

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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BMC NATIONAL COUNCIL

Minutes of the 45th National Council meeting held at Plas y Brenin, Capel Curig on Sunday 20 September 2015.

In attendance

Voting members:

President	Rehan Siddiqui	(RS)	Chair
Vice-President	Nick Kurth	(NK)	
Honorary Treasurer	John Simpson	(JS)	
CEO	Dave Turnbull	(DT)	
Cymru Wales (South)	Will Kilner	(WK)	
Lakes	Ted Rogers	(TR)	
London & SE	Lisa Payne	(LP)	
London & SE	Rik Payne	(RP)	
Midlands	Roger Fanner	(RF)	
Midlands	Phil Simister	(PS)	
NE	Mark Anstiss	(MA)	
NE	Alan Hinkes	(AH)	
Peak	David Brown	(DB)	
South West	Colin Knowles	(CK)	
South West	Gareth Palmer	(GP)	
Yorkshire	James Rowe	(JR)	

Observers:

Equity	Kamala Sen	(KS)	
Independent Director	Brian Smith	(BS)	
MT Cymru & Plas y Brenin	Carlo Forte	(CF)	

Staff:

Deputy CEO	Nick Colton	(NC)	
Secretary	Tony Ryan	(TRY)	

Note: * = supporting paper circulated.

Actions

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

1.1 Welcome

- 1.1.1 Rehan Siddiqui welcomed everyone to the meeting and reported that the BMC's Nepal earthquake auction had raised over £24k; it is planned to present a cheque at the Kendal Mountain Festival.

RS welcomed Carlo Forte to his first National Council meeting as observer for both Mountain Training Cymru and Plas y Brenin. Tony Ryan acted as meeting secretary.

1.2 Apologies

- 1.2.1 Apologies were received from Deirdre Collier, Rupert Davies, Tim Greenhalgh, Rob Greenwood, Jim Kelly, Simon Lee, Mina Leslie-Wujastyk, Dave Musgrove, Iain McCallum, Mike Rosser, Trevor Smith and Mark Walker.

1.3 Conflicts of Interest in relation to agenda items

- 1.3.1 No conflicts were declared.

2. Note issues for AOB

- 2.1 Crookrise – possible acquisition by BMC (Dave Turnbull).

3. Minutes of the previous meeting*

3.1 Accuracy of previous minutes

- 3.1.1 Item 5.4.1 – David Brown noted that the June meeting had requested that the Guidebook Committee review its policy on advertising in guidebooks. Action: DT

3.2 Actions from previous minutes

- 3.2.1 Item 3.1.1 – Strategic Plan; re-issued.
3.2.2 Item 4.2 – Area specific information; in progress.
3.2.3 Item 5.2.5 – Castle Rock; signage now back in place.
3.2.4 Item 6.2 – Policy breakdown paper; on agenda.
3.2.5 Item 6.3.1 – 2017 AGM date; discussion ongoing, suggest delay decision until nearer the 2016 AGM. Action: DT
3.2.6 Item 6.3.1 – 2016 NC dates; circulated.
3.2.7 Item 7.1.1 – Bracken; Access Management Group (AMG) to take lead.
3.2.8 Item 9.1.1 – Quarries; Land Management Group (LMG) to produce paper for December National Council meeting. Action: LMG
3.2.9 Item 9.4 – Area support meeting; ensure follow-up actions completed. Action: TRy

4. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

- 4.1 BMC policy on mountain heritage – Colin Knowles commented that the BMC has no overall policy on mountain heritage and suggested producing a discussion paper for the December meeting. There was a discussion about the role and capabilities of MHT, the clubs and other initiatives such as the photographic archive as proposed by Rab Carrington. CK agreed to speak with Deirdre Collier about the production of a discussion paper. Action: CK

5. Reports

5.1 Areas

- 5.1.1 **Midlands***. Roger Fanner reported that the invitation to clubs to send a rep to the September meeting had not been very successful, but that three club reps had attended a pre-meeting to discuss how to make the area more relevant to clubs.

A climbing and walking festival is being planned and the area plans to elect a hill walking rep at the November AGM.

- 5.1.2 **London & SE***. Rik Payne reported an improvement in meeting attendance (c.40), although there is still a high churn rate in meeting attendance. The area is continuing to push Facebook and several people had volunteered to act as communication reps. Two hill walking reps and a climbing wall rep were also recruited.

RP asked the office to investigate why so many email invites to area meetings appear to be blocked by spam filters. Action: TRy

There had been a discussion about the removal of an unstable block opposite Isolated Buttress at Harrison's Rocks. Rob Dyer is liaising with the relevant parties.

- 5.1.3 **North East***. Mark Anstiss reported that the September meeting had been well attended. He has now formally replaced Jon Punshon as National Council rep, and has also been elected as a rep on the Clubs Committee.

The recent Peel Crag clean-up had been very successful (c.20 attendees) following three annual clean-ups at nearby Crag Lough.

