



2021 BMC Strategic Consultation Issue 1

*To create a better future for climbers, hill walkers
and mountaineers*

Introduction

At the equivalent point last year, the BMC Board was developing a strategy framework document for 2020-24 following a facilitated strategy away day (29 May 2019) and a member wide consultation on the vision, purpose and values. The final version being signed off in February 2020 (available [here](#)). We therefore believe the strategy's structure, vision, purpose and values can remain the same, however there is a need to reflect on our priorities to re-focus the strategic plan in light of the impact of COVID-19. Further, in recognition that there are a number of pinch points at an operational level, we need to establish more effective ways of working between staff, committees, National Council and Board in support of these evolving priorities.

2020 saw hard work across the organisation in a number of areas over the past year, such as our staff, volunteer and partner response to COVID-19, setting up the Welsh committee, the formation of CCPG and starting the transformation of the IT infrastructure. Acknowledging all the positive work, the purpose of this paper is to summarise the Board's thinking on what its priorities are for 2021.

Recognising that we are starting this review with 3 months remaining of the year, the aim is to stimulate feedback from specialist committees, staff and National Council (NC) on how they might contribute to each area and build on the integrated ways of working developed as a response to COVID-19 to create stronger links between all areas of the organisation.

The timeline is constrained largely by the need to also develop the operational and financial plans in good time and therefore we intend to carry out the following steps:

- Paper issued to SMT followed by a discussion on Tuesday 18th August 2020 via a short web meeting. SMT to share with staff with a request for overarching feedback by Monday 24th August.
- Paper shared with NC and chairs of specialist committees on Tuesday 18th August with a request for any overarching feedback by Monday 24th August.
- Potential for a group session facilitated by the Board with specialist committees and NC members to introduce the paper end of w/b 24th August.
- Request for areas to share the paper and suggested priorities at area meetings with a Director leading the discussion.
- Further detailed feedback from all stakeholders to be received by Friday 11th September.
- Final paper presented at NC and Board at the end of September.

The purpose of the consultation is to ensure that we have identified the right priorities and to engage those experts in identifying the actions required and the targets that we should use to measure our success.

This consultation process is running alongside the 2021 budgeting review managed by Alan Brown (BCM Financial Controller). It is imperative that both dovetail together enabling budget holders to reflect any priority changes in their budget proposals. Both are required to be completed by mid-September in order for them to be reviewed at the next Board meeting.

The following pages set out the context in which this review is taking place, then, proceeds to indicate what we believe are the priorities within each strategic theme and foundation activity for the following year with the context taken into account and really want to hear your views.

The purpose of this paper is to trigger discussion on each of the themes and the priorities currently identified. Staff, specialist committees, working groups and National Council are still reviewing it in the context of their respective areas so feedback from these groups will be integrated alongside that of the members.

When responding to the review, we would like members to consider the following questions:

1. Does the context fairly represent the landscape in which we are currently operating in?
2. Do you think the priorities we have included under each strategic theme are appropriate?
3. Is there anything you think is missing that you would like to see the BMC doing in 2021, taking into account the context in which we continue to operate in?

You can provide your feedback by filling in a short survey accessible from the BMC website or by attending your local Area Meeting:

Thursday 27 th Aug	South West
Tuesday 1 st Sept	Cymru North
Wednesday 2 nd Sept	Peak
Thursday 3 rd Sept	North East
Monday 7 th Sept	Yorkshire
Tuesday 8 th Sept	North West
Wednesday 9 th Sept	Cymru South
Wednesday 9 th Sept	Lakes
Thursday 10 th Sept	London & SE
Thursday 10 th Sept	Midlands

We would like to receive all feedback by Friday 11th September in order for the updates to be made and discussed with staff prior to being presented to National Council and the Board.

Following the consultation and approval of the priorities, the paper will be taken forward by the Interim Executive as part of their role to steer the organisations strategic and business plan.

Context

Since the inception of the strategic plan, COVID-19 has changed much of the landscape for both the BMC and many of our members and partners. These contextual factors provide both risks and opportunities that we need to engage with, and it's these areas below that are guiding our thinking on what our priorities should be, acknowledging as well that the future remains very uncertain, and any priorities will need to be adaptable.

