

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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Board of Directors

Redacted minutes of the Board meeting held as a virtual only meeting on Zoom, on Wednesday 1st November 2023 at 18.30

Directors Present:	Roger Murray (RM)	Chair
	Caroline Worboys (CW)	Senior Independent Director (SID)
	John Willmott (JW)	Independent Director
	Flavia Alzetta (FA)	Independent Director <small>from minute 2.1</small>
	Laura Needham (LN)	Nominated Director
	Martyn Hurn (MH)	Nominated Director
	Neal Hockley	Nominated Director
	Peter Salenieks (PS)	Council Nominated Director (CND)
	Trevor Smith (TS)	Council Nominated Director (CND)
	Andy Say (Asa)	Council Nominated Director (CND)
	Andy Syme (ASy)	President
In attendance:	Gavin Finch (GF)	Chief Commercial Officer (CCO)
	Iain Dickinson (ID)	Chair of Finance and Audit Committee (FAC)

* denotes supporting paper(s) circulated prior to meeting

Item	Topic and Main Aspects Considered	Decision / Action
1	Welcome, apologies & declaration of interests	
1.1	The Chair reported that due notice of the meeting had been given and he declared it open. The following conflicts of interest were declared: <ul style="list-style-type: none">One member of staff present – in relation to any staffing issues	
1.2	The Chair then welcomed ASa to his first Board meeting and invited him to say a few words about himself. ASa introduced himself and provided the Board with details of his background. The Chair then said that the meeting would focus on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">An update from those Directors working closely with Senior Management TeamThe QPR of the organisation	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finances<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 2023 – Year to date○ 2023 – Expected outturn○ Planning for 2024 budget• GB Climbing<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The position with respect to the UK Sport grants and associated delivery○ Communication Programme coming out of the Listening Sessions○ Identification of what can be improved within GB Climbing in the short term○ Longer term changes that maybe required within GB Climbing	

2 Approval of previous minutes

2.1 The minutes of the Board Meeting held on the 23rd September were approved with the addition of the edit provided by ASy

2.2 The minutes of the Board Meeting held on the 12th October were approved

3 Actions

The Chair noted that all of the actions from the Board Meeting held on the 12th October 2023 had been completed with the possible exception of confirming that both Carl Spencer and Paul Davies had been removed from all distribution lists.

GF confirmed that checks had been made and that neither Carl Spencer nor Paul Davies had access to any teamwork or other distribution lists

The Chair noted that Risk Management would be a substantive item on the Agenda for the Board Meeting to be held on the 6th December 2023

The Action items around GB Climbing communications were to be handled in Item 9 of the agenda

Item	Topic and Main Aspects Considered	Decision / Action
4	Work of the Board with Senior Management Team (SMT)	
4.1	<p>The Chair noted that a quartet of directors - himself, the SID, the President and MH had been working with SMT since the CEO's departure, and that FA had been working closely with the Financial Controller on the finance side.</p> <p>The Chair said that his focus had been on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The recruitment of a new CEO• The Induction of new Directors• Working as scribe on some of the GBC Listening Sessions• With GF, Alan Brown and Lorraine Brown meeting with UK Sport on understanding the expenditure within all components of the GBC activity set and understanding the position around the UK Sport grants <p>He finished with an observation that he was already feeling the loss of Lucy Valerio as Company Secretary and Governance and Compliance Officer</p>	
4.2	<p>MH followed with the following observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Board and SMT need to be adjusting the workload to the available staff and director capacity. He felt that at the moment the organisation was still trying to deliver at the same rate and pace as prior to the recent set of resignations. <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
4.3.	<p>The President followed with the observation that the communication update appeared to have landed successfully and that the organisation must start planning for an "Open Forum" to be held before Christmas 2023</p>	
4.4	<p>The CCO noted that within the staff team there are some positive things happening as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the Staff Meeting has been seen as a success• That the Staff Away Day was very positive and successful• That the organisation is moving forward positively in spite of the recent staff losses	

