



**The BMC in your Area:
a guide to Area Meetings
for BMC Area Officers
and Representatives**

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1. Introduction

1.1 About this document

This document defines the roles of BMC Area Officers and Representatives and provides guidance on how to run your Area smoothly and efficiently. It defines ‘who does what’ and explains the role of your Area in the BMC’s wider decision making structure. It also provides practical advice on the organisation of Area Meetings and sets out the ‘formal’ regulations which apply to the Areas as defined in the [BMC Memorandum & Articles of Association](#) (M&AA).

2. BMC Area Meetings

2.1 Geographical definition of BMC Areas

The BMC's work in England and Wales is divided into ten 'Areas' as follows:

a. Cymru North Wales and Cymru South Wales

Cymru Wales is a single entity in the M&AA but an outreach group Cymru South Wales was established in 2007, and in February 2017 National Council agreed that Cymru South Wales should become a fully constituted area, with two National Council Representatives.

Both Cymru North Wales and Cymru South Wales now have two votes on National Council.

There is also a Cymru Mid Wales outreach group, which meets from time to time.

For the purpose of membership administration and communications, the boundaries of Cymru North Wales and Cymru South Wales have yet to be set, and all members in Wales receive communications about all Area Meetings in Wales.

b. Lake District

The Area covers the whole of Cumbria, focusing on the Lake District National Park, but also including the Eden Valley to the north and east, and the area to the south of the national park.

c. London & South East

This is a very large geographical area which encompasses the whole of south east England and East Anglia. It contains around almost 30% of the BMC's total membership.

d. Midlands

The Midlands covers the area extending from the Leicestershire quarries in the east across to Shropshire and Welsh Border crags such as Llanymynech.

e. North East

The North East Area runs from Northumberland, through Tyne and Wear and Durham then into Cleveland. The North York Moors are overseen by this Area.

f. North West

This Area includes the whole of Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Cheshire including such venues as the Wilton quarries, Frodsham, Helsby and Frogsmouth Quarry.

g. Peak District

The Peak Area focuses on the Peak District National Park but includes many outlying areas extending to the Churnet Valley in the south, Shooters Nab in the north, Hobson Moor Quarry in the west and various outcrops in the Sheffield area.

h. South West

This is a very large geographic area which covers Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Avon. It also encompasses the Wye Valley including Wintour's Leap and Symonds Yat.

i. Yorkshire

The Yorkshire Area covers most of West Yorkshire with the exception of the moorland to the west of Holmfirth and south of the M62, the moors and valleys of North Yorkshire including the Three Peaks area and land surrounding the rivers Aire, Wharfe and Nidd, and all other parts of North Yorkshire stretching as far as the east coast but excluding the North York Moors.

2.2 Role & purpose of the Areas

The role of Area Meetings is to facilitate democratic debate between BMC members and reach consensus and decisions on local (and national) issues. Area Meetings are the main forum for members to contribute to discussions about climbing, hill walking and mountaineering issues in their area. To many people they are the 'public face' of the BMC where members wishing to get more involved can express opinions, influence policy and learn about wider aspects of the BMC's work.

The BMC M&AA define the purpose of the Areas as follows:

- *to act as the prime forum in which Members may make their views known and to communicate those views to the National Council.*
- *to report to the Members in that Area the views, decisions and activities of the National Council, the Executive Committee and the CEO.*
- *to discuss local issues and to liaise with other organisations with an interest in such issues and to represent the policies of the BMC in connection with such issues.*
- *to elect representatives to serve on the National Council.*

2.3 Attendance & voting

Any BMC members who are resident in a particular Area (or have elected by notice to the BMC CEO to attend the meetings of an Area within which they do not reside – see Article 43.1 of M&AA) can attend Area Meetings; Areas should actively encourage new activists to get involved in the BMC's work. Many Areas run their meetings as 'open meetings' which may be attended by any climber, hill walker or mountaineer at the discretion of the Chair. There is a provision in the M&AA for Areas to hold 'outreach' meetings (e.g. in remote parts of the Area) to discuss local issues. BMC Associate Members may also send a representative to Area Meetings, but are not entitled to vote.

