

BMC Cymru Newsletter – April 2018

Croeso/Welcome to the April 2018 BMC Cymru newsletter.

As before, apologies for the lack of graphics or translations – this is a one off that hopefully will become glossier, bilingual and possibly even interesting to read when a nice BMC member volunteers to put it together next time!

BMC Organisational Review

The Organisational Review Group (ORG) has now produced a final, amended report, available here:

www.thebmc.co.uk/organisational-review-final-report

and the ORG itself is no longer operational. As a consequence, the National Council has established an Implementation Group (IG) to consider how the report's recommendations can be taken forward. The IG has come up with two proposals, the first with four parts, which we are asked to discuss, and vote on, in our area meetings. The voting would not be binding; it would simply offer a quantitative measure of the opinions of members attending Local Area meetings.

The first of those proposals seeks to quickly adopt those recommendations which would allow the BMC to:

- a. Become compliant with the law,
- b. Use on-line voting
- c. Increase the number of members needed to raise a resolution
- d. Become compliant with Sport England's Code of Governance

The second of the IG's proposals seeks to present an 18-month long schedule for further examination, amendment and/or adoption of the other recommendations in the ORG report.

The chairs of the Local Areas are expected to introduce and explain these proposals in more detail at their April meetings, but any member who wants to fully explore the background to, and the implications of, accepting or rejecting the proposals is strongly recommended to visit the following link which has been set up specifically for this purpose:

www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-organisational-review-april-update

Further independent discussion of the ORG report and alternative proposals are available on a website set up by Crag Jones:

<https://sites.google.com/view/bmc-rr/introduction>

Recommendation 25 - BMC Cymru/Wales

Recommendation 25 is the one which concerns the way forward in Wales. It was reworded in the final, amended ORG report, and then had some extra bits added by the IG. This recommendation could be considered and refined over the next 12 months if the IG's second proposal (see above) were to be approved. It now reads:

The BMC should research the benefits of creating a sub-group or subsidiary to support its operations and activities in Wales/Cymru, and to help maximise region-specific funding opportunities to better engage with Welsh Government and other organisations in Wales. The BMC should also develop a Welsh language policy. ”

Access & Conservation notes

Range West 2018

Contrary to what most people think, the climbing at range West Pembrokeshire is most certainly not the preserve of hard-core top grade climbers. Range West contains some of the very best low and middle grade sea-cliff routes in the UK...but To climb in Range West Pembrokeshire you have to attend an annual safety briefing at the Castlemartin Army Camp. The dates and times for the remaining 2018 briefings are:

Thursday 26/4/18 @ 18:00; Saturday 28/4/18 @ 10:00; Thursday 24/5/18 @ 18:00; Saturday 26/5/18 @ 10:00 (Whitsun Bank Holiday). There is no need to book, just turn up at the Castlemartin Army camp (ideally a few minutes before the briefing starts).

In addition there is no firing on the range (so access to all the cliffs, subject to the seasonal nesting bird restrictions) on the following dates:

Summer shutdown 4/8/18 – 2/9/1

Snowdonia National Park –cutbacks update

Following the consultation on this, the National Park Authority have proceeded with their proposed increases to car parking and cut backs to the warden service. BMC and many other bodies objected strongly to this, suggesting that savings could be made in other areas of the Parks's work, such as the built heritage and agricultural support. However it seems that the Authority had already been forced to make these savings due to substantial cutbacks in funding from Welsh Government. For the 2018 season car parking charges will now be £6 per day at all their main car parks (with no half day rates) and £10 at Pen y Pass, with an additional £10 charge for parking after 6.30pm at this location.

Tremfest is back! Saturday April 21st

Support is gathering for this fun practical and very useful event organised by the BMC to carry out

essential work at the BMC owned and managed crags at Tremadog . Put the date in your diaries – turn up with gloves, secateurs, sickles, handsaws and clothes that you are happy to get covered in mud and be prepared to win amazing (well....ok, some fun) prizes in the by now infamous prize draw (oh and get some free beer...). Saturday April 21st is the day.....! Turn up at 10am to be allocated some tasks and have great fun!

