

Harrison's Rocks Management Group

Special Meeting on Access to the Isolated Buttress. 13th December 2017

Present: Rik Payne (Chair), Emma Harrington, Daimon Beale, Adrian Paisey, Tim Skinner, Sarah Cullen, Mark Brewster, Rob Dyer (late, stuck on the M25), Bob Moulton

- 1) SC opened the meeting by referring to her email earlier that day in which she had declared her conflict of interest and explained that she had asked Rik Payne to chair the meeting. The Group confirmed that they accepted her presence at the meeting with a full voting capacity.
- 2) RP introduced himself and told the meeting that he had an open mind on the matter and that at the Sandstone Open Meeting on 8th October he had abstained when there was a show of hands as he just couldn't decide.
- 3) RP then asked each member of the group to express their view on the matter, after which he would open the matter up for general discussion.
- 4) The general discussion was wide-ranging and covered much detail, including:
 - a) It was agreed that although a number of people had emailed SC with other proposals such as rebuilding the original step-across, the only options acceptable to the BMC were building a bridge or doing nothing.
 - b) It was noted that consultation in addition to talking to people had taken place in a number of ways: an online survey in 2015 (which indicated that 80% were in favour of a bridge), emails to SC and the 8/10/17 open meeting (the last two were both approx 50/50). The Group were not bound by these opinions but would take them into account.
 - c) Damage to the rock in different ways was discussed at length:
 - i) The traverse used to get onto and off the buttress (part of Boulder Bridge Route) was getting damaged. Resin had been applied and should be applied regularly in future if a bridge were not to be built. Different views were expressed as the acceptability of this long-term damage.
 - ii) There was no evidence of damage caused by lowering off/abseiling, but it was accepted that this would happen to a certain extent in future. Again, different views were expressed as to both how much this had happened to date and how much it would occur in future. All were agreed that lowering off/abseiling was bad practice.
 - iii) Currently the climbs on the buttress are having less ascents and therefore are getting less damaged than was the case in the past and would be in future if a bridge were to be built.

- iv) As a consequence of the reduction in climbing on the buttress, climbs elsewhere, particularly in the Unclimbed Wall area were getting more traffic and hence were likely to get more eroded than they had in the past.
 - v) Although it was known that when the step-across was there some climbers, some of whom climbed at a high standard, wouldn't do the step-across, it was accepted that the effect of this was marginal and therefore that a bridge would not increase traffic on the buttress to a higher level than when the step-across was in place.
- d) The nature of Harrison's was discussed. It was agreed that the Rocks was an outdoor crag and all climbers going there should have to accept that there was a risk element in line with the BMC's Participation Statement. It was agreed that it is probably the busiest crag in the country and the first outdoor crag visited by large numbers from climbing walls. It was therefore argued by some that as a managed crag with the existence of the bolts reducing the risk to a minimal level, that a bridge would be in keeping with this. Others felt that any risk caused by the natural environment should remain, and it was pointed out that originally (in the late 60s/early 70s) the bolts had been put in because of the large number of rope grooves (many now filled in with cement) caused by moving ropes and not to make climbing safer. This view was countered by the argument that the removal of the step-across was 'manmade', although against this was the strong probability that eventually it would have broken off anyhow.
- e) The advice given or not given by the BMC if a bridge were not built was discussed at length. The only advice that the BMC were in a position to give was that access to and from the buttress was either by soloing or by the so-called 'Mike Eden method' that was shown on a BMC video. In fact, this method was developed for the Hut Boulder at High Rocks, and the video was only made at Harrison's for the convenience of the video-team. This method works well for the Hut Boulder, but no one knew of it ever being used on the buttress; it was agreed that it was not a practical option. The use of a safety rope from the mainland to the top of the buttress (a so-called Tyrolean) could not be recommended by the BMC for safety reasons. The only advice that the BMC could offer as to how to get off the buttress was either to down-climb the route just climbed on a slack top rope, or to solo down the top part of Boulder Bridge Route - the extent to which the latter was currently taking place was debateable. The other advice that could be given was not to put a lateral pull on any bolts. It would be necessary for climbers to assess the situation for themselves. However, this would often lead to some climbers making arrangements that could damage both the rock and/or themselves.
- f) The fact that some local climbers were currently spending a lot of their time in the vicinity of the buttress and gave advice as to how climbers new to the area

could protect themselves getting onto and off the top of the buttress was recognised and appreciated, albeit that the method being recommended could not be endorsed by the BMC and therefore could not be put on a sign.

- g) RD made it clear that the BMC's Land Management Group had agreed that they would accept whatever decision was made by HRMG
- 5) At the end of the meeting RP asked all present to make their concluding comments. He then asked for a vote; he made it clear that he himself would abstain. The Vote was 4 to 3 in favour of a bridge.

RDM.15/12/17