

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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Minutes of Midlands Area Meeting 3 June 2020 ONLINE VIA ZOOM

Present: Andy Potter (Chair), John Edwards (Sec), Claudia Sarner (Area Rep), David Jones (Area Rep), Richard Law (Access West), Ian Wyatt (Clubs Rep), Jane Thompson (BMC Clubs Officer), Lynn Robinson (BMC President), Chris Stone (Council Nominated BMC Director), Cress Allwood (Chair of BMC Equity), James McHaffie (BMC Equity Officer), Roger Fanner (SolihullMC), Phil Simister (SolihullMC), Catherine Allen (ShrewsburyMC), Dave Holland (WolverhamptonMC), John Handley (CoventryMC), Richard Lloyd (CoventryMC), Daren Church (Northampton)1st meeting, Richard Loydon (Wrekin MC), Hazel Jonas (Fell & RockCC), Hazel Lewis (Pinnacle Club), Stuart Webb (MAM), Tim Weller (Halesowen), Jason Till, Graham Beaumont, Ian Kelsey, Jo Dennis, Steve Johnson, Nick Bentley, Paul Nicholson, Pete Nicholson, Kieran Eason, Chris Boardman, Len Oakes, Simon McPhee, Ann-Marie Dodson, Michael Babel, Guy Jarvis, Rachel Hamill, Matthew Doyle, Alex & Toby, Tamsin (? Mayberry) **Max 42, of whom 36 were present for 85% of the meeting (putting Midlands Area in top 3 for attendance 😊) & 39 present for 50% of the time. 11 female attendees.**

1. Welcome and Apologies: Andy Potter welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Andy Railton and Mike Beaumont.

2. Minutes of the last Meeting: The Minutes of the November meeting were not prominent on the BMC website and, as there was only an attendance of 10 people, John Edwards read through the key points in the Report to Council of that meeting.

3. Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere: None

4. Update on BMC's response to COVID-19: Lynn Robinson highlighted that the BMC was being planned normally 6 months ago but that it would now be a Virtual one on 13th June and members will have to pre-register online if they want to vote on Directors etc. BMC staff are now working from home so the shop at HQ is closed, and 10 staff have been furloughed. She said details of the Volunteer Award winners were now on the website:-

- Peter Judd (Peak Area) & Ron Kenyon (Lakes) were joint winners of the George Band Award
 - Jesse Dufton (Midlands Area) would receive the Rehan Siddiqui Award for his amazing & inspirational climbing blind exploits (see *"Climbing Blind"* on BBC i player) &
 - Kody Bradley the Young Volunteer Award for his involvement in the Youth Climbing Series.
- She is looking forward to presenting the winners with their uniquely sculptured awards at the 2021 AGM President's Dinner. She reported that climbers and hill-walkers had been good at following the BMC's COVID advice and the main current problem in the mountains were fires started from disposable portable BBQ's.

Andy Potter asked about the financial implications of the virus. Lynn said the BMC looked OK for 2020 because of its reserves & membership income but, with nothing coming in from the BMC shop or via its travel insurance policies for over 3 months, things will be more difficult in 2021. Chris Boardman praised the way the lockdown implications were clearly worded in the website notice. Chris Stone, lead Director for Membership Engagement, wanted to say a few words, as this meeting was a direct result of his work with Local Area Chairs & Secretaries. Since his appointment at the end of March he'd been pleased to see the strategic changes of the last few years coming through and making the BMC more representative. He said he would welcome feedback on Zoom meetings or membership matters in general.

5. Work of the Equity Steering Group: James McHaffie shared a Powerpoint presentation explaining the work of the group. He put his contact information in Chat so that people could contact him if they wanted a copy james@thebmc.co.uk

There are 5 sub-groups to do with issues of fairness and equality: Disability, Womens' Development, BAME, Mental Health & LGBTQ. His first slide listed some of the group's achievements in these areas. In media channels their main focus is on women and BAME. There is a digital feature on Wednesdays "Womenwhorock" and they are aiming for 50/50 men/women % on Instagram posts. Having Lynn as President and Molly Thompson as 2019 Rehan Siddique Award winner has helped gain publicity. There have been 3 Equity Symposiums:

- 2011 (trial) Theory based to share information and good practice.
- 2015 Developing Outdoor Leaders run by BMC in partnership with Mountain Training & the Mosaic National Network. They were looking for role models in BAME communities.
- 2019 Supporting and developing Outdoor leaders based in the Peak District with practical sessions on climbing, walking & navigation for complete beginners to potential leaders with experience.

