



ANNUAL REPORT

2019



President's Report



It seems an age since the last annual report – how lives have changed over the past few months. The year started well at the 2019 AGM with contributions from members on developing the Values of the BMC; the heart and soul of what we do and the bedrock on which the Strategic Plan was developed. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this.

It's been a busy year, but let's not forget where we've come from. In 1944, Winthrop-Young, then President of The Alpine Club, was successful in creating The British Mountaineering Council. Membership was to be open to all "regardless of race, religion or political party"; and the body was to represent and speak on behalf of all climbers in Britain. That was 75 years ago, and the BMC has developed into the main body that represents climbers and hill walkers at local, national and international level. Inclusivity in the BMC is just as important now – recently recognised through our work in achieving the Intermediate Standard of Equality in Sport.

Volunteers remain central to the BMC, from local areas to specialist committees, National Council and the Board. This structure is supported and run by equally committed staff. Thank you to all, you are what makes the BMC.

With climbing in the Olympic Games for the first time, and the qualification of Shauna Coxsey, the excitement was beginning to build. Unfortunately, this is now on hold until 2021, but I wish all the athletes well in their training and future competitions.

The competition scene was vibrant in 2019, from the Youth Climbing Series to national and international Paraclimbing, climbing and ice-climbing competitions. It was inspirational watching them all and we hope they can resume as soon as we can.

There were a huge number of festivals and events that the BMC has been part of, or organised, during the past year, too many to list, but stand-out examples include: the virtual launch of the Climate Project, numerous litter picks and crag clean-ups as part of the Hills2Oceans (H2O) campaign, and the Hill Walking event in Ambleside.

By now, we're getting used to 'virtual' meetings, so I do hope you can 'join' the BMC at our virtual AGM on 13 June. We are working hard with government and partners to ensure the return to normality is as smooth for our member interests as possible; many thanks for your continued support in this. I hope you stay safe and well and that it won't be long before we can get back to all the activities we love.

With very best wishes



Lynn Robinson
BMC President

Chair's Report



This Annual report summarises several aspects of another very successful year for the BMC in delivering services and activities for members and working with a wide range of partners. This is built on the hard work of staff and volunteers, whose efforts deserve our thanks and recognition.

The financial context for 2019 was set early in the year by the knowledge of an imminent substantial increase in the liability insurance premium provided within the membership package. As well as leading to a need to raise membership subscriptions, it also placed the BMC in a situation of expenditure restraint through which the eventual operational deficit was contained to £164k.

2019 was also a year of looking forward, through a full strategic review that involved wide consultation with Areas and members. This led to a strategic plan based on five major themes that cover services to members and clubs; access, conservation and the environment; education and skills; sector leadership and advocacy; and competition climbing. With flexibility built into it, the plan and accompanying financial profile cover the five-year period to 2024. Through the continuing work of the Organisational Development Group (ODG), the delivery of aspects of the strategic plan are gradually being put in place: this includes the setting up of a Competition Climbing Performance Group (CCPG) and a BMC Cymru Committee, both of which are now formal sub-committees of the main Board.

What we didn't know in 2019 was that Covid-19 was on its way, with its wide-ranging impact on society, the economy and access to the countryside. This brings a range of challenges for the BMC that extend into 2021, in terms of needing to adapt the way in which we fulfil our purpose and ambition as well as being diligent in managing our finances.

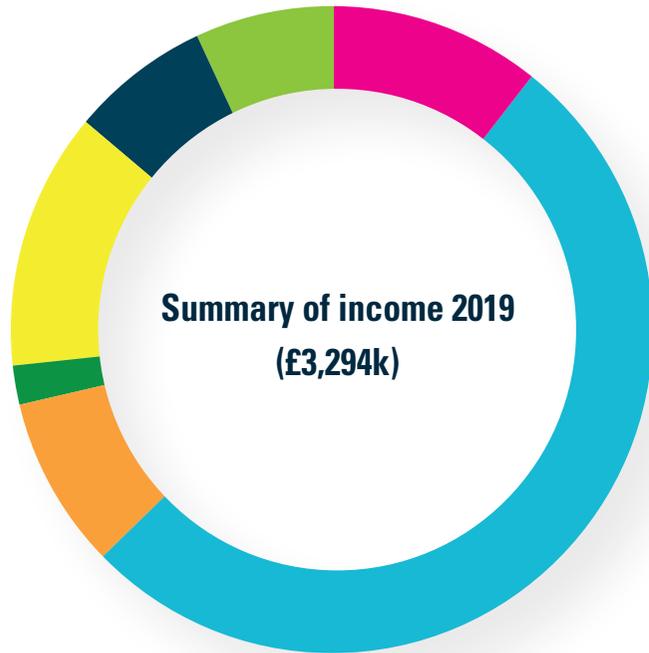
2019 was also a year of considerable change in BMC's governance, with seven new members having joined our Board of 12 since the AGM date. Their insight and conscientious efforts, working alongside National Council and partner organisations, provides a firm basis for the continuing success of the BMC.

