



British Mountaineering Council SOUTHWEST AREA

ORDINARY MEETING MINUTES

Date, Time, Type & Venue of Meeting: 2nd December 2023, 6pm, Hybrid Meeting, The Robins Pub Bristol Ashton Drive, Bristol BS3 2PW.

Chair: Colin Knowles, Secretary: Philip Wilson

If anything discussed at this meeting gives rise to a conflict of interest for anyone, please declare it at the start of the meeting.

Attendees

In Person: Mark Kemball (Chair Outgoing), Philip Wilson (Sec), Colin Knowles (Chair Incoming), Jerzy Wieczorek (Hybrid Meeting Tech), Mark Courtiour (Somerset Rep), Ben Darby (Avon Rep), John Allcock, Steve Menandue, Andrew Tobin, Libby Houston, Martin Hallett (Swanage, Dorset Incl Portland & Isle of Wight Rep), Ben Hallett, Sophie Kong, Lisa Lewis, Jamie Evans & Dan Donovan

Via Zoom: Trevor Smith (Members Council & BMC Board), Yasmin, Adam B, Tony Bird, Alex, Dave Wynne, James & Rich Smith.

- Welcome Introductions & Apologies for Absence:** Colin Knowles our newly elected Area Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting which directly followed our SW Area Annual AGM. Apologies for absence were noted from Helen Wilson, Julio Sánchez (Wye Valley Rep) & Ian Butterworth. Colin then set the following aspirations for his term, as follows:
 - Fully support the south-west Area Access Reps / Volunteers, including reach & communications.
 - Review fixed equipment in all our local areas.
 - Expand local area contacts who can help us manage BMC members activities and interests.
 - Respond pro-actively to all public consultations to ensure that they conform to BMC members interests such as the recent Avon Gorge and Wye Valley Walking Access consultations and engage with them to gain changes that are in our BMC members interests.
 - Bring an international climbing event to the south-west such as one of the International Federation of Sport Climbing bouldering, leading or speed climbing events.
- Previous Meeting Minutes 6th September 2023 Sign Off:** These minutes were agreed and signed off as an accurate and complete record of this meeting.
- Actions From Previous Meeting (06 September 2023) Letter to Simon Fletcher:** Philip Wilson confirmed that he had drafted and sent a letter to Simon Fletcher our long-standing Avon Rep to thank him for his service.
- Avon Gorge Fixed Equipment Vote** (as reviewed in the 6th September 2023 meeting): Following debate, the following points were discussed:
 - John Alcock stated that the BMC was only an advisory / representative and not a legislative body so can only recommend and champion best practice. He supported the proposal even though he thought the wording was strong and gave the impression that this was a legislative document.

- A discussion took place as to why glue in bolts were being suggested. Ben Darby replied that this was the most sustainable option as this type of bolt was the strongest and would last the longest in situ.
- Some members asked if training in placing these bolts would be available for volunteers, Trevor Smith said that the BMC runs sponsored glue-in session workshops and that folks carrying out any work could attend this.
- There was a general feeling in talking to people that the document talked in general principles, and contained no actual proposals as to which routes would receive bolts and where they would be placed. It was agreed that it was this that would spark debate.
- **Action Point:** Ask BMC head office for a link from the BMC RAD database to this policy.

A vote on this issue was then held, which resulted in all attendees being in favour of the proposal, with only one abstention.

5. **Members Council Nov 2023 Update:** Trevor Smith outlined this in a Power Point presentation. **Action Point:** A copy of this will be posted on the BMC Community site.

6. Local Area Access:

- Dartmoor:** Ongoing, no change. The Darwell family are appealing the decision to the Supreme Court and the Dartmoor National Park is going to try to block this appeal from being heard again.
- Somerset & Cheddar:** Mark Courtiour (Somerset Rep) that there were no issues that he is aware of in this area.
- Wye Valley:** No additional report.
- Symonds Yat:** Colin Knowles summarised the position. All of this crag still remains closed to climbing and walking due to rockfall and the required geological report. The local wardens seem sympathetic for climbing and walking to resume, but the higher management decision is still to not allow it until the results of this report are known.
- Portland Path Rescue:** No additional report.
- Winspit Quarry Rockfall:** Martin Hallet reported that This is closed due to rock instability. A meeting is taking place in 2 weeks' time with the National Trust.
- The Needles:** Martin Hallet outlined that Historic England are worried about damage to their monument due to abseil descents to the base of the climb. Climbers could access the base by boat as the National Trust are happy to allow climbing, but climbers cannot top-out as this crossed the monument and there is nothing to abseil from at present other than the monument. Abseil stakes are currently being considered. A humorous point was also made by a member that the monument is a robust past military defensive structure that has stood since the Napoleonic wars and that abseiling from it is hardly likely to damage it!
- Carn Gowla:** No additional report.
- Tintagel:** No additional report.

7. Any Other Business:

- The meeting marked the passing of John Willson, Climbers Club member and Wye Valley pioneer.
- Dave Wynne Jones stated that communications publicising area meetings was still problematic with not all members receiving emails alerting them to meetings taking place.
- Mark Kemball re-iterated BMC support for indoor climbing and the transition to outdoor rock. He cited the example of 2 ex competition climbers from the SW Area, having made ascents of routes on El Capitan in Yosemite.

- John Allcock publicised the Geographical Society Wilderness Award that is offering a £1k contribution for an interesting solo expedition (with a required post expedition lecture). Presently there was only 1 applicant. See: [Wilderness Award - RGS](#). Note: The Award mentioned by JA is the Wilderness Lectures Award. Application details can be downloaded from here: <https://www.wildernesslectures.com/data/Award-forms/application-2024.rtf>. Applications close on the 30th December 2023.
- Dave Wynne Jones expressed the opinion that the Kendall Mountain festival was moving away from mountaineering into more general topics / areas and could the BMC do more about this. Other members pointed out that the BMC is a participant and does not lead at the festival but added that it was well, represented at the festival. The general opinion was that as the festival is growing year on year this broadening of focus seems unfortunately unavoidable.

8. **Date, Time & Location of Next Area Meeting:** (time & venue to be determined).