

Area Chair Role and Responsibilities

Area Chair Role Description

Welcome to the BMC's network of area volunteers. The BMC has been built by and depends on volunteers like you. Members, staff and other volunteers hugely appreciate your contribution of time, knowledge and enthusiasm as a Chair of one of the 10 BMC areas. Thank you for your interest in volunteering for this role on behalf of the organisation and the climbing and walking community.

What does an Area Chair do?

The BMC represents over 80,000 members as well as many other climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers in England and Wales, split into 10 geographical area. Each area has two elected officers, a chair and a secretary and numerous elected representatives including two volunteers which sit on National Council, access reps, club reps and hill walking reps. Every member of the BMC is assigned to an area which is usually based on their location and within that area they are eligible to vote on issues or at elections that take place at the area meetings. Each area holds 4 to 5 area meetings a year which act as a hub and a forum for local members to come together to discuss matters of local and national importance and have their say on the running and governance of the BMC.

As an Area Chair you will play a key part in making the area 'tick' both at meetings and in between. With regards to Area Meetings you will work with the Area Secretary to develop an agenda for each meeting responding to issues that have arisen locally as well as other items that will be of interest to members. You will be required to ensure briefing papers are produced for any items that require them and that these are made available to members beforehand. Meetings are open to everyone, not just members and it is important that as a representative of the BMC you make sure everyone feels welcomed to the meetings. You will need to develop consensus on issues and determine when votes are required on agenda items by listening to different points of view and summarising the key aspects of discussions. Some issues will be contentious and it is important that you take lead to ensure everyone is given a fair opportunity to speak and that they are listened to in a respectful manner.

Meetings should be an enjoyable social experience for all attendees and will take place either online or in person. For face-to-face meetings you will need to work with the Area Secretary to choose a suitable venue that is accessible and arrange food for the meeting. You may also wish to find guest speakers for the meetings or organise social events such as a quiz. You may also wish to organise additional social events that take place between the formal meetings.

Working with other volunteers you will need to respond to members queries in between meetings. Where you are not able to answer a query you should direct the person to a suitable staff member. As chair you should be able to provide support to the volunteers in your area and assist with any queries they may have.

As an Area Officer you will play a key role in developing engagement within the area and promoting equity and fair representation. It is important all meeting, events and communications take place in an inclusive manner. You should actively seek to increase engagement within your area and should consider ways in which this could be achieved which could include using your areas Facebook page, holding single topic Zoom meetings or social / networking events.

The position of Area Chair is voted on by members during the elections at the Area AGM. Where a vacancy arises outside of the AGM a chair may be co-opted in accordance with Article 28 in the Articles of Association.

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What can you expect from the BMC?

- Officer support to help you fulfil your role as well as advice on complex or difficult issues which can range from advice by phone/email to attendance at meetings.
- The BMC is committed to ensuring that all people have an equal opportunity to participate in climbing, hill walking and/or mountaineering at all levels and in all roles. Our full Equity Statement can be found [here](#).
- Travel expenses – the BMC will reimburse travel expenses for any meetings.
- You will be added to the BMC collaboration platform enabling you to communicate with other area officers and representatives.
- Further opportunities to get involved with the BMC's work.
- An opportunity to develop your skills and learn new skills.

What does the BMC expect from you?

As an Area Chair, you will be representing the BMC to members, other climbers and walkers and external organisations. This means that it is important that you:

- Are a member of the BMC with your designated area the one in which you are standing to be chair.
- Are passionate about climbing and/or walking and/or mountaineering.
- Behave in a respectful manner at all times, remembering that you are representing the BMC membership as well as the wider walking and climbing community (rather than just yourself as an individual) in the public domain. This includes posting on social media and internet forums in a BMC capacity.
- Keep well informed about area activities to develop appropriate and engaging meeting agendas.
- Ideally have some experience in chairing meetings both in person but also on a webinar platform.
- When chairing meetings ensure all present have a fair opportunity to voice their views and everyone is listened to and responded to respectfully.
- Ensure meetings take place with an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere.
- Ensure everyone at the meeting is polite and courteous to one another.
- Be unbiased, impartial and diplomatic; to get the best out of the others.
- Be able to 'keep the peace' during times of disagreement or unrest.
- Ensuring good time-keeping to enable appropriate discussion on all agenda items.
- Be an advocate for the BMC. With regard to this it is helpful to develop some understanding of the BMC's specialist work areas, finances and structure.
- Be aware of the BMC procedures and constitutional requirements relating to Area Meetings (ref: Article 28 – Area Meetings).
- Be able to represent members' views in a fair and balanced manner at local, regional and national level.
- Ability to work collaboratively with other volunteers.
- If you have a conflict of interest whilst representing the BMC in any aspect of your voluntary role, declare it to a BMC staff members ASAP.

Benefits of volunteering for the BMC

- Contributing to the BMC's work representing climbers and walkers in the UK
- Becoming part of a community of committed volunteers, giving back to the mountaineering community

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Appendix 1: useful resources for BMC Area Chairs

- [Articles of Association](#)
- [Volunteering Handbook](#)
- [Guidance on Volunteer Responsibilities](#)
- [BMC's Organisational Structure](#)
- [Volunteer Expense Claim Form](#)

Appendix 2: Expenses claims

- Area Chairs can claim for travel expenses (mileage/public transport costs/parking fees etc) incurred whilst carrying out their role using the BMC's standard volunteer expenses claim form.
- Claims can also be made for venue hire and food provided at the meeting within the area budget provided.

Staff Contact

The main staff contact for this role is Tony Ryan (Publications & Local Areas Coordinator)
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