

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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BMC NATIONAL COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the 56th meeting of National Council,
BMC office, Manchester, 2-3 December 2017.

Voting members present:

Acting President	Nick Kurth	(NK)	Chair
Vice-President & Women's Development Group	Lynn Robinson	(LR)	
Honorary Treasurer	Graham Richmond	(GR)	
CEO	Dave Turnbull	(DT)	
Cymru North Wales	Dan Lane	(DL)	
Cymru South Wales	Will Kilner	(WK)	
Lakes	Pete Sterling	(PS)	
London & SE	Rik Payne	(RP)	
London & SE	Lisa Payne	(LP)	
Midlands	Roger Fanner	(RF)	
Midlands	Claudia Sarnier	(CS)	
North East	Mark Anstiss	(MA)	
North East	Jon Punshon	(JP)	
North West	Carl Spencer	(CSp)	
North West	Lyndon Gill	(LG)	
Peak	Alison Cairns	(AC)	
Peak	David Brown	(DB)	
South West	Helen Wilson	(HW)	
Yorkshire	Andy Syme	(AS)	
Yorkshire	Mick Green	(MG)	

Observers present:

Independent Director	Simon McCalla	(SM)	
Independent Director	Matthew Bradbury	(MB)	
ABC	Rich Emerson	(RE)	
Access	Dave Musgrove	(DMus)	
Clubs	Fiona Sanders	(FS)	
Competitions	Ian Walton	(IW)	
Finance	Iain Dickinson	(ID)	
Guidebooks	Ian Carr	(IC)	
Hill Walking	Peter Judd	(PJ)	
Huts	Iain McCallum	(IM)	
Plas y Brenin	Jackie Bryson	(JB)	
Mountain Training	Mike Pinder	(MP)	
Land Management	Martin Wragg	(MW)	
Technical	Phillip Tootill	(PT)	
Training & Youth	Andy Newton	(AN)	

Staff present:

Deputy CEO	Nick Colton	(NC)	
Secretary (Saturday AM)	Kate Anwyl	(KA)	
Secretary (Saturday PM & Sunday)	Tony Ryan	(TR)	
Access Officer (England)	Rob Dyer	(RD)	
Access Officer (Wales)	Elfyn Jones	(EJ)	
Clubs & Partnerships Officer	Jane Thompson	(JT)	
Guidebooks Officer	Niall Grimes	(NG)	
Hill Walking Officer	Carey Davies	(CD)	
BMC / MTE Training Officer	Jon Garside	(JG)	
Technical Officer & Huts	Dan Middleton	(DMid)	

The Saturday morning session, which began at 14.30pm and was attended by:

Mark Anstiss, Kate Anwyl, Matthew Bradbury, David Brown, Alison Cairns, Ian Carr, Nick Colton, Carey Davies, Iain Dickinson, Rob Dyer, Roger Fanner, Jon Garside, Mick Green, Niall Grimes, Elfyn Jones, Peter Judd, Will Kilner, Nick Kurth, Dan Lane, Simon McCalla, Iain McCallum, Dan Middleton, Dave Musgrove, Andy Newton, Lisa Payne, Rik Payne, Jon Punshon, Graham Richmond, Lynn Robinson, Fiona Sanders, Claudia Sarner, Carl Spencer, Pete Sterling, Andy Syme, Jane Thompson, Phillip Tootill, Dave Turnbull, Ian Walton, Helen Wilson, and Martin Wragg.

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

1.1 Welcome

1.1.1 Nick Kurth welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Alison Cairns (Peak Area rep) who was attending National Council for the first time.

1.2 Apologies

1.2.1 Apologies were received from Cressida Allwood, Emma Flaherty, Cath Flitcroft, James McHaffie, Gareth Palmer, Ian Parnell, Steve Quinton, Mike Rosser, Andy Say, and Christine Scarborough.

1.3 Conflicts of Interest

1.3.1 No conflicts were declared.

2. Specialist Committee ToR, Membership & Forward Plans for approval

2.1 Access Management Group

Chair: Dave Musgrove

Officer: Rob Dyer & Elfyn Jones

2.1.1 DMus reported on a busy 2017 and noted that the AMG oversees the work of three BMC officers. He thanked Elfyn Jones for his impressive commitment to the BMC during a serious health crisis; Estee Farrar for her work as maternity cover for Cath Flitcroft and Rob Dyer for holding the fort over this period.

2.1.2 DMus noted that Ruth Chambers had left the group due to work commitments but thanked her for her valuable input over the years. He added that further to the General Election the All Party Parliamentary Mountaineering Group (APPG-M) had lost some key members and that Brexit also created potential concerns regarding access and conservation. He went on to emphasise the close working relationship with the Land Management Group (LMG) and the BMC Access & Conservation Trust (ACT). NK asked the AMG to seek to revitalise the APPG-M; the BMC provides the secretariat for this important group.

**Action:
DMus**

2.1.3 Mark Anstiss requested an update on the Crag Care Fund. Rob Dyer confirmed that he hoped to increase its profile in 2018 with a focus on local / small projects (in contrast to projects of the type funded by Mend Our Mountains). David Brown felt the AMG's work could be better publicised and that it should interact more with members and volunteers.