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	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
5	Quarter 3 reporting	
5.1	<p>The CCO led the meeting through the SMT Board Pack covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update on Staff leavers, changes and recruitment• Successes during the quarter<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Starting to bring Youth Clubs into the BMC via a pilot scheme○ Supporting the recruitment of an Indoor Climbing Accreditation Manager within ABC○ Partnering with the YHA on multiple activities across Hill Walking○ Multiple successes across the EDI agenda○ Steady progress on Safeguarding including updating and publishing of the policies and provision of training○ Within the Technical Arena, Incident and Near Miss reporting is becoming more prevalent○ A successful Partners Forum with new additions to the Forum.○ 2 new membership offers launched – with Abel and Cole for sustainable green groceries and with Komoot for route planning○ Marketing and Communication launched the new brand identity, was planning the BMC presence at Kendal Mountain Festival and supporting the organisation with managing the communications around GB Climbing• There is progress as planned towards the implementation by end 2023 of Microsoft Teams across the whole of the staff team.• [REDACTED] effect from January 2024 la Sportiva have decided to withdraw sponsorship, in the main because of the external commentary seen in the media over the past year.• The CCO emphasised that the staff team are being stretched through the resignation of several employees, staff on long term sickness, and staff reducing hours due to the redundancy/restructure. This means that the workload needs to be managed.	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Senior Management team are meeting twice per week in order to ensure alignment, pick up any CEO responsibilities and ensure delivery. One of these meetings each week is attended by several Board Directors with whom the Senior Management are working very closely.• The CCO continued with showing the latest membership figures, insurance sales, numbers of complaints and safeguarding cases.• The report finished with a review of recent work around access and conservation including an update on the “<i>Right to Roam</i>” within England and Wales and that 4 “<i>Mend our Mountains</i>” Projects are to be funded with start of works scheduled for 2024	

5.2 The comments and questions which followed covered the following:

- Whether the BMC has sufficient administrative staff – and it was agreed that increased resourcing of administrative staff would reduce the burden on the more highly qualified officers
- A view which was supported was about the importance of good back-office systems and databases

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- That the BMC should ensure that the membership application – renewal includes an option to contribute to the trusts and that it is clear that the contribution will be eligible for “*Gift Aid*”:
 - Access and Conservation Trust (*Already in place*)
 - Land and Property Trust
 - Mountain Heritage Trust
- That there needs to be work around the best way to manage the assets of Land and Property Trust and Land Holdings Limited. This will include considerations of Governance, Ownership, Costs of asset transfer and other Legal and Commercial considerations.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There was challenge around the relationship with Abel and Cole and whether this was “<i>Greenwashing</i>”. The CCO stated that Abel and Cole is a solid and sustainable business, which is a good fit with the BMC values. He went on to say that so far, the relationship has been productive and will continue until the end of the year• The Partner’s Assembly is attempting to link up with the “<i>Ordnance Survey</i>”, but they are not the easiest of organisations with which to work.• An observation was made that the BMC website needs to be updated showing the full range of offers that are available to BMC members.• A question was raised about the pace at which the Member’s Offer would be rolled out. The CCO stated that there will be workshops before Christmas and a launch in 2Q 2024• Questions were asked about the effectiveness of the voting platform that has been tested by the Areas during this round of Area Meetings. It was agreed that the Council Nominated Directors would work with the President• There is recognition that important events, including the very successful Mountain Medicine Weekend, have been delivered through the work of Becky McGovern who has recently decided to resign from the BMC• The CCO provided an outline of the recent claim on 3rd party insurance, involving a woman climbing outside. This is likely to lead to increased costs to the BMC during 2024 and impact the membership during 2025.	TS, ASa and ASy to discuss and suggest improvements in the Area Voting Platform
6	Recruitment	
6.1	The Chair provided a brief update to the recruitment of both a new CEO and a new Governance and Compliance Officer – both of which were in progress	
7	Board – Staff – Members’ Council relationship	
7.1	JW updated the Board on progress around the Board – Staff – Members’ Council relationship. It has been agreed that there is a 4-step process:	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questionnaire issued to all Directors, Councillors and Members of the Senior Management Team• After analysis of the questionnaire there will be interviews with selected individuals• After analysis there will be a plan put to the Board covering improvements across the organisation as a whole• Later in 2024 there is expected that there will be changes required for the Articles of Association, and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Board and Members' Council. Implementation is expected to be after the new CEO has been appointed and is in post.	
8	Finance	
8.1	Current Financial Position <p>ID and FA led the Board through the current financial position. The situation is complex due to multiple negative impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less than planned Membership numbers and revenues• The loss of revenue from travel insurance during July• The accounting errors associated with the UK Sport Grants• The cost overruns within the full activity set of GB Climbing <p>It was emphasised that unravelling the grants, income and expenditure within GB climbing is complex.</p> <p>It has become apparent that the way that the BMC accounts for its expenditure is not the same as that applied by UK Sport. This difference in approach to accounting has created substantial problems.</p> <p>It is clear that the BMC must manage its own and public expenditure to very high standards and that at least as far as UK Sport are concerned, the BMC has not been meeting those standards</p> <p>Going forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The BMC must comply to agreed and high levels of financial compliance, and that compliance is agreed with UK Sport• Only once the BMC is compliant will the BMC be able to negotiate future funding from UK Sport.	
8.2	The subsequent discussion covered the following items: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the BMC is not permitted to reprofile the UK Sport Grants• Questioning how the BMC gets in control of financial management within GB Climbing	