Best wishes for your climbing and hill walking activities as access to the hills, mountains and indoor facilities is gradually regained.

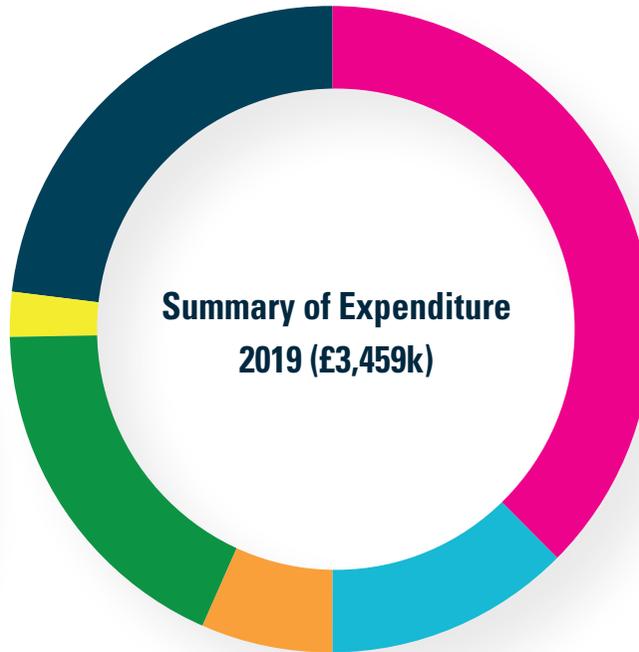
Gareth Pierce

Chair, BMC Board of Directors

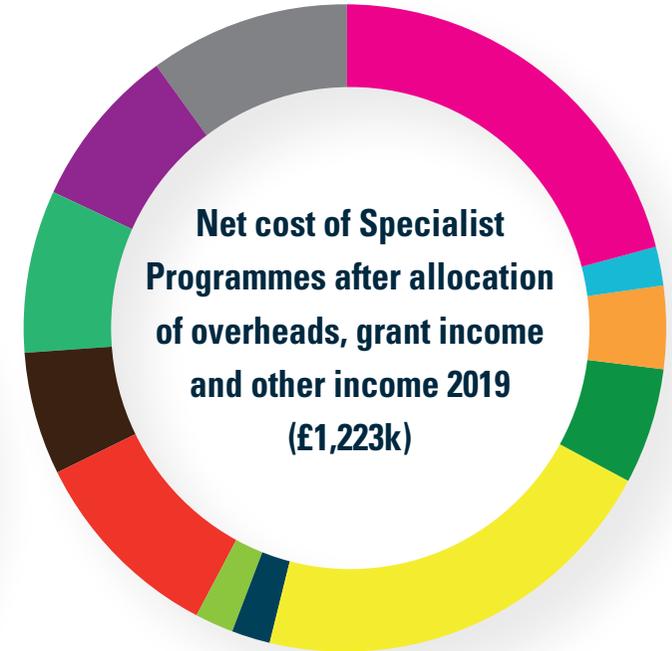
Finance Report



- Club & Associate Membership subscriptions - £348k
- Individual Membership subscriptions - £1,729k
- Sports Council Grants and other donations - £277k
- Profit on sale of publications and clothing - £67k
- Travel Insurance scheme surplus - £418k
- Other income - £227k
- Other income from Specialist Programmes - £228k



- Salaries and Personnel - £1,304k
- Personal Accident and Civil Liability Insurance - £432k
- Summit Magazine - £229k
- Cost of Specialist Programmes - £620k
- AGM, Area meetings and Events - £83k
- Other office costs - £791k



- Access & Conservation - 21%
- Facilities (Walls, Managed Rock's & Huts) - 2%
- Heritage - 4%
- Guidebooks - 6%
- Competitions - 21%
- Expeditions - 2%
- Performance - 2%
- Safety & Training - 10%
- Technical - 6%
- Youth & Equity - 8%
- National & International representation - 8%
- Volunteer Support & Communications - 10%

Headlines & highlights



Introduction

The BMC ran a very broad range of work programmes, events and policy initiatives for the benefit of climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers in 2019. This included continued staff and financial support for our three charities – the BMC Access & Conservation Trust (ACT), the Mountain Heritage Trust (MHT) and the Land & Property Trust, as well as support for key partner organisations – Mountain Training England and the Mountain Training Trust (Plas y Brenin) – via BMC appointed directors.

a. Access, conservation & environment

This remains the BMC's highest priority work area for members and covers a broad range of activities including political engagement, environmental campaigning, climbing site management (including BMC-owned land) and local access negotiations for climbers and hill walkers. Three technical staff undertake the work backed up by a team of specialist volunteers from the membership.

