorities.

In addition, the lack of clarity around how we grow our membership is eating up large amounts of time within the leadership and staff and is simply getting in the way of running an efficient business.

There is an *“Open Forum”* Meeting planned for 19.00 on Wednesday 20th April at which those who wish to undertake a deep dive into this proposed change of the articles can participate.

3. Other changes to the Articles

There are a range of other changes to the Articles which are covered in a separate resolution. These were discussed at an *“Open Forum”* Meeting which was held on Wednesday 2nd March. These changes cover:

- Required in order to widen our membership and be able to accept new generation clubs
- Required in order to meet the demands of the Code of Sports Governance, which was issued in December 2021
- Some changes to articles associated with Areas

4. 2021 Financial Outcome and progress against budget in 2022

The BMC ended the 2021 year with a deficit of approximately £0.11 million, which was funded out of reserves leaving the organisation at the start of 2022 with reserves of £1.11 million. Given the circumstances, this was a good outcome, albeit at the expense of not making progress on renewing the back and front-end IT systems nor on refreshing our marketing and communications.

Positively, UK Sport granted £0.56 million in support of elite competition climbing and we managed to retain our staff through the pandemic by accessing £0.14 million of funding from the UK Government Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Clearly the pandemic has negatively impacted membership numbers and sales of travel insurance. Despite this we have seen a steady rebuild of membership through the second half of the year and notably of Club membership.

Looking to 2022 we are planning to again run a deficit as we rebuild the BMC after the pandemic and ensure that we can both represent and support the membership as well as continue to improve our delivery as a Sports Governing Body. Having said that, during the first quarter of the year, the build in membership and insurance sales has been better than expected and this gives the Board and Senior Leadership some choices with respect to how best to use the underspent funds.

5. Sport England (SE) Funding

The Phase Two funding submission was made to Sport England at the end of February and at the end of March Sport England indicated that we have been successful in our submission and have given us an indication of the size of the award.

The funds that will be released cover 5 years and focus on the three areas of Governance, System Development and Talent. Whilst this is a request to “*Sport England*” – the funds will have many benefits across the whole of the BMC irrespective of geography or activity.

We are working with our Partners, the Association of British Climbing Walls (ABC) and the National Indoor Climbing Awards Scheme (NICAS) on exactly what we must deliver by when, along with getting clarity on the resourcing that will be required.

6. Wales

Neal Hockley, the Chair of the Wales Committee was invited into the January 2022 meeting of the Board. An excellent presentation and discussion followed during which we explored how within the existing framework the Wales Committee could both do more and be seen to be better representing the needs of hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers within Wales

7. GB Climbing – The 2022 Competition Climbing Schedule

We are back to having nearly a full year of Competition Climbing complete with a schedule and dates for each competition in place

8. International Mountaineering Committee and Representation

The International Mountaineering Committee, with the Board and the Staff have reviewed how best to both represent the interests of British Mountaineers on the international stage ... for instance through UIAA and the European Mountaineering Association (EUMA) at the same time as delivering on the business of expeditions, grants and awards and working hand in hand with the Mount Everest Foundation.

The conclusion is that we should keep the International Mountaineering Committee focussed on their core work on grants and expeditions whilst formalising a group which considers how best the BMC leverages its expertise strategically on the international stage – this group is to be called the “*International Strategy Group*” and is led by the President, Andy Syme.

9. Development of a Senior Leadership Team

The Chief Commercial Officer (CCO), Gavin Finch, was appointed in December 2021 and he has made substantial progress on assessing and developing a refreshed approach to communications and marketing

We have just completed the process of recruiting a full-time CFO, Joelle Chisholm, who starts in May.

The BMC recognises that it needs to increase its presence in Wales and be seen to do so. During 2021 we appointed a Policy & Campaigns Officer and decided that we must maintain the position of an Access & Conservation Officer dedicated to Wales.

10. Volunteer Gala

We are delighted to announce that we will be inviting our volunteers to a Gala Dinner and based at Warwick University over the weekend of the 8th and 9th October.

11. Ukraine

The BMC is leading UK Sports Governing Bodies in putting in place a web based system where British mountaineers can offer to host Ukrainian mountaineers who either have already or will in the future flee from their home country. The system builds on what the UK government already has in place for hosting Ukrainian families with families in the UK, whilst maintaining the protections for both the refugees and the hosts that are built into the UK government system.