2.4 Planning & running Area Meetings

The timing and business of Area Meetings is closely linked with National Council meetings. National Council meets five times a year (Feb, April, June, September & December) and the Area Meetings should take place 1-3 weeks prior to the National Council, to allow Areas to discuss National Council agenda items and feed their discussions into the National Council meetings. The April meeting, which coincides with the BMC AGM, is not a full meeting, and Areas can choose whether or not to hold an Area Meeting prior to it.

As a rule of thumb the following approach to organising Area Meetings is suggested:

- Find a venue (e.g. pub function/meeting room) with a suitable capacity. The venue should be free from interruptions and distractions, and accessible to all members. Some Areas like to hold their meetings at different locations throughout the year.
- Agree meeting dates / times through discussion at Area Meetings. Schedule your meetings for 1-3 weeks before the National Council meeting dates. The BMC office (Tony Ryan) can advise you of National Council dates.

- Allow c.3 hours (total) per meeting to include 30 minutes set-up / arrival time, a 1-2 hour meeting and 15-30 minutes for food.
- Arrange food (chips / simple buffet); the BMC will cover reasonable costs.
- Arrange a speaker / presentation when possible, e.g. a local club talking about a recent trip, or a luminary talking about their climbing / hill walking / mountaineering life.
- Each Area holds an Annual General Meeting (usually the last meeting of the calendar year) at which elections for the Chair, Secretary, National Council Representatives and other post holders and representatives are held.

Suggested timeline for Chair & Secretary:

- Once a year: decide on dates, book venue(s). The June National Council meeting sets the dates for the following year's National Council meetings. Your end of year Area AGM is probably the best meeting at which to decide dates for the following year. Set your Area Meeting dates for 1-3 weeks before the National Council meeting dates, to allow for discussion of National Council issues and reporting back to National Council.
- Notify the BMC office (Tony Ryan) of your meeting dates for the year ahead, so that they can be added to the [BMC Local Areas site](#).
- 3 months before meeting: identify speaker and advise office if the presence of a specific member of BMC staff (see 2.5 BMC staff support & attendance) is requested.
- 2 months before meeting: re-confirm room booking and determine facilities required (e.g. projector, extension leads). Determine how / when the venue, food and speaker expenses are to be paid.
- 1 month before meeting: produce agenda, and send to the BMC office (Tony Ryan), who will post it on the BMC Local Areas site, and publicise the meeting with support from the office.
- Hold meeting. Keep a record of meeting attendees, as a minimum the number attending, and if possible gender breakdown. Some Areas like to record the names of meeting attendees and use a signing-in sheet for this purpose.
- Claim back legitimate meeting expenses from the BMC.
- Before National Council: write up brief notes of the main points arising and send to the BMC office (Tony Ryan). A template is available from the office for this purpose.
- Within 2 weeks of Area Meeting: write up meeting minutes (note form) and send to the BMC office (Tony Ryan) for posting on the BMC Local Areas site; refer to the BMC Local Areas site for examples of Area minutes.

2.5 BMC staff support & attendance

There is a commitment from the BMC Office to send a relevant member of staff to all Area Meetings. If a particular Officer (e.g. one of the Access & Conservation Officers) is requested to attend a particular meeting the office will endeavour to facilitate this. It should be noted that

despite our best efforts, there may be occasions when it is not possible to identify an Officer to attend an Area Meeting.

The BMC Office will also support the promotion of Area Meetings via the BMC website and social media, the monthly email newsletter and area-specific bulk emails in consultation with Area Secretaries (see 2.6 b. Promotion & publicity).