Brexit dominated the political landscape in 2019 and the BMC contributed to several important consultations in England and Wales focused on the implications to the natural environment, agriculture and access. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Mountaineering continued to function under the BMC's secretariat albeit with reduced engagement from MPs and Peers due to Brexit workload; Derek Twigg MP took over as chair from John Mann and David Rutley (former co-chairs). The BMC also contributed to DEFRA consultations on the future for food, farming and the environment and the review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Glover Review). In Wales the BMC was influential in the establishment of the Welsh Government Access Reform Advisory Group which includes a commitment to extend CROW access rights to sea cliffs and coastal slopes.

Our flagship environmental campaign in 2019 was the Access & Conservation Trust-led (ACT) *Mend Our Mountains: Make One Million*, which ultimately raised £900k for footpath projects across 15 National Parks. *Hills 2 Oceans (H2O)*, was also launched to encourage litter and plastic removal from our hills and mountains; 50 volunteer clean-up events have been run to date and 3,000 biodegradable bin bags handed out.

Site negotiations with land owners large and small proved as busy as ever in 2019 and local access volunteers made a positive impact across both England and Wales. ACT extended its financial support for live weather and winter conditions monitoring stations with a new facility on Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) adding to existing sites in the Lake District. Raptor persecution grew in prominence and the BMC published detailed media articles in collaboration with the RSPB Investigations team; in the Peak / North West local BMC reps established a Raptor Persecution & Grouse Moor Management Working Group to encourage ongoing dialogue on the issue.

In November we staged a well-received conference – *Changing Behaviours: caring for the places we love* – attended by conservation and land management agencies from across England and Wales. Discussion ranged from path repair practices to disposable BBQs and moorland fires; the conference helped reinforce the BMC's environmental credentials and commitment to an influential and engaged audience.



THE CLIMATE PROJECT

b. Safety & training

Supporting Mountain Training and advising on safe practice remains a core function of the BMC. In 2019 we ran the annual Safety Seminar for University Clubs at Plas y Brenin, climbing courses for 80 u18 climbers, Ready to Rock courses for 100+ adults and subsidised coach training weekends for u18s, many thanks to AMI and Mountain Training for supporting these activities. A key initiative in 2019 was the development of a Safe Belaying campaign primarily aimed at new climbers and the indoor sector. A technical working group of BMC, Mountain Training and Association of British Climbing Walls (ABC) reps reported on the issue mid-year and a well-attended seminar for climbing wall Technical Advisors was held in December; with the continued growth of indoor climbing this remains a critical consideration for the BMC and our partners, the full campaign will roll out later in 2020.

c. Competitions & high performance

2019 proved an exciting year on the competitions front fuelled by the prospect of our debut Olympic appearance in Tokyo 2020. At the IFSC World Championships in Hachioji, Japan, it was great to see Shauna Coxsey win bronze medals in bouldering and the combined event and qualify for a quota place at Tokyo.

On the Paraclimbing front, a huge team of GB athletes went to the 2019 World Championships in France, and came away with three double World Champions and nine medals – the biggest medal haul ever by a GB climbing team.

Throughout the year the BMC also carried out a major review of the structure for managing competition climbing and the talent pathway and in October the BMC Board agreed to establish a new internal department (GB Climbing) and a Board sub-Committee (the CCPG) – to oversee this growing aspect of our work. The new structure is supported by Mountaineering Scotland and the ABC both of whom are members of the CCPG. Planning for future activities continues apace and considerable work went into our bid for UK Sport funding supported by GB Climbing colleagues from the English Institute of Sport (EIS); we are hopeful of a positive outcome which would allow us to put in place the infrastructure and personnel required for successful world class programme.

Headlines & highlights

d. Organisational development

The implementation of recommendations from the BMC Organisational Review 2017-18 continued apace under the direction of the ODG. A significant volunteer effort went into this work across multiple subject areas including clubs, membership engagement, competitions, strategy, Wales, partnerships, governance and organisational structure; considerable progress had been made by the year end with some work areas overlapping into 2020. One of the more complex considerations related to ORG Recommendation 33, *“National Council should be restructured and become the Members’ Assembly and its role redefined”*.

In January 2019 the R33 Working Group began considering the new Council’s structure; the aims were twofold – to give better representation to members and a greater voice to specialist committees. A new category of councillor, the ‘Nationally Elected Councillor’, was recommended to represent key membership groups e.g. hill walkers. The R33 Group also recommended the introduction of ‘Constituency Councillors’ for members of both Mountain Training and BMC affiliated clubs. Specialist committees were given four votes on the new Council and it was recommended these be given to Access, Clubs, Competitions and Partners.