The 4th slide covered Black Dog Outdoor events for people with mental health issues. 5 events were run in 2019 with between 15 – 35 people on each walk. One walking event each month was planned for 2020 plus 5 other climbing based days. They are now trying to give increased visibility to opportunities for LGBTQ and working on a transgender policy. He covered the group's priorities going forward and suggested that Clubs might want to get involved by setting up or helping on disability walks, Black Dog events or helping develop resources. He said it would also be useful if our organisations can demonstrate that it is implementing the equality action plan and that its internal policies & procedures do consider their impact on people who share protected characteristics. Are clubs working toward increasing the diversity of people participating in its activities?

Cressida Allwood (Chair of the Group) stressed they were a group of volunteers who would be grateful for any ideas from the membership.

6. Reports from Area Representatives:

Before taking the reports Andy opened the **online meeting poll** which was completed by 29 people. Committee members and those with defined BMC roles were logged as co-hosts so were unable to register their opinions but if they had voted, the 2nd question would still have been almost 100% to allow online participation in future. The actual results were:-

- 14 (48%) had never been to an Area meeting before.
- 29 (100%) would like to have the option to attend Area Meetings online in future.
- 17 (59%) especially liked being able to ask questions of BMC staff and volunteers.
- 15 (52%) especially liked to hear information / discussion about local access matters
- 23 (79%) especially liked hearing directly from BMC staff & volunteers about BMC activities/projects
- 14 (48%) especially liked meeting / chatting with fellow BMC members
- 10 (34%) especially liked getting an update from the ODG
- 12 (41%) especially liked being able get information and discuss local club matters
- 18 (62%) especially enjoyed presentations and talks from guest speakers.

6.1 Access East: No report

6.2 Access West: Richard Law said he'd had very little contact from members and had not yet been out to check on nesting issues etc at Pontesbury Rocks. Simon McPhee noted in Chat that there were no access issues at Ippikins and Graham Beaumont noted the same for Pontesbury, Wenlock Edge and the Malverns. Lynn drew attention to her first 'port-of-call' for up-to-date access issues / nesting birds / COVID etc - the Regional Access Database (RAD) which was available as an App. www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD/ One could also email access@thebmc.co.uk which would get you to Rob Dyer, the Access Officer for England.

6.3 Youth: Claudia Sarnar said that the first 3 rounds of the Youth Climbing Series took place before lockdown started, the 4th round was cancelled due to COVID-19, and Grand Final had been tentatively re-arranged for Sept 26/27th weekend in Sheffield. <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-youth-climbing-series-the-grand-final> However there would need to be 8 weeks between walls re-opening and when competitions can start to allow climbers to train.

6.4 Hill Walking: David Jones said it was important to tell our clubs that even though things are shut down there's still a lot of work going on. The Reps have been meeting online every Wednesday now for 10 weeks, some lasting over 3 hours, and Clubs & Huts are now putting together a Huts Protocol for their eventual re-opening.

6.5. Club Issues: Ian Wyatt said that after being elected in November he had written to all clubs in the region asking for a contact person and he'd had a healthy response. Jane T said they sent out a survey at Easter re Club huts and government grant support. Club huts have been the BMC's priority during lockdown and she was hopeful they will be able to re-open soon, though not in the normal way. Haze Lewis asked if the hut guidance would include Wales where restrictions were more severe and was re-assured it would. However, she warned that generic advice gets out of date very quickly these days! She said it was best for Clubs to have at least 2 BMC contacts and they could go onto MSO and add a Communications contact if they haven't already. Catherine Allen said her club were desperate to get into their hut to check its condition and was told that the BMC was taking legal & medical advice before holding a meeting next week to discuss opening of Club huts.

6.6. Climbing Issues: Nil from the floor

7. National Council:

7.1 Report from last meeting: Claudia Sarnar said that National Council had been very busy over the past few months. The last face-to-face meeting was in December, since then meetings

have been 'virtual' (by webinar) for one full meeting at the end of March and several interim meetings to discuss specific issues. Key points of these meetings are summarized below:

An Interim meeting on Jan 23 which included:

- Discussion and agreement on the number, roles and processes to be used for the election of the new positions of Nationally Elected Councillors at the June 2020 AGM (now postponed)
- Approval of a new Councillor Role Descriptions document
- Discussion around the future role of one or more Deputy Presidents.