2.6 Practical considerations for meetings

a. Catering & room preparation

If you are providing food at the meeting advise the venue of your budget and aim for a 50/50 meat and vegetarian split. If you are offering entertainment, make sure your speaker has everything they need (laptop, projector, screen, speakers) well in advance. Do not assume that the venue will provide everything. The BMC office has projectors and speakers that can be booked out for this purpose and brought to the meeting by the attending BMC officer.

b. Promotion & publicity

There are several ways in which Area Meetings can be advertised. The office can support the promotion of meetings more effectively if you provide meeting information in good time. It is up to the Area Officers (Secretary & Chair), with support from the office, to arrange the necessary publicity. Generally speaking, the more vocal and visible you are, the more people will turn up for meetings. To advertise your meeting:

- Send the meeting details and supporting documents (agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, discussion papers, etc.) to the BMC office (Tony Ryan) as soon as they are available, so that they can be added to the BMC Local Areas site. If you want to add content yourself, you will need to have a profile on the site, which you can create by becoming a registered user. Additionally, the office will need to give your profile permission to add content and upload documents. Contact Tony Ryan to obtain permission, and for advice on using the Local Areas site.
- Use the [Local Areas Forum on UKClimbing](#), and the [UKC Event Diary](#). About two weeks before each meeting, the BMC office (Tony Ryan) will start a thread on the Local Areas Forum if one does not already exist, and upload meeting details to the UKC Event Diary. Utilise other relevant internet forums, such as the '[get involved: access, environment, BMC](#)' forum on UKBouldering.com and any with a specific regional focus.
- The office will use the [BMC monthly email newsletter](#) to publicise all upcoming Area Meetings. The newsletter is sent to all members for whom we have an email address (unless they have unsubscribed from it). The more information we have about the meeting on the BMC Local Areas site the better, as the newsletter article about [upcoming Area Meetings](#) will link to this information.
- Information for the next round of area meetings will also be publicised in each issue of Summit magazine, as long as it's available before the copy deadline, which can be a month or more before an issue is published.
- The office will send an email to all members in a specific area about 7-10 days before that area's next meeting, to publicise the date, venue and details of the meeting. It will be the responsibility of the Area officers to advise Tony Ryan of any specific information to be included in the email e.g. notification of key agenda items, speakers / entertainment, availability of food etc.

- If you have a particularly hot topic up for debate, you can ask the office to run this as a news story on the BMC website.
- Consider distributing a promotional poster to be put up in local climbing walls, used on social media etc, especially if you have arranged a guest speaker. If you provide the office with a suitable image, we can create a digital poster / flyer.
- Use your area Facebook page (all areas now have one) to promote area meetings. The BMC office can help you maintain your page. The office will also use the [BMC's Facebook page](#) to publicise meetings.
- In the days prior to a meeting, the office will tweet it on https://twitter.com/team_BMC

c. Financial support

Each Area has an annual budget of £500.00 to support the cost of meeting room bookings, food and speaker costs. For auditing and VAT purposes, it's useful if you can provide receipts with any claims you submit for meeting costs. A volunteer expense form is available to enable you to reclaim out-of-pocket costs. If a meeting location is willing to invoice the BMC directly for room bookings and food costs, please ensure that invoices are made out to the BMC and not to the volunteer responsible for the booking/ordering.

3. Area Officers & Representatives

3.1 The Chair

The Area Chair is an extremely important position within the BMC. Together with the Area Secretary it is the Chair who makes the Area 'tick'. He or she will need to work closely with other volunteers in the Area and should liaise with BMC office staff to ensure the Area receives suitable support.

What is expected of the Chair?

The main roles of the Area Chair are to:

- be an advocate for the BMC. With regard to this it is helpful to develop some understanding of the BMC's specialist work areas, finances and structure;
- be aware of the BMC procedures and constitutional requirements related to Area Meetings (ref: Articles 41-48 – Area Meetings);
- be able to represent members' views in a fair and balanced manner at local, regional and national level;
- ideally have some experience in chairing meetings;
- keep well informed about Area activities and meeting agendas;
- be unbiased, impartial and diplomatic; to get the best out of the others; and
- be able to 'keep the peace' during times of disagreement or unrest.

