

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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BMC NATIONAL COUNCIL

Minutes of the 50th National Council meeting held at
Derwent Hill Outdoor Education Centre, Portinscale on Saturday 17 September 2016.

In attendance

Voting members:

President	Rehan Siddiqui	(RS)	Chair
Vice-President	Emma Flaherty	(EF)	
Vice-President	Nick Kurth	(NK)	
Honorary Treasurer	John Simpson	(JS)	
CEO	Dave Turnbull	(DT)	
Cymru Wales (North)	Anthony Eccles	(AE)	
Cymru Wales (South)	Will Kilner	(WK)	
Lakes	Mike Parsons	(MP)	
Lakes	Ted Rogers	(TR)	
Midlands	Roger Fanner	(RF)	
Midlands	Phil Simister	(PS)	
North East	Mark Anstiss	(MA)	
North East	Alan Hinkes	(AH)	
North West	Nick Bond	(NB)	
Peak	David Brown	(DB)	
Peak	Rob Greenwood	(RG)	
South West	Colin Knowles	(CK)	
South West	Gareth Palmer	(GP)	
Yorkshire	James Rowe	(JR)	

Observers:

Independent Director	Brian Smith	(BS)
Access Management Group	Dave Musgrove	(DM)
Association of British Climbing Walls	Rich Emerson	(RE)
Clubs	Fiona Sanders	(FS)
Competitions	Ian Walton	(IW)
Plas y Brenin	Rob Spencer	(RSp)
North East	Jon Punshon	(JP)
Women's Development Group	Cressida Allwood	(CA)

Staff:

Deputy CEO	Nick Colton	(NC)
Secretary	Tony Ryan	(TRy)
Head of Marketing & Comms	Alex Messenger	(AM)

Others in attendance:

BMC Patron	Doug Scott	(DS)
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Note: * = supporting paper circulated.

Actions

1. **Welcome & apologies for absence**
- 1.1 **Welcome**
- 1.1.1 Rehan Siddiqui welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Cressida Allwood, Rich Emerson and Jon Punshon, who were attending National Council for the first time.

1.1.2 Apologies were received from Jackie Bryson, Deirdre Collier, Tim Greenhalgh, Jim Kelly, Iain McCallum, Andy Newton, Lisa Payne, Rik Payne, Mike Rosser, Peter Sterling, Phillip Tootill, and Martin Wragg.

1.2 Conflicts of Interest in relation to agenda items

1.2.1 No conflicts were declared.

2. Note issues for AOB

- 2.1
- Climbers Against Cancer (Nick Bond).
 - Lancashire Rock guidebook launch (Nick Bond).
 - Mountain Weather Information Service (Will Kilner).
 - Visibility of National Council minutes on BMC website (Mark Anstiss).
 - BMC officer for Wales (Anthony Eccles).

3. Minutes of the previous meeting*

3.1 Accuracy of previous minutes

Amendment to item 4.1. Phil Simister requested an amendment to the wording of the draft minutes, which read:

Mend Our Mountains – PS noted that the campaign had never passed through National Council for discussion and approval, and asked whether it should have.

Change to:

Mend Our Mountains – PS noted that the campaign had not passed through National Council for discussion and approval, and asked whether it should have. There was a general discussion, but no formal answer to this question.

