



Cyfarfod Ardal Leol - BMC Cymru (North/Gogledd) - Local Area Meeting

18 October 2023 – Canolfan Dringo BEACON Climbing Centre.

MINUTES - COFNODION

Attendance – Presenoldeb:

18 members. Including Tom Carrick (BMC Paid Officer), Eben Muse (BMC Paid Officer), Neal Hockley (Director), Dave Turnbull (BMC Paid Officer), Steve Hobdell (Area Secretary), Anne Vowles (Area Secretary), Tim Jepson (Area Chair)

1. Croeso - Welcome

The meeting immediately followed the Area AGM.

2. Apologies - Ymddiheuriadau

Pete Johnson; Ian Martin; Dave Percy; Rusty Bale; Mike Pycroft

3. Minutes/Cofnodion (Zoom 19/7/23)

Matters Arising - Materion yn codi

1. The Chair noted that Paul Davies, CEO, had now resigned.
2. A personalised, single-issue email had eventually been sent from the Manchester Office in an attempt to recruit volunteers for the vacant N. Wales area officer posts. However, this email was sent to all members in Wales, rather than just those registered with the northern region, thus partially defeating the attempt to target members with only information specific to them.

The minutes were accepted without amendment.

Proposed: Andy Boorman: Seconded: Gwyn Jones

4. Parking and Safety – Tremadog

On behalf of the BMC, Tom Carrick and Tim Jepson attended a meeting at 'The Cow Shed' (the old Bwlch y Moch cafe), convened by Jo and Gareth of Hadfer Glamping, to discuss options to improve safety and parking along the road either side of the site. Local councillors, the National Park, farmers and community representatives were all present, but unfortunately Gwynedd Council were absent.

The meeting was good-natured and focused on the key issue of safety for pedestrians and climbers, with no attempt to prevent parking in the small, off-road 'lay-by' under Vector buttress per se., although it was recognised that climbers, and climbers' cars, spilling out onto the road did present an obvious hazard.

The following measures were agreed, and supported by the BMC:

- i. Gwynedd Council to be approached (again) with a clear request to put a 40mph speed limit along the road, and double yellow lines on the end corner.
- ii. BMC to improve access along the overgrown path between the descent path and the 'lay-by'.
- iii. Hadfer to display the cost and opening times of their parking more clearly.

The Chair stated that climbers needed to accept that the era of cheap parking at 'Bwlch y Moch cafe' is now over. Paying for parking, on-site, is now part of the long-term Hadfer business model. However, charging for parking is not intended to restrict free parking elsewhere.

5. Eryri National Park Issues - Crib Goch signage

Peter Rutherford (ENPA officer) had asked the BMC for its opinion on measures taken to discourage inexperienced walkers from 'accidentally' leaving the PyG track at Bwlch y Moch (Yr Wyddfa) and ending up on Crib Goch. Recently, a sign placed close to the path junction had been deliberately destroyed.

The damaged sign included a small, coloured symbol indicating the route's relative difficulty. Most members present were unaware that the National Park utilised a path grading system.

Route Grading | Snowdonia National Park (gov.wales)

The ensuing discussion made the following points:

- signage on the mountain should always be minimal.
- signage in car parks may be more effective.
- LLMRT had not been consulted recently. Incidents were now more frequent on Garnedd Ugain and the Watkin Path, rather than Crib Goch.
- ..Incidents on Crib Goch rarely involved walkers who had strayed there accidentally.
- Rough stone walls which nudged walkers are more effective, and less obtrusive than signs.
- We can't 'signpost' our way out of misadventure.
- Education would be a better way forward.
- ..A coroner's report recently got close to issuing an enforcement order for safety measures on Garnedd Ugain.
- It's not within the Park's manifesto to 'enforce' safety.
- .. Signage does not affect people's behaviour.

Action: The area to appoint a small group to draw up BMC guidance for signage in the mountains of Eryri.

6. Cotoneaster Clearance - Craig y Forwyn

A successful day; much cotoneaster was cut from the top of the crag, and burnt, by ten (mainly retired) volunteers. There is still a lot left to do (5 days worth?) hopefully with the help of some (younger) BUMS (Bangor University) volunteers next time.

One member asked where information about these volunteer days could be found.

The Chair explained that the information had been available in the minutes, and on facebook.

In future more use could be made of the single-issue, all-Wales email facility.

7. What's new at the BMC? Update from the directors.

The CEO and CFO (Chief Finance Officer) have now left.

Meanwhile various areas of work are being overseen by members of the Board (eg Neal Hockley is supporting Access).

There is no appetite for an Interim CEO. The intention is to appoint someone with excellent interpersonal skills, and who understands the nature of a member-led, adventure-based organisation, to be in place by 6th December. A job advert is now out. The new CEO's key role will be to get the BMC, including GB Climbing, moving forward again on a track supported by the members.

The staff pool is now actually quite small for the tasks being asked of it, resulting in pressure on staff workloads, morale and security.

Although the BMC has recently 'burned through' a significant proportion of its reserves in an unsustainable manner, some of that money has been spent on valuable developments in Wales; eg. Welsh-specific posts (Access, and Policy) have risen from 0.4 FTEs to 2.0 FTEs.

8. Any Other Business or Reports

1. Eben Muse - Policy & Campaigns

a. Thanks to all members who answered the access survey. There was a strong mandate for a Scottish-style 'Right to Roam'. There is now a close relationship with 'Right to Roam UK' which has resulted in a bilingual campaign in Wales involving Lush Cosmetics (the 'Right to Foam').

Communications are going out to all MPs and MSs.

Eben will be at Kendal being interviewed on topics such as access and Welsh place names.

b. Crowdfunding is being sought to buy Sirhowy crag in S Wales.

c. The Agricultural Reform Bill does not now include a specific 'Right to Roam', but does offer payments to farmers/landowners to improve access.

d. There are plans to designate a new National Park in NE Wales. Consultations imminent.

Action: Elfyn Jones to send Eben notes about previous access negotiations in the Clwydian Range.

- e. Natural Resources Wales has asked for feedback (with a very tight deadline) on its 'Recreation Strategy'.
- f. Work with Sport Wales is continuing to remedy the problems created by lack of recognition, which in turn results in lack of funding (eg for MT Cymru and for Competition Climbing).
- g. Following BMC support for Hongian Ffest (Blaenau Ffestiniog), the old facilities building is being converted into a community-run climbing hall. Help needed!
- h. The path between Pen y Pass and the Cromlech Boulders is now waymarked, but people still walk up the road, as they do from Pen y Gwryd to Pen y Pass.
- i. The National Park say that the 'Cylchdaith Yr Wyddfa' will never become a fully-accessible, gravel path all the way round, although further sections (eg near Rhyd Ddu) have recently been gravelled.

2. Tom Carrick – Access and Conservation

Tom ran through his report, previously posted/available on the BMC Community webpage. In addition:

- a. BMC Cymru is now in partnership with N. Wales Wildlife Trust on the climate-based Seagrass project off the Pen Llŷn coast. Hopefully the BMC will have a sponsored Seagrass plot somewhere.
- b. A winter monitoring station is due to be installed this week under Clogwyn y Garnedd on Yr Wyddfa.
- c. Discussions are taking place with the local MS around the Gwrych Estate (Llanddulas) - to designate the climbing as Open Access.

Tom also set out the arrangements for first 'Furey Festival', taking place this coming weekend.

9. Meetings in 2024 – Formats, Venues, Dates.

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

Tim Jepson

31.10.23