- 2.1.4 DT asked if the AMG felt access and conservation work was given appropriate priority and resources within the BMC given its importance to members (ref: ORG findings). DM responded that CF is the secretary for AMG and ACT while EJ and RD work across both AMG and LMG. He was concerned about the workload for some volunteers as well as the staff. Matthew Bradbury noted it was important to avoid duplication of work and to make the best use of the time and skills of volunteers on committees. He added that Mend Out Mountains would further raise the profile of the BMC's access work.
- 2.1.5 A discussion took place about the BMC's A&C work in Wales and whether it might be beneficial to set up an access group / committee specifically for Wales. EJ and WK said this would be possible but felt a broader group (England & Wales combined) is a better option. EJ added that the Outdoor Alliance had been formed to help influence relevant policies in Wales, and that this group seemed to work well. He stressed the importance of the BMC engaging with the Welsh Assembly (and its c.60 members) and highlighted that the time commitment required to do so can be an issue.
- 2.1.6 DT highlighted the respect in which the BMC's A&C work is held and referred to British Canoeing which is now using the BMC as a model for restructuring its own access and environmental work. Lynn Robinson acknowledged the work of the AMG volunteers and offered to write a thank you letter to all involved. **Action: LR**
- 2.1.7 **Vote: Proposed by Mark Anstiss and seconded by Andy Syme, the ToR, Membership & Forward Plans were unanimously approved.** **Agreed**
- 2.2 Clubs Committee**
Chair: Fiona Sanders
Officer: Jane Thompson
- 2.2.1 FS reminded the meeting that the role of the Clubs Committee is to support all affiliated clubs and highlighted four key areas:
1. Providing support to encourage clubs to join the BMC;
 2. Identifying what support and guidance clubs want;
 3. Reviewing how the BMC can support Clubs (technology / digital);
 4. Increasing support for student clubs.
- 2.2.2 Discussions took place about how the committee could undertake this work mindful that clubs rely primarily on volunteers. It was noted that many club members still do not appreciate the benefits of BMC membership, in part due to the difficulty in disseminating information within clubs. It was acknowledged that the BMC has an important role as the central source of information and support for clubs on the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) over the next six months.
- 2.2.3 The difficulty of engaging with student clubs was discussed and Jon Garside suggesting contacting British Universities and College Sports (BUCS) for guidance. FS confirmed a membership survey was planned to understand the needs of student clubs.
- 2.2.4 Will Kilner asked for his name to be removed from the ToR and to be replaced by Rik Payne.
- 2.2.5 **Vote: Proposed by Will Kilner and seconded by Iain McCallum, subject to amendment of the membership, the ToR, Membership & Forward Plans were unanimously approved.** **Agreed**

2.3 Competitions Committee

Chair: Ian Walton

Officer: vacant

2.3.1 IW reported on another successful year for the committee and team, with three athletes making finals of IFSC events. He thanked Rob Adie for his hard work over the years and looked forward to Zoe Spriggins taking over as Competitions Programme Manager on 2 Jan 2018.

2.3.2 IW confirmed he had finished his term as Chair to be replaced by Iain McKenzie with immediate effect. The committee is keen to bring ski mountaineering and ice climbing into the competitions portfolio and to work more closely with the UIAA and IFSC.

2.3.3 LR asked about plans for speed climbing. Nick Colton confirmed that discussions are currently taking place for suitable venues and coaches.

2.3.4 Discussions took place about the BMC Youth Climbing Series (YCS) which is growing in size and now difficult for some walls to accommodate. NC confirmed the YCS structure is under review. Mick Green asked what support is available for grass roots competition climbers. NC said this was constantly being looked at (by James McHaffie and other staff). JG pointed out that the talent development strategy still awaits Sport England funding.

2.3.5 **Vote: Proposed by Roger Fanner, seconded by Andy Syme the ToR, Membership & Forward Plans were unanimously approved.** **Agreed**

2.4 Equity Steering Group

Chair: Kamala Sen

Officer: vacant

2.4.1 NC reported in the absence of the outgoing chair Kamala Sen that Cressida Allwood is in line to take over as chair. He explained that the group oversees equity, diversity, disability and mental health and is currently without a dedicated officer since Jo Rowbottom left the BMC due to uncertainty with Sport England funding.

2.4.2 Jane Thompson is now overseeing the volunteer strategy with Lynn Robinson. FS asked about the future direction of the ESG and NC replied that the incoming Chair has a professional interest in gender balance issues. WK suggested the ESG should also address Welsh language issues.

2.4.3 **Vote: Proposed by Rik Payne and seconded by Dave Musgrove, the ToR, Membership & Forward Plans were unanimously approved.** **Agreed**

2.5 Finance & Audit Committee

Chair: Iain Dickinson

Officer: Alan Brown

2.5.1 ID highlighted the changes to the ToR and the new name to include 'Audit'. LR reported that the newly appointed independent director will sit on the F&A Committee and should be added to the membership. Questions were asked about how an additional staff member (Simon Lee) had come to be added as a member of the committee; it was agreed that SL should be recorded as an observer rather than a full member. **Agreed**

Post meeting note: third independent director now confirmed as Amanda Parshall.

2.5.2 **Vote: Proposed by Graham Richmond and seconded by Lynn Robinson, subject to amendment of the membership, the ToR, Membership & Forward Plans were unanimously approved.** **Agreed**

2.6 Guidebook Committee

Chair: Ian Carr

Officer: Niall Grimes

2.6.1 IC reported that Peak Limestone South is at the printers and due for imminent release. He acknowledged the role and contribution of Nick Bond who passed away earlier this year.

2.6.2 Discussions moved onto the Wired Guides; it was confirmed it is a co-operative with 100% buy-in from clubs and that it covers the whole of the UK. It was agreed to rephrase point three of the ToR to include the Wired Guide series.

2.6.3 **Vote: Proposed by Lisa Payne and seconded by Helen Wilson, subject to the amendment of point 3, the ToR, Membership & Forward Plans unanimously approved.** **Agreed**

2.7 Hill Walking Implementation Group

Chair: Peter Judd

Officer: Carey Davies

2.7.1 PJ confirmed a number of initiatives were on hold due to the uncertainty with Sport England funding, the Motion of No Confidence and the ORG recommendations. PJ added that there is considerable opportunity in this area due to the large numbers of active hill walkers across the UK. LR noted the positive work of BMC hill walking ambassador Mary-Ann Ochota.

2.7.2 CD questioned why hill walking had been classed as an 'isolated activity' in the ORG report, noting that hill walking perhaps offers greater potential than indoor climbing if the recent Active Lives figures are true. That said, it was pointed out that hill walking was accepted in the ORG Report as a key (headline) activity – see page 9 (Key Recommendation Themes) of the full ORG report.