Agreed

3.2 Actions from previous minutes

- 3.2.1 Ref 3.1.3: Fixed equipment paper – Rupert Davies and Martin Wragg to formulate wording – ongoing. Action: RD/MW
- 3.2.2 Ref 3.1.4: LMG to consider purchasing and leasing policy word changes – next meeting in November – ongoing. Action: RD
- 3.2.3 Ref 3.1.6: New member data breakdown – Arun Patel liaising with Roger Fanner – ongoing. Action: DT
- 3.2.4 Ref 3.1.8: Quarries paper – Roger Fanner working with office on advice note – DM reported that Threshfield discussions have now stalled – ongoing. Action: DT
- 3.2.5 Ref 3.1.11: Re-engage with North West area. DONE
- 3.2.6 Ref 3.1.15: AMG response to NT activity licensing scheme. Dave Musgrove reported that the proposals had been watered down and now appear unlikely to be a major issue. DONE
- 3.2.7 Ref 4.2: Set start time of Sunday National Council at 2017 AGM – ongoing. Action: DT/KA
- 3.2.8 Ref 5.1.2: Communication plan for area youth co-ordinators – ongoing. Action: NC
- 3.2.9 Ref 5.1.9: AMG position statement re. hydro-electricity schemes – ongoing. Action: DM
- 3.2.10 Ref 5.2.1: Churn rates and membership retention procedures. DONE
- 3.2.11 Ref 5.3.1: Appointment of interim press & PR agency. DONE
- 3.2.12 Ref 6.1.1: Review 2017 AGM date in relation to Easter. DONE
- 3.2.13 Ref 6.2.1: Sign and return Conflicts of Interest policy document – check with KA. Action: TRY
- 3.2.14 Ref 7.3.1: Exec to present new vision and mission statements – ongoing. Action: DT
- 3.2.15 Ref 8.1: Include club membership application procedure on Sept. agenda. DONE
- With the above agreed amendment, the minutes of the June 2016 meeting were signed by the President. Agreed

4. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

4.1 None.

5. Reports

5.1 Areas

- 5.1.1 **Lakes.*** 42 people attended the September meeting in Keswick, which focused almost exclusively on the rebranding discussion. DT and RS attended as Exec reps. It was noted that the area requires a new secretary.
- 5.1.2 **London & SE.*** 50 people attended the meeting in central London. DT and Nick Kurth attended as Exec reps. The meeting had focused almost exclusively on the rebranding discussion. Sherry Macliver had given an update on the clubs committee (updating guidance documents, informing clubs on grant applications, and planning for the next clubs seminar).
- 5.1.3 **Midlands.*** 49 people attended the meeting in Solihull, which focused almost exclusively on the rebranding discussion. Colin Knowles and Brian Smith attended as Exec reps, with Nick Colton from the BMC office.
- 5.1.4 **North East.*** 25 people attended the September meeting in Durham. NC attended from the BMC office. In addition to discussion of the rebranding, the meeting discussed how to respond to recent accidents which might be linked to climbers making the transition from indoor to outdoor climbing.

There was also an update on plans for the 2017 North East Festival of Climbing & Walking, which will be held in the North York Moors national park.

- 5.1.5 **North West.** 19 people (including 6 members of BMC staff) attended the meeting in Manchester, which was the first area meeting since January. RS attended as Exec rep alongside NC.

NB reported that in addition to the rebranding discussion, the meeting also received an access and guidebook update from Les Ainsworth.

- 5.1.6 **Peak.*** 93 people attended the meeting in Grindleford. RS, EF, RD and DT attended as Exec reps. The meeting focused on rebranding followed by a talk from Nigel Vardy.

Concerns were raised about the re-organisation of the Peak District NPA, and the potential impact on North Lees. The Authority had thanked the BMC for funds generated by Mend Our Mountains which will help repair the Ringing Roger path on Kinder.

- 5.1.7 **South West.*** 33 people attended the September meeting on Dartmoor. DT attended as Exec rep. In addition to rebranding discussion, there was a review of the Cornish Climbing & Walking Festival (new volunteers needed for next year) and an update on the 2017 Lundy Climbing Festival.
- 5.1.8 **Yorkshire.*** 36 people attended the September meeting in Ben Rhydding. DT attended as Exec rep. The meeting focused primarily on rebranding. There was also an update on a number of local access issues, including: Caley (overgrown Himalayan Balsam) and Kilnsey (inconsiderate parking). Plans to develop Threshfield Quarry have come to a halt, due to the owner's concerns about risk and liability. Concern was expressed that the BMC had supported a letter from British Cycling to the environment secretary and the Welsh environment secretary calling for cyclists to have more access to more public paths.
- 5.1.9 **Cymru Wales (Mid).** Attendance 15, DT present as Exec rep.

- 5.1.10 **Cymru Wales (North).** 44 people attended the meeting at Pen-y-Pass YHA. RS and DT attended as Exec reps. AE reported that, in addition to the rebranding discussion, the meeting considered officer representation in Wales and hydro-electric schemes (reminder to members to put in objections to planning applications).

