

# The BMC and Climate Change



## Our commitment

The British Mountaineering Council (BMC) is well aware of the impact that climate change could have on the landscapes that make climbing, hill walking and mountaineering so special to us all. The BMC has demonstrated its environmental commitment with the development of an **Environment Policy** in order to ensure our interests are not threatened through inaction in this area. In September 2008, we received the Gold standard of the North West Environmental Business Pledge for our exceptional environmental performance. This further signals our commitment to promoting good practice in managing climate change, both within the office and nationally by offering advice to all our members and the climbing, hill walking and mountaineering community at large. The BMC has also signed the North West Climate Change Charter.

**The Northwest Climate Change Charter** is a major initiative, spearheaded by Lord Thomas of Macclesfield CBE and Sustainability Northwest, to get organisations in the Northwest to commit to tackle climate change.

By signing up to the Charter, the BMC:

### **Acknowledge:**

That climate change will profoundly influence the environmental, social and economic conditions in the Northwest of England and will continue to be a critical factor throughout the 21st Century.



### **Commits to:**

- Taking action to mitigate and adapt to climate change
- Acknowledging that action needs to take place at all levels – global, international, European, national, regional and locally
- Helping the region to achieve the national goal of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> by 60% by 2050 (based on 1990 levels)
- Supporting better ways to co-ordinate action on climate change across the region.

### **Agrees to take on the climate change challenge by:**

- Putting climate change at the heart of our internal decision-making process
- Taking all practical steps to limit CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and responding to the challenges posed by the impacts of climate change
- Setting up organisation-wide and effective CO<sub>2</sub> measurement and monitoring arrangements and comparing our results with appropriate benchmarks
- Working with others to communicate our progress and successes and encourage others to take action to ensure that England's North West becomes a champion for climate change activity.

This document highlights the commitment the BMC has made to try and raise the issue of climate change with our members and how we are translating our commitment to climate change through policy and action.



## The Value of Our Environment

As climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers, we practise our sport on relatively untouched summits and cliffs. We have the potential to further affect those environments that are so valuable to our experience. We need to be aware of, and to protect, the special features of the environment we use, whether it is cliff or ground nesting birds, arctic-alpine flora, blanket bog, or the fragile montane heath on the very highest summits.

The BMC recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering impact on the environment, and acknowledges responsibility to take reasonable measures to safeguard the environment for both present and future generations. The BMC will improve its own environmental performance and provide assistance and advice to climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers on environmental issues relating to their activities. These policies will be regularly monitored and subjected to audits at appropriate intervals to ensure that the policy objectives are achieved.

Climate change is a global problem and is now recognised as a key priority for Government at all levels. The evidence base for impacts on climate change is increasing and the **Stern Review** (DEFRA 2006) and the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Reports** (2007) emphasise the need for immediate action.

The **United Kingdom Climate Impact Programme** (UKCIP) has predicted a rise of between 2 and 5°C over the next 50 years and the current level of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere is measured at 430 parts per million (ppm) compared to only 280 ppm before the Industrial Revolution. The majority of evidence suggests that Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere is warming the planet and the government have set a target of 60% reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050.

For the BMC, the nature of our activities and responsibilities as a national representative body is a complex issue. The BMC has a significant interest in preserving our mountain environment and wildlife. With temperatures predicted to rise over the next 80 years this could lead to a change in the range, composition and location of important habitats and species in these sensitive environments.

Similarly, coastal habitats and access to the coast may be under threat with sea level rise expectations, and hotter summers may mean more people are seeking to access these changing but still wild environments. We may also find an increased threat to our mountain and cliff environment as the threat of fire and public safety increase.

## What might happen – impacts on the mountain environment?

### ***Some predictions***

- The last 10 years, with the exception of 1996, are the warmest years on record (WMO, 743)
- By 2050 snow cover will decrease by 60% in the Scottish Highlands
- Winters over the last 200 years have become much wetter relative to summers throughout the UK
- Sea level around Wales is expected to rise by about 40cm by 2080

### ***Changes in biodiversity = change of experience***

- Plant distribution will rise 500m in elevation
- Increase in species richness of 70% on summits of highest peaks
- Local extinction of some species; decreasing lake levels; changes to woodlands.

### **Changes in where and when we go**

- The UK may grow in popularity for outdoor recreation if other areas become unpleasantly hot
- Changes in when to go and recreate – shift in season and infrastructure needed to deal with it
- Changes in visibility and hours of sunshine / shade

### **Changes in weather patterns & recreation**

- Milder wetter winters
- Drier hotter summers
- Changes in the provision of facilities
- More variable weather conditions
- Changes in land value
- Greater weathering of footpaths
- Loss of paths to coastal erosion and greater pressure on the rights of way network
- More voluntary restrictions?
- More codes of practice?
- Migration to new activities (more water based sports?)

### **Changes in the nature of climbing**

- Guides taking groups higher into the mountains
- Shift from pure ice climbing to mixed buttress climbing
- No / more midgets
- The loss of some climbing resources
- Coastal climbing sites reduce / disappear
- Loss of the Bonatti Pillar / Harlin route on the Dru / American Direct



## **External Action**

### **Partnership Working**

Working with **Wildlife Countryside Link** and **Wales Environment Link** across England and Wales we are responding collectively to Government strategy and policy on climate change and sustainability issues. In particular, keeping informed of environment strategy action plans; the sub-national review; eco-towns consultation; environmental audit committee and biodiversity loss; transport emissions consultation; renewable energy route map for Wales consultation; the draft Marine Bill and the Climate Change Bill as this went through Parliament.

The BMC has also been involved with the development of recreation strategies and management plans, particularly within National Parks – the BMC is advocating **Sustainable Recreation** which:

- Recognises addressing climate change as an integral part of good landscape management
- Needs to ensure we supply a diverse range of recreation opportunities –

properly accommodated into planned changes for land use

- Reviews regularly the way we share best practice
- Brings management practitioners and users together at national and local level
- Promotes sustainability of our upland areas
- Promotes minimal impact and good practice
- Manages relationships with Government and Conservation bodies
- Communicates through local area meetings and liaison groups
- Publicises information through web news reports and outdoor press
- Works towards common aims across a broad landscape

### **Local Area Meetings & Initiatives**

There are 9 BMC areas across England and Wales, each with its own set of volunteers and each holding quarterly area meetings. The purpose of the meetings is for BMC members to share information on

local and national issues, including climate change. They also act as a mouthpiece for the opinions of the locals in such matters as crag access, conservation issues, and national debates (e.g. wind farms and local road building schemes). They are also the forum for getting local environmental projects organised. Each year there are numerous crag conservation projects and open days around the country - these are all instigated locally by the access volunteers.

### **The Access & Conservation Trust**

The Access & Conservation Trust (ACT) is a charity that aims to improve access and protect the cliff and mountain environment for climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers.

Act funds projects that:

- Support rural access and conservation initiatives that protect access and promote sustainable use
- Educate and raise awareness of conservation issues
- Inform people about areas of ecological sensitivity
- Research the benefits and impacts of mountain recreation and tourism
- Train and support access and conservation volunteers

ACT will fund Landscape Site Based Work, Campaigns and Policy Development, Rural Development Initiatives, Sustainable Transport Initiatives, Information Resources and Publications as well as research projects. Amongst the projects that ACT has funded in the past two years has been a weekend bio-fuel bus service to Stanage, a popular climbing area in the Peak District, and erosion control work within the Yorkshire Dales National Park.



