

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

177-179 Burton Road
Manchester M20 2BB
www.thebmc.co.uk

Tel: 0161 445 6111
Fax: 0161 445 4500
e-mail: office@thebmc.co.uk

ACCESS, CONSERVATION & ENVIRONMENT GROUP 2007 REPORT & FORWARD PLAN 2008

Summary of Key Achievements & Outputs for 2007

- Lobbying DEFRA, CCW, Welsh Assembly Government and Westminster in the build up to the public consultation on coastal access.
- Developed the BMC's coastal access campaign through work with Natural England and CCW as a key member on the coastal access stakeholder groups. Completed and led on a joint campaign letter to the Welsh Minister for the Environment on increasing access to the Welsh coast (9 organisations involved).
- Met with David Miliband (previous Minister for the Environment) at the launch of the public consultation on increasing access to the coast.
- Met with Prince Charles at the Moorland centre, Edale to discuss recreational activities in upland areas
- Held a publicity event at Brean Down, Somerset to raise the profile of the public consultation on coastal access – over 8 media interviews including Radio 4.
- Completed several DEFRA public consultations including increasing public access to the English coast; the right to apply for orders to extinguish and divert ProWs; Natural England's consultation on the activation and expiry of fire prevention restrictions under CRoW; CCW's consultation on the route criteria and quality standards for the development of the Wales coastal path; National Trust's consultation on climbing on their land.
- Met with new Welsh Assembly Minister for the Environment, Housing and Sustainability, Jane Davidson.
- Continued developing working relations with other membership & voluntary organisations esp. the Ramblers Association, the British Canoe Union, the British Horse Society, CTC, YHA and the Open Spaces Society.
- Meetings with Natural England on various issues including coastal access and the CRoW restrictions process.
- Worked closely with the MoD and the Defence Estates to clarify access arrangements to climbing sites on live-firing ranges. Developed a programme to replace redundant belay stakes and add new ones on the South Pembroke ranges.
- BMC have been represented on the National Access Forum, The Outdoor Pursuits Division of CCPR, Council for National Parks, Wales Canoe Association Access Group, Wales Environment Link, Wildlife & Countryside Link, MoD Access & Recreation Focus Group.
- Contributed to CCW's 'codes working group', examining the sustainable and responsible enjoyment of the Welsh countryside (3 meetings).
- Represented the BMC at various public conferences including Countryside Recreation Network, Peak District National Park Upland Conference.
- Completed developing the BMC environment policy with a number of key headings and principled statements on key environmental issues.
- Attended the MCoFS access meeting in Perth.
- Helped develop the Coastal Access Database (now available on the BMC website).
- Updated the Access & Conservation Resource Pack.
- Created the Access and Conservation section on the new BMC website.

Regional Issues

- Developed and delivered the new Regional Access Database (RAD).
- Posted many news and feature articles on the BMC and UKC websites.
- Produced a number of published articles for Climb, Climber and Summit magazines
- Continued campaigning for the restoration of public access to Vixen Tor - encouraging members to write to their local MP, liaison with Dartmoor National Park Authority and support for local pressure groups.

- Organised volunteer initiatives such as the Roaches Open Day and Access Reps Training Day (Lake District / Manchester Office.)
- Continued to support local access representatives.
- Produced the 2007 Nesting Restrictions poster.
- Produced the Crag & Habitat Management publication.
- Completed the effect of the CRoW and Scottish land reform Acts research.
- Worked with National Parks, statutory conservation bodies, Wildlife Trusts and BMC Access & Conservation volunteers on the following;

NE

- CRoW restrictions to Simonside and nesting restrictions at Henhole.
- Hold erosion control at Bowden Doors.
- Dog restrictions at Scugdale.
- Improving access to Queens Crag, Holwick Scar, South Yardhope and crags on the Otterburn Range.

Lake District

- Commissioned a habitat assessment at Chapel Head Scar with a view to improving access to the left side of the crag.
- Publicised the 2007 nesting restrictions.
- Access/liaison work at Chapel Stile boulders, Lower Scout crag, Honister Pass Via Ferrata (on-going).

Yorkshire

- Access issues/landowner relations at Hugencroft, Eastby, Brunthwaite, Brandrith, Sypeland, Great Wolfrey, Foredale Quarry, Giggleswick Scar South, Great Close Scar.
- Worked with the YDNPA on reassessing nesting restrictions at Blue Scar, Malham Cove, and Langcliffe Quarry.
- Worked with North Yorkshire police, the RSPB, and Natural England on strategic aspects of the CRoW Act relating to disturbance of Schedule 1 bird species.
- Commissioned the construction of a path to stop ground erosion at Kilnsey.
- Worked with Natural England/YDNPA/Malham Parish Council on the proposal to rebolt Malham, Kilnsey & Gordale.
- Applied measures to halt hold erosion at the Bridestones.
- Worked through the West Yorks LAF to resolve the loss of permissive access to Shooters Nab (on-going).

Peak

- Collaborative work on the successful Save Longstone Edge campaign (and public inquiry) to prevent further quarrying.
- Unsuccessful liaison work at Eagle Tor – loss of permissive access.
- Nesting restriction work at Millstone, Stanage, Ravensdale, Beeston Tor, Yarncliffe, Roaches 4th Cloud.
- Access liaison work for bouldering at Rowter Rocks, Craig David, Haddon Estate rocks, ERF Rocks.
- Applied measures to stop hold erosion at Newstones, Ramshaw, Roaches Doxy's Pool.
- Investigated addressing ground erosion at the Roaches.
- Lobbying Governmental Ministers of State on issues such as quarrying on Longstone Edge and proposals to build a bypass road through Longdendale.

