

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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BMC NATIONAL COUNCIL

Minutes of the 55th National Council meeting held on Saturday 16 September 2017,
Orierton Field Studies Centre, Pembrokeshire.

In attendance

Voting members:

Acting President	Nick Kurth	(NK)	Chair
Honorary Treasurer	Graham Richmond	(GR)	
Cymru Wales (North)	Anthony Eccles	(AE)	
Cymru Wales (South)	Steve Quinton	(SQ)	
Lakes	Ted Rogers	(TRo)	
Lakes	Pete Sterling	(PSt)	
London & South East	Lisa Payne	(LP)	
London & South East	Rik Payne	(RP)	
Midlands	Phil Simister	(PSi)	
North East	Mark Anstiss	(MA)	
North West	Carl Spencer	(CS)	
North West	Andy Say	(AS)	
Peak	David Brown	(DB)	
South West	Helen Wilson	(HW)	
South West	Gareth Palmer	(GP)	
Yorkshire	Mick Green	(MG)	
CEO	Dave Turnbull	(DT)	

Observers:

Independent Director	Matthew Bradbury	(MB)
Independent Director	Simon McCalla	(SM)
Association of British Climbing Walls	Rich Emerson	(RE)
Clubs Committee	Fiona Sanders	(FS)
Equity Steering Group	Kamala Sen	(KS)
Land Management Group	Martin Wragg	(MW)
Mountain Training England	Guy Jarvis	(GJ)

Staff:

Deputy CEO	Nick Colton	(NC)
Secretary	Tony Ryan	(TRY)

Note: * = supporting paper circulated.

- | 1. | Welcome & apologies for absence | Actions |
|-------|--|---------|
| 1.1 | Welcome | |
| 1.1.1 | Nick Kurth welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Steve Quinton who was attending for the first time as Cymru South representative in place of Will Kilner. | |
| 1.1.2 | NK advised that the focus of the meeting would be on governance, and would include a presentation by Organisational Review Group (ORG) members. | |
| 1.2 | Apologies | |

1.2.1 Apologies were received from: Jackie Bryson; Roger Fanner; Will Kilner; Dan Lane; Dave Musgrove; Andy Newton; Jon Punshon; Lynn Robinson; Mike Rosser; and Andy Syme.

1.3 Conflicts of Interest in relation to agenda items

1.3.1 No conflicts were declared.

2. Note issues for AOB

- 2.1
- National Council expenses (Pete Sterling).
 - National Council venues (Phil Simister).
 - Nick Bond's passing (Carl Spencer). Agreed to cover in NW report.
 - Subscriptions; and BMC historical record (David Brown).
 - Nick Colton advised that BMC hon. member Vin Machin had passed away; the meeting recorded its condolences to Vin's family.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting*

3.1 Accuracy of previous minutes

3.1.1 Under item 9.7 the minutes recorded:

Rik Payne commented that once again the meeting had not fully covered all issues on the agenda, and proposed that future meetings should be extended beyond the scheduled time if additional time was required to fully cover the agenda.

RP clarified that what he had in fact said was that meetings should be scheduled for a full day, and if they finished early, that would be a bonus.

With the above amendment, the minutes were signed by the Chair.

3.2 Actions from previous minutes

- | | | |
|--------|---|-----|
| 3.2.1 | Ref 5.3.2: Produce 'Top Ten' points for area chairs; done, but re-circulate. | TRy |
| 3.2.2 | Ref 5.4.1: Advise Rehan Siddiqui of hon. membership nomination; done. | |
| 3.2.3 | Ref. 5.4.2: Consider wider equity award as part of volunteer strategy; under consideration ref: Lynn Robinson. | |
| 3.2.4 | Ref 6.1.2: Report financial strategy request to ORG; ongoing. | |
| 3.2.5 | Ref 6.2.1: Review Strategic Plan draft to identify items not reliant on the ORG outcomes. Send out for feedback with two-week response deadline. | DT |
| 3.2.6 | Ref 6.3.1: Write to Mountain Training regarding their letter to Ray Wigglesworth; on September agenda. | |
| 3.2.7 | Ref 6.4.1: Advise Colin Knowles and take forward plans to engage with IFSC; on September agenda. | |
| 3.2.8 | Ref 7.1.1: Produce key to help National Council members interpret BMC accounts; done. | |
| 3.2.9 | Ref 7.2.1: AMG to consider additional advice on bracken / ticks. DT to advise Dave Musgrove and Cath Flitcroft, BMC to review and re-issue advice. | DT |
| 3.2.10 | Ref 7.2.1: Prompt Rob Dyer to re-visit composting toilet idea. The meeting was supportive of establishing a facility at Horseshoe Quarry as a good practice trial; Martin Wragg (LMG) and Rob Dyer to take forward. | MW |
| 3.2.11 | Ref 7.2.5: Investigate airline baggage query. Andy Say to research potential web article. | AS |
| 3.2.12 | Ref 7.2.5: Investigate data query with Alvin Foy. Simon McCalla to clarify. | SM |
| 3.2.13 | Ref 7.2.7: Advise Rob Dyer to engage with West Penwith authorities. Gareth Palmer to contact Rob Dyer. | GP |
| 3.2.14 | Ref 9.1: Circulate letters to patrons. Letters drafted, NK to circulate. | NK |
| 3.2.15 | Ref 9.2: Investigate club hut volunteer insurance query; done and resolved. | |

- 3.2.16 Ref 9.3: Roger Fanner to circulate update to National Council members on Hill Walking Implementation Group. The following points were noted: RF
- Peter Judd is now chairing the HWIG.
 - Sport England funding for BMC's hill walking strategy is not available until at least 1 April 2018.
 - Mend our Mountains II is in motion and will run for most of 2018; an ACT funded co-ordinator (Inigo Atkin) has been appointed to support Carey Davies.
 - Phil Simister expressed a concern that the BMC's hill walking work has stalled.

4. **Matters arising not covered elsewhere**

4.1 **IFSC update***

NC summarised the latest paper produced by Colin Knowles.

Since elections to the IFSC Executive Board and Continental Councils Board have just taken place and are held every four years, appointment of a BMC member to one of these boards is unlikely to happen until early 2021.

Colin has expressed interest in joining a new IFSC working group looking at a new database and results system.

Both IFSC and UIAA are open to the proposal of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations. The meeting discussed how best to develop such an agreement, and felt it would be better to have a joint approach with other federations. NC to sound out federations. NC

5. **Constitutional issues**

5.1 **Modernisation of BMC Governance***

DT reported that the office and Executive had now completed most of the governance improvements; the outstanding points are either awaiting consideration by the ORG and / or would require changes to the BMC Memorandum & Articles of Association.

NK added that this work is not just in response to Sport England, but that much of it was standard good practice that should ordinarily have been done over the past five years in any case.

AE asked which actions had been completed and which parked. DT replied that Sport England had identified 29 of 55 areas where work was required, and that we had now addressed c.20 of them.

MA asked whether Sport England was satisfaction with our progress. NK said it had been a challenging exercise to convince SE we can deliver, being the only national body which will remain non-compliant by the October deadline.

The draft Governance Manual was discussed. DT advised that this will remain a work-in-progress until after the 2018 AGM. MB felt there should be an annual review of the manual.

The meeting was asked to adopt the Governance Manual, subject to the removal of the 'draft' and its replacement with 'interim'.

For – 17; Against – 0; Abstentions – 0.

Agreed

NK summarised the role and make-up of the Nominations Committee, and advised that a third independent director with financial experience is required, and that the Nominations Committee needs to be in place to make the selection.

PSi felt it important to have multiple candidates to select from. NK advised that candidate selection would be by a panel comprising members of the Executive, not by the Executive Committee itself nor by National Council; this followed best practice.

MA pointed out that item 1.1 (Establishment and duration) in the ToR only covered establishment, not its duration. Martn Wragg advised that 1.1 was subject to review when the ORG reports.

RP noted that the one member of the committee who has a link to the membership (National Council rep) does not have a vote, and questioned how this might be perceived.

MW suggested rephrasing 3. (Membership), to say: the Committee shall comprise of the BMC President three independent directors and a National Council rep on the Executive Committee, who shall not vote pending the appointment of the third independent director.

SM clarified that the selection of National Council reps (directors) on the Executive would remain a National Council responsibility. Organisational needs and the skills matrix should however be carefully considered in the case of these appointments.

A vote was taken on whether to accept the ToR as an interim document. For – 16; Against – 0; Abstentions – 1.

5.2 Consideration of Organisational Review Group report*

FS gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation setting out the ORG process to date. It was reported that Paul Caddy has stepped down from the ORG, and is being replaced by another individual with a legal background. The member survey and focus group meetings have been completed.

The survey had received over 5,000 responses, and the age breakdown of respondents closely mirrors BMC membership as a whole. A report has been produced by 20/20 Research, the independent market research company commissioned to undertake the work.

16 focus group meetings have been held with a broad range of stakeholders, and feedback is apparently consistent with the survey findings.

The ORG report will be published by 16 November, and presentations will be made by ORG members at the November Area Meetings.

NK recorded National Council's gratitude to Fiona and all the ORG members for the considerable work they have done. He asked for the presentation to be attached to the minutes, and for an edited version be put on the BMC website.

TRY

The format of the December 2017 National Council meeting was then discussed, this is already a lengthy meeting due to the annual approval of Specialist Committee ToR and forward plans. The meeting discussed how the process for approving these ToRs and plans might be done differently.

A two-day format was suggested, as one day may not allow for proper consideration to all items.

PSt preferred an extended single day meeting, but the general feeling was that this could lead to fatigue, which might affect decision making, and would leave little time for homeward travel, thereby necessitating hotel accommodation. If people would have to stay overnight anyway it made more sense to spread the meeting over two days.

A vote was taken on whether to hold the meeting over a single day or two days:

Single day – 6 votes; Two days – 10 votes.

Schedule as follows:

Saturday AM – Specialist Committee ToRs and Forward Plans (2.5hrs)*

Saturday PM – ORG report and Area feedback (4hrs)

Sunday AM – other National Council business

*chair to ensure all Committee chairs have sufficient time to present their work; chairs to provide succinct 1 page summary in advance for circulation to NC members (note: TRy to provide updated template).

TRy

6. Policy issues

6.1 BMC representation on Mountain Training England*

NC summarised the paper produced Jon Garside, which included two proposals: that the BMC reduces its number of voting members from four to one at MTE; and that the observer status of MTE and MTC (on National Council) be replaced with Mountain Training having observer status (a reduction of attendees from two to one). Additionally it was proposed that MTUK, MTE and MTC become National Council paper members.

GJ was keen for National Council to decide upon these proposals, but it was felt that it ought to be put to the wider membership, in view of the long history of the BMC and Mountain Training.

RP felt we must explain to members how the current situation had come about and why the change is being proposed; Carl Spencer added that without area consultation we would not have a mandate for the proposals.

NK summarised by saying that National Council was broadly supportive of the proposals, but noting the historical context, it was prudent to consult more broadly, and that Jon Garside and Nick Colton should produce a one-page summary for discussion at the November area meetings.

NC

In respect of the second proposal, reducing the number of MT observers on National Council from two to one, a vote was taken:

For – 16; Against – 0; Abstentions – 0.
NC to advise Mountain Training.

NC

7. Reports

7.1 Finance*

7.1.1 GR reported that cost savings had been implemented to ensure staff continuity, and that the forecast still includes an expectation of receiving some Sport England funding this year.

DT advised that we had received no Sport England since 1 April 2017, a loss of c.£100k; an interim payment of £89k (plus some additional funding for talent) is however expected, then we will have to wait until the December Sport England board meeting for a decision on the next period of funding. Continued funding will be dependent on the outcome of the BMC AGM.

AE asked how much money might be saved if Summit magazine was published online only. (note: refer to accounts for figures).

DB asked about the cost of engaging with Sport England. DT replied that this was primarily staff time e.g. c.20% of his own time is spent dealing with Sport England over the course of a year, plus considerable staff time input.

FS expressed concern at the loss of financial support for clubs, and asked whether there was a policy / criteria for allocating additional funding. NC replied that staff supported by Sport England funding have had to work with limited project funding over the past 6 months.

NK observed that the high participation figures for mountaineering reported by Sport England Active Lives survey were not reflected by government funding or support for the activity.

7.2 CEO & office

DT advised that he had been focused on governance work and that significant progress had been made since June. However, there was still uncertainty over Sport England funding.

The commercial partnerships programme is starting to yield results, with a major partnership with Cotswold Outdoor / Snow+Rock having recently been announced, and a partnership with an outdoor clothing supplier due to go-live in October.

Membership now stands at over 85k for the first time, 90% of whom are on direct debit for membership subscriptions.

Three members of staff are about to leave the BMC: Rob Adie (competitions), Jo Rowbottom (equity), and Estee Farrar (access). Cath Flitcroft returns from maternity leave in early October.

Two new temporary staff have recently joined the BMC: Tamaris Higham as marketing & communications co-ordinator (maternity cover placement) and Inigo Atkin as co-ordinator for Mend Our Mountains II.

7.3 Mend our Mountains II - project report*

MB brought the meeting up to speed with developments. A soft launch is planned for October. MOM II differs from the original project, not just in scale of fundraising (£1m compared to £100k), but in timescale (MOM II is one year, MOM was 6 weeks). MOM II is more than a fundraising / footpath repair exercise. It aims to raise awareness among policymakers and the public of the importance of national parks, and galvanise a sense of responsibility among recreational users for looking after precious places.

7.4 Area reports

Note: female attendance now recorded where known.

7.4.1 Cymru South. 16 people attended the Sept meeting in Cardiff.

The main discussion centred around the Welsh government consultation on future access legislation, which includes a proposal to permit cycling and horse riding on footpaths. The BMC in Wales is generally in favour of the proposal, provided a code of conduct is agreed, and restrictions put in place to limit erosion at key sites. The paper includes proposals to remove some restrictions on activities under the CRoW Act, to extend access land to the coast and cliffs, and develop a statutory code of access for Wales.

SQ reported that there had been three breaches of access restrictions in Pembroke; one of these may have been due to incorrect / inconsistent information (now resolved) on the Regional Access Database (RAD). SQ also reported that Dee de Mengel, a former BMC access rep had passed away.

7.4.2 **Cymru North.** 32 people total (5 female) attended the Sept meeting in Nant Peris.

AE reported that Elfyn Jones is negotiating for access to the central part of Craig y Forwyn (Llanddulas). There have been recent parking problems, as well as sheep escaping through an open gate, so climbers are encouraged to follow the agreed access arrangements so as not to jeopardise negotiations. It was noted that Cymru North is very supportive of the BMC progressing negotiations with a view to taking on the ownership of the site.

There have been two recent serious incidents in the Llanberis slate quarries, one involving a walker and the other a climber, which might cause the landowner (First Hydro) to reconsider access arrangements.

7.4.3 **Lakes.** PSt reported that there have been several recent incidents of inappropriate route marking by challenge event organisers, as well as the fixing of ropes on Pinnacle Ridge (St Sunday Crag). He asked whether the BMC challenge events guide addresses the issue of 'signage'.

Post meeting note: the BMC's *The Green Guide to: Challenge Events in the Hills* does include guidance on the use of route markers.

It was agreed that the office would issue advice to the list of event organisers it holds. DT to advise Rob Dyer.

DT

The meeting had also discussed what to do about bracken encroachment on footpaths, and the merits of composting toilets.

Patterdale MRT has installed some bolts above Dove Crag to assist rescue operations, in spite of advice from the Area that natural anchors are available. There was concern that this might set a precedent for installing bolt anchors on other traditional crags.

It was agreed that the office should write to MREW, and request it disseminates guidance to rescue teams. DT to advise Rob Dyer.

DT

The meeting discussed and voted on the proposed zip wire across Thirlmere reservoir; 18 voted against (including 5 non-members), 2 for, and 2 abstentions. It was agreed that Cath Flitcroft would gather evidence and formulate the BMC's position. DT to advise CF.

DT

7.4.4 **London & SE*.** 38 people attended the Sept meeting.

The issue of access onto / off the Isolated Buttress at Harrison's will be resolved at an open meeting on 8 October; members were encouraged to attend or email their views to Sarah Cullen.

Some members wanted more detailed information on the criteria and principles used in formalising commercial partnerships.

The area is seeking two new youth co-ordinators for the London North region.

7.4.5 **Midlands***. 32 people total (11 female) attended the Sept meeting in Solihull.

There was some concern that the Hill Walking Implementation Group seems to have been side lined by Mend Our Mountains II, and that the loss of Sport England funding might impact its work. Some members had felt that the BMC should be independent of government funding. NK responded by stressing that the Mend our Mountains is very much a hill walking focused campaign which sits well within the BMC's overall Hill Walking Strategy.

It was noted that some members had had difficulty understanding / completing elements of the ORG online survey.

7.4.6 **North East**. 15-20 people total (3 female) attended the Sept meeting in Newcastle.

MA advised that former access rep Peter Hay had passed away. Peter had performed the role for many years, and the meeting recorded condolences.

There had been some unease at the speed at which the partnership with Cotswold Outdoor/Snow+Rock had gone through.

MA asked whether funding might be available to address the issue of hold erosion on some popular sandstone crags. DT noted that small grants may be available from the BMC Access & Conservation Trust.

7.4.7 **North West.*** 10 people total (1 female) attended the Sept meeting in Belthorn.

In an effort to attract more hill walkers Andy Say had offered a free navigation workshop before the meeting, one person had taken up the offer.

A site has been established at Wilton in memory of Nick Bond. Over 400 people attended WiltonFest earlier this month, and raised over £1,400 for Climbers Against Cancer.

7.4.8 **Peak**. 80-90 people total (8 female) attended the Sept meeting.

DB noted that three people had so far expressed interest in the vacant National Council rep role.

Key activities include rebolting at Horseshoe Quarry, and work with the National Trust to improve crag access in Dovedale, in advance of the publication of the Peak Limestone South guide, which is likely to stimulate activity.

Later this month there is a BMC-led walk on Bleaklow as part of Moors for the Future BogFest 2017.

7.4.9 **South West**. c.20 people total (1 female) attended the Sept meeting on Dartmoor.

HW reported that the Lundy Climbing Festival, organised by GP, had been a tremendous success. The meeting thanked Gareth for his great effort in arranging the festival.

Dan Middleton has held a bolting workshop to support Dorset Bolt Fund activists. Torbryan Quarry is under consideration for re-equipping.

In Avon Gorge, Bristol City Council is working to reduce the suicide risk, and the gate above Sea Walls (an identified 'hot spot'), which is currently padlocked, is likely to be fitted with a keypad for climber access – code to be on the RAD.

The meeting was also warned of the impact of major income reduction to the City Council from central government, particularly its potential effect on estates / parks management.

The meeting discussed the incidence of unnecessary coastguard call-outs made by members of the public in response to seeing DWS climbing activity, and recent incidents at Portland when coastguards had experienced difficulty evacuating casualties but had not called for support from local climbers.

7.4.10 **Yorkshire***. 38 people attended the Sept meeting in Ben Rhydding.

MG reported that the area has a new clubs committee rep, Pete Barrans.

The purchase of Crookrise Crag has gone down well with local members.

MG asked about office support to raise awareness about youth activities in Yorkshire. The area has previously had a youth co-ordinator for outdoor activities. NC agreed to investigate.

NC

8. Club applications for membership*

8.1 The application for membership by Nidderdale Adventure Club was circulated to National Council on 29 August 2017. No queries or objections were made by the 12 September deadline, so the application has been accepted.

Agreed

9. AOB

9.1 Conflicts of Interest register*

NK read out a list of those who had not yet completed the register; it was agreed that completed forms would be submitted by 6 October.

9.2 National Council expenses (Pete Sterling)

PSt suggested extending expenses to cover partners attending National Council weekends. As the main expense is mileage, he felt this would not amount to a significant additional cost, but would help to acknowledge the contribution of partners.