### **Education and Information**

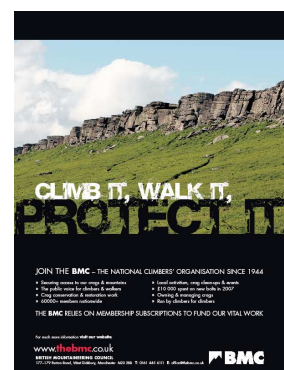
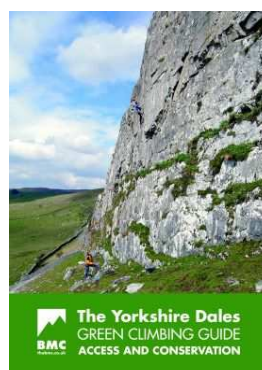
One of the key work areas of the BMC is to inform our members of climate change issues and to present information and guidance on how to make a difference. Articles and news items are regularly posted on the BMC website covering topics such as low cost flights abroad and **sustainable transport options**. If Britain is to achieve its target of cutting CO2 emissions by 60% by 2050, then every person will have to reduce their total annual emissions from an average of about 10 tonnes of CO2 now to just four tonnes by the middle of the century. The BMC supports sustainable transport strategies across the country.

### **Publicity**

The BMC have produced several Green Climbing Guides including the **Lake District Green Climbing Guide** and **Yorkshire Dales Green Climbing Guide** as well as the **Green Guide to the Uplands**. These publications are designed to help climbers or walkers identify the protected flora, fauna, and geology they will encounter in these areas, and to contribute towards the conservation of these vulnerable habitats through 'Best Practice' guidelines. There are also several **codes of practice** at climbing areas across the country where the sensitive nature of the landscape requires specific practice guidelines.

The BMC will provide clear leadership on environmental issues through its policies, programmes and the way it conducts its business. The BMC will ensure that climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers understand and are enabled to take responsibility for their environmental impact through the provision of quality information and future publications.

Recent campaign work has also called for climbers to "Climb it, Walk it, Protect it"



## Internal Action

### *Environment Policy*

The BMC core policies already reflect our commitment to reducing the environmental impact of the organisation and climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers. The Environment Policy has been developed to:

- Translate this commitment into practical action.
- Ensure the BMC can fully demonstrate its environmental commitment to both its Members and other interested parties in order to ensure our Members interests are not threatened through inaction in this area.

The BMC has determined the following key areas of impact for action: in the office; transport and travel; energy use; enhance and protect the environment; reducing the impacts of users; activities by other parties and supporting mountain economies. The policy is supported by an Action Plan, which specifies how the policy will be implemented, complete with targets and dates.

### *Sustainable Energy*

The BMC favours measures to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels and to mitigate against the production of greenhouse gases. There is no argument that we are now faced with the real consequences of climate change and as the Stern Report has most recently outlined, it will be what we do in the next 10 to 20 years that will have a profound effect on the climate. Mitigation is now the key.

The BMC is concerned that developments, which may appear sustainable in one

respect, should not be allowed to happen without a consideration of their overall impact. The BMC, whilst fully supporting the development of renewable sources of energy, believes that these should not go ahead without due regard to their impact on the landscape, on flora and fauna and on recreational activities including climbing, hill walking and mountaineering.

### *Within the office*

In its day to day operations and processes, the BMC has a significant impact on the environment, through the resources it uses such as paper, power, fuel and also through the waste products it produces, such as solid wastes and emissions from heating and transport. The BMC regularly reviews the effectiveness of its office policy and has introduced quarterly energy and travel mileage reports which are **reported annually** to the **Access, Conservation and Environment Group**.

The BMC seeks to quantify these effects and has implemented measures to ensure day to day office practices have as small an impact on the environment as is possible. For example, this has been achieved through:

- The recycling of all materials, including ink cartridges and food waste for over 12 months
- Green purchasing practices ('green' electricity, economy flush systems and BMC desktop machines are all EPA Energy Star and Blue Angel rated)
- Community Activities – such as Crag Clean Ups
- Green Travel Plans

## What can you do?

The BMC is keen to preserve our wild spaces for future generations to enjoy. Climbing, hill walking and mountaineering that we know and appreciate today and the unspoilt natural environment that we often take for granted, will change completely if we don't do something to prevent it.

For information on how you can **take action at home**, for greener living, greener travel, waste and recycling, energy and water saving, gardening, as well as how to be greener at work, school or within the community visit the following web sites (copy and paste the addresses):

For advice from the Government visit;

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

[http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environment/countryside/climate\\_change/?lang=en](http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environment/countryside/climate_change/?lang=en)

For information on **how to cut your carbon footprint**, tips on how to make more environmentally friendly choices or innovative ideas on how to communicate environmental messages and a chance to check how green you are, this site is very useful.