Item	Topic and Main Aspects Considered	Decision / Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasising the importance of good financial management to both the BMC and our relationship with UK Sport• Getting clarity on the nature of the agreement between the BMC and UK Sport• The wider financial capability within the BMC and the requirement for both deeper and higher level capability and capacity for a sustained period.• A request that the investigation team be given the time and space to complete the next stages of their investigation and audit. This was agreed.	Agreement: that Investigation Team continue working through all 3 phases of their work.
8.3	Financial Planning for 2024	Agreement: on existing Task and Finish Group to lead the BMC through the 2024 Budget process.
	<p>It was agreed that the existing Task and Finish group would continue and lead the BMC through the 2024 budget process. The Task and Finish Group would comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flavia Alzetta• Iain Dickinson• Andy Syme• Gavin Finch• Alan Brown• Others as required by the Task and finish Group <p>The conversation that followed covered the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That in 2024 the financial outcome must be positive• That all involved in the BMC, be they Directors, Staff, Councillors or Members need to consider how to improve the BMC performance and by definition the financial outcome• That despite the cost control there still needs to be investment in the future and investment in growth• That there must a full consideration of risk and associated controls• That for the members and stakeholders we need an excellent storyline – which currently is lacking• In order to have a compelling message to the members and stakeholders the BMC must engage with the Chairs of the key committees	
9	GB Climbing – Challenges and Plan	
	<p>The Chair led the Board through a short presentation and set of requests that follow on from the Listening Sessions which covered the majority of Stakeholders associated with GB Climbing.</p>	

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9.1	Communicating what has been learnt from the Listening Programme The Chair stated that there needs to be an agreed communication plan coming out of the listening sessions as follows: <ul data-bbox="203 363 1615 533" style="list-style-type: none">• Share 3 pager with Board• Share slide pack with Board• Create a softer version of the 3 pager for distribution to all participants within the listening sessions and at the same time issue the full document to a much shorter list of people.• Share feedback with UK Sport It was agreed that: <ul data-bbox="203 608 1615 879" style="list-style-type: none">• Both the 3 pager and the slide pack should be shared with the Board with the exception of the <i>“Wordgram”</i>• A softer version of the 3 pager needs to be drafted before the 7th November• There needs to be a phased release of the messages from the listening sessions starting with the Head of GB Climbing, Lorraine Brown• There needs to be formal engagement with UK Sport taking them through the learnings from the listening sessions• A simpler story should be available for release by the 20th November when it can be shared with the wider membership	 Chair to share 3 pager and slide pack with Board excluding <i>“wordgram”</i> MH to share summary from listening sessions with Lorraine Brown LN and Paul Ratcliffe to share summary from listening sessions with UK Sport GF and LN to ensure that a simpler summary from the listening sessions is available for wider distribution by the 20 th November
9.2	Actions to support short term improvements at GB Climbing The Chair requested that the Board focus on what could be done now to improve the performance of GB Climbing and start to fill some of the gaps identified through the listening sessions The Chair suggested that the following points could be considered: <ul data-bbox="203 1265 1637 1469" style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding the expenditure within each part of GBC and mapping it against source of funds and amount of each funding source• Ensure that Podium Funding is ring fenced and Individual Athlete Development Programmes are in place• Cancel Unit E contract• Putting in place a mapped budget for 2024• Los Angeles Strategy to be developed with climbers and stakeholders engaged	Chair and GF to ensure that top 5 bullet points are acted upon before end 2024