1. The volume of income from travel insurance and its associated BMC membership route is unlikely to return to similar levels in 2021.
2. The greater emphasis of devolved governments has become more prominent, meaning an increase level of support for our members and shift to up to the minute news, advise and guidance.
3. Many of our partners have been hit harder than ourselves in terms of income or membership numbers and are also working under a similar demand from their members. Our role as sector leader has been heightened.
4. Greater numbers of people are wanting to hill walk, climb and participate in outdoor activities. Their understanding however about the environment can be limited and cause avoidable damage to the landscape and strain on services. e.g. Mountain Rescue, National Parks etc.
5. Equally, as a caveat to the above, we acknowledge that local lockdowns will mean that there will be continuing difficulties to participating in climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering as a result of COVID-19 which will also create uncertainty around new members joining.
6. Greater sense of urgency to take action on the issues of inclusion and representation, particularly those from a BAME background, along with the increasing promotion of the outdoors as a route to mental wellbeing.
7. BMC's member engagement work through face to face events is likely to continue being disrupted for the foreseeable future meaning an increase pressure on digital resources to deliver the events and the creation of alternative engagement opportunities.
8. The Tokyo 2021 Olympics, if happening, is likely to require considerable marketing and staff resourcing to ensure the organisation maximises its profile, keeps the members up to date and takes advantage of membership growth opportunities.
9. The on-going economic uncertainty is going to continue to effect the financial situation of our members and therefore requires the organisation to operate within its current membership fee range.
10. Uncertainty over the operation of indoor walls is likely to continue, either through national or regional outbreaks. The risk of re-closure or changes to opening guidelines remains.
11. The National Parks are under pressure financially and managing their parks within the above context, leading to potential conflicts with our members through potential commercial plans.
12. The working conditions required for our staff within the context of COVID-19, social distancing, local lockdowns and managing health conditions needs to be recognised and managed appropriately.
13. The government implementing new legislation relating to the environment and agriculture partly as a response to leaving the EU at the end of 2020, ensuring the rights of our members and the wider outdoor community are maintained.

Headline Priorities

Underpinning our priorities are four key objectives:

1. **Ensure that we grow our membership in order that it balances our income normally expected from our travel insurance in order to secure our financial position in 2021 and to set up a future income stream whilst ensuring that we understand our current membership to enables us to deliver across all our areas of interest with the right levels of resources.**
2. **Build on the agility and focus with which we brought together staff, expert volunteers, specialist committees, NC members, the Board and a multitude of partners in the context of COVID-19 to deliver on a range of scenarios.**
3. **Develop the relationship with our charitable trusts and improve the ways of working between organisations to ensure a coherent approach, whilst supporting their objectives through financial, resources and marketing support as appropriate.**
4. **Hold the membership fee in line with the likely economic difficulties faced by many of our members and to develop the membership packages so that they provide further benefits that support retention and provide clear added value to members.**

In identifying the following priorities within each of the original strategic themes we recognise that we need to focus on consolidating much of the activities and campaigns that have been initiated over the past couple of years. At the same time identifying a number of areas to provide additional focus for the coming year.

Strategic Themes

4a. Access, conservation & environmental sustainability

We continue to be strong in this area and we need to use this year to **consolidate** our campaigns with no new major campaigns starting in 2021, allowing recently launched projects to embed and used to support our membership retention and growth.

- Contribute to the green recovery to support our public relevance and objectives.
- Continue to lead and be responsive to the impact of COVID-19 on access to hills, mountains and open country.
- Continue to support work and improvements to BMC owned land.
- Continue and build on our existing H2O and Climate Project campaigns, and effectively interlink these with our communications to members, continuing to promote responsible use of the outdoors.
- Implement the BMC's Climate Change Declaration and support our Partners in helping develop a sector wide code.
- Continue to work with the Mountaineering All-Party Parliamentary Group and lobbying government on legislation and policy matters on behalf of the members.
- Agree a strategic plan with ACT to provide long term sustainability to our fund raising and project support.