2.7.3 DT reported that Sport England had declined to fund the BMC's hill walking work in 2017 but that they may do so from 1 April 2018 onwards.

2.8 Huts

Chair: Iain McCallum

Officer: Dan Middleton

2.8.1 Discussions took place about why huts were not being used to their full potential and what are the perceived barriers to individuals and other clubs. AS offered to update the huts list and associated links on the BMC website; MA asked if individuals could access huts and could this be administered by the BMC office. IM explained the difficulty some clubs experience letting their huts out to individuals and noted that ultimately it was a choice of each club.

2.8.2 **Vote: Proposed by Mark Anstiss and seconded by Dave Brown the ToR, Membership & Forward Plans were unanimously approved.** **Agreed**

2.9 International

Chair: Ian Parnell

Officer: Nick Colton

2.9.1 NC noted the committee awards expedition grants and works closely with the Alpine Club and the Mount Everest Foundation to assess applications. RP asked why the ToR do not refer to the IFSC and NC explained that the IFSC is purely focused on indoor competition climbing and therefore has links with the BMC's Competition Committee.

2.9.2 **Vote: Proposed by Rik Payne and seconded by Mark Anstiss the ToR, Membership & Forward Plans were unanimously approved.** **Agreed**

2.10 Land Management Group

Chair: Martin Wragg

Officers: Elfyn Jones & Rob Dyer

- 2.10.1 MW noted the BMC owns nine crags and has agreements in place with many land owners across England and Wales. Volunteers and staff are extremely busy managing these sites. MW reported that the current LMG membership is not diverse although its members do have the required specialist skills and experience. This is to be looked at further in 2018.
- 2.10.2 MW added that if there are further purchases or agreements it may create a resource issue as staff and volunteers are already thinly spread. RF questioned whether it was wise to take on further acquisitions with the current resources. RP queried whether the acquisition policy needs updating.
- 2.10.3 CSp noted the ORG recommendation 22 (regarding legal obligations) and asked if the LMG had considered the risks associated with its work? MW confirmed that the crags are held in subsidiaries (BMC Land Holding Ltd and the Land & Property Trust) and that liability is separate from the BMC, adding that volunteers, staff and officers are covered by adequate insurance. MB noted this is fine provided there is separation between governance and liability as the legal process can be problematic without this separation.
- 2.10.4 **Vote: Proposed by David Brown and seconded by Dave Musgrove, the ToR, Membership & Forward Plans were unanimously approved.** **Agreed**

2.11 Technical Committee

Chair: Phillip Tootill

Officer: Dan Middleton

- 2.11.1 PT reported on much work on belays and bolts within the last 12 months. He added that several new publications were available as PDFs on the website with more planned for 2018.
- 2.11.2 The committee has successfully recruited several new members in 2017 and they are keen to get the right mix of skills and expertise; more chartered engineers are currently needed.
- 2.11.3 **Vote: Proposed by Rik Payne and seconded by Claudia Sarner, the ToR, Membership & Forward Plans were unanimously approved.** **Agreed**

2.12 Training & Youth Committee, including Child Safeguarding Group

Chair: Andy Newton (TYC) / Christine Scarborough (Safeguarding)

Officers: Jon Garside, James McHaffie and Nick Colton

- 2.12.1 AN reported that the talent development is now under the Competitions Committee and that point 2b on the ToR should remove the words 'include competitions'. He added that following an internal restructure, the proposed new name of the committee is - the Training, Youth & Climbing Walls Committee.
- 2.12.2 NC reported on the work of the child safeguarding group, which has now received a green RAG rating from the Child Protection Sport Unit of the NSPCC.
- 2.12.3 **Vote: Proposed by Helen Wilson and seconded by Claudia Sarner, subject to the above amendments, the ToR, Membership & Forward Plans were unanimously approved.** **Agreed**

NK acknowledged the tremendous spread of activities undertaken by staff and volunteers and thanked everyone for their contributions. He asked for the work of the specialist committee to be highlighted on the BMC website. (Note: action for TR recorded later in the agenda).

The morning session finished at 14.00.

3. Independent Organisational Review

The Saturday afternoon session, which began at 14.30pm and was attended by:

Mark Anstiss, Matthew Bradbury, David Brown, Jackie Bryson, Alison Cairns, Nick Colton, Rich Emerson, Roger Fanner, Lyndon Gill, Mick Green, Will Kilner, Nick Kurth, Dan Lane, Simon McCalla, Dave Musgrove, Lisa Payne, Rik Payne, Jon Punshon, Graham Richmond, Lynn Robinson, Tony Ryan, Fiona Sanders, Claudia Sarner, Carl Spencer, Pete Sterling, Andy Syme, Dave Turnbull, Ian Walton, Helen Wilson, Martin Wragg and Emma Moody (Womble Bond Dickinson).

NK suggested the meeting should firstly receive feedback on the ORG report from area reps; FS should then give an update of feedback to date from the perspective of the ORG, following which there would be an open Q&A session with Emma Moody of Womble Bond Dickinson (legal advisor to the ORG). This general structure was agreed.

- 3.1 Cymru North Wales (DL):** generally positive feedback. Some members had felt that the gender diversity targets could be difficult to achieve.
- 3.2 Cymru South Wales (WK):** the main themes discussed were the issue of primacy, the importance of indoor climbing as a member activity and the pros and cons of a new structure for Wales.
- 3.3 Lakes (PS):** The meeting was attended by two of the signatories to the motion of no confidence who (along with some others) left after the ORG session. Questions were asked about how the BMC proposes to manage the work of being both a representative body and a governing body (NGB). Most of the challenges were around detail and queries about what comes next. Some felt there was a lack of statistical evidence in the report.
- 3.4 London & SE (RP):** the main concerns were about the make-up of the Board (especially the number of ex officio members), and how members could hold the Board to account. One of the MONC signatories had attended and spoken at the meeting (as well as attending the Lakes area meeting). Some members had been disappointed at the limited amount of time to digest the report and were concerned about the short consultation period (22 Dec).
- 3.5 Midlands (RF):** members wanted to know what matters will be reserved for Members' Assembly, and what mechanism would be used for holding the Board to account.
- 3.6 North East (JP):** there had been lots of interest in the detail, and some questions remained unanswered, e.g. how information would flow between the Board and the Members' Assembly. Some people were deterred from attending the meeting because they felt the process had become overly complex.