[www.globalactionplan.org.uk/](http://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/)

Green Choices offers advice about the choices we make in our everyday lives to protect our environment, for the benefit of all. It offers **advice on broad topics** such as food and drink, DIY, toiletries, gardening and so on.

[www.greenchoices.org](http://www.greenchoices.org)

Start to count your annual carbon output and seek ways to reduce it. Through the Government website you can **calculate your carbon footprint** and find ways to reduce this.

<http://actonco2.direct.gov.uk/index.html>

Switch to a **green electricity** provider or consider applying for a grant to **install green energy** generating equipment like solar panels– for more information visit:

[www.greenelectricity.org](http://www.greenelectricity.org)

[www.lowcarbonbuildingsphase2.org.uk](http://www.lowcarbonbuildingsphase2.org.uk)

Alternatively consider better insulation of your house and save on energy bills:

[www.britishgas.co.uk/energy-efficiency/products/home-insulation.html](http://www.britishgas.co.uk/energy-efficiency/products/home-insulation.html)

Try to **use public transport** as an alternative to using the car. Not only as a means of getting to a destination but as part of a day out. This frees you from only doing circular walks and is more relaxing than sitting in a traffic jam.

For times of train services nationwide use the National Rail Journey Planner

[www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)

For details and booking of coaches see the National Express pages

[www.nationalexpress.com](http://www.nationalexpress.com)

National public transport information can be found at;

[www.transportdirect.info/web2](http://www.transportdirect.info/web2)

Wales bus services from Showbus

[www.showbus.com/index.html](http://www.showbus.com/index.html)

Alternatively you could try to co-ordinate your need to travel with others by **car sharing**. Car share is an online car share community, or you could join a car club in your local area.

[www.carshare.com/](http://www.carshare.com/)

Reduce your carbon footprint and **off –set your flight abroad** this year. Every flight you take produces carbon dioxide (as well as other gases). However before considering carbon offsetting, be clear about its value. For more information visit:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/index.htm>

<http://www.carbontrust.co.uk>

[www.ecotourdirectory.com/ecotourism/future\\_forests.php](http://www.ecotourdirectory.com/ecotourism/future_forests.php)

[www.climatecare.org/?gclid=COfMm9e-iJUCFQ5tMAodOR58rg](http://www.climatecare.org/?gclid=COfMm9e-iJUCFQ5tMAodOR58rg)



## Quick Guide to Reducing Your Impact on the Climate

1. Manage your mileage. Cutting daily car use is the best way to reduce your impact. Resolve to halve it progressively by finding alternative ways to make everyday journeys to work, school and the shops. The average British car does about 9,000 miles per year, the average main driver 7,400. If your totals are higher, you need to cut faster. Consider joining a car club and lift share. Choose public transport, or better still, buy a bike - and use it.
2. Air travel - every flight you take produces carbon dioxide (as well as other gases). We might be tempted to take advantage of cheap flights abroad but we want to encourage you to reduce your carbon footprint before you arrive at your destination. Consider off-setting your flight by investing in projects that cut down CO2 emissions, such as those which use renewable energy sources.
3. Location, location, location. If you really cannot get to work, school or the shops without your car, you need to lobby your local authority for some decent public transport.
4. Wise up, turn down, and switch off. Turn your central heating down a couple of degrees and wear another layer. Each 1°C cut should save about 10% off your fuel bill. Switch all electronic appliances off at the socket whenever they are not in use. Computers and their peripherals consume lots of electricity even when ostensibly turned off, never mind on standby.
5. Invest in better insulation or energy saving technology if you can. Solar panels are expensive, and micro wind turbines may not produce anything like their official power rating. But good insulation and draft-proofing is cheap and pays for itself almost immediately, and solar hot water systems ([www.nef.org.uk](http://www.nef.org.uk)) on a south-facing roof can produce up to half a family's hot water over the course of a year for relatively little outlay.
6. Check the websites suggested here and make a difference.

