



BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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NORTH EAST AREA MEETING

Friction Bouldering, Saltmeadows Road, Gateshead.
on 24th April at 6.30pm

Minutes

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Attendance

NE Area Committee. Paul Ratcliffe (CEO, BMC), Simon Litchfield (Social Media), Jon Punshon (Secretary & Members' Council), Jonathan White (Members' Council), Fred Williams & Chris Bullock (Youth & Competitions) & Ella Farley (Access rep N).

NE Area Members and other attendees.

Max Forest, Kurt Carruthers, Andrew Gargle, Matthew W. Green, Rob Woodward, Katy Wild, Jim Richardson, Brody Richardson, Colin Lofthouse, Peter Young, Garry Craig, Lynda Harwood, Aaron Duke, Cameron Smith, Heather Rowe, Tom Suddaby, Enrico Adriola, Jeff Lyall, Craig McMenemy, Harry King, Mark Savage, Joshua Enlander, Emma Enlander, Henry Thomas, Katherine Williams, Tony Williams, Dan Pearson, Claire Wood, Gareth Wood, Paul Smith, Steve Blake, Bronwen Blake, Casim Lady, Lynn Watson & Roy Watson.

Apologies for absence: Alan Hinkes, Peter McCreedy, John Herron, Graham Harkness, Mark Anstiss, John Spencer, & Mark Goodings,

1. Minutes from the previous Area Meeting held on 24th February 2023

The minutes from the previous Area Meeting were not discussed.

2. Meeting report (J White)

This meeting was organised by the new younger members of our committee (principally chair Josh Petty), with the specific aim of spreading the word on local crag etiquette to those new to the area (in student clubs), new to the area, and indoor climbers transitioning to the outdoors.

New Northumberland Access Rep Ella Farley gave a great 15-minute talk on respecting the rock, and particularly about minimising damage to the Northumberland rock, which is significantly weaker when wet. She showed how to assess whether the rock was dry enough to climb on, and also handed out free carpet tiles for climbers to clean their feet on.

This was followed by an excellent and entertaining career retrospective (to date) by Adam Watson, local superstar who is currently chief routesetter at Friction Bouldering. He described his long and progressive path to becoming a first ascensionist, climbing 8b outdoors, climbing all over the world – both outdoors and indoors as a member of the Team GB competition squad, and paying his way as a rebuildier of upland footpaths in Australia, whilst dodging the lethal wildlife. He'd clearly gained a lot from his international experiences, stressed that climbing is supposed to be fun, and remained firmly of the view that nowhere beats Northumberland – if you can handle the scrittal.

Following agreement at the Feb Area meeting, BMC business was changed from the prime/sole focus of the meeting into written submissions and up to 5-minute reports from each area officer, and held after the speakers. Although too brief for some (it is a BMC meeting, after all), all 40+ talk attendees stayed for the reports (including updates on local access issues), and consequently a concise briefing on BMC matters was heard by a much larger number of people than has ever been the case in recent times. The Area committee will now consider future formats.

1. Key issues discussed in Area Meeting:

- Brief Introduction to Paul Ratcliffe as new CEO (only the second Director to attend a NE meeting in the last 2 years).
- Details of the Northumberland Youth Meet in June – thanks to the volunteers organising and running it.
- Concerns over unnecessary office meddling in successful youth comps.
- Report on loss of access to most crags in the Otterburn ranges. NY Moors typically quiet, and Weardale unusually quiet.
- Update on BMC finances: 2023 being less negative than had been feared with the great news that the lower reserves limit had not been breached; a slightly better than break-even budget set for 2024; and financial stability ahead.
- Report from 16-year-old BMC NE Youth rep Fred Williams on his involvement with the Council Articles Working Group and the strong support for proposals to reduce the AGM voting age, and increase youth representation through a National Councillor for Youth at Members Council and more widely in the BMC.
- Restructuring of GB Climbing, and the link to Simon Lee's proposal.
- BMC NE chair has decided to step down – replacement needed.
- Vacancies in the BMC – appeal for good people to come forward for the many vacancies currently at the BMC – particularly on Council and the Board.

6. Any Other Business

7. Date of next meeting TBC

8. Close meeting

About 21.05pm

Jon Punshon (Secretary).
24th April 2024.

Appendix 1 - Access Report - Ella Farley

As this was my first quarter as Access rep, I've spent time with my excellent predecessor, Steve Blake, doing a handover for him to pass on his wealth of knowledge.

A pretty quiet quarter mainly marked by the revocation of access to crags in the danger area of Otterburn area MoD. This has taken Linshiels 1 and 3, off the table. These crags were not well visited at any rate, but the loss is still felt across the community. I followed up immediately and a few weeks after to confirm the reasoning and I gather that no one within the MoD is willing to take on the risk of having folk on the danger area where there is potential for UXO. A shame when the land is government owned and the risk is accepted by the individual when crossing the border. As ever, access is at the land owners discretion and must be respected.

I've been attempting to get a meeting with the landowner at Titlington Mount through Alec Burns, who knows them well. Unfortunately the landowner was too busy to meet prior to lambing and I've not tried during lambing for obvious reasons. Sophia has been given incorrect advice that she would be liable if someone was injured on her land and so is understandably nervous. Hopefully a chat about the BMC's public liability insurance ought to set things straight and reopen another lovely little crag to the area.