Representing North Snowdonia Local Access Forum, John Gladstone asked for feedback on a pilot scheme of Footpath Grading to be used by the National Park for their promoted paths, on their website. Ray Wood had also sought feedback on the idea of putting an extra information sign on the way to Crib Goch.

Jim Kelly is standing down as National Council rep and Calum Muskett as area secretary. Volunteers will also be needed to replace Jim as organiser of the annual TremFest clean-up event.

- 5.1.12 **Cymru Wales (South).** 23 people attended the September meeting in Swansea. CK attended as Exec rep, with NC from the BMC office. In addition to rebranding, the meeting discussed retro-bolting policy, and a proposal to replace some old pegs at Little Tor Crag with bolts. A 2017 Pembroke festival is being considered; volunteers will be required.

5.2 **Finance***

- 5.2.1 JS presented his report. The budget was set with an expected surplus of £23k, but the forecast at the end of Q2 has moved to an £82k deficit.

The main negative variances included: introduction of Climbers With Cancer award (£5k); increased postage costs and reduced advertising revenue for Spring Summit (£6k); estimated rebranding costs should it go ahead (£60k); additional allocation to the Climbing Team's budget (£15k); and the cost of Mend Our Mountains campaign (£15k).

Positive variances included: improved travel insurance income in the half year, compared to 2015 (£12k, 9%); profits from the Mountain First Aid event (£3k); and good performance of the BMC shop, particularly with T-shirt sales.

As of the beginning of July, total membership stood at 82,536, up by 2,296 compared to 2015; an increase of 4% on individual membership (to 56,501) and 0.3% on club membership (to 26,035). 90% of individual members now pay by Direct Debit.

The 2017 budget is at an early stage, with a number of uncertain variables still to be finalised (e.g. anticipated Sport England grant support). The Finance Committee is recommending a break-even budget.

There was a general discussion about plans to address a potential decrease in Sport England funding. RS suggested that it would be better to defer these discussions until the 3 December meeting.

5.3 **CEO report**

- 5.3.1 DT reported on a particularly difficult period since July as a result of the major disruption caused by the office refurbishment combined with the strong reaction to the rebranding announcement.

He stressed the need to further clarify the roles of National Council, the Executive Committee and the office in order to ensure the divisions of responsibility and remit are transparent and clearly understood by all. EF echoed the point and stressed the importance of good governance to Sport England.

CK suggested conducting a regular review of the BMC to include governance and organisational structure. The question of whether we are a representative or governing body was also raised, and how this relates to our membership, structure and external bodies. DT explained that Sport England recognises the BMC as the 'NGB' for mountaineering and that our M&AA define us as the 'representative' body, so we could be seen as being both.

The meeting went on to discuss the potential for the BMC becoming financially independent from Sport England in light of potential funding cuts. Some felt this might be possible whilst others were less certain about the scope for attracting substantial external funding and felt BMC work programmes could suffer quite badly from the withdrawal of support.

RS concluded by saying that this a substantial and multifaceted issue and that it will be a major item for the 3 December meeting.

Action:
TRy

5.4 Executive*

5.4.1 There were no issues arising from the minutes of the 20 July 2016 meeting.

6. Constitutional issues

6.1 Rebranding proposal*

6.1.1 RS introduced Doug Scott (BMC Patron) and Alex Messenger (head of marketing and communications), who joined the meeting for this item. RS asked DS if he would like to make any opening remarks.

DS explained he was attending further to the rebranding announcement and his concerns about the governance of the IFSC and the future management of competition climbing. He felt it very important that competition climbing remains an integral part of the BMC and was concerned about the possible introduction of a separate brand for indoor and competition climbing as this might encourage separation from the BMC.

RS thanked DS for his contribution, and acknowledged that in hindsight the BMC should have consulted more widely on the rebranding issue. National Council's decision to proceed had been taken with the best of intentions and no blame could be attached to the volunteers involved.

AM gave a view of the rebrand from a marketing perspective. The BMC has a strategy to increase the number of young members and his department is responsible for meeting membership targets.