Welsh Government statement on National Parks

Last year the Welsh Government commissioned a report on the future of National Parks and designated landscapes in Wales, called Future Landscapes Wales. The BMC and many other conservation bodies were very concerned at the proposals in this report and especially as the then Cabinet Secretary for Natural Resources felt minded to support those proposals. The proposals would have fundamentally changed the “raison d’etre” and legal status of National Parks, long established to protect natural landscapes and promote quiet enjoyment, to places where essentially, economic activity and the exploitation of natural resources could be promoted and prioritised. We were therefore very pleased to hear that the new Environment Minister made a statement in March 18th *“Minister for Environment, Hannah Blythyn, has given a firm commitment that all Wales’ existing Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks will be retained and their current purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty will not be weakened”.*

New BMC Regional Access Database app

At long last we are very pleased that the new RAD app is available for smart phones. The new app lists all known crags in England and Wales and is updated daily for all access changes. The new app is much more user friendly than the previous version and even tells you how far and how to get to the crag of your choice from your current location.....oh it also tells you where you can park and if there are any restrictions in place ...and it’s free!

Download for Android here <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.bmc.rad.app>

And for i-phones here <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/bmc-rad/id635707992?mt=8>

RSPB South Stack Parking charges

Many people will be aware that RSPB have submitted a planning application to install pay and display meters at the car parks at South Stack, with a basic fee of £5 per visit. This has attracted a lot of media attention, not least from the local community in Holyhead which has resulted in considerable bad feeling towards the RSPB and involvement of both the local MP and AM. BMC wrote to the planning authority and to RSPB expressing concern at the lack of public consultation and weak arguments put forward for the justification for this and also at the likely implications for yellow lines and associated signage along the approach roads to the lighthouse and parking areas. This will change the character of the area from relatively wild backwater with minimal urban signage to a more managed urban site. The response from the planning authority is that additional parking restrictions and signage are not a planning matter and cannot be considered in determining the application! The latest is that the planning committee have adjourned a decision pending a site visit.

Gower – Bacon hole – a storm in a tea-cave?

Bacon Hole is a very special conservation site on the Gower coast – nesting choughs, roosting bats and internationally important archaeological remains (including mammoth tusks and other animal remains over 100,000 yrs old). There is an agreed permanent restriction on climbing here (apart from a short section where bouldering is allowed). Conservation bodies (including the NT and Natural Resources Wales) received reports from one of their conservation officer about fixed ropes and new bolting at this banned venue. This inspired a lot of debate and accusations on social media but thankfully they got it wrong and the fixed rope is thought to be an old caving fixture and the bolts are old ones from before the agreement. This does demonstrate the way climbing can be seen as an easy target and how sensitive both the sites we climb on are and that these sites are monitored by conservation managers.

Craig y Forwyn Llanddulas

The new owners of the central section have expressed to the BMC a possibility of selling or leasing the crag to the BMC. However as there are four different landowners involved and both the access to the crag and parking will need to be agreed and formalised with other landowners, the situation is very complex. However after many months of negotiations and discussions all the provisional agreements are now in place (including with Natural Resources Wales). A full report looking at all the options and possibilities (including easements, leases, management agreements and purchase has been produced and is going to the BMC's Land Management Group for its professional view before being debated by National Council. There is some concern expressed by some people on various BMC committees that due to the ongoing Organisational Review and financial cutbacks in BMC spending, that the BMC may not have the resources to maintain it. It is worrying and hugely frustrating that one of the most important access issues in UK climbing history is very close to a long term solution but due to the ongoing organisational issues the BMC may not be able to capitalise on this.

Crag clean ups

- **Llanddulas** . On a very cold but dry February morning over 20 people turned out at Llanddulas Caves, where over 40 bags of litter, including tables, chairs and all sorts of unmentionables were removed from the crag and cave area. A great effort by all involved and many thanks to Conwy Council for their support in sending their waste collection team out on a Saturday to take away the collected litter.
- **Penallta** Unfortunately the planned clean up here had to be cancelled due to the snow – to be rearranged at a future date.

The important stuff!

Next Area meetings are:-

BMC Cymru North Wales Area Meeting

Caffi Eric Jones, Bwlch y Moch, Tremadog LL49 9SN

Tuesday 17 April, starting at 7.30pm (food from 7.00pm)

[See the BMC Local Areas site](#)

BMC Cymru South Wales Area Meeting

Boulders Climbing Centre, Pengam Road Cardiff CF24 2R

Tuesday 17 April, starting at 7.30pm

[See the BMC Local Areas site](#)

BMC Mid Wales outreach group

The White Lion Heol, Pentrehedyn, Machynlleth SY20 8DN

Wednesday 18 April, starting at 7.30pm

[See the BMC Local Areas site](#)