There are several trees down at the tops of Kylloe Out of the Woods, which Steve and Ben Brotherton (local tree surgeon and climber) had worked with Scottish Woodland - the landowner - to set a date to remove. The work was kindly offered at a severely low rate and was to be funded by the NMC and BMC in halves. This date fell through unfortunately due to delays in communication as I understand it. Ben has all of the paperwork completed so all that's left to me is to find a new date.

In an effort to streamline the work, I had gone to Verity Williams at Scottish Woodland to get a quote for what it would cost for their tree surgeons to do the work in house and for us to pay them. This came to £2555 which the BMC have said they are unable to fund. Therefore we will have a revised quote from freelancer Ben Brotherton to complete the work once again.

Colin and Adrian at the NMC organised a gorse clean up event at Kylloe Out of the Woods at the invitation of the landowners - President Estates. I worked with the NMC and the BMC to put their insurance policy in place. How lovely that the landowners suggested this as the gorse situation has meant that well established routes have been entirely inaccessible for a number of years. President Estates facilitated camping, debris removal and even put on a hearty spread for us. Several people signed up but unfortunately only 5 of us showed up. Hopefully the success of this event will yield a greater turn out at the next! President Estates are very happy that climbers should garden as they go on subsequent visits to their land.

There's a tree down at Jack Rock meaning access to the whole crag is difficult.

Ella Farley

Appendix 2 - Youth Report.

- **Irish Youth Boulder Championships**

The Irish Youth Bouldering Championships took place at Awesome Walls Dublin last month. Several North East kids made the journey to Dublin with a number making the final and coming home with medals of all colours. Congratulations to all who took part.

- **Scottish Youth Bouldering Championships**

The Scottish Youth Bouldering Championships takes place this weekend at Eden Rock Edinburgh, there is a large contingent of North East climbers making the trip to Edinburgh, we wish them every success.

- **Rock Solid Inter Wall Trophy 2024.**

We held the first annual Rock Solid Inter-Wall Trophy competition at Durham Climbing Centre in March. Eight climbing walls from across the North East and Lakes region took part. With Climb Newcastle the Pool taking the trophy. Congratulations to them and all the teams that took part, it was a wonderful day, and we look forward to next year.

Thank you to Core Climbing Holds for the Trophy and Medals.

- **2024 Rock Solid Bouldering series.**

Entry is now open online for the Rock Solid Boulder series, to enter go to the Rock Solid Bouldering page on Facebook or scan the QR Code on posters displayed in climbing walls around the region.

Huge thank you to all our sponsors: Black Dimond, Beyond Hope Ltd & Dirtbag Climbing.

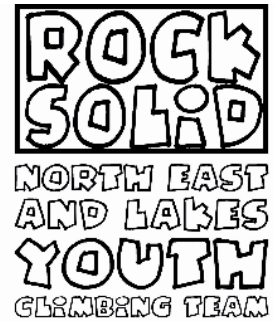
Round 1.	Saturday	08/06/2024	-	Friction Bouldering, Gateshead.
Round 2.	Saturday	29/06/2024	-	Climb Newcastle, The Valley, Byker.
Round 3.	Sunday	14/07/2024	-	Rock Antics, Middlesbrough.
Round 4.	Saturday	10/08/2024	-	ROF 59, Newton Aycliffe.

- **BMC Northeast / Rock Soid Northumberland Youth Meet 21st to 23rd June.**

Entry is now open online for the Northumberland Youth Meet, Hugh Thank you to the RCI climbing instructors who responded to our appeal for volunteers, there are twenty-two child places available on a first come first served basis, so don't delay in getting your booking in.

This is an ideal opportunity for young indoor climbers to experience an introduction to outdoor climbing in a safe and supervised manor, which we hope will inspire them to take up outdoor climbing in the future.

Chris Bullock



Appendix 3 - Report on recent business conducted by Members Council

The main focus of recent discussion has centred on:

- Finances
- Future structure of GBC
- Simon Lee's proposed motion for the AGM.
- Vacancies in the organisation

Finances

It transpires that the 2023 outturn is less negative than some had feared with the shortfall being in the region of £280/290K. Much of the recent uncertainty surrounding BMC finances has been related to a recent transition to new accounting software and the resignation of the Finance director. We are re-assured that the recent part-time secondment of a finance officer from British Judo is making a positive impact.

Greater financial stability is likely to result from the impending re-structure of GBC.

Concerns about the erosion of BMC reserves, brought about by recent overspends, have some validity with the current level being in the region of £550,000.

Future Structure of GBC

It is no secret that much of the recent financial turbulence has related to profligate spending by GBC with little/ineffective controls being applied. The new CEO has addressed these issues as a matter of priority, and whilst the details of his proposed re-structure are not yet in the public domain, there is every reason to be positive about this much needed development and the likely positive impact upon finances, morale and the general public image of the organisation.

Simon Lee's potential resolutions to the AGM

Members may be aware of Simon's concerns about the impact of the BMC's growing focus on competition climbing, with the resultant impact on finances. If members are not aware of Simon's position and proposed two resolutions for the AGM they should visit change.org and type **Signatories needed by BMC members for resolutions at the AGM.**

It appears that Simon is struggling, not to get support for the resolutions but to evidence that his supporters are actually members of the BMC. Clearly this matter is ongoing but may be superseded by the CEO's planned restructure of this area of BMC work.

Vacancies in the organisation

- The current President's term of office expires at the AGM and a replacement is sought.
- The Chair of the Board's term expires in
- There are currently two vacancies on the Board.
- There are a number of vacancies on Members' Council

Jon Punshon & Jonathan White. 24th April 2024