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Move towards a “<i>Climber First Philosophy</i>”• Start to collaborate with Personal Coaches• Step change in communication• Deploy the Athlete Management System• ? Order to team kit for 2024 ? <p>The subsequent discussion covered the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the numbers of staff within GB Climbing be considered as part of the budget process• An offer to help by TS with the implementation of the climber management system• A considerable discussion around coaching:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ There should be a very close working relationship between the GBC and personal coach○ The GBC Head Coach should be meeting with the personal coaches once per quarter○ An observation that a personal coach will have had a very long relationship with the climber and that as a consequence some may not wish to engage with the GBC coach• That there needs to be more thought and consideration given to the landing the selection policies• That there is confusion over the terms “<i>Climber</i>” and “<i>Athlete</i>”<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ IFSC uses the terminology “<i>Athlete</i>”○ Sponsors use the terminology “<i>Climber</i>”○ The competitors tend to use the terminology “<i>Climber</i>”	TS to contact GF and Lorraine Brown offering to support the deployment of the athlete management system

9.3 GB Climbing Leadership and Structure

The Chair outlined that Jo Coates had been recruited to support GB Climbing for a minimum of 1 day a week and hopefully up to 1.5 days per week on average.



The Chair emphasised that her remit is to focus on supporting and restructuring GB Climbing

The subsequent discussion covered the following points:

- Whether it would be possible for Jo to work several days in one week within the office and make a larger impact. (*Post Meeting Note: That was tested with Jo, and she stated that she will be adaptable and at least in the early stages try to work more than a single day / week on BMC business*)
- Whether UK Sport could help fund Jo

Item	Topic and Main Aspects Considered	Decision / Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The importance of working up a transition plan to whatever structure and form is agreed for a new GB Climbing	
10.0	Governance	
10.1	Decisions made by the Board since previous Meeting	
	On the 28 th September 2023 the Board approved a 7.5% increase in membership fees for 2024	
10.2	Open Forums	ASy to work with Gregg Cropper on developing the Open Forum and return at the next Board Meeting with a plan
	It was agreed that there would be an Open Forum held prior to Christmas 2023	
11.0	AOB	Director with accountability for Clubs to pass from PS to TS with immediate effect
	The Following Items of Other Business were noted	
11.1	Director with accountability for Clubs	Director with accountability for Clubs to pass from PS to TS with immediate effect
	It was agreed with that with immediate effect the Director with accountability for Clubs would pass from PS to Trevor Smith	
11.2	Multi Sport Clubs	
	PS raised the subject of how the BMC should handle " <i>Multi Sport Clubs</i> " It was agreed that a proposal should be worked up which would pass through Clubs Committee, followed by Members' Council and ultimately come to the Board	

Item Topic and Main Aspects Considered**Decision / Action****11.3 Observation about Priorities**

An observation was made about priorities at this time:

- Reputation
- Finances
- Being aware of what the BMC does not have the capacity to do

12 Date and time of next meetings

12.1 The Chair noted the next scheduled meeting is to be a day meeting on Wednesday 6th December

13 Close of meeting

There being no other business, the Chair closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their time.

Item	Action	Involving	Target date
█	█	█	█
5.2	TS, ASa and ASy to discuss and suggest improvements to the voting platform	TS, ASa and ASy	22.12.2023
9.1	Listening Sessions Slide Pack and 3 pager to be shared with the Board	RM	14.12.2023
9.1	MH to share outcome from Listening Sessions with Lorraine Brown	MH	17.11.2023
9.1	LN and Paul Ratcliffe to share outcome from Listening Sessions with UK Sport	LN and Paul R	01.12.2023
9.1	Create a simpler summary from the Listening Sessions for sharing with a wider audience	LN and GF	01.12.2023
9.2	Chair and MH with Jo Coates to ensure short term interventions within GBC start to be implemented	RM + MH + Jo	22.12.2023
9.2	TS to contact GF and Lorraine Brown offering help with deployment of the athlete management system	TS	22.12.2023
10.2	ASy to work with Gregg Cropper on developing an Open Forum to be held before Christmas	ASy	06.12.2023
11.1	TS to become the Director with accountability for Clubs	TS	02. 11.2023

The above is accepted as an accurate record of the meeting: