

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

177-179 Burton Road
Manchester M20 2BB

Tel: 0161 445 6111
www.thebmc.co.uk

Members' Council

Approved minutes of the Members' Council meeting held on Zoom on Tuesday 23 November 2021 at 7.00pm.

In attendance:

Voting Members

Elected Councillors

President	Andy Syme	AS		
Cymru North Wales	Tarquin Shipley	TS		
Cymru South Wales	Steve Quinton	SQ		
London & South East	Robert Dufton	RD	Chris Stone	CSt Deputy to the President
Midlands	David Jones*2	DJ	Claudia Sarnier	CSa
North West	Bill Beveridge	BB	Carl Spencer*1	CSp
Peak	David Brown	DB	Alison Cairns	AC
South West	Helen Wilson	HW	Philip Wilson	PW
Yorkshire	Mick Green	MG		

Specialist Councillors

Clubs Committee	Peter Salenieks*1	PS
Nationally Elected Councillor for Hill Walkers	Rose Gare-Simmons	RGS
Nationally Elected Councillor for Rock Climbers	Steve Clark	SC
Constituency Councillor for Mountain Training candidates	Oli Lewis	OL

*1 = also Council Nominated Director

*2 = also Huts Group Observer

Observers

Board of Directors

Nominated Director (Clubs)	Jonathan White	JW
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Others

Chair of the Role of the President Task & Finish Group	Roger Fanner	RF	For Role of the President agenda item only
BMC staff	Minute taker	Tony Ryan	

* denotes supporting paper(s) circulated prior to meeting

Item	Topic and Main Aspects Considered	Decision / Action	Who	When
1	Welcome & apologies for absence			
1.1	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, an extra meeting scheduled for discussion of two agenda items which could not be covered in the Council meeting on 13 November due to lack of time.			
1.1.1	In addition, the meeting would discuss the paper on Councillor Guidance for Social Media Interaction, which had been uploaded to the meeting project on Teamwork the day before the meeting, and had generated a number of comments.			
1.2	Apologies for absence were received from: Peter Judd.			
2	Note Conflicts of Interest			
2.1	The Chair, being also the President, stated his conflict in relation to agenda item 5, the discussion of the Role of the President Task & Finish Group Report.			
3	Councillor Guidance for Social Media Interaction*			
3.1	A general discussion was held on the proposed social media guidelines. HW thanked those who had commented on the document posted on Teamwork. The aim of the document is to provide guidance on how the new social media point in the Members' Council Code of Practice (CoP) should be actioned in practice.			
3.1.1	HW acknowledged the differing views of Council members expressed in the Teamwork comments, and that interpretation of that guidance might differ from person to person.			
3.1.2	SC felt that the document needed to include a pre-amble, and should emphasise the positives of using social media, acknowledging that its use can also have downsides.			
3.1.3	The Chair felt that the use of 'you should do the following' was too prescriptive and needed to be softened.			
3.1.4	There was discussion about the benefits to the BMC of Councillors who already have an established social media profile using such profiles to promote the work of the BMC.			

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3.1.5	With respect to managing group and business profiles, CSp said that they work in a different way and that group profiles provided the opportunity for management by multiple people.			
3.1.6	There was some resistance to action point 5, which states that Councillors should not re-post private posts from other members or colleagues without prior arrangement. HW said that this featured in the guidance of other organisations she had looked at when compiling the document.			
3.1.7	There was also some resistance to the guidance on consultation with other volunteers and staff before publishing, although the guidance does state that this should be done where practicable and this guidance does feature in the CoP.			
3.1.8	In response to a suggestion that accounts for the Nationally Elected Councillors (NEC) might be a useful addition, CSt cautioned about the risk of diluting messaging by setting up more official BMC accounts. As an NEC, RGS was concerned about the additional burden of managing another account in addition to her own personal and professional accounts, and the time to build up a following on a new account.			
3.1.9	It was agreed that different people use social media in different ways, and the Chair suggested that our best approach would be to start with some basic guidance which can evolve over the next couple of years.			
3.1.10	AC pointed out that posting isn't usually problematical until someone engages with you and expects a response, and control of discussions can easily be lost whether you respond or not.			
3.1.11	HW agreed to review the draft document in light of the discussions and publish another draft, with the aim of having a final version agreed for the start of 2022.	Publish revised draft of guidance document.	HW	ASAP
4	Role of the President Task & Finish Group Report*			
4.1	The Chair welcomed back RF, who had previously sat on Council as an Area Representative for the Midlands, and had been a Council Nominated Director until 2019, and asked him to summarise the work of the group and say what it wants from Council.			
4.1.1	RF said that the report was somewhat of a compromise, in that the group had hoped to present some recommendations to Council, but could not agree on them. Nevertheless, the report sets out what the group has discovered and its conclusions.			

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4.1.2	In considering the future role of the President, it should be noted that the last five years has been a period of considerable turmoil for the BMC, and this is likely to have affected the willingness of individuals to take on the presidency.			
4.1.3	If the decision was to establish a new form of presidency, the group did not wish to see it established as a third 'powerbase' alongside the Board and Council, so the role must be ambassadorial, and there should not be any attempt to undo or redo any of the organisational changes made by recent changes to the BMC's Articles of Association (AoA).			
4.1.4	Essentially there seem to be two models for the role of a President: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As is (hands on / primarily inward facing). 2. Super Patron / Ambassadorial President (hands off / outward facing). The role does not have to be uniquely one or the other and can sit at different points on a continuum from inward facing to outward facing.			
4.1.5	The group suggests that the role of the President cannot be prescribed without also considering the roles of the Patrons, the operation of Council, any Deputy Presidents and others, so there is a risk that this might require a review of all that has originally changed; which would be 'difficult' (see 4.1.3 above).			
4.1.6	RF wished to highlight six issues for Council to consider: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Would an 'Ambassadorial' President be beneficial to the BMC? 2. If so, what would need to be in place before that could happen? 3. Who should chair the Members' Council? 4. Should the Council Chair be a Director? 5. Should the BMC cease to describe the President as the Members' Champion? 6. Can some or all of the ex-officio duties of the President be reallocated to others? 			
4.2	1. Would an 'Ambassadorial' President be beneficial to the BMC?			
4.2.1	RD, who is a member of the group, said that the answer to this question should inform the direction of travel, and that the six questions are sequential, and he felt that the role is about lending reputation and profile to further the BMC's external goals including raising the organisation's public profile and helping to bring in more revenue.			
4.2.2	Some Council members felt that some of the reasons for change seem to be solvable by other means, such as making better use of BMC Patrons and Ambassadors. It was also felt that the President needs to have a relationship with the Board and Council, in order to understand the role and be effective in it.			

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4.2.3	There was also discussion around shaping the role to fit potential candidates.			
4.3	2. If so, what would need to be in place before that could happen?			
4.3.1	In practice, an Ambassadorial President (AP) role is largely ceremonial, and to make proper use of the personality who carries out the role, so that it maximises the benefit to the organisation, requires skill and dedicated human resource within the organisation, and a clear 'outreach' strategy the AP can sign up to.			
4.3.2	Some Councillors felt that the organisation was not ready to instigate what could be a step change at this point in time.			
4.4	3. Who should chair the Members' Council?			
4.4.1	Other than the duty to chair a General Meeting, the AoA do not define the role of the President, so the Chair of Council may or may not be called the President. Currently, the President is an Elected Councillor (ex-officio).			
4.4.2	A member could be elected President, and be expected to Chair Council with no experience of Council. An alternative might be for Council to elect its Chair from amongst its members.			
4.4.3	However, if the Chairs of Council and Board were no longer voted on by the membership, would that be acceptable to the membership or would they perceive it to be a democratic deficit?			
4.5	4. Should the Council Chair be a Director?			
4.5.1	There is recognition that this is a sensitive issue, and that the President/Chair of Council is highly conflicted as a Director, because they have legal duties as a Director which may impact on their ability to act strongly on behalf of Council. It was recognised that this conflict also affected CNDs albeit possibly slightly less.			
4.5.2	An AP would not be expected to be involved in day to day governance, let alone attend Board or Council meetings, and a Council Chair could be an influential observer on the Board.			
4.6	5. Should the BMC cease to describe the President as the Members' Champion?			
4.6.1	Although the report stated that the evolution of National Council into Members' Council means that the title of 'Members' Champion' for the President is superfluous and could be seen to denigrate the role of all Councillors to champion their constituencies and members generally. reduce the perception that, there was some concern that this could be seen as a			

