

# BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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## LONDON & SOUTH EAST AREA MEETING

Meeting held at the Alpine Club and online  
on Wednesday 1 May 2024

### Minutes

#### 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Chaired by Olly Hicks-Pattison (OHP). Minutes taken by Robert Dufton (RD)

OHP welcomed everyone to the meeting which was attended by 11 members in person and 7 virtually.

OHP thanked Sherry Macliver, Hon Secretary, Alpine Club for generously hosting the meeting, including the opportunity to view the current exhibition.

OHP welcomed Peter Salenieks (PS) Council Nominated Director on the BMC Board to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Flavia Alzetta, Independent Director, Will Green Clubs Rep, Tanya Sage, Youth Climbing Coordinator and from LSE member Chris Stone.

#### 2. Minutes of previous meeting held on 29 February 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2024 were tabled at the meeting. RD explained that the draft minutes had been submitted to the BMC, along with the agenda for this meeting in good time. It was regrettable that they were not posted on the website. RD said he would take this up with them.

#### 3. Access rights and the Right to Roam,

OHP noted that the BMC had made a policy statement about the right to roam and was campaigning. He outlined the rights conferred in England & Wales by the CROW and the types of land this covered.

In England and Wales this did not include the right to camp on such land in contrast to the right conferred under legislation in Scotland. In order to do so legally the permission of the landowner was needed. In practice wild camping was often tolerated if it was done sensitively.

OHP asked members what should a future right to roam include? Possible options included:

Default inclusion (i.e. access to all places and for all purposes, subject to obvious exceptions)

Building on the current access areas

Access purposes could be widened e.g. to give greater access to kayakers

Mike Penny suggested radical change was needed e.g. to allow kayakers access to rivers where both banks were privately owned.

Lotte enquired about the nature of the campaigns. It was noted that the ardour of the Labour Party had diminished. OHP suggested that giving personal testimony in one's own words was helpful.

Linda (online) suggested that as part of any campaign for greater rights to roam there should be in parallel more education of the public about appropriate use and behaviours in the countryside.

Carl enquired about how much land in the UK public was open access? OHP noted that the CROW did not differentiate between different types of land ownership. 11% of UK land was open access but most it was in Wales and Lake District as it is based on mountain, moor and downland (though the downland definition was very restrictive). Also some of the open access land was surrounded by land to which there was no access, so you have to trespass to get to the open land.

PS referred to consultation in Wales which might lead to an increase in accessible land to 30%

There was a question online about how broad a campaign might be about cycling, including e-bikes (quite powerful so like motor bikes). PS said BMC represents its members but collaborates with others who share its aims. He would pick this point up with Cath Flitcroft, the BMC Access Officer.

There was a question about whether rights of way available on foot should be opened up to other users. OHP noted that the Ramblers Association was not in favour. Also the right to roam in Scotland does include wider users.

There as an outdoor manifesto jointly agreed by 49 organisations. Also there was a push to get an All Party Parliamentary Group on countryside access. At present there were two existing APPGs, one for mountaineering and one for outdoor education.

#### **4. Reports from area representatives**

OHP said that the indoor climbing rep role was not filled currently. Mike noted that there were now more climbing walls in London than swimming pools. Paul (Belgian Alpine Club) asked about the role. OHPS said it involved building relationships with London walls and potentially encouraging meets.

##### **4.1 Update from Southern Sandstone (Harrison's Rocks Management Group)**

OHP said there was no report. Given all the wet weather he reminded members to check the Southern Sandstone code of practice. We would seek to get a SS report next meeting

##### **4.2 Clubs**

Apologies had been received from Will Green. It was noted that online participants in the meeting included representatives of the Ipswich and North London Mountaineering/Climbing Clubs.

##### **4.3 Hillwalking**

OHP updated as whilst a LSE HW rep had been co-opted they had not responded to OHP. OHP was leading walks monthly to bag the peaks of all LSE counties. The next two would be on 18 May 2024 at Leith Hill and 29 June 2024 Blackdown Hill in W Sussex. Paul Ratcliffe the BMC's new CEO would be taking part in the latter.