Specific responsibilities of the Chair:

- dealing with Area administration in a timely manner i.e. agreeing agendas, briefing papers, minutes and responding to correspondence;
- welcoming newcomers to Area Meetings and making any necessary introductions;
- listening to different points of view and summarising the key aspects of discussions;
- ensuring that Area Meetings run smoothly; the Chair should be 'fair but firm' – people should be allowed to speak but repetition and time wasting should be minimised;
- developing consensus and determining when votes are required on agenda items;
- taking a lead on difficult or contentious issues; and
- ensuring good time-keeping to enable appropriate discussion on all agenda items.

3.2 The Secretary

The Secretary is another very important role within the Area. Secretaries should be good communicators who are well organised and reliable.

The main roles of the Secretary are to:

- arrange the meeting venues in accordance with the agreed schedule;
- work with the BMC office to publicise and promote Area Meetings;
- produce agendas (in discussion with the Chair) and send them to the BMC office (Tony Ryan) for posting on the BMC Local Areas site at least 2 weeks before the meeting date;
- arrange the circulation of reports / discussion papers to support agenda items;
- record attendance at the meetings.
- write meeting minutes (note form – not detailed) and send them to the BMC office (Tony Ryan) for posting on the BMC Local Areas site within 14 days of the meeting having taken place;
- help ensure that meeting action points are followed up; and
- deal with any necessary administration and correspondence between meetings.

3.3 Area Representatives on National Council

Each BMC Area can appoint two people to serve on the BMC's main policy making body – National Council. National Council holds weekend meetings five times a year and its voting members are the BMC's Elected Officers (i.e. the President, Vice-Presidents and the Treasurer), the CEO and the Area Representatives. The BMC's Specialist Committee Chairs (Technical Committee, Training & Youth Committee etc) are Observer members, and there are also several Observer organisations including Mountain Training, Plas y Brenin and the Association of British Climbing

Walls. The BMC covers travel and accommodation costs, and with the exception of the December meeting, which is usually held at the BMC office in Manchester, meetings take place in upland and coastal areas, to ensure that meeting weekends are a combination of business and pleasure.

Guidance for Areas Representatives on National Council:

- The role of the Area Representative is to represent the views of their Area at National Council and to report back to their Area on any relevant decisions or debates at National Council. At times it will be necessary for National Council to make quick decisions on issues, so Area Representatives must be prepared to 'think on their feet' and act (including voting) on behalf of their Area.
- Areas Representatives should aim to attend as many National Council meetings as possible. Since there are two reps in each area, meeting attendance can be split if necessary. It is important that Areas send at least one rep to National Council.
- After an Area Meeting and prior to the following National Council meeting, one of the Areas Representatives should provide a summary report of the area meeting; a template for the report is available from the BMC office.
- If an Area is unable to field a representative to attend National Council a suitable 'stand-in' may be sent to the meeting instead. This should be discussed and agreed with the Area Chair.
- If having attended a National Council meeting an representative is unable to attend their next Area Meeting, the Area Chair or Secretary should be briefed on any important matters arising.
- Area Representatives on National Council can serve for no longer than five consecutive years.

3.4 Access Representatives

Voluntary Access Representatives are well established within the BMC and they play a vital role in our work with landowners and conservation bodies.

Guidance for Areas:

- It is up to each BMC Area to decide upon how many Access Representatives are required and which geographical areas they cover.
- Access Representatives are appointed and re-appointed at Area AGMs; there is no time limit for how long an Access Representative may serve. Experience has shown that continuity in this role can be a good thing.
- It is important that Access Representatives attend Area Meetings whenever possible; local access issues are the main point of debate at many Area Meetings.

The role of the Access Representative is to:

- Liaise with landowners, conversation bodies, national park authorities and others to maintain and improve access for climbers and walkers.