4b. Membership engagement, services & support

With the introduction of an improved IT infrastructure at the end of 2020/early 2021, along with a general shift in the membership experience of digital engagement we need to **focus** on:

- Improving our ability to represent the 3.2 million people that climb and hill walk (including the full breadth of indoor climbers and adventurous hill walkers) by growing our membership through new membership packages and improving our member only benefits and categories using a data driven approach. Subsequently, this should enable a better understanding of our existing members and support retention.
- Improve engagement with, and representation of, underrepresented groups through a cross-organisational and cross-sector approach. With partners, contribute to the development of tools and resources to support volunteers to engage with underrepresented groups.
- Further realise the value of remote working tools for staff, committees National Council, area meetings, and Board to improve accessibility, efficiency and decrease our environmental impact.
- Build on the increased media attention on the outdoors during COVID-19 to raise the BMC's profile and reach a wider audience (not just members).

4c. Education, inspiration & skills

A key thread of our members benefits, the impact of COVID-19 hitting the hardest on both our volunteer lead activities and more central delivered programmes, this is an area we believe we need to have a working group of specialist committees and wider stakeholder groups to work alongside NC and the Board to establish how we as a sector can better deliver these objectives. Therefore this area is up for **review**

- Change the delivery of our educational objectives through collaborative working with our partners.
- Further develop digital delivery of resources and events work.

It is recognised that a review of this strategic theme will take longer than the current timeline permits in order to make sure the right staff and volunteers have been consulted and the update is well considered. Any initial thoughts on this theme can be provided at this stage however a working group will be set up in September / October led by key staff, including appropriate volunteers to develop this theme in more detail taking into account how it would apply operationally.

4d. Organisational development & sector leadership

During COVID-19 we have been able to demonstrate a pivotal role in bringing together many of our partners, working with SE and providing clear guidance to our membership. Within this section we believe there needs to be further **consolidation** by:

- Further developing our profile and public engagement by continuing to unify and lead the sector in light of COVID-19.
- Further develop our partnership working to jointly tackle the challenges and opportunities presented by COVID-19.
- Build on the Welsh specific work that the Wales sub committee and staff have achieved during the current devolved responses to COVID-19.
- Provide clear evidence of our commitment to Mountain Heritage by improving our strategic collaboration with MHT in support of their objective through financial, resources and marketing support

Further there are a number of areas that need the organisation and Board to **focus** this year:

- Developing a detailed strategy for working with our three charitable trusts.
- National and international collaborations within the COVID-19 context.

4e. GB Climbing – competitions, talented athletes & the GB Teams

This area is about **focus** as our ability to service this sector of our membership is still to be proven yet the opportunities for improving BMC profile and provide membership growth is substantial. The opportunity of funding streams will potentially help to deliver a clear strategy developed through the remainder of 2020.

- Make the Olympics an organisational priority and work with our partners to fully realise these opportunities.
- Focus the CCPG efforts around obtaining funding and engaging with members and those potential members in the lead up to and directly after the Olympics.

Foundation Activities

5a. People: staff, volunteers & members

Focus

- Ensure that the structure of the organisation and staffing levels are appropriate to deliver the strategic plan and supports staff through the continued difficulties faced by COVID-19.

5b. Money: financial management & business development

Focus

- Securing and improving the BMC's financial situation through membership growth.
- Using the reserves when appropriate to balance organisational impact with financial security. Develop a long term plan that maintains reserves in line with policy.

5c. Communications & member insight: IT, database & online

Consolidate

- Completing the move to modern internal and external digital resources.
- Enhance our communication with all aspects of the organisation and with members as well as externally.

5d. Governance: systems, procedures & standards

If we want to be fit for the future this area needs **focus**:

- Establish approaches to Governance of subsidiaries and introduce appropriate committee structure within the BMC to support the governance of the organisation.
- Deliver the changes to the Articles at the 2021 AGM.
- Develop policy and procedures to support the professionalism of the organisation and volunteer ways of working.
- Conclude the outstanding ODG work and ensure that the changes made are delivering for the organisation, members and volunteers.
- Gradually establish a risk-based internal audit and assurance programme

5e. Collaboration: clubs, partners & stakeholders

Consolidate

- Build more effective bridges with our subsidiaries and other partners to maximise our ability to deliver our strategy in financially constrained times.

- Facilitate the introduction of the clubs strategy and encourage membership packages that engage with a wider range of clubs.
- Support those clubs that are facing significant financial and operational challenges as a result of COVID-19.
- Continue to extend the range of partnerships and build on the work of the Partnership manager with organisations that support our principal of inclusion.