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	reduction in members' powers, and until Member's Council has been in place long enough to gain members' trust, there is a need for one person to be identified as such.			
4.6.2	An AP wouldn't be the Member's Champion, and could mean that the Chair of Council is not elected, making it difficult for the Chair to undertake the Members' Champion role.			
4.7	6. Can some or all of the ex-officio duties of the President be reallocated to others?			
4.7.1	This question was asked in relation to looking at how the time commitment of the present role could be made more manageable. The Chair said that the ex-officio duties don't take up a significant amount of time, and it is chairing Council which takes up the largest amount of time.			
4.7.2	The Chair stated that he would be supportive of another Councillor taking Chair of the Council (which did not affect the AoA) as a trial but there was no appetite amongst attendees to take this task on. The Chair stated that if the President's role is to be less time consuming, and hence more attractive to wider group, the Council will need, in all likelihood, to take on more.			
4.8	Council support for Ambassadorial President, and further action			
4.8.1	The Chair asked each Council member individually whether they were in favour of an Ambassadorial President. Although there was a slight majority for an AP, there was some variation on the timing of the introduction of this role.			
4.8.2	In acknowledgement of the fact that this role cannot be prescribed without also considering other roles within the organisation including Patrons and Ambassadors, the Chair proposed that BMC Ambassador Steve McClure, who would appear to be effectively the senior BMC Ambassador, should be invited to join the Honours and Awards Panel, if the Council meeting on 7 December agrees to the formation of the panel.	Add option to invite 'senior ambassador' to join Honours & Awards T&FG, for 7 Dec	CSt	7 Dec
4.8.3	Each attending Councillor was asked whether an 'Ambassadorial' President be beneficial to the BMC? The majority (12) believed this was a good direction of travel but there were significant variations in when this should be achieved by, with the majority of yes voters saying 3-5 years was a reasonable estimate of the minimum time necessary before implementation (and all the no voters being "not within 5 years", rather than not ever). The Chair asked Council how they wished to take forward the discussion, given that there was no strong agreement on the direction and timing, which would make the work of a Task & Finish Group (T&FG) or an Implementation Group (IG) difficult.			

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4.8.4	The Chair agreed to add the discussion to the 7 December meeting agenda, when a T&FG could be established to consider how we might move to the introduction of an AP role. The group would propose what needs to be done, including a timeline, and when and how to take any proposal to the membership for approval. This would be quite a large piece of work running in parallel with the work on establishing an Honours and Awards Panel, and would require co-ordination between the groups.	Add Ambassadorial President T&FG formation to 7 Dec agenda	AS	ASAP
4.8.5	The Chair stated that any progress was dependant on Councillors being willing to resource this additional T&F Group.			
4.8.6	RD requested that the minutes of the meeting recorded an expression of thanks to RF as Chair of the group, and other group members including MG, Alex Hamilton-Baily and Fiona Sanders, and others who had supported the group in producing the report.	Noted		
5	Member Code of Conduct Task & Finish Group Report			
5.1	This agenda item was not discussed; the group's report had not yet been submitted.	Add Member Code of Conduct T&FG Report to future agenda once paper available	AS	TBC

There being no other business, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.15pm.

Summary of actions:

See [3rd Members' Council Outstanding Actions](#) (link only available to Council members)

Item	Action	Involving	Target date
3.1.11	Publish revised draft of Social Media guidance document.	HW	ASAP
4.8.1	Add option to invite 'senior ambassador' to join Honours & Awards T&FG, for 7 Dec	CSt	7 Dec
4.8.3	Add Ambassadorial President T&FG formation to 7 Dec agenda	AS	7 Dec
5.1	Add Member Code of Conduct T&FG Report to future agenda once paper available	AS	TBC

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



Signed _____ Date 8 December 2021

Andy Syme, Chair