Alan Hinkes noted that the new Rock Antics wall in Newton Aycliffe is excellent and worth a visit.

- 5.1.4 **Yorkshire***. James Rowe reported on a well-attended meeting, which had included an interesting talk by Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association.

Volunteers have been recruited for a 2016 area climbing and walking festival. The hill walking day in July had been poorly attended (note: poor weather); it was felt that these events could take time to catch on.

New walls have recently opened, in Huddersfield, Ilkley and Leeds.

- 5.1.5 **South West***. Gareth Palmer reported on a very successful climbing and walking festival at Bosigran. Tickets had been sold in advance via the BMC online shop so planning and budgeting had been much easier. The festival will run again in 2016 and Lundy is being considered for 2017.

- 5.1.6 **Lakes***. Ted Rogers reported that the decision taken by the area for additional bolts to be added to routes at Tilberthwaite Quarry had been met with resistance from some locals. National Council suggested the area may wish to re-consider its decision and invite the climbers in question to a future area meeting to discuss the issue.

United Utilities has withdrawn its application to install fencing on common land above Thirlmere.

Planning has commenced for a festival in Borrowdale in May 2016, to coincide with the launch of the new FRCC Borrowdale guidebook.

- 5.1.7 **Peak***. DB reported that the September meeting was attended by over 15 BMC office staff as part of a staff training day.

Rab Carrington had introduced his photo archive project proposal, and solicited comments, ideas and help.

A successful outcome to the BMC's long-running campaign against mineral extraction on Longstone Edge is looking hopeful (note: public inquiry in Jan 2016).

The area is seeking a volunteer activist or club to help look after BMC-owned Horseshoe Quarry.

- 5.1.8 **Cymru South Wales**. Will Kilner reported that the meeting had been held the evening before the Gower Festival (meeting attendance c.15 / festival 50+).

It was noted that there had been a serious contravention of agreed climbing restrictions (nesting birds) in Pembroke, which may lead to a criminal prosecution. There also was a request for Range West briefing dates to be publicised earlier.

The Cymru Wales AGM and FunDay is on Sat 31 Oct at Plas y Brenin.

5.2 **Finance***

John Simpson advised that the latest forecast (end of Q2) predicts a £21k surplus, up from an original expected surplus of £10k. Commission from Summit Financial Services and sales of the new Peak Limestone North guidebook are performing well. Travel insurance income is down on the same period in 2014, mainly due to the reduction in sales of US policies.

Membership has exceeded 80,000 for the first time; 54,000 of these are individual members, over 90% of whom pay their membership fees by direct debit.

Cash reserves are slightly down on the year-end, but remain very healthy, as does the balance sheet.

5.3 Executive Committee (Board of Directors)

5.3.1 The abridged minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2015 were reviewed; no questions were raised.

5.4 CEO report

5.4.1 DT reported on a range of issues including the healthy state of BMC membership, IT and website improvements and new Sport England initiatives.

Changes have been made to the travel insurance system to enable targeted promotional offers and the use of SMS is being extended.

A number of Sport England projects and consultations are in the pipeline, i.e. commercial consultancy project, a management review of our operations and processes and consultations on a new DCMS sport strategy and the future of the APS participation measurement system.

Job descriptions have been agreed for the replacement Regional Development Officer posts, one to focus on youth, the other on equity.

6. Constitutional issues

6.1 2016 AGM – Castleton YHA (Losehill Hall)*

The venue has been used for several BMC events in recent years, is in a central location with climbing and walking on the doorstep, and has all the facilities required for the AGM. The AGM will be held on Saturday 16 April 2016.

6.2 Defining the remit of National Council & the Executive*

DT summarised discussions at the June National Council and noted that he had been asked to propose breakdown of responsibilities of National Council and the Executive for consideration at this meeting.

The proposed breakdown was as follows (6.2.1 & 6.2.2 below):

6.2.1 National Council

- Environment & landscape: policies, position statements or other specific high level guidance on the use and protection of the hill and mountain environment, e.g. organisation position on wind farms, climate change, major development proposals (note: initial proposals to be developed by the Access Management Group).
- Climbing ethics: policies, position statements or other specific high level guidance related to climbing and hill walking ethics, e.g. Fixed Equipment position statement and Dry Tooling position statement.
- Land acquisition policy, i.e. organisational policy on crag purchase & leasing (note: initial proposals to be developed by the Land Management Group).
- Major organisational developments, changes or decisions which represent a substantial change in direction or have substantial political, resource or

financial implications, e.g. decision about whether the BMC should support climbing as an Olympic sport.

- Major policy changes related to the work of the Specialist Committees (note: Specialist Committees to present their forward plans annually to National Council).
- Other issues on which National Council agreement / buy-in is desirable or needed in order for progress to be made.