To those who are already aware of the BMC, it might appear that the name has good visibility, but those who are unaware see only an acronym.

DS questioned the purpose of advertising the organisation, and asked why we need more members. DT replied that membership is the BMC's most important income stream, and has the most potential for increasing our revenue and organisational influence.

6.1.2 a. Feedback from Areas.

Each of the September area meetings had been given a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation explaining how and why the BMC had come about announcing Climb Britain on 25 July. At the end of the presentation people had been asked to express their preferences for the following options:

1. Remain as BMC (and completely discard Climb Britain).
2. Full rebrand to Climb Britain.
3. Remain as BMC and investigate alternative uses for Climb Britain.
4. Consider other name options.

Individual summaries of the discussion in each area are given below:

Lakes. MP felt the debate had been open and healthy, although he questioned whether the attendees were representative of membership in the area. The majority had been in favour of option 3.

London. DT reported there had been a strong vote for options 1 & 3, and also a reasonable level of support for option 4.

Midlands. PS reported the meeting had expressed anger at the lack of consultation. Majority support was for option 3, in addition to support for remaining BMC (option 1) but with some element of rebranding/refreshing.

North West. NC reported on a lively meeting in Manchester, which had been attended by a number of BMC staff who wished to listen to the discussions. The majority supported option 1, but there was also some support for options 2 & 3.

Peak. RG reported the majority favoured options 3 & 4. He felt we should also consult members not at the meeting and referenced the experience of access rep Henry Folkard, who said people he meets do not know who / what the BMC is, and judge it on those who represent it and what they do, rather than the name.

South West. GP reported that the majority at the meeting had supported options 1 & 3.

Yorkshire. JR reported on a wide-ranging discussion with majority support for option 3 and some strong voices supportive of the rebrand.

Mid Wales. DT reported that the meeting had strongly favoured option 3.

North Wales. AE reported majority support for option 3, with some support for option 4 as well. He felt the opportunity of gathering more accurate statistics had been missed due to the nature of voting process. More thought is needed on how to deal with Cymru / Wales in any future rebranding.

South Wales. WK reported that a number of people had questioned what the BMC has to offer wall users and how it engages with them. Voting was evenly split between options 1, 3 and 4 (no votes for option 2).

6.1.3 **b. General points to note**

- a. If the rebrand had been presented differently (i.e. as a proposal for discussion) it would have been more positively received.
- b. Despite some regional variations there was little support amongst the areas for a full rebrand to Climb Britain (note: the full rebrand received a vote of between 0-20% in favour at the 11 meetings).
- c. The BMC is not well recognised by wall users; we would benefit from a bespoke membership package aimed at indoor climbers.
- d. Only a very small percentage of members attended the area meetings or sent in written feedback.
- e. Climb Britain risks alienating hill walkers (both individuals and clubs).
- f. Some clubs would find affiliation to 'Climb Britain' a harder sell within their clubs than affiliation to 'the BMC'.

6.1.4 **c. Review of decision-making processes**

There was general agreement that in hindsight BMC members should have been consulted on the rebrand.

6.1.5 **d. Area consultation – when to consult***

CK noted that following a meeting in July attended by DT, TRy, Deirdre Collier, and himself, a short paper had been produced on the issue of area consultation. Due to time constraints this was deferred to 3 December meeting.

Action:
TRy

6.1.6 e. Lessons learnt & next steps

DT summed up the outcomes of the 11 area meetings and the clubs meeting; the feedback received and views of members had been very consistent and a very clear consensus had emerged that people want to retain 'the BMC' and are comfortable with alternative uses of Climb Britain being explored. He suggested that further to discussion by National Council a statement should be issued to members as soon as possible (i.e. week commencing 19 Sept) to advise members of the outcome and bring some closure on the matter.

There followed a general discussion about the consultation feedback. DM stressed there was general support for the BMC using Climb Britain in some way e.g. as marketing mechanism or campaign. RS suggested it as a possible title for the BMC's competition climbing programme. Others suggested that the BMC's brand identity (logo) might benefit from a general 'freshening up'.