- Work closely with the BMC Access & Conservation staff and members of the Access Management Group.
- Negotiate and review of any seasonal restrictions (e.g. nesting birds).
- Provide information for Summit magazine, the Regional Access Database (RAD) and the wider outdoor media.
- Attend site meetings as appropriate and identify any site information needs, e.g. signage.

3.5 Area Youth Co-ordinators

Area Youth Co-ordinators (AYC) support and / or co-ordinate the BMC's work with young people across England and Wales.

The role of the AYC is to:

- organise and support BMC local events for young people, e.g. regional rounds of the BMC Youth Climbing Series;
- consult with the BMC Office on child protection issues and pass on any specific concerns to the responsible BMC Officer; be familiar with the BMC Child Protection Policy and attend necessary training courses as specified by the BMC; and
- report to the Area Meeting on youth-related activities and events; if an AYC is unable to attend a meeting, a report of activities should be submitted and a template is available from the BMC office.

The AYC should be an experienced climber, hill walker or mountaineer with experience of working with young people. AYC's are invited to participate in the BMC Training & Youth Committee and are required to complete a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check.

3.6 Area Representative on the Clubs Committee

The BMC Clubs Committee provides a forum for the discussion of all matters of concern to BMC Affiliated Clubs. Each Area can appoint a representative to the Clubs Committee and details of the election process can be found on the BMC website. Area Representatives on the Clubs Committee are appointed annually at Area AGMs and all candidates must be a member of and formally proposed by a local club based in that Area.

Area representatives may hold office for a term of three years from their respective dates of appointment but shall be eligible for reappointment and may serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms and shall not be eligible for reappointment thereafter until the expiry of at least one year.

3.7 Climbing Walls Representative

BMC Areas may choose to appoint a Climbing Wall Representative to liaise with climbing walls and wall users and to refer any relevant issues to the Area. Amongst other things the Climbing Walls Representative can take responsibility for ensuring the display of BMC literature at climbing walls.

3.8 Hill Walking Representative

Hill Walking Representatives work to widen the scope of issues covered at Area Meetings and increase the appeal of meetings to hill walkers.

The role of the Hill Walking Representative is to:

- Ensure hill walking appears on Area Meeting agendas regularly and to suggest ways the area can develop its hill walking work.
- Act as a focus for hill walking members in the area, helping them to find the right BMC staff or volunteers to assist them with their concerns or requests.
- Assist the area in addressing hill walking-related access issues.
- Communicate developments coming from the BMC Hill Walking Implementation Group back to the area and relay opinions on priorities from the area back to the HWIG.
- Be on the lookout for opportunities to include hill walking in existing area events and, if feasible, suggest ideas and opportunities for new local hill walking events, helping where possible. Hill walking reps have recently organised a number of hill walks in some BMC Areas.

3.9 Election process for Area Officers & Representatives

Area Chairs, Area Secretaries and National Council Representatives are elected annually at the Area AGM, where members have an opportunity to put nominations forward and volunteer for the different positions. Nominees / volunteers are required to have a proposer and seconder, and voting is usually by a show of hands at the meeting.

No person may hold office for more than five consecutive years; in that event a period of at least one year should elapse before they are eligible for re-election. Only BMC members who are resident in that Area (or have elected by notice to the BMC CEO to attend the meetings of an Area within which they do not reside – see Article 43.1 of M&AA – are eligible to stand for official posts.

Area representatives on the Clubs Committee may hold office for a term of three years from their respective dates of appointment but shall be eligible for reappointment and may serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms and shall not be eligible for reappointment thereafter until the expiry of at least one year.

All other Area representatives (as shown in 3.4 to 3.8 above) are elected annually at the Area AGM; there is no fixed term of office for these positions.

Where it is felt appropriate, other representatives may be co-opted and where this occurs, their co-option should be reviewed annually.

3.10 Expenses

The Area Chair, Area Secretary and National Council Representatives may claim travel expenses to/from Area Meetings. Area Officers may also claim travel expenses to/from formal meetings with external organisations and individuals. A volunteer expense claim form is available from the BMC office.