6.2.2 Executive

- Policies, procedures and regulations related to the overall strategic direction of the BMC including the development of the Strategic Plan.
- All policies, procedures and regulations related to the staff and office, e.g. IT development strategies and policies, HR regulations and the staff handbook.
- All financial policies, procedures and regulations (note: on the advice of the Finance Committee).
- Policies, procedures and regulations related to the Executive Committee's formal duties as company directors (note: the Directors hold the ultimate legal responsibility for the BMC under the Companies Act).

6.2.3 There was a discussion about whether the breakdown provided a clear definition in terms of good governance considerations, and also whether people were comfortable that it represented the right balance of responsibilities between National Council and the Executive. DB suggested a minor amendment i.e. to change 'climbing ethics' to read 'ethics', this point was agreed.

6.2.4 NK asked how the document would be formalised within the BMC. DT replied that it needed to be made a Management Regulation. A vote was taken on accepting the split in responsibilities and formalising the proposed definitions into a Management Regulation.

Agreed

Proposed: CK; Seconded: TR
For: 15; Against: 0; Abstentions: 1.

Action: DT

6.2.5 RS went on to introduce the idea of simplifying the BMC's Memorandum & Articles of Association and putting much of the operational detail into a management agreement / operating procedures document which could be much more easily amended by the organisation as and when required. There was a general feeling that the idea warranted further consideration. CK cautioned about ensuring safeguards were in place to protect from changes being made easily against the wishes of the majority.

6.3 Declaration of conflicts of interest*

6.3.1 Declaration forms were circulated, signed and collected by TRy.

7. Policy issues

7.1 DCMS sports strategy consultation

7.1.1 DT summarised progress on the BMC's response to the 'New Strategy for Sport' consultation (deadline 2 Oct), MPs David Rutley and John Mann (Mountaineering APPG) have agreed to write a covering letter to the BMC's response.

7.2 Availability of Committee minutes

- 7.2.1 The meeting discussed the availability of National Council minutes. Currently they are available only to National Council members with a summary posted on the BMC website.

Yorkshire and Midlands had discussed the issue and were in favour of the minutes being made available.

The pros and cons of publishing full / abridged / redacted minutes was discussed, as was the timing of publishing the minutes, as the minutes are not officially agreed until the next meeting.

A vote was taken on putting the full meeting minutes (subject to removal of confidential / sensitive information) on the BMC website as soon as possible after the meeting, and then replacing them with the agreed minutes (if different) after the following meeting.

Proposed: PS; Seconded: RF
For: 15; Against: 0; Abstentions: 1.

Agreed
Action:
TRy

It was agreed that clarification of what to do about confidential / sensitive information still needed to be finalised.

Agreed

7.3 **Staff & office – options***

- 7.3.1 DT summarised early stage discussions between the staff and Executive – following the staff restructuring – about the Burton Road office and the possible need for refurbishment or relocation. The office is close to capacity and requires updating; there is also the possibility of MHT amalgamating with the BMC, and this would need larger premises.

CK felt that the current building did not fit with the BMC's future aspirations, and that we ought to be based in a zero carbon building, which was an open house for members and easily accessible by public transport. WK felt that a venue where volunteers could meet and then go walking and climbing would be attractive.

For further consideration.

8. **Club applications for membership***

- 8.1 There was a discussion about the procedures for new club applications and the acceptance criteria used by office staff.

There was some concern about the validity of insurance cover for a new club, i.e. does it commence on acceptance of the application by the office or on approval by National Council?

It was felt that approval should remain with National Council, but that a process of shortening the time between acceptance by the office and approval by National Council should be found.

It was proposed that the office should continue to assess applications; when an application meets the criteria, the office should notify National Council by email and seek online approval within 10 days. The email from the office should include the acceptance criteria.

Agreed

- 8.2 There was one application for club membership, from Buckley McCall Shaw Climbing & Mountaineering Club (BMSCMC), based in the North West area.

For: 16; Against: 0; Abstentions: 0

Agreed

9. **AOB**

9.1 Crookrise Crag, Skipton

9.1.1 DT reported that the Executive Committee is considering a recommendation from the LMG concerning the acquisition of Crookrise.

10. Date of next meeting

10.1 10.00am – 5.00pm, Saturday 5 December 2015, at Manchester Climbing Centre.

Agreed

Summary of action points from the 45th meeting:

Ref	Action	Involving	Target date
3.1.1	Advise Guidebook Committee to review advertising policy	DT	Ongoing
3.2.5	AGM 2017 options paper	DT	June 2016
3.2.8	Quarries: LMG paper for December National Council	LMG	Dec 2015
3.2.9	Area support meeting follow-up actions	TRy	Ongoing
4.1	Produce BMC heritage policy discussion paper	CK	Dec 2015
5.1.2	Investigate why area mailings blocked by spam filters	TRy	Ongoing
6.2.4	Produce Management Regulation (NC/Exec)	DT	Dec 2015
7.2.1	Publish NC minutes on BMC website	TRy	Ongoing

The above accepted as an accurate record of the meeting:

Signed _____ Date _____
 Rehan Siddiqui, President & Chair