



Cyfarfod - BMC Cymru (North/Gogledd) - Zoom Meeting

05/07/2022

MINUTES - COFNODION

Attendance – Presenoldeb:

Chair (TJ). 8 local area members; BMC Officer (TC); BMC President (RM); Director (PS). (Total 12)

1. Croeso - Welcome

Members shared a few moments of silence to remember the life of Tom Furey. Friend, colleague, BMC member and access rep., Tom will be missed by all who knew him.

Details of events and a trust set up to celebrate Tom's life will be available via the Chair.

2. Apologies - Ymddiheuriadau

Eben Muse, Will Millar, Ross Worthington, Dave Turnbull.

The Chair expressed disappointment at the poor turnout in view of the amount of work that goes in to organising a meeting which will cover important issues of interest to all climbers and walkers.

3. Minutes/Cofnodion (Beacon – 26 April 2022)

NB. The Chair forgot to ask for a proposer/seconded to accept the minutes.

Matters Arising - Materion yn codi

- a. No advert for the post of Ogwen E-minibus driver had been received.
- b. A somewhat unhelpful reply from Emyr Williams (CEO, SNPA) has now arrived. (Shared on-screen). Issues relating to the work done on the bridleways rumbles on, but there is some evidence that the force of complaints (including those from the BMC) is bringing about an improvement in the Park's consultation and engagement process. It is unlikely that Mend our Mountains funding will be made available to any SNPA projects in the next few years.
- c. The design, manufacture and installation of the proposed information sign for Castle Inn Quarry is on its way.
- d. The Chair did write to Paul Davies asking for an explanation of the need to send three BMC delegates to Salt Lake City for a IFSC meeting. The subsequent exchange of emails was shared on-screen and a short discussion about the problems associated with international sporting bodies reducing their carbon footprints ensued.
- e. The stainless steel rods are still in place at Rhoscolyn. They are a potential trip-hazard close to a cliff edge, and are not ideal as climbing anchors either. Various opinions about leaving, removing or replacing them were voiced without clear consensus.

4. Hongian Ffest Report - 27-29 May 2022.

The Chair shared some photographs which gave a feel for aspects of the event.

Hongian Ffest was generally judged to have been a success, especially in respect of engaging local youngsters, but there were lessons to be learnt for any repeat festival, including:

- Oversight of spending and fee structure.
- Advertising and booking system.
- Clarity of Programme.
- Bilingual provision.
- Plan 'B' for bad weather.

TC is already in conversation with the local organiser to maximise opportunities next time round.

Very few local members supported the event and calls for volunteers (especially Welsh speakers) were largely unheeded.

5. Joint Conservation Project – Nant Gwynant – 29/30 June

The Chair shared photographs of the culvert cleaning and cairn removal undertaken by BMC members on Yr Wyddfa and Y Glyderau, under the guidance of the National Trust's Path Maintenance Team.

The work was fun, social. Informative, helpful and tiring, but it was disappointing that, apart from TJ and DT, there were no members from BMC Cymru present to support the initiative.

Similar events will be organised for the future, and hopefully more local members will get involved. Thanks to the excellent NT team, and to Steve Charles (BMC NW region) for his impeccable organisation.

NB. It was stressed that such organised cairn removal needs to be advertised with care, as it is a sensitive issue, politically, ecologically, historically and safety-wise.

6. Restoration Projects – Ideas, Funding and Applications

A number of suggestions for local restoration projects had been received via the Chair and these were displayed on-screen. Many of these had merit (and would be put on TC's to-do list!) but were too big or complicated for consideration for this funding scheme. Two suggestions were discussed:

a. Simon Panton presented a case for repairing the area under Jerry's Roof (roadside, Llanberis Pass) which was slumping into the road.

The meeting agreed that work was needed, but it was potentially expensive and might require Council or Highways Authority approval first. Small, discreet repairs, undertaken by climbers, is, for the time being anyway, the best way forward.

b. Andy Boorman presented a case for bolted lower-offs at Upper St Tudno's (Gt Orme) in order to preserve rare vegetation and avoid unstable rock on ledges.

This project appeared to fit all the criteria for funding, and local area approval for an application of approx £400 was granted. (No votes against.)

7. A copy and paste error resulted in missing a number 7 off the agenda!

8. Reports:

Pwyllgor Cymru: Neal Hockley

Not too much to report since last area meeting but I met with Paul Davies (BMC CEO), Roger Murray (BMC Chair) and Fiona Sanders (Council Nominated Director) at Plas y Brenin on 5th May, to discuss the various practical ways the BMC can improve its profile in Wales, including some quick wins on the website etc. I will be speaking to Roger again in the next week or so to follow up and hopefully we will get some concrete changes quite soon (though some will have to wait for the grand website redesign).

RM said that he was keen to better integrate Neal's work with Pwyllgor Cymru into the BMC. In this respect he would like Neal to represent Welsh interests on the Board, as a director.