There were lots of volunteer dates for BMC mend our mountains in other areas listed on the website. Riya said a lot of them were full e.g. in Lake District but that spaces were still available in Snowdonia.

A member asked communication with area members about events. OHP said the area was not allowed to maintain its own email distribution list under GDPR. Instead information about area activities was included in community site of BMC and on the area Facebook page.

OHP suggested that anyone who wished to lead a walk could volunteer.

##### **4.4 Youth**

Apologies had been received from Tanya Sage, the Area Youth Climbing Series Coordinator. The YC series had not yet started. More information would be provided at the next area meeting. The junior bouldering championships in Manchester would be taking place on 15 and 16 June.

##### **4.5 Social media**

Olly reported on social media activity: Instagram now 550 followers (largely youth and indoor climbers). Facebook 1553 followers and continuing to grow. The hill walking series had been popular.

#### **Area vacancies**

Volunteer reps were needed for hill walking and indoor climbing

The second Members Council representative role was vacant. OHP was one of the representatives.

## **5 Members Council and Organisational update**

OHP welcomed PS BMC board member to the meeting.

OHP reported that MC had been busy leading up to the BMC AGM.

A Members forum would be held on 21 May 2024 online. The Chair, President and CEO will be there. 14 May to submit questions. Info on BMC website about this. Future meetings on Members forum Sept and Nov.

Sherry said that she had tried to register for 14 May but had received a response that her application to join was under review. OHP said he would follow this up.

The AGM would be on 12 June 2024, online only (to save costs). Any voting member of BMC can join.

Martin, a member online asked about the UKC discussion of motions. PS did not know if either of motions had reached threshold (but period hadn't closed). As of last Council meeting position unclear.

Martin said that these were important issues. He enquired whether the Members Council itself might request that they be discussed. OHP said that he had not attended the last MC meeting. An update of the BMC's situation had been given by the Chair and President on the website including the finances.

OHP said that Paul the new CEO had attended the previous LSE meeting. A new budget had now been approved. The Financial position would be updated when the year end figures came out in May. There has been unexpected financial issues in 2023. The 2024 budget was prudent. PS agreed with OHP's update. PS felt that Paul Ratcliffe had made a good start. He agreed that transparency was important. PS noted that it was difficult to reopen closed accounts. Instead it was better to focus on the current and future financial periods

Sherry asked about the planned recruitment of a Chief Financial Officer. PS said that the position was still going forward. The FD of British Judo was currently providing some support to BMC each week.

OHP emphasized that Paul Ratcliffe seemed very open and available to members, and responsive.

## **6 Area noticeboard**

Mike Penny reported on Ty'n y Berth, formerly Inner London Education Outdoor Centre in North Wales. He said sadly it had now left public ownership as the local authority had sold it. The new owners were interested in giving access to young users and are investing for refurbishment. In addition a Mountain Adventure Fund had been set up (administered by Plas y Brenin) initially supporting school groups. He invited members to make donations.

## **7 Any other business**

(1) Safeguarding officers. Did the NLMC need one for only family meet. PS offered advice;

(2) Online training for introducing new members course, was it still running? PS suggested she contact Jane Thompson the BMC Clubs officer. PS said the course had been running recently. Also a course for committee members of clubs had been due to run in April 2024 but had been postponed.

(3) Consultation about holiday homes in Wales. Would future restrictions apply to clubs with huts/barns? PS responded that BMC had put in a good submission on this issue. Wales government have analysed consultation responses. No response yet to public consultation. Not yet clear whether club huts would be treated differently from holiday homes.

## **8 Date of next Area Meetings**

15 August 2024 (online)

17 October 2024 AGM and area meeting (hybrid - at the Alpine Club and online)

Meeting finished at 20.23. Minutes written by Robert Dufton