- 3.7 North West (CSp):** the NW was the first area meeting after the Kendal launch event so there had been very little time for people to read the report. Some probing questions had been asked by members with previous experience as elected volunteers. The overriding issue was whether the recommendations are workable and the timescales realistic. The NW area's written report listed a number of specific concerns.
- 3.8 Peak (DB):** DB said there had been 'a resigned acceptance' at the Peak area meeting that something must be done. Some people had felt the proposed new structure would reduce engagement with members. One of the signatories of the MONC had attended and addressed the meeting (as well as attending the Lakes area meeting).
- 3.9 South West (HW):** there had been a pre-meeting undercurrent of dissatisfaction, although HW noted that some people had admitted that they had not read the report. The main questions were about timescales, primacy, changes to risk of legal liability, and reserved matters. Some concern was expressed about the lack of transparency of specialist committees and their proposed role on the Members' Assembly.
- 3.10 Yorkshire (AS):** most people had felt the recommendations were necessary and broadly sensible. There had been some questions about the relationship between specialist committees, Members' Assembly and the Board. There was a concern that the time / workload required to implement the recommendations might impact on the broader work of the BMC's workforce (volunteers and staff).
- 3.11** NK thanked everyone for their contributions, and the ORG for the work that had gone into the report. In summary: the lack of time to read the report prior to the area meetings had been an issue; there was resigned acceptance that a new organisational structure is necessary, but the detail of the structure is important and lots of discussion is required; the proposed role of specialist committees on the Members' Assembly had produced some concern; and the capacity of volunteers and staff to implement the proposed changes must be considered and addressed.

MG noted that the ORG had not addressed the issue of implementation costs and timescales or priorities. MG felt it would be unwise to start the process of restructuring without being sure of our ability to implement the changes. AS felt that we needed to decide which recommendations needed member approval. LG said that a great number of people were not satisfied by the explanation of 'how we got here' let alone 'where we go from here'.

There followed an update by FS. 400 responses to the follow-up survey have now been received. There was a discussion about the relevance of the interim survey results responses.

FS introduced Emma Moody, from Womble Bond Dickinson. EM stressed that the new structure must be legal and workable in practice and that it enable the membership to hold the Board to account. Board members must have the right balance of skills and expertise and be appointed objectively. The Members' Assembly will be a link between the membership and the Board, and will enable close scrutiny. The current constitution (M&AA) is not fit for purpose and lacks clarity in relation to the risk of legal liability of elected volunteers. Members of National Council could be considered as shadow or de facto directors under the current constitution.

LG considered the legal advice about the risk of prosecution of National Council members, 'a conspiracy to scare the membership into agreeing the new structure'. MW advised that the formulation of the current M&AA was a three-year process before their adoption in 1993. He felt the current M&AA makes it clear that the Executive 'runs the show', and that the ORG report overstates National Council's liabilities. He concluded by saying he accepted the report's recommendations as a whole.

EM responded that the legal advice note was issued in relation to the content of the current M&AA rather than what might happen in practice, and that modern good governance is vital in all organisations in order to comply with the law.

CSp suggested there could be greater risks that need addressing first, although he did not indicate what these risks might be. LG felt the survey results might be skewed by the perception of risk in not changing the organisational structure. ORG member MB responded that not adhering to good governance would present a broader risk to the organisation as a whole, not just to members of the Executive and National Council. There was no intention to scaremonger, just simply to highlight risks. RP added that good governance is the elimination of 'grey areas' and the creation of clear lines of accountability, regardless of external funding sources requirements; members constituted the major source of funding.

ORG member SM added that members' interests had been put at the heart of every decision and recommendation made by the ORG. LG disagreed and felt members would have less influence under the new structure.

The meeting went on to discuss how the recommendations might be adopted and implemented. EM advised that they would need to go before an AGM (or EGM, actually a General Meeting) for new Articles to be adopted. A transition period would then be required to reconstitute the Board and Members' Assembly, etc. The ToR of other committees would need to be reviewed, as would the structures of related bodies (e.g. ACT, MHT and LPT).

MG asked about the feedback process during the transition period. EM advised that a more flexible approach could be taken for the implementation of changes that did not need to go before a General Meeting. FS added that a review of the M&AA had also been built into the ORG's recommendations, and that there was a difference between recommendations that would call for amendments to the M&AA and those that would not require formal legal changes. (note: in the literature circulated by the ORG prior to the meeting it was judged that 22 of the 51 ORG recommendations would need changes to the M&AA).

DB asked the meeting to consider the argument for charitable status as he felt the BMC is similar to other organisations (e.g. the National Trust) that are charities. EM clarified that the BMC's purposes as stated in the current M&AA are not exclusively charitable and that a charitable structure would have to be seen to provide a public (not private) benefit. Charitable status is not incompatible with a member organisation per se, more the BMC as it is now constituted and operates is more a 'members' organisation' than a public organisation. EM suggested the BMC's existing charities could be used more effectively for fiscal benefits. FS said the governance requirements for charities are more stringent than limited companies, and MW added that members' views are not relevant in charitable organisations. For these reasons the ORG had concluded against recommending charitable status for the BMC.

In summary, NK said there needed to be a degree of separation from the ORG's proposals and any possible counter proposal that might arise. NK proposed to put a paper together which would outline an implementation plan. LR felt that a communications plan was also needed. RP suggested we start at the 2018 AGM and work backwards.

