

BMC Peak Area – 2022 Chair's Report

As is tradition – well, actually – as is mandated unto me by the Area Terms of Reference (seriously), I hereby present the British Mountaineering Council Peak Area Chair's report for the year 2022, which, as mandated by the Area Terms of Reference, I shall submit to the board of the BMC for their consideration within 21 days of the Area meeting (again, seriously). I do hope that my strict adherence to the ToR is appreciated by those who have a pedantic bent, and taken as a light-hearted dig at unnecessary bureaucracy by those who don't.

First, the good: we have a new regular venue in the Bamford Village Hall, giving us some consistency that we haven't had since the Maynard days. We have Sam R as our secretary (woo! Thank you for keeping me on track), and Sam H as new Members' Council Rep (woo! Thank you for agreeing to do so!) who has joined Alison in this important and challenging role. We had a great talk by Percy Bishton, regaling us with stories of setting the bouldering at the Olympics. We have furthered public discussions of the ideas behind no-car days in the Hope valley, with much thought and opinion given on how this would affect access, accessibility, and how this can be balanced against the need to reduce carbon emissions. Peak Area clubs have had a boost from Paul Justin's efforts setting up network meetings and supporting with the 'find your adventure' campaign. Our hill walking reps have been busy setting up events such as the moorland walking festival amongst other led walks. Henry Folkard has, in spite of all his protestations that he is retiring from access work from 2017 onwards, now finds himself as the chair of the Kinder and High Peak Advisory group, giving the BMC (and, by extension, all climbers, walkers, and other recreationists) a voice on this important panel. The access reps have continued to fight the good fight, including Jon Fullwood taking up his role as Access Officer for England. Given that he lives in Sheffield, my aim for the next year is to distract him from all the other places that are far away from here and instead focus solely on the access issues facing the Peak. Finally, we have had two successful bids to the Crag and Upland Restoration Fund – a bunch of crag cleaning equipment to enable volunteers to respond to graffiti, and funding for the materials for path restoration at the Roaches.

Next, the bad: Apprentice wall at Anston Stones Wood now has a fence up against the crag erected by National Rail – a result, it would seem, of people posting photos on the internet of them sitting next to the train tracks. There is a lesson in this. There is a serious and ongoing access issue in Cressbrook Dale, where a "entrepreneur" apparently is trying to develop the land that lies in a National Nature Reserve, despite this contravening its protective status. Lastly, and sadly in the 'bad' category, meeting attendance has generally been down on previous years as we've come back to in-person meetings. I'm hopeful that running them as hybrid will help, but if anyone would like to bring a live issue or suggest a useful person to invite from another organisation, I'd be all ears.

Finally, the ugly (don't worry any fellow volunteers, I've mentioned you already and you can't be in twice). As most people will have seen already on social media, bolt-on holds (yes, actual indoor holds) have been added to Wildcat crag. The vast majority of climbers are strongly against this for clear reasons. This will be a discussion point later in this evening's meeting, but really my main reason for raising it here is as a warning that we, collectively, should take heed of as we look to shape attitudes amongst our community which include care and respect for the places we love as well as inclusivity and accessibility for those who enjoy them.

To another year full of the positives, and whatever challenges they bring with them.

Andy Reeve
BMC Peak Area Chair