In June 2019, the R33 Group published the proposed new structure and recommended the body be renamed the Members’ Council. In the autumn of 2019 work began on the operating procedures of the new Council, in particular the new Terms of Reference, role descriptions and a code of conduct. It was planned that the proposals for the new body would be put to the BMC AGM in 2020 but Covid-19 means this will now take place in 2021.

e. Governance

Improving the BMC’s governance systems and processes was a high priority in 2019. In the spring a full-time Governance & Compliance Officer was appointed and a standalone Annual Governance Statement has been produced which can be viewed separately to this report. The new Officer also assumed the role of Company Secretary in mid-2019. The BMC is compliant with the Code of Sports Governance and any new requirements are monitored on an ongoing basis. In August 2019 a Governance Working Group (GWG) was formed to consolidate the governance changes instigated in 2018. The initial focus was on processes, communications and member engagement related to AGMs, together with the process and membership of the Nominations Committee; the GWG’s proposals have been considered by the Board and National Council and will be circulated to the membership for feedback prior to finalisation and implementation. Key recommendations include:

- Retaining discretionary proxy as an option for voting on AGM resolutions and elections.
- How information on candidates standing for election and important resolutions will be presented to members.
- The voting record of any proxy holding 10% or more of the votes cast on an election/resolution will be published i.e. how many votes they cast and how they voted.
- The Nominations Committee should consist of seven members i.e. the Chair, President, three Independent Directors, a National Council Representative and an independent HR specialist.

The GWG is moving on to review the Nominated Director process and possible future amendments to the BMC Articles of Association.

f. Clubs

During 2019 the BMC Clubs’ Committee and the Huts Group continued to provide guidance and support to members. A great focus was placed on engaging with ODG workstreams and ensuring clubs and huts are at the heart of BMC strategy moving forwards. Clubs will have a greater voice in the new structure with stronger representation at Board and National Council levels and will be further supported through new ways to engage with staff and key volunteers. This will build on existing foundations, such as the guidance notes available to clubs and huts; in 2019 new and updated guidance was published on a range of technical issues including insurance, club structure, property ownership, water supplies, and child protection. Areas where guidance was offered in new formats included a Facebook Live session between BMC officials and student club reps, and technical training days for Club Officers.



Headlines & highlights



g. Equality

The BMC Equity Steering Group (ESG) was established in 2007 and now comprises five sub-groups covering Mental Health, Disability, BAME, LGBTQ and Women's Development. The ESG's key objective in 2019 was to make a case for the 'Intermediate Standard' accreditation in the Equality Standard for Sport. This involved a substantial effort by staff and volunteers and culminated in the submission of a detailed (and ultimately successful) application in December 2019. As part of this work a detailed review of progress from previous years was undertaken alongside a gap analysis. Notable current initiatives include the BMC's support for Black Dog Outdoor monthly walks, the development of the Paraclimbing Series, supporting the Women's Trad Festival 2019 (one of the biggest of its type in the world), Disability and Equity Symposiums and publications around disability awareness in climbing and walking. Other work towards the Intermediate Standard included undertaking equality surveys of the staff, Board and membership. Online equity training for staff and officials was rolled out and equality impact assessments were undertaken for BMC services including competitions, talent inclusion, marketing, clubs, director selection and recruitment.

h. Partnerships

The importance of BMC's role as a co-ordinating body for the climbing, hill walking and mountaineering sector was highlighted in the Organisational Review 2017-18. The BMC routinely operates a 'Funded Partners' group (BMC, Mountain Training, ABC and ABC Training Trust) to liaise on Sport England funding issues and joint projects and in 2019 we established a new 'Partners Assembly' bringing together a collective of organisations to work on common objectives and strategies; early discussions have involved Mountain Training, the ABC, the Outdoor Industries Association (OIA), Plas y Brenin, the British Activity Providers Association and the Ramblers with key topics including Tokyo 2020, climate change and government funding for climbing and hill walking.

i. Events & membership engagement

Organising and participating in events is a major part of the BMC's work and throughout the year they provide key opportunities to engage with members and the wider outdoor community, many of which have been highlighted in other sections of this report. The BMC continues to partner with the Sheffield Adventure Film Festival and has a prominent presence at both the Keswick Mountain Festival and Kendal Mountain Festival (at which, in 2019, BMC TV's, The Big Bang, won Best Climbing Film). Many BMC-supported climbing festivals took place including the Gower Climbing Festival, Wilton Fest and the Women's Trad Festival. For the second year, the British Bouldering Championships were streamed live to BBC Sport bringing the atmosphere of Devonshire Green to the many. In addition to the work of staff, local BMC volunteers put in a vast number of hours organising and running events including Area Meetings, led walks, crag clean-ups and youth climbing competitions. Education, inspiration and skills is one of the BMC's main