Interim meetings on Feb 10 & 26 to agree the processes for the election of two new Council Nominated Directors (CNDs).

A Full meeting on Mar 28 which included:

- Discussion and agreement on holding the 2020 AGM as a 'virtual' meeting
- Approval of the Terms of Reference of the BMC Cymru Committee
- Approval of the new Clubs Strategy
- Discussion of some outstanding issues from the Governance Review Group
- Actual election of the two new CNDs (Jon Punshon & Chris Stone).

There was an then an Interim meeting on May 9 to review actions from the previous meetings, and receive updates regarding the AGM, access, ODG, Area meetings & other matters with respect to the ongoing situation resulting from Covid.

David Jones said the BMC online communication systems were working really well and that the Midland's suggestion of an insert in Summit about ODG matters had been raised at Council. Lynn Robinson said that it had been decided the 2020 Member's Handbook will be in electronic form and that a £40,000 saving could be made if the next Summit magazine was produced in digital format. From a poll of a sample group of members it appeared 89% were in favour of this.

7.2 Matters for the next Council Meeting: There were no matters from the floor.

8. News from HQ / ODG: Chris Stone summarised the position so far – ORG made 51 recommendations in 8 workstreams and these are gradually being worked through by the ODG which posts its progress online at <https://odg.thebmc.co.uk/hc/en-gb>

The May update is live and the June one is due next week. The final version of Club Strategy will be out shortly, as is a massive piece of work on changes to the National Council. Because of COVID-19 the recommendations will be deferred until the 2021 AGM, which will give the chance for even more feedback from members.

9. Any other Business:

- Jane Thompson reminded folk about Volunteers Week and that latest opportunities could be found on <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/how-to-volunteer-at-the-bmc>
- John Edwards asked whether hard copies of Summit would continue to be available as some people find reading these more satisfactory and they can be passed on to give publicity for the organisation. Lynn said this was being considered but it could cost a lot to produce just a few copies.
- Tim Weller wondered whether individuals or the BMC would support him in his efforts to get 2 old railway line routes designated as adventure walking routes:

Dowery Dell Trail 8 Kms from Halesowen to Longbridge - this was a single-track railway and is now an adventure (rough) walk but not all of it is legal as sections are in private hands.

Black Country Cycle-Walk Mudway 22 kms from Brierley Hill to Wolverhampton - all official, legal & marked on the OS Explorer map as a traffic-free cycle route, but it becomes a mudbath in places when wet weather arrives. He would like BMC regional and national approval for his proposal that *'All dismantled / disused railway lines to be brought back into use, where practicable - for trains and, more likely, for walking, cycling and horseback, in the new normal and, essential normal, of lower finite fossil fuel use'*. Richard Lloyd said he was also concerned about the Stonebridge Railway, sections of which could be a useful recreational route, but other parts are used as private roads etc and there are missing bridges, plus it runs across the proposed HS2 route near Bickenhill station. Andy then made the lucky dip draw for online attendees. First out of the hat (Matt Doyle) was no longer in the meeting so it was redrawn and Phil Simister & Roger Fanner each won a BMC T-shirt.

10. Date & location of next meeting:

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 10th September, possibly using ZOOM again.

Andy then gave out the details of how to watch "Steve McClure Local Area Presentation" via YouTube – an amusing and interesting 16 minutes which showed how professional guides like him had been spending lockdown. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2G5l5H2Lt7w&feature=youtu.be>

One of the ways in which COVID had actually helped was to action the slogan "Get Better by Stop Going Outside - Get Indoors, Train and Get Stronger!" So lockdown is a good time to knuckle down and Steve has been training regularly on the climbing wall in his garage, used 13 times in the previous 13 years. Others have been putting training videos online, sometimes ghoulish, and some aimed at the positively ancient over-45's !! Steve discovered a lovely rough gritstone end wall on

one of his rental properties that he turned into a great climbing challenge (8a) & (7c+) and this featured on the regional ITV News. Well worth a watch. Written by John Edwards