A vote was taken on the following statement:

National Council does not support the full rebrand to Climb Britain.

Proposed – WK; Seconded – RF

For – 11; Against – 0; Abstentions – 8

Agreed

The options and timeframe for possible future uses of Climb Britain were then discussed. NK felt it was important we get the process and substance right, and suggested we should not set ourselves an unrealistic timeframe. RS concluded by saying this should be added to the 3 December agenda for a progress update, and discussed by the Exec in the meantime (meeting 19 October).

Action:
TRy

6.2 Managing climbing as an Olympic sport*

6.2.1 DT introduced his paper as a starting point for discussion. He noted that he had been in conversation with representatives from the GB Climbing Team and competition climbers and that they are keen to remain under the umbrella of the BMC. He stressed the importance of the BMC retaining a focus on core work at the same time as doing our best for competition climbing.

The amount of additional funding that might be available via UK Sport for climbing as an Olympic sport remains unclear, and there are several options for structuring the management of competition climbing in the coming years (e.g. as it is now as part of the main BMC structure or under a subsidiary company).

RS added that we have received a proposal from the MCofS to work together to create a national identity for competition climbing.

CK asked about competitors from Northern Ireland, which is represented by Mountaineering Ireland, but is included in Team GB, the brand name used since 1999 by the British Olympic Association for the Great Britain and Northern Ireland Olympic team. IW said that anyone from Northern Ireland who holds a British passport can compete in the GB Climbing Team.

IW gave a summary of progress made by the team in the past 2-3 years. There was some disappointment with the lack of financial support from the BMC, and the question of whether to set up a separate structure outside the BMC had been discussed. Other countries had taken this step, generally without much success, increased autonomy often being offset by reduced funding, at least initially.

DS felt it was important to have assurances that money for the BMC's core work would be ring-fenced, so that funds could not be unnecessarily diverted to competition climbing. WK said that lots of young climbers join the BMC to enter our competitions, so for them this is one of our core activities.

A vote was taken on the following:

Do we agree it would be preferable to keep competition climbing under the umbrella of the BMC rather than see it move to a separate organisation outside of the BMC?

Proposed – RG; Seconded – DM
For – 15; Against – 2; Abstentions – 1

Agreed

There was a discussion about what more we could do for the GB Climbing Team, and how we might bring more indoor climbers into the BMC. IW felt we are missing opportunities to use the profile of the team and competition climbing to grow membership.

RE felt we should talk to climbing walls about possible funding for the team / competition climbing, using the 2020 Olympics as a tangible goal. As an example he said the ABC could potentially help by providing money from competition entry fees at ABC-member walls (estimated £20k).

The question of whether to establish a new BMC subsidiary company to manage competition climbing and / or the GB Climbing Team was raised and discussed in brief. CK suggested this needed detailed analysis by the Exec. DT is also due to speak with the UK Sport governance manager on the issue.

RG felt that the exposure the BMC can provide to brands is much greater than the financial benefits we currently get from sponsors and that there should be good potential now we are in the Olympics.

NK felt the British Cycling model, in which the GB Cycling Team's successes are used as an aspirational marketing tool, is one we could learn from.

Actions: Exec to consider further in light of discussions with UK Sport and other relevant parties.

Action: DT

7. Policy issues

7.1 National Council reps on the Executive Committee

7.1.1 RS advised that two vacancies on the committee needed filling: one now, replacing Deirdre Collier, and one in January 2017, replacing Colin Knowles. A written expression of interest had already been received from Lakes Area rep Peter Sterling.

PSim proposed Roger Fanner for one of the vacancies. FS asked if there could be strong representation for the interests of clubs on the Exec.

It was decided to defer a decision until the 3 December meeting. Action: Kate Anwyl to circulate an invitation for interested candidates to apply; Exec skills matrix also to be circulated.

