

## **Chairperson's Report**

Dear members,

I am pleased to present a summary of my recent activities since being elected as Chair. I promised to listen, learn and understand before offering comment and conclusions as I felt that all voices and opinions should be valued within the BMC. I am also keen to reach the broadest possible demographic as this is an area that I note is absent.

In my initial comments I stated that it is often difficult for those “in a box to fully understand or perceive of life and things outside of that box” I am committed to changing that in any way I can as conversely those outside of a box often don't have pathways to communicate with those who are in the “box”.

**Action taken:** So since our last meeting I have I personally visited several indoor climbing facilities. Here are the key highlights:

### Venue Visits:

I visited 3 indoor climbing centers across our region, these visits allowed me to observe the facilities, interact with staff, and gain firsthand insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by climbers.

### Engaging with Staff and Public:

During my visits, I had valuable conversations with facility managers, instructors, and front-line staff. Their dedication to promoting climbing safety, providing quality instruction, and maintaining a welcoming environment was evident.

I also engaged with fellow climbers, both novices and experienced. Their feedback and perspectives were instrumental in shaping my approach to how I can support the indoor climbing community whilst in this role.

### Understanding Bouldering and Indoor Climbing Experience:

Bouldering, , has gained huge popularity. I witnessed the dynamic nature of bouldering walls, the intricate routes, and the focus required to solve problems.

The indoor climbing experience extends beyond physical challenges. It fosters camaraderie, mental resilience, and personal growth. Venues play a crucial role in nurturing these aspects. The atmosphere in these venues contrasts sharply with the atmosphere I found when being around trad climbers.

### Demographics and Inclusivity:

It revealed a diverse community of climbers, spanning different age groups, backgrounds, and abilities. There was a low presence of those from ethnic minority backgrounds even in those locations where there is a significant presence.

Climbing needs to be accessible and inclusive. I was pleased to see women's-only sessions contributing to this goal.

### Promoting the Role of the BMC:

Surprisingly, many climbers I spoke to were unaware of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) and its vital role in advocating for climbers' rights, safety, and access to outdoor and indoor climbing areas.

I took the opportunity to spread awareness about the BMC's work, emphasizing its support for local climbing communities, conservation efforts, and policy advocacy.

#### Ex-Royal Marine:

I had the privilege of speaking with an ex-Royal Marine who shared his extensive experiences in outdoor activities. His insights into discipline, resilience, and teamwork were invaluable. We discussed the importance of safety protocols and mental preparedness for challenging environments.

#### Mountain Instructors and Club Members:

Our mountain instructors and club members provided candid feedback about their experiences with the British Mountaineering Council (BMC). They appreciate the BMC's advocacy for access rights, conservation efforts, and safety guidelines. However, they also expressed a desire for more tailored resources and could not give any examples of how the BMC was supporting them directly in their work and activities in general.

#### Trad Climbers' Perspectives:

Trad climbers, with their deep connection to traditional climbing methods, *offered a unique viewpoint*. Their reverence for natural features, ethics, and self-reliance informs our ongoing discussions about climbing practices and environmental stewardship.

#### Public Engagement:

Spending time in the mountains allowed me to engage with fellow outdoor enthusiasts. I listened to their aspirations, concerns, and desires related to outdoor spaces. Many emphasized the need for accessible trails, clear signage, and sustainable practices. None had heard of the BMC. Meeting all these various individuals and speaking and spending time with them confirmed the wide gap in outlook, socio economic group, age and motivation in being out in the mountains between those traditionally found in the outdoor activities industry and those individuals. Of those I met and spoke to (over 50 people) none mentioned social media as being a reason for them being out in the mountains.

#### Farmers' Perspectives:

I had 3 conversations with local farmers one in the Berwyn's and another in Eryri and another in Scotland. They shed light on their role as stewards of the land. They shared insights into balancing agricultural needs with outdoor recreation. Their perspectives underscore the importance of respectful coexistence between climbers and rural communities. Their main concern was related to dogs on leads and the importance of sticking to clear trails in lambing season. However the farmer in Scotland had a different outlook completely which I think relates to the fact that open access is accepted as a norm. They expect to see hikers across all parts of the countryside.

#### Facebook page

Suzanne kindly sorted out access to the facebook site and it has been a huge success in me being able to promote the Midlands BMC. I have offered to attend any clubs meetings to listen and learn. Many clubs acknowledged the request. I have also been able to follow all of the clubs that

regularly post on Facebook, and this keeps me in touch with what's happening. I have posted pictures and comments where I have involved BMC conversations and given random people I've met opportunities to hopefully become future BMC members. I would ask all members to keep posting and liking on the Facebook page. [ check out the posts]

Incorporating these additional insights, we can foster a harmonious relationship with the outdoors. Let us remain committed to our mission and collaborate with **all stakeholders** to enhance the outdoor experience for everyone.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Darren Johnson