



Cyngor Mynydda Prydain Cymru – Gogledd  
BMC Cymru/Wales – North

## Annual Report Adroddiad Blynyddol October 2022

### **From the Chair**

The last twelve months have finally seen an end to Covid travel restrictions (until the next variant, at least!) and allowed us to return to relatively free access to the hills and crags. However, the welcome, BMC-supported, improvements to eco-transport options around the Park are currently significantly under-used, while parking in Ogwen and the Llanberis Pass continues to present a problem on busy weekends.

2022 has seen four area meetings, two in-person, two on-line. All meetings have been very well-supported by BMC officers and directors, but attendance by members has not yet returned to pre-Covid levels. Although hybrid meetings could be an answer to low attendance, and might mitigate the problem of venue choice, no practical offer of technical help for a hybrid meeting has yet been forthcoming.

The scope of the work now undertaken by the paid BMC officers in Wales, (for Access and Conservation, and for Policy and Campaigns) along with the continued work of the Wales Committee, has reduced the pressure on the Area Chair enormously, compared to the period of furlough. I can now act in an advisory capacity, and focus on local implications, rather than feeling the need to keep abreast of all national developments. Thank you Elfyn, Eben and Tom for your balanced oversight of both the big picture across Wales, and the day-to-day detail in our area. In September, Elfyn did his final day's work for the BMC, handing on his important portfolio to Tom. Enjoy retirement, Elfyn, but please don't expect me to stop asking you for advice.

Particular thanks also is due to Tarquin, acting as our sole area representative on the Members' Council, and to Steve and Neal for their consistent, prompt and helpful work as area volunteers. Your support and advice is much appreciated. More area volunteers are always needed, but issues nowadays are so complex, and often so sensitive and contentious, that getting involved is hard without becoming overwhelmed!

2023 will be my sixth consecutive year as Area Chair. Until recently, six years was the maximum term of office, but that restriction has now been removed. However, six years feels like long enough to me and the process of finding the next Chair should start now!

In my last annual report, I spoke of a perceived gap between the work of BMC volunteers, and the Manchester-based organisation of the BMC. I am pleased to report that that gap now seems to have narrowed considerably. Tony Ryan's admin. support has been excellent, Dave Turnbull has run an informative series of on-line sessions for volunteers, Wales-based officers provide quick and easy access to information, officers and directors attend area meetings and Andy Syme has organised a Volunteers' Gala. All this represents good progress and makes my work as Chair feel enjoyable and worthwhile.

The BMC clearly still struggles with the unresolved conflict between the carbon footprint of adventure travel and international competition, and its own declaration of a climate emergency. Maybe persuading each BMC member to become 'An Imperfect Advocate' (google it!) would provide a partial resolution.

Specific local events which have proved interesting to organise and have the potential to become important future developments for all hill wakers and climbers, whether members or not, include:

1. An on-site visit to examine the engineered pathwork being undertaken on the bridleway between Capel Curig and Crafnant. This visit involved family, friends, BMC members, BMC volunteers, BMC officers, bikers, community representatives and National Park wardens, all engaging in a frank debate about objectives, path construction alternatives, funding sources and consultation. Although somewhat acrimonious at the time, I believe that this episode will eventually lead to a wider-ranging consultation process within the Park, better path planning and maintenance, and tighter scrutiny of BMC Mend our Mountains funds.
2. Hongian Ffest: An innovative bilingual climbing and walking festival, based in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Blessed by decent weather, this BMC-and DMM-sponsored event offered excellent introductory opportunities to local young people, as well as climbers and walkers. However, should a BMC grant be sought for a similar event in the future, there needs to more clearly defined objectives, careful control of the accounts, better advertising and more volunteer support. A heartfelt thank you to those few volunteers, English and Welsh speakers, who did answer the bilingual request for help.
3. A collaboration between the BMC's North West and North Wales regions to volunteer on a two-day National Trust conservation project based in Nant Gwynant. The excellent National Trust staff were able to take advantage of the hill-competence of BMC members to get up high on Yr Wyddfa and Y Glyderau and work to clear unnecessary, recently-erected cairns. Expertly organised by Steve Charles, the event was fun, social, productive and tiring. But disappointingly, no members from North Wales (apart from the Chair and a paid officer) volunteered for this 'collaboration'.
4. A collaboration between the Snowdonia National Park Authority and BMC Cymru

to restore a waterlogged path above Cwm Cywarch. This event received a grant from the BMC's Crag and Upland Restoration Fund in order that volunteers could join it at near to zero cost. Unfortunately, the event had to be cancelled at the last minute due to National Park scheduling problems, a poor weather forecast and very few volunteers making themselves available. However, the groundwork (no pun intended) is now in place to resurrect the event in 2023.

These four events have provided me with the highs of new friendships, knowledge and experiences alongside the lows of let-downs and mistakes. But the lessons have been learned and we can do better next time!

Finally, it is with great sadness that I note the death of Tom Furey, who died while scrambling alone in the Welsh hills that he loved. Tom had been an access rep. for NE Wales for many years. He is terribly missed by all his family, friends and colleagues.

Tim Jepson  
1<sup>st</sup> October 2022