There was some support for the suggestion, but also a concern about how this might be perceived. NK suggested that a 12-month financial analysis be conducted; DT thought that it would amount to roughly £2k in additional costs.

GR

9.3 National Council venues (Phil Simister)

PSi felt meetings in remote locations of England and Wales left little time for outdoor activities, nor for extended meetings, as travel to and from the locations took up a significant chunk of the weekend.

NK suggested National Council could either continue to visit all BMC areas (on a rotating basis), or be focused on a 'central beltway' to reduce overall travel time. A show of hands indicated that 14 people were in favour of the later. Action: TRy to suggest venues for 2018.

TRy

9.4 Subscriptions, and BMC history (David Brown)

9.4.1 DB had produced a paper containing some ideas and suggestions for new and revised membership categories for young people, senior citizens, and lifetime members. TRy to circulate and gather feedback.

TRy

9.4.2 DB also raised the question about what we planned to do about recording the history of the BMC. The 'First 50 Years' book documents the history of the organisation up to 1994, but has not been continued.

Whilst there is no specific plan to undertake such a project CS suggested Phil Kelly might be interested in assisting and offered to take soundings.

9.6 2018 BMC AGM

The June National Council meeting had agreed the 2018 AGM would be held in the Lake District. DT felt that a more central location with good public transport and a venue which could host a sizeable number of attendees might be preferable, as the ORG report is likely to generate increased attendance. The office had been looking at alternatives in Manchester and Sheffield.

PSt felt there is a good case for Kendal which is home to the UK's biggest mountain festival, has suitable hotels and good road and rail links.

HW suggested Bristol and its Watershed Centre as an alternative.

A vote was taken on whether to hold the AGM in Manchester / Sheffield or the Lake District. In the first round of voting, there were 8 votes for each. A second round scored 4 votes to Manchester / Sheffield and 10 votes to the Lake District. DT to progress.

DT

9.7 Note of thanks to Phil Simister

As this would be Phil's last National Council, the meeting recorded a note of thanks to Phil for his joint role as chair and National Council rep for the Midlands Area, during which time he had helped to regenerate the area meetings, and which had often involved long journeys whilst working away from home.

10. Date of next meeting

10.1 2 & 3 December 2017, BMC office, Manchester; 10.30 am start on the Saturday.

The meeting finished at 16.30

Summary of action points from the 55th meeting:

Ref	Action	Who	By
3.2.1	Re-circulate 'Top Ten' points for area chairs	TRy	Immediate
3.2.5	Send out Strategic Plan draft for feedback	DT	October
3.2.9	Prompt AMG for additional advice on bracken / ticks. Re-issue BMC advice	DT	asap
3.2.10	Progress composting toilet at Horseshoe Quarry	MW	Ongoing
3.2.11	Research airline baggage web article	AS	asap
3.2.12	Clarify data query	SM	asap
3.2.13	Engagement with West Penwith authorities	GP	Ongoing
3.2.14	Issue letters to patrons	NK	Immediate
3.2.16	Circulate HWIG update email	RF	asap
4.1	Sound out federations re. IFSC/UIAA MoU	NC	Ongoing
5.2	Upload ORG presentation slides to website, and attach to NC minutes	TRy	Immediate
5.2	Produce 1 page template for Specialist Committee chairs	TRy	October
6.1	Produce 1-page MT summary document	NC	November

6.1	Update National Council membership list, and advise MT	TRy / NC	Immediate
7.4.3	Advise challenge event organisers about route marking	DT	October
7.4.3	Write to MREW re: cliff anchor guidance	DT	October
7.4.3	Formulate BMC position on Thirlmere zip wire	DT	October
7.4.10	Review AYC cover in Yorkshire area	NC	asap
9.2	Financial review of partner expense option	GR	December
9.3	Suggest 2018 National Council meeting locations in 'beltway' area	TRy	December
9.4.1	Circulate subscriptions paper	TRy	Immediate
9.6	Progress Lake District venue for 2018 AGM	DT	Immediate

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

Signed _____ Date _____
 Nick Kurth, Acting President & Chair