

# BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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## **BMC Environmental & Sustainability Policy (P4)**

### **Foreword:**

The BMC recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering have a wide range of impacts on the upland and mountain environment, and acknowledges its responsibility to act to help safeguard the mountain environment for both present and future generations.

In particular, given the sensitivity of the upland and mountain environment to the effects of climate change, the BMC understands the need to respond urgently to the climate and biodiversity emergencies. We believe it is necessary to stop the overexploitation of natural resources and habitat destruction, and to cut carbon emissions in order to help reduce the effects of climate change. The BMC also considers that there are a broad range of other environmental threats, which affect our mountain environments and communities. These issues include, but are not limited to, reductions in air and water quality, erosion and flooding.

### **Vision:**

The BMC vision is to ensure that our uplands, moorlands and mountain environments, including crags, cliffs and water bodies, are protected and enhanced for the benefit of future generations. The BMC is aware of the value of these sensitive environments to climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers, but also recognises their intrinsic value as landscapes and habitats, and in respect of the environmental services, such as retention of flood water, the sequestration of carbon in bogs and homes for wildlife that they provide.

### **Mission:**

The BMC mission is to:

- consistently measure and publicly disclose its annual climate footprint and emissions reductions progress which will be widely publicised amongst its staff, members and other relevant stakeholders;
- develop a GHG Emissions Reduction and Sustainability Plan and report annually;
- take account of the BMC GHG Emissions Reduction and Sustainability Plan in its decision making and workstreams;
- continue to promote sustainability across the organisation as well as raising awareness of the importance of responsible behaviour in the mountain environment amongst members and the wider outdoor community;
- ensure that climate considerations are front and centre in all of its on-going policies, activities, communications and events;
- work in partnership to realise a long-term, sustainable vision for outdoor recreation and our natural environment.

## The Environmental and Sustainability Policy

The Environmental and Sustainability Policy acts as a high-level statement of intent and commits the BMC to:

1. Quantifying, as far as reasonably practical, the environmental impacts of the BMC as an organisation;
2. Seek to reduce the biodiversity, landscape and climate change impacts of travel to and within mountain environments;
3. Working to enhance and protect mountain environments from not only the aspect of their use for climbing, mountaineering and walking, but also for their own intrinsic value and for the benefit of its communities’;
4. Help manage expectations (educate and inform members and wider mountain users) in an evolving and changing landscape;
5. Support and enhance mountain and upland economies;
6. Lobby and make representations to decision makers, and work with other organisations to secure the BMC environmental vision.

The BMC has determined the following key areas of impact for action:

### 1 Environmental Impacts of the BMC

#### ***BMC operations***

In its day-to-day operations and processes, the BMC has an impact on the environment, through the resources it uses such as paper, energy and also through the waste products it produces, such as solid wastes and emissions from heating and transport as well as use and disposal of BMC materials and merchandise including guidebooks and equipment.

We will seek to quantify these effects and implement measures to ensure day to day office practices have as small an impact on the environment as is possible. This will be achieved through;

- Developing a Zero Pollution and Zero Waste Pathway with the aim of eliminating waste and pollution and looking to circular economy principles;
- Influencing through procurement and partnerships: sharing our approach and working with our partners to develop pathways for the whole industry;
- Producing guidance for members, events, clubs and office: outlining the steps needed to ensure we move towards zero waste and zero pollution.

#### ***Energy use***

The BMC recognises that climate change will increasingly lead to changes that will affect biodiversity and our members' recreational interests.

The BMC will improve its own energy pathway by:

- Continuing to achieve carbon net zero from its operations (initially achieved in 2020) by investing in local landscape-restoration projects that help store carbon and other carbon reduction projects, setting a science-based target, and reducing emissions through energy-efficiency, the use of renewable energy, reduced travel and lower-carbon forms of travel;
- Developing a Zero Carbon Pathway: making intelligent use of energy and other natural resources with power-down through energy efficiency and power-up through the use of renewables;
- Work with clubs and other sector interests to help reduce energy use. In particular, support hut owners and managers to install off-grid renewable energy sources and/or install measures to reduce energy use, particularly at huts using oil or bottled gas as heating sources;

- Off-setting its own carbon footprint by supporting a scheme that invests in a UK based, landscape wide programme;
- Working towards implementing an Environmental Management System which conforms to ISO14001.

## **2 Transport & Travel**

The single largest source of carbon emissions from activities associated with climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering is transport. Developing the infrastructure to support private car use is also damaging to habitats and air quality. The BMC acknowledges the tension between expedition and holiday travel globally, and the need to urgently cut carbon emissions.

The BMC will seek to reduce the contribution that travel makes by:

- Promoting the use of sustainable transport and low carbon travel options (car share options, public transport, walking, cycling and other non-car modes);
- Encouraging the use of web conferencing and remote meetings to reduce the need to travel;
- Ensuring, as far as reasonably practicable, that meetings, events and competitions organised by the BMC can be accessed by public transport and by promoting car share options and mechanisms to achieve this.