Access and Conservation:

Tom Carrick

- * Bwlch y Moch open access paperwork now complete; next step in September.
- * Access to Pandy Outcrop – proving difficult to get hold of the landowner.
- * Need to sort out access across the road to Fachwen Boulders
- * A 'Respect the Rock' video coming soon.
- * Talking to Mountain Training Association (MTA) to improve educational links.
- * Plantlife are keen to partner with BMC to increase the number of technically competent conservationists, who can survey and report on species in difficult-to-access cliff sites. (Barbara Jones, BMC member, has done this for many years.)
- * Trash Free Trails meeting – monitoring plastics around Yr Wyddfa.

Gwyn Jones

- * New stile to access Craig y Castell.
- * Crag access paths, and some routes, cleared of bramble and ivy.

Andy Boorman

- * Dyserth – No pheasants this year, therefore access likely.
- * Llanddulas Cave – still problems, but don't expect success from the owners, Gwrych Castle.

Policy and Campaigns: Eben Muse

Please see attached report.

Director/Board Updates: Peter Salenieks

PS submitted a full report which is appended to these minutes.

The Chair brings to your attention item 7 in the report. The implication of Sport England funding indoor, but not outdoor, climbing/walking activity is potentially very serious for the work of the BMC.

Clubs: Peter Salenieks

- * All the AGM motions relevant to clubs were passed.
- * The net can now be cast wider in respect of club affiliation, although there will be boundaries.
- * Clubs with huts in Wales will need to register their group accommodation with the Hostels Agency in order to avoid the increased local council taxes which apply to second homes.

9. Chair's Business:

There was none.

**10. Date of AGM 2022: Dyddiad y CCB 2022: (and local area meeting)
19th October**

The format, timing and venues for meetings will be notified at least two weeks in advance of scheduled dates.

TJ 25/7/2022

Access Reform.

After being repeatedly blown off by the deputy minister Lee Waters, we finally managed to pin down the Welsh Environment Minister, to ask her about the seemingly stalled Access Reform Legislation. The turnout was good for the meeting, with some 23 attendees, mostly from representative bodies such as ourselves but also several MS's and some who couldn't attend sent their staff. We put to Julie a presentation and short video on why we felt it was urgent and timely to proceed with access reform. The answer we received was disappointing – there is no legislative slot and there won't be for another two years or so. Consultation will proceed but for now, we go nowhere. She encouraged us to work within the existing legislature, which is frustrating. Our response generally was to ask that access continue to be tied in to other ongoing legislation (i.e. agri reform, more on that later). Huw Irranca-Davies, chairing, suggested the creation of a "Minister for the Outdoors" for which he'd clearly be the perfect fit. It feels like a logical next step from establishing the CPG as we have, but we'll see if the idea goes anywhere. We'll continue to be a part of consultations and work going forward but it's undeniable that the current state of affairs is a disappointment. I'll be considering what our options are going forward.

Agricultural Reform

The Royal Welsh this year was held against the backdrop of the recent publication of the Sustainable Farming Scheme – a kind of draft proposition for the model for future farm payments to replace the scheme expiring in 2025. The draft contains no financial information really, but it does contain an overview of what the government will ask for, and what they will reward farmers for. I spent much of the last week listening to farmers berate labour politicians and third sector forestry associations for the demand for 10% of farm space to be devoted to tree cover (a 3-4% increase from current levels). While the hysteria over that is real, there are other encouraging areas for us, including provision for rewarding farmers who provide and improve access and engage with the public. I was at an event held by the NFU who believed it to be a coup, with Mark Drakeford. While many of us expected an apologetic or even deferential tone, we were surprised by a defiant performance from him. He didn't budge much at all on targets or general principles. He also stood up on the NSZ legislation in Wales stating that the problem needs solving and farmers need to work with the government on it or be left behind. All in all, it left me and others encouraged that Labour may not be moved on this legislation as much as we had feared. The SFS itself is a pretty encouraging document in general (I have attached for your interest) and we are signed up for the upcoming period of co design.

I hadn't attended the show for some 17 years and it hasn't changed much although there are now such developments as military drones being shown off as potential new agricultural tools and the like. I attended ten different events, discussions, and talks all quite directly relating to access, the environment, and agriculture reform, which included ministers and opposition politicians from all parties. I think it was important that I attended and I hope to attend again while agriculture is a legislative priority for us over the next few years.

Our presence was also valuable there in challenging dishonest and damaging assertions from FUW/NFU lobbyists (who are only doing their job I suppose); Nick Fenwick, who is the policy lead for FUW, broke into an astonishing rant at an event that was supposed to be about "imagining sustainable futures" asserting that "the liberalisation of access over the last forty years has given predominantly middle class people the freedom to leave gates open all over the country – and now through thankfully stalled access reform, they are trying to ensure that you can ride a horse or bike on any path in Wales! And who rides horses and bikes?! Middle class people!". I challenged him on that as constructively as I was able because it was a ridiculous statement. But they are made, and when they go unchallenged in a room full of policy makers and folks with influence, it becomes the narrative.

Not everyone at the show was overwhelmingly negative either – I attended a talk held by WEL (of which we're a member, although I wish I had the time to engage more fully on their land use task force) which featured some speakers from the Nature Friendly Farming Network, and it was fantastic to see that some farmers are already ahead of the curve on access and the environment, despite pressure from their peers to be otherwise inclined.

