

Clarification of volunteer responsibilities and delegated authority

The BMC operates as a constructive and mutually beneficial partnership of staff and volunteers. The 33 staff (27.5 full time equivalents) work alongside several hundred volunteers operating at regional level, through specialist committees, clubs, climbing competitions, youth development, equality work, guidebooks, international bodies, mountain training, access & conservation roles and more. The importance of volunteers was highlighted in the BMC Organisational Review 2017 and this is being actively addressed by the President and staff.

Some questions have been asked about how the adoption of a new constitution at the June 2018 AGM may affect the way volunteers should approach their roles including any changes to the responsibilities delegated to volunteers and the circumstances under which matters should be referred to the Board of Directors for consideration or approval.

In response to these questions the BMC can offer the following guidance:

- Volunteers are highly valued within the BMC. This is fully acknowledged and endorsed by the Board, the members of which (with the exception of the CEO) are all unpaid volunteers themselves.
- The bulk of volunteer activities within the BMC are unaffected by the constitutional changes agreed in June 2018.
- The main change is that BMC specialist committees now formally report to the Board rather than National Council. This is because some aspects of their work are sensitive in nature or have significant financial, legal and reputational implications. Examples include child protection matters, issues related to safety, accidents and near misses, land acquisition, major events or campaigns and significant policy changes.
- A review of the specialist committees is scheduled to take place before the 2020 AGM as part of the Organisational Review recommendations. This will address structural, operational and reporting considerations as well as the role of the committees under the new Members' Assembly format which is set to replace National Council.
- The work of volunteer post holders and officials operating at a regional level via BMC Area Meetings should be largely unchanged. BMC staff will continue to give support in the usual way and technical improvements will be phased-in in line with proposals set out by the Membership Engagement work stream of the Organisational Development Group.
- The BMC will continue to run a wide range of events (e.g. climbing competitions, technical seminars and safety & good practice activities) based on existing models of good practice, demand, risk assessment and cost benefit considerations. Wherever possible volunteer training will be offered – particularly for activities with significant safety considerations.

In all normal circumstances, the relevant BMC staff member(s) should be the first point of contact for volunteers with queries about their work or activities. Depending on the nature of the query the staff member will deal with it directly, refer it to a senior staff member or consult the relevant specialist committee chair on the required course of action.

Examples of issues likely to require referral to the Board include the following:

- Matters presenting significant reputational or financial risk to the BMC (e.g. allegations of abuse, serious complaints against staff and volunteers or significant data protection issues).
- Serious accidents, injuries or near misses at BMC events (e.g. regional climbing / hill walking festivals, crag clean-ups, international meets and climbing competitions).
- Major policy changes with implications nationally or across the membership (e.g. access, environmental & landscape policies related to member activities and the uplands).
- Land acquisition proposals. Following consideration by the BMC Land Management Group and National Council the final decision on proposals to purchase or lease new sites will be a Board responsibility.
- Any proposals for new activities, projects or events with significant financial or staffing implications.
- Any other matters with significant legal, compliance or insurance implications for the organisation.