The BMC also supports prioritising active travel options such as walking and cycling, and supports campaigns and policies that improve suitable public transport services for rural communities that need to be better connected. The BMC will develop and maintain a Sustainable Transport Policy which will contain more information on all of these issues.

## **3 Enhance & Protect Biodiversity and Landscapes**

A number of nationally and internationally protected flora and fauna species are found in the mountain environment and other areas valued for their wild land character in England and Wales. The BMC actively supports the protection of their habitats and will work with conservation bodies and land managers to ensure that appropriate restrictions are designed to have the least impact on member activities. On particularly sensitive sites, the BMC will also support research and monitoring to ensure conservation programmes are effective. The BMC will continue to protect our natural environment by:

- Seeking opportunities to remedy biodiversity loss. This means better protecting species and our most important habitats, with no reduction in the current level of protection, and positively supporting nature's recovery;
- Promoting Biodiversity Net Gain and Environmental Land Management, along with other funding mechanisms for recovering nature, amongst partners and neighbouring land owners;
- Supporting and embracing nature-based solutions to enhance climate resilience.
- Working with landowners and managers to advise on visitor usage and appropriate access and conservation improvements;
- Promoting good practice and responsible behaviour to climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers and adherence by its members to access restrictions through its Regional Access Database (RAD);
- Ensuring that sites owned by the BMC are actively managed as exemplars of good practice;
- Encouraging, educating and where possible incentivising its members to reduce their personal environmental impact associated with their activities.

The BMC will seek to protect mountain landscapes from inappropriate development.

The range of landscapes that BMC members recognise as valuable is broad, from wilder environments of semi-natural habitat, including mountains, uplands, moors and sea cliffs, to outcrops bordering arable land and disused quarries, which can be in urban and rural areas. All these landscapes are important for their scenic beauty and cultural value. They provide habitats for threatened species and their conservation secures vital elements of our natural and cultural heritage. These landscapes can also provide vital services in protecting water quality, reducing downstream flood risk and offering efficient carbon storage.

The BMC wants these landscapes to be managed and protected for future generations so they remain sanctuaries for quiet and sustainable recreation as well as areas in which sustainable agriculture and silviculture can be carried out. We will work with all those with an interest in conserving our important landscapes to strike a proper balance between development and conservation.

The BMC will maintain and keep under review its Landscape Charter which contains more guidance as to when it will oppose developments that would have a negative impact on access to, and protection of, the natural environment. The stance of the BMC is to have regard for the type of development proposed, the scale and design of proposals and the environmental, biodiversity and landscape value of the area as well as its recreational importance. The BMC will also;

- Seek to influence planning and policymakers at local and national level and advocate local, sustainable development within communities where and when appropriate;
- Lobby for better protection of habitats and upland landscapes, with no reduction in the current level of protection, and positively support nature recovery;
- Encourage green and sustainable forms of transport by seeking to amend planning guidance so that it promotes a shift towards walking, cycling and green public transport as the main forms of transport.

#### **4 Supporting Upland and Mountain Economies**

Hill walking, mountaineering and climbing has brought economic opportunities to previously isolated and undeveloped areas of the UK and beyond, and visitors should respect the needs of people who live and work in these areas. The BMC will continue to promote the local, economic benefits of hill walking, mountaineering and climbing and encourage members and clubs to contribute to the economies of local communities by:

- Utilising locally owned accommodation, restaurants and shops;
- Collaborating with local partners on issues that pose a significant benefit or impact on the local area;
- Supporting local nature-based solutions to enhance climate resilience and landscape improvements;
- Work to influence government policies that directly affect our members' interests, promote sustainable management practices and help protect our upland and mountain regions.

#### **5 Partnership working & lobbying**

The BMC will also use its influence to encourage and support its partners, stakeholders and others to reduce their environmental impact and carbon emissions, and to raise awareness through joint initiatives and campaigns by;

- Campaigning collectively to increase our influence on the protection of our natural environment and sustainable access to the places we love;
- Collaborating on and supporting responses to issues that pose a significant benefit or impact on our mountains or upland areas as well as codes of good practice;

- Working with commercial partners to create awareness of their responsibilities towards a sustainable low carbon environment and working in collaboration with commercial operators to share learning, raise awareness and towards reducing their/our carbon footprint;
- Working with the Outdoor Industries Association (OIA) and the European Outdoor Group (EOG) to support joint initiatives around the production and recycling of outdoor clothing and equipment;
- Working with other organisations to press Government and the Welsh Assembly for greater action responding to the biodiversity and climate crisis as well as on other sustainability issues around landscape protection, planning, resources and waste;
- Working with BMC clubs and local areas to inspire and facilitate change.

The BMC Environmental and Sustainability Policy is a statement of our commitment to help reduce the impact of our activities on the environment and to cut carbon emissions to help limit the very worst effects of climate change and the biodiversity crisis.

**Document agreed by:**

**BMC Board of Directors, 27 April 2022**

**BMC Members Council, 14 May 2022**