BMC Area Meetings June 2022 Talking Points for Directors

1. 2022 AGM

The AGM was held on the evening of Wednesday 18th May.

673 members voted, all resolutions were passed and in all cases with over 90% of votes for “*cast for the resolution*”

2. Hill Walking – Rock Climbing – Indoor Climbing – Mountaineering Vision Events

Over the past 9 months Members’ Council have run a half day session on each of our core activities – sports: Hill Walking, Rock Climbing, Indoor Climbing and Mountaineering

The events have focussed on current state and direction of travel for these Activities and Sports and in all cases have been positive, inspirational and forward looking.

A very good and positive overview was brought to the Board Meeting that was held on Saturday 18th June. This was led by the nationally elected councillors representing these activities – sports, with the intent that the key messages around our activities and sports are brought into the planning and resourcing of the BMC over the next 2.5 years.

3. Access and Conservation

Towards the end of 2021 the BMC undertook a National Access Survey – which has been very instructive and has been followed by regular meetings of the Steering Group. The whole process of the survey and subsequent engagement and meetings is believed to have been very successful in engaging access volunteers and our partners across the sector.

Dave Turnbull and his team have put together an excellent pack of material which tells the story of what the BMC has done and is doing within the realm of access and conservation and looks to the future including the requirement for additional resources.

Dave brought a very good and positive overview to the Board Meeting that was held on Saturday 18th June, with the intent that the key messages around access and conservation are brought into the planning and resourcing of the BMC over the next 2.5 years.

4. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Over the past 6 months the ESG Steering Group under the leadership of Jonny Dry have considered the current state and future direction for EDI within the BMC and the Sector, building upon the work within the sector wide survey, “*Your Movement Matters*” which was delivered during the second half of 2021.

The review and its recommendations were brought to the Board Meeting that was held on Saturday 18th June. The work was warmly received and the recommendations agreed.

In the short term it was agreed to recruit a full time and senior member of staff to lead the EDI activity across the sector and simultaneously to recruit a new chair for the Equity Steering Committee (ESG). Both appointments will require people who have substantive experience in integrating EDI into organisations.

The two positions are expected to work together in order to further develop the strategy, put in place action plans and ensure subsequent delivery.

5. IFSC speed and lead world cup competition at Ratho in September 2022

The UK has been requested by IFSC to host the speed and lead world cup competition at Ratho in September 2022. This is after these competitions were pulled from China due to the current outbreak of CoVid in China.

The BMC, through GB Climbing, is working with UK Sport on bringing these world cup events to the UK and agreeing the support that the event will receive, such that the UK delivers this high profile event really well.

6. EUMA and UIAA coming to Yorkshire in 2023

The Board has agreed that it supports bringing the Annual General Meeting of the EU Mountaineering Association (EUMA) and the UIAA General Assembly to Yorkshire in 2023. All the meetings and events will last a total of approximately 6 days.

Bringing these meetings to England provides a great opportunity to showcase the work of the BMC, and for some of our members to meet fellow climbers and mountaineers from other countries.

7. Supporting the Outdoor Sector of our activities - sports

Whilst the successful bid with Sport England is very welcome, it has left the outdoor sector, which is where most of our existing and future members are active, with little support from Sport England.

We are working with Mountain Training England, Mountain Training UK and Ireland and with Plas y Brenin and we are planning on making a joint approach to Sport England which will emphasise the mass participation in our sports, the training and education requirements and the risks associated with a failing to support this hugely important sector.

8. A new Environmental Policy

Under the leadership of Cath Flitcroft, a new environmental policy has been developed, presented to Members' Council and approved by the Board.

It considers:

- BMC Operations
- Transport and Travel
- Enhancement and Protection of Biodiversity and Landscapes
- Supporting Upland and Mountain Economies
- Partnership Working and Lobbying

9. Staff changes and support

Recently there have been several departures of staff from the BMC, many of whom have a long track record with the organisation. On behalf of the Board, we are grateful for their service to both the BMC itself and the Sector as whole.

It is recognised that staff should be supported through the current cost of living crisis and Paul Davies is exploring how best to achieve this and is expected to report to the next meeting of the Board, which is to be held towards the end of July.

10. Finances

The new CFO, Joelle Chisholm is reviewing both the progress against budget in 2022 and considering how best to improve reporting and planning.

At the end July meeting of the Board, we will receive a full report on current expenditure against budget, and given that we are anticipating that our expenditure is lower than budgeted, how we

may best utilise remaining funds. It is good to know that we have plenty of opportunities and consequently we will need to prioritise.

11. Sport England (SE) Funding

We are continuing to work 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.

Challenges still exist around how both a National Coaching Scheme and Wall Accreditation will be delivered – but slowly, progress is being made.

12. Safeguarding and Health and Safety

At the Board meeting held on the 18th June we received an update from both the Safeguarding and the Health and Safety Committees.

Whilst there are no immediate challenges, there is work to do – especially around having an even more impactful Safeguarding Regime across the sector. In support of that, the BMC is recruiting a full time Safeguarding officer who will support the sector.