**Action:
NK**

FS asked what involvement was expected from the ORG after the 22 December consultation deadline. RP said that the ORG must analyse the survey responses and produce a final set of recommendations. SM added that this second report should clearly show the changes that had been made. PS noted that the ORG's ToR allowed for any suggested follow-up work thought to be required to be identified and communicated to the BMC within the initial 4 to 6 month review period.

NK asked if there was anything else the meeting hoped to get out of the discussions. There was a general feeling that more detail on how the proposed new structure would work in practice is required. FS said she envisioned two groups after the consultation period ends: one to consider the detail (with input from the ORG, working with focus groups); the other to consider transition.

RF said he would like to see the retention of the word 'council' in the body representing members, and asked whether the proposed Members' Assembly could instead be called the Council of Members.

DM asked whether the current BMC staff structure could cope with the challenge of implementing a new organisational structure, and was there a possibility that other activities would suffer. SM said that a 'transition team' might be necessary to implement the changes, and the question of how best to resource this had not yet been answered.

The meeting discussed how the recommendations might be presented to the AGM. RP asked if they would be put to members en bloc, or as groups of related recommendations. DM felt we needed to ask members to accept or reject the recommendations as a whole, and could not ask people to pick and choose. FS agreed there was an expectation from members that all recommendations would be presented for ratification.

CSp expressed concern about the lack of detail in the report; there are only two more area meetings before the April AGM, and we ought to hold an EGM later in the year. MW felt it important to take the recommendations to the AGM; there has been a constitutional crisis for over a year, and members and other organisations recognise this. We must get members to accept the report, and then adopt a new set of Articles. We need to engage members at large, and encourage them to vote, either by attending the AGM or voting by proxy.

LG warned of a backlash if there was insufficient consultation, as had happened with the rebranding proposal.

LR suggested that the 2018 AGM could be rescheduled for later in the year, as permitted by the current M&AA. IW asked how putting back the AGM date might affect director appointments / re-elections; MW advised that the posts are elected / re-elected on an annual basis at the AGM, so the current directors would be able to continue until the deferred AGM.

RP felt that we needed an 'option B' if we decided at some point that members felt they had not been fully consulted before being asked to vote on the recommendations.

The Saturday afternoon session finished at 17.15.

3.12

The Sunday morning session, which began at 9.20, was attended by: Mark Anstiss, David Brown, Alison Cairns, Nick Colton, Rich Emerson, Roger Fanner, Lyndon Gill, Mick Green, Will Kilner, Nick Kurth, Dan Lane, Lisa Payne, Rik Payne, Mike Pinder, Jon Punshon, Lynn Robinson, Tony Ryan, Fiona Sanders, Claudia Sarner, Carl Spencer, Pete Sterling, Andy Syme, Dave Turnbull, Helen Wilson and Martin Wragg.

NK welcomed Alison Cairns, attending her first National Council meeting as a newly elected representative for the Peak Area; a welcome was also extended to Claudia Sarner, beginning a new term as a Midlands Area rep, and Lyndon Gill, standing in for Andy Say as a North West Area rep, both having served previously on National Council.

NK asked for thoughts on Saturday's Council session; he was keen to publicise the work of specialist committees. TR agreed to compose a web article highlighting achievements in 2017 and key objectives for 2018.

**Action:
TR**

Following Saturday's Organisational Review session, NK reaffirmed that he felt there was a need to produce a plan for the next six months; LR, AS and PS volunteered to review the document which NK hoped would be circulated to National Council members before Christmas.

**Action:
LR/AS/PS**

In terms of the organisation's structure, AC said that as someone fairly new to the BMC she had difficulty understanding 'where the organisation was coming from, and where the ORG report was proposing it should go'; she asked if there is a document which explains this? AS thought we needed a two-page document outlining the genesis of the structural issues, where we are, where we are going, and how we plan to do it. NC offered to produce a first draft

**Action:
NC**

LG reiterated that he was sceptical about the process of member consultation and the presentation of the ORG report.

CSp asked whether there was a plan to instruct lawyers to prepare new Articles before the AGM; he was uncomfortable about the possible expenditure and would like to see a cost-benefit analysis. DT and FS confirmed that Womble Bond Dickinson had quoted £15k for drafting a new set of Articles and that this had already been built into the ORG budget.

RF asked what the current Articles said about when an AGM can be held. MW advised that the AGM could be postponed; it would need to be held within six months of the financial year end, i.e. 30 June 2018, and not more than 15 months after the last preceding AGM.

CSp felt that there was insufficient time to prepare and discuss the details of the six-month plan, and that the process must be delayed. An offer to CSp to join the group preparing the plan was declined, as he felt he would be 'seen to be complicit' (by some members in the North West Area, and others outside the area) in pushing through the process.

RP suggested that, as National Council members, CSp and LG had a duty to be part of the process and not take an adversarial stance.

CSp said that there were lots of ex officio* members in the North West area with many years' experience of BMC committee work, and he was getting a very different message from them than the one presented by the ORG report. It may be that the area is viewed by some as a 'rebel' area, but he 'represented the voice of reason'.

LG said that in the wrong hands the ORG report could lead to very damaging changes in the BMC.

NK felt that we needed to go through the process of producing a plan, so that we can advise members whether we feel able carry it out by the AGM.

MP said we do not yet know what members will or will not accept, but the priority is to sort out the governance issues, the policy issues are less urgent.

JP said some members in the North East Area are already starting disengage from the issue because it has become too complicated. It was important for National Council to represent members.

AS felt it was important not to be swayed by a vocal minority (on either side of the debate).

In LG's opinion, the first ORG member survey was flawed and not an appropriate way to develop policy; CSp felt the second survey should not have been released before the National Council meeting as it is incomplete.