NW

- Access restriction work at Houghton Quarry, Central Quarry, Woodwell (O'ert road), Witches Quarry, Egerton Quarry.
- Ensured the Wilton quarries were withdrawn from a proposed auction.
- Finalised the acquisition of Craig Y Longridge.
- Strategic work with United Utilities to ensure climbers, hillwalkers and instructional groups were not penalised by a new policy to charge groups for accessing UU owned land.
- Liaison work with UU at Pex Hill and with Halton Borough Council on the proposal to rebolt Frogmouth Quarry.

Cymru/Wales

- Fact-finding and background research on the viability of a pitched path to access Dinas Cromlech – to prevent further erosion on the approach (on-going).
- Reassessment of Great Orme nesting restrictions, and access liaison work at Pen Trwyn.
- Restored permissive access at Maeshafn Quarry.
- Liaison work to remove prohibitive fencing at Devil's Gorge (on-going).
- Partnership work with local experts and Denbigshire Council to manage the Clwyd limestone nesting restrictions.
- Input towards managing parking issues in Ogwen valley.
- Partnership work with PCNPA on South Pembroke nesting restrictions.

Midlands

- Met Natural England to discuss CRoW Section 15 Land issues affecting climbing on the Stiperstones.
- Collaborated with local access reps on issues affecting access to Markfield Quarry, Clee Hill, and Forest Rock.

L&SE

- Conservation work at Stone Farm Rocks.
- Collaborated with local volunteers for the Crag & Habitat Management publication and on developing the RAD.

SW

- Produced the 2007 Cheddar Gorge Access Calender
- Partnership work with Cheddar Caves and Gorge, the National Trust and local volunteers on managing the first summer access regime in the gorge.
- Collaborated with Avon Wildlife Trust to remove unstable rock at Portishead Quarry.
- Access/liaison work at Avon Gorge, Goblin Coombe, Churchill Rocks, Fairy Cave Quarry, Holcombe Quarry, Dewerstone.
- Contributed towards Dartmoor National Park 'Take Moor Care' best-practice publication.

Forward Plan for 2008

- Consultation on the implementation of new plans to increase access to the coast (in England and Wales)
- Coastal Green Climbing Guide
- Update and publish the BMC Tread Lightly booklet
- Develop a strategy to develop good practice around group use at crags and the sustainable use of crags
- Continue work on restoring public access at Vixen Tor
- Research developing standardised methodology to agreeing bird restrictions
- Continual presence at meetings and regular contact with MPs and Ministers.

SUB - COMMITTEE: The Land Management Group

Summary of Key Achievements & Outputs for 2007

Horseshoe Quarry

- Signage including a site plan, the boundaries of BMC owned land, and strategically placed warning signs for the general public have been installed.
- Funding – Henry Folkard successful applied for c.8k funding from the Derbyshire Aggregates Levy Grant Scheme. The funds will be used for access improvements including path work, boundary improvements and scrub control to conserve the flower rich grasslands. Other conservation work has included partnership work with English Nature to enhance the wetland and pond areas.
- A professional geotechnician assessed the rock pillar taken by Monkey Stole my Walkman - indicating the pillar was unstable and could collapse at any time. The decision was taken to execute this under controlled conditions - the pillar has now been demolished using experienced volunteers.

- Dan Middleton (BMC Technical and Safety Officer) has installed a fixed equipment test – bed in the quarry floor. This will be used to periodically pull test various types of bolt.

Aldery Cliff

- A geotechnical assessment indicated the large overhang on the right side of the crag was unstable, but supported by a large keystone. The decision was taken not to scale the loose rock, but to erect a warning notice for climbers and to monitor the situation. It is thought the large earth bund below the overhang offers sufficient protection to the wall and road.
- There are on-going problems with trial bike riding in the quarry.

Bwlch y Moch

- A number of routes have been restored to a good condition by dedicated volunteer efforts. Headed by Mike Raine, the North Wales Climbing Action Group has cleaned over 40 routes, opened-up the access paths and replaced the Balshazzar Gully descent ladder. A fine effort.

Pant Ifan

- The management agreement with the landowners is proving satisfactory for all parties.

Pen Trwyn

- To fulfil the BMC's obligations of inspection and maintenance of lower offs/belay stations which we have responsibility for at Upper Pen Trwyn, Chris Parkin has been engaged (with support from the BMC office) to manage a 3 year project to train volunteers to inspect up to 130 listed stations and replace defective anchors.
- Stainless steel rings and maillons have been retrofitted to the lower-offs (which the BMC has responsibility for) to extend the lifespan of the lower offs.

Harrison's Rocks

- The acquisition process is taking longer than expected due to the illness of the BMC's Sport England contact and boundary inaccuracies on various deed plans. It is hoped the conveyance process will be concluded in 2008.
- The HRMG have undertaken a complete load-tested inspection of all (169) belay bolts. The work illustrated the bolts and bonding materials remain in a very good condition, and also identified the requirement for an additional 9 bolts to 'back up' single bolt placements.
- A number of volunteer days have been organised for conservation work, including trimming trees and ground erosion/drainage work.
- Car Park and Toilet Block - the bench by the noticeboard was burnt by climbers. The car park is still being used at night, but this is not causing problems. The toilets are in need of maintenance. All leak, the handwashers don't work (because they drip, and the water is metered, CT turns off the supply), they need painting, and the electrics are still uncertified. CT to put together an assessment to send to Dave Turnbull, before sending it on to Sport England.

Stone Farm Rocks

- Small amounts of woodland management, ground erosion and resin work is required in various locations. The bouldering notice on the fence near Inaccessible Boulder needs refixing, and a new graffiti notice is required.

Completed by Cath Flitcroft & Guy Keating, BMC Access & Conservation Officers