Action: KA

The meeting recorded its thanks to Deirdre Collier for her excellent work as one of the National Council reps on the Executive Committee. **Noted**

8. Club applications for membership*

8.1 The meeting discussed the approval process in relation to the application from Grafham Climbing Club.

RF was concerned that the new email approval system procedures are not being followed, or had not been clearly communicated, in respect of what happens if / when someone queries an application. RF had raised a question about the application from South Norfolk CC, but its application had been accepted – in his opinion – with insufficient scrutiny. He proposed that any application which is questioned by any voting member of National Council should come to the next meeting for discussion before being agreed.

FS proposed that we should get Jane Thompson to request more information from any club whose application is not unanimously accepted. The clubs committee should also produce a guidance note on what constitutes a club. **Action: DT**
Action: FS

RS asked whether there was any risk in accepting the Grafham application. CK felt we had not given it sufficient thought. It was agreed to pass the matter (including Grafham's application) to the clubs committee for consideration at its meeting on 29 September. **Action: FS**

9. AOB

9.1 Support for older members*

9.1.1 CK had produced a discussion paper on older climbers (60+ years), which looked at issues affecting this group, their particular needs and relationship with the BMC.

There was insufficient time to discuss the paper, but FS suggested it could go to the clubs committee for discussion and input. BS felt we should not ignore other groups with specific issues and needs.

9.2 Climbers Against Cancer

9.2.1 NB brought to the meeting's attention the full-page advert for CAC in the new Lancashire Rock guidebook. He asked whether the £5,000 Climbers With Cancer grants would be repeated in 2017. DT advised that the grants were created in 2016 as a one-off tribute to John Ellison who died in December 2015.

9.3 Lancashire Rock guidebook launch

9.3.1 NB reported on a successful launch of the guidebook at the WiltonFest event, where there was a great turnout despite poor weather. See the BMC Facebook page for pictures.

9.4 Mountain Weather Information Service (MWIS)

9.4.1 Concern had been voiced about the future of MWIS, following reports that sportscotland would not continue to fund the service beyond 2016. But following discussions between sportscotland and MWIS both organisations have now given reassurances that the service will in fact be maintained.

9.5 Visibility of National Council minutes on BMC website

9.5.1 MA said the minutes were not easy to find on the website. TRy to create a webpage of 'National Council minutes' with links to recent minutes and summaries. **Action: TRy**

9.6 BMC officer for Wales

9.6.1 Not discussed due to lack of time; a detailed paper would be required should BMC Cymru / Wales wish to progress the idea.

10. Date of next meeting

10.1 10.00am Saturday 3 December 2016, BMC office, Manchester

The meeting finished at 16.20. RF noted that it was the last meeting that PS would attend, and wished to record thanks for his work as National Council representative and area chair.

Summary of action points from the 50th meeting:

Ref	Action	Involving	Target date
3.2.1	Formulate wording of fixed equipment paper re. insurance claims	RD / MW	3 Dec
3.2.2	LMG to consider purchasing and leasing policy word changes	RD	3 Dec
3.2.3	New member data – check progress	DT	3 Dec
3.2.4	Quarries paper	RD	3 Dec
3.2.7	Set start time of Sunday National Council at 2017 AGM	KA	3 Dec
3.2.8	Communication plan for area youth co-ordinators	NC	Ongoing
3.2.9	AMG position statement re. hydro-electricity schemes	DM	Ongoing
3.2.13	Sign and return Conflicts of Interest policy document	All	Immediate
3.2.14	Exec to present new vision and mission statements	DT	3 Dec
5.3.1	Add BMC structure to December agenda	TRy	3 Dec
6.1.5	Add Area consultation paper to December agenda	TRy	3 Dec
6.1.6	Add alternative uses of Climb Britain to December agenda	TRy	3 Dec
6.2.1	Exec to consider options for managing climbing as an Olympic sport	DT	19 Oct
7.1.1	Invite interested candidates to apply as NC rep on Exec	KA	Immediate
8.1	Clubs officer to request more information from applications not unanimously accepted via email system	DT	Immediate
8.1	Clubs Committee to produce guidance on what constitutes a club	FS	Ongoing
8.1	Clubs Committee to consider Grafham CC application	FS	29 Sept
9.5.1	Create National Council minutes page on BMC website	TRy	Ongoing

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

Signed _____ Date _____
 Rehan Siddiqui, President & Chair