At this point, NK asked the meeting to turn its attention to attendance at the November area meetings. It had been reported that some of the MONC signatories had attended more than one meeting, which was contrary to the M&AA. This was clearly an attempt to influence the debate outside of the areas in which they resided.

There was a discussion about the pros and cons of tightening the rules on attending and speaking at area meetings, which currently are quite relaxed, to the extent that non-members are generally welcome to attend and speak.

RF said he would like a forceful statement to be made about the attempt to influence meetings. FS advised that the ORG was expecting a letter from one of those who had attended multiple meetings (Rodney Gallagher) and that the ORG would discuss this in due course.

The meeting took a vote on possible actions in response to this breach of the rules:

- Do nothing (other than make area chairs aware) – 12 votes for.
- Direct intervention (with Rodney Gallagher) – 4 votes for
- Advisory notice on website – 0 votes for.

Noted

There was one abstention.

At this point (10.35) RF said he would quite like to start the meeting, as per the agenda.

4. Note issues for AOB

- 4.1 AOB items were only considered after item 9. (Club applications) had been completed.

5. Minutes of previous meeting*

- 5.1 The minutes of the September 2017 meeting were accepted as a fair and accurate record, and were signed by the Chair.

5.2 Actions from previous minutes

- 5.2.1 Ref.3.2.1: Re-circulate 'Top Ten' points for area chairs; meeting requested re-send to James Mann (SW Area Chair).

Done

5.2.2	Ref.3.2.5: Send out Strategic Plan draft for feedback.	Done
5.2.3	Ref.3.2.9: Prompt AMG for additional advice on bracken / ticks; re-issue BMC advice.	Done
5.2.4	Ref.3.2.10: Progress composting toilet at Horseshoe Quarry; MW to investigate lower cost alternative site.	Ongoing
5.2.5	Ref.3.2.11: Research airline baggage web article.	Ongoing
5.2.6	Ref.3.2.12: Clarify data query.	Done
5.2.7	Ref.3.2.13: Engagement with West Penwith authorities.	Done
5.2.8	Ref.3.2.14: Issue letters to the Patrons.	Done
5.2.9	Ref.3.2.16: Circulate HWIG update email; report presented at NC.	Done
5.2.10	Ref 4.1: Sound out federations re: IFSC/UIAA MoU; Colin Knowles now appointed as BMC go-between.	Ongoing
5.2.11	Ref 5.2: Upload ORG presentation slides to website, and attach to NC minutes.	Done
5.2.12	Ref 5.2: Produce 1 page summary template for Specialist Committee chairs.	Done
5.2.13	Ref 6.1: Update National Council membership list, and advise MT.	Done
5.2.14	Ref 6.1: Produce 1-page MT summary document.	Done
5.2.15	Ref 7.4.3: Advise challenge event organisers about route marking; training session to be organised for providers.	Ongoing
5.2.16	Ref 7.4.3: Write to MREW re: cliff anchor guidance.	Ongoing
5.2.17	Ref 7.4.3: Formulate BMC position on Thirlmere zip wire.	Ongoing
5.2.18	Ref 7.4.10: Review AYC cover in Yorkshire area, David Farrell to continue as AYC; suggestion to produce 'job spec' for outdoor youth co-ordinator.	Ongoing
5.2.19	Ref 9.2: Financial review of partner expense option; FinCom to provide cost estimate.	Ongoing
5.2.20	Ref 9.3: Suggest 2018 National Council meeting locations in 'beltway' area.	Done
5.2.21	Ref 9.4.1: Circulate subscriptions paper; re-send and put on February agenda.	Ongoing
5.2.22	Ref 9.6: Progress Lake District venue for 2018 AGM; Kendal now agreed.	Done

5.3 DB reminded the meeting that another AOB item discussed at the September meeting was about what we intended to do about recording the BMC's history, following the 'The First Fifty Years' book. Whilst there is no specific plan to undertake such a project, CSp suggested Phil Kelly might be interested in assisting.

6. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

6.1 2018 National Council locations*

The meeting decided to keep the February 2018 meeting in the Wye Valley (and not move it to the Buxton area, as proposed), but to move the September 2017 meeting from Gower to the Midlands – venues yet tbc.

Noted

7. Reports

7.1 Finance*

7.1.1 In the absence of the Honorary Treasurer, DT presented the latest finance report. The revised forecast shows a deficit for the year of £112k. Positive variances against budget amount to £175k, including reduced salary costs (£40k) and credit for Summit postage overcharge (£37k); negative variances of £163k included grant income taken out of volunteer development programme (£68k) and inclusion of organisational review costs (£20-25k).

We have received no Sport England funding since 1 April 2017 although verbal promises suggest interim funding of £149k for the period 15 August 2017 to 30 March 2018 may be forthcoming, which is a lot less than requested or anticipated. The budgets for all work programmes with Sport England support have been affected since April.

The insurance market remains difficult, and the growth to the end of Q2 has fallen off in Q3. Membership has continued to grow although not at the levels originally budgeted. The 2018 forecast currently stands at a deficit of £10k.

NK advised that with reference to Sport England, the BMC has done what it has been asked to do (ref: multiple governance improvements that fall outwith the ORG's remit), but that Sport England had not yet delivered on its promises.

7.2 CEO

7.2.1 DT advised that the combination of government funded being on hold, and the ORG being in sitting had created management challenges for staff and senior volunteers. Much of the BMC's core work – access, membership, insurance etc. has continued much as usual although budgets of externally funded work including clubs, youth, equity and hill walking have all been subject to large cuts.

Jo Rowbottam (equity) left the BMC in October and Zoe Spriggins (competitions) has been appointed to start work on 2 January 2018.

MG asked about staff input into the Organisational Review. FS advised that all staff had been invited to the initial focus group sessions, and that follow-up sessions were planned for 12 December.

7.3 Executive*

7.3.1 NK asked the National Council reps on the Executive to give a verbal report.

WK had attended the 18 October meeting, and said the Executive is currently limited in what it can do pending the organisational review process.

LR added that interviews for a third independent director had taken place on 1 December and that a selection had been recommended. (Post meeting note: the position has now been accepted by Amanda Parshall, a corporate lawyer of 15+ years experience.)

FS asked about the employment contract for Simon Lee as Commercial Partnerships Manager, which was originally for 12 months from December 2017. DT advised that a 12-month extension had been agreed by the Executive.

Jon Punshon and Martin Wragg gave their apologies and left the meeting at this point.

7.4 Areas

7.4.1 **Cymru North Wales.** DL reported that 42 people attended the meeting at Plas y Brenin; a good turnout considering the weather made travel difficult. The meeting focused on the ORG report and the Area AGM – Tim Jepson was elected as the new Area Chair (for Cymru North Wales, now that Cymru South Wales is a fully constituted Area).

7.4.2 **Cymru South Wales.** The meeting focused on the ORG report and the Area AGM, the first for the Area since it was approved by National Council as a fully constituted Area. Ollie Burrows was elected as the Area Chair, replacing WK, who remains as a National Council rep and Steve Quinton was elected as the second National Council rep.

WK reported that someone from the venue hosting the meeting (Up and Under in Cardiff) had commented on the new commercial partnership with Montane; this had upset a number of independent retailers, who had written to the BMC, Up and Under being one of the signatories.

DT advised there had been a useful meeting between BMC reps (NK, DT & Simon Lee) with Paul Casey (The Climbers Shop, and the lead signatory of the letter from retailers) at Kendal Mountain Festival at which a proposal to develop the BMC's Associate Membership package and improve its benefits to independent retailers had been discussed. Simon Lee has been actioned to follow this up.

- 7.4.3 **Lakes.** PS reported that Mike Parsons is continuing as Area Chair and that Ted Roger's term on National Council has been completed. National Council recorded its thanks to Ted for his contributions over the past five years.

Ted has not yet been replaced, so the Lakes currently has just one rep, who as it happens is unable to attend the February 2018 National Council meeting; PS asked for clarification on the nomination of a replacement. DT advised that 'the norm' at National Council over the years was to allow Areas to send replacement reps to meetings.

PS was keen for an official BMC response to the Thirlmere zip wire proposal to be published, and that members be encouraged to write to the planning authority with their views on the application; the deadline for submissions is 2 January 2018. DT advised that Cath Flitcroft has already been tasked with this job.

PS also reported on the proposal to develop the Walna Scar car park. A planning application has been approved for a tarmac car park with 58 parking places; the typical charge for such a facility in the Lakes is £12/day, and PS added that the car park is likely to be locked in the evenings at times when climbers and walkers are still likely to be on the hill. Furthermore, the site is common land and a change of use to commercial purposes requires approval.

DT advised that a letter opposing the application is in preparation, and DB added that 14 December is the critical date. It was agreed that the office would publish a news article and initiate a social media campaign.

Action:
DT

- 7.4.4 **London & SE*.** RP reported on a lively meeting attended by 45 members. After the ORG presentation, there was a lengthy Q&A session covering a broad range of issues including accountability, transparency, the timeframe of the review process, and the representative nature of the currently defined Areas; there was also general admiration for the ORG's work.

Discussions on BMC representation on MTE had been postponed to February due to lack of time.

- 7.4.5 **Midlands*.** RF reported that the meeting was attended by 32 members (5 female, 27 male), a slightly lower number than usual. The meeting focused on the ORG report, the MTE proposal and the Area AGM.

Members wanted more detail on what 'reserved items' would have to go to the Members' Assembly for approval.

There were no objections raised to the proposal that BMC representation on MTE be reduced to one vote.

The AGM elected Andy Potter as the new Area Chair, and Claudia Sarner as a new National Council rep.

7.4.6 **North East.** MA reported that the meeting was attended by about 25 members, and would have been greater if not for difficult driving conditions caused by snow. The meeting focused solely on the ORG report, and the Area AGM has been postponed until February.

7.4.7 **North West.*** Approximately 35 members attended the meeting in Rivington, an improvement on the more typical figure of c.15.

The AGM elections were voted en bloc; CSp and Andy Say were re-elected as Chair and Secretary, and National Council reps. Les Ainsworth was re-elected as Access rep, Stuart Holmes as Youth rep, and Stuart Igoe as Hill Walking rep; Richard Toon's continuing role as Clubs rep is yet tbc.

There was a lively debate on the ORG report, aided by the attendance of a number of members with previous experience of acting as locally and nationally elected volunteers.

Some of the main concerns revolved around the timeframe of the review process, the rush to adopt the recommendations in whole, a perception that the membership survey was flawed, and the nature of what will be included as 'reserved matters' for the proposed Members' Assembly.

CSp mentioned that the NW was considering holding an interim Area Meeting in December.

On the subject of BMC representation on MTE, attendees felt there was insufficient information and time to reach a conclusion. CSp reported that subsequent email feedback from meeting attendees had suggested 80% favoured no change (whilst the organisational review is ongoing), and 20% supported the reduction in voting numbers.

7.4.8 **Peak*.** DB reported that c.110 people attended the meeting in Grindleford. The meeting agreed to abandon the 'normal' area meeting business in favour of concentrating on the ORG report and discussions with Peak Park CEO Sarah Fowler, who addressed the meeting.

Area AGM elections were conducted. Alison Cairns was elected as National Council rep, replacing Rob Greenwood, who stepped down earlier in the year. Rob remains as Chair, Becky Hammond as Secretary and DB as the other National Council rep.

Sarah Fowler addressed the meeting and a robust discussion ensued. The park authority was left in no doubt that the Stanage Forum should be consulted about future decisions affecting the North Lees Estate, and not be treated as a rubber stamp for decisions already taken.

In respect of the ORG report, concerns expressed included the proposed make-up of the Board, and the loss of votes by area reps on the Members' Assembly as compared to the current National Council structure.

7.4.9 **South West.** HW reported that 30 members attended the meeting in Bristol, including a greater number of women than usual.

The AGM had re-elected the Chair, Secretary and National Council reps. A vacancy for a Clubs Committee rep remains.

In addition to the ORG presentation, the meeting had discussed the issue of the effectiveness of the coastguard service in carrying out sea cliff rescues. Influencing how the rescue services operate is proving difficult, and it was suggested that higher level conversations (via the Mountaineering All Party Parliamentary Group) might be worth considering. DT advised that matters were in hand following a conference call between several BMC staff, Trevor Smith, Scott Titt and David Hillebrandt on 17 October.

Anthony Eccles arrived at this point (12.15pm).

- 7.4.10 **Yorkshire.** AS reported that the Area AGM elected members for all elected volunteer roles with the exception of Area Youth Co-ordinator – David Farrell's ongoing role is yet tbc. Some concern was expressed about succession planning within the proposed new organisational structure.

MG felt the work of the specialist committees could be better communicated to members to enable people to get more involved where appropriate.

8. Constitutional issues

8.1 Review of interim draft strategic plan*

NK summarised the status of the paper, which was now re-issued unchanged since being reviewed by WK and others after the June National Council meeting. He suggested the meeting needed to decide if the Red / Amber / Green ratings had been correctly applied, and determine what work can be advanced without any impact from the organisational review.

DT felt that the bullet point about brand identity (under item 1) should not be rated Green.

WK said he would welcome further feedback.

8.2 BMC representation on Mountain Training England*

NK reminded the meeting of that National Council had decided in September that this should go to the November Area Meetings for consideration. It was noted however that some Areas had not been able to discuss it due to the ORG presentations and Area AGM elections.

WK reminded the meeting that this is a longstanding issue which has been unresolved for 18 months.

MP felt there was a perception that MT matters often get pushed to one side; BMC representation is the single MT governance issue yet to be resolved.

HW said that there was general disquiet at the SW Area Meeting about the proposed change. MA felt the proposal may be more controversial than anticipated and some members in the North East are also uncomfortable with it.

CSp said Andy Say had reported that in the North West area 80% are for the current arrangement, and 20% for the proposal.

WK reported that South Wales, North Wales, the Midlands and Yorkshire are broadly in favour of the proposal; the Lakes and Peak did not discuss it at their November meetings.

There was a discussion about how to progress towards a decision. MP felt the BMC had a duty to act in a timely manner.

NK asked for a vote:

- To extrapolate the results received so far – 6 votes for.
- To ask the Areas to discuss in February – 8 votes for.

There were 5 abstentions.

RP suggested we should advise the Areas that it was up to them to decide whether to discuss at the February meetings (and if so, it should appear clearly on meeting agendas), otherwise National Council would take the decision.

NK requested that both papers produced by MTE should be re-circulated.

Action:
TR

RP apologised to MTE for the delay in making a decision.

9. Club applications for membership

9.1 RBC Women's Climbing Group – accepted 27 September 2017.

9.2 University of Worcester Climbing & Mountaineering Club – accepted 18 October 2017.

9.3 London School of Economics Rock Climbing Club – accepted 20 November 2017.

9.4 LG suggested there should be an ongoing requirement for affiliated clubs to accept the BMC's participation statement noting that some university clubs / student unions had been refusing to acknowledge it.

There was unanimous support for the suggestion. TR to liaise with clubs officer on communication to affiliated student clubs.

Action:
TR

10. AOB

10.1 Associate Members

LG felt that National Council should keep an eye on the breadth and depth of the organisations joining as Associate Members.

Noted

10.2 Improved gender equality

LG suggested the BMC should improve the reporting of the gender balance to include transgender where appropriate.

10.3 Area structure review

AS and DB felt a review of the BMC's area structure was needed, with particular respect to representation and voting.

10.4 Volunteer strategy

LR reported that development of a volunteer strategy was ongoing, and requested it be put on the February meeting agenda. She acknowledged the staff support she had received whilst working on the strategy.

Action:
TR

11. Date of next meeting

11.1 Saturday 17 February 2017, Wye Valley – details tbc.

The meeting finished at 13.00 hours.

Summary of action points from the 56th meeting:

Ref	Action	Involving	Target date
2.1.2	Reinvigorate the APPG-M.	DMus	asap
2.1.6	Thank you letter to AMG volunteers.	LR	asap
3.11	Organisational Review implementation plan.	NK	End Dec
3.12	Specialist Committee achievements / objectives article.	TR	Jan 2018
3.12	Produce plan for next six months. (linked to 3.11 above).	LR/AS/PS	End Dec
3.12	Draft paper on BMC structure and proposed changes.	NC	asap
5.2.4	Investigate lower cost composting toilet test site.	MW	ongoing
5.2.5	Research airline baggage web article.	Andy Say	ongoing
5.2.10	Sound out federations re. IFSC/UIAA MoU.	NC	ongoing
5.2.15	Training session for challenge event organisers.	Rob Dyer	Spring 2018
5.2.16	Write to MREW re: cliff anchor guidance.	Rob Dyer	Jan 2018
5.2.17	Formulate BMC position on Thirlmere zip wire.	Cath Flitcroft	Immediate
5.2.18	Write 'job spec' for outdoor youth co-ordinator.	NC	Ongoing
5.2.19	Cost estimate for extending expenses for partners attending National Council weekends.	GR / FinCom	17 Feb
5.2.21	Re-send subs paper and put on February agenda.	TR	Mid Jan
7.4.3	Publicise Walna Scar car park plan to members.	DT	completed
8.2	Re-circulate BMC on MTE papers.	TR	Mid Jan
9.4	Ongoing criteria for club affiliation ref. participation statement.	TR	End Jan
10.4	Put volunteer strategy on February agenda.	TR	Mid Jan

The above accepted as an accurate record of the meeting:

Signed _____ Date _____
 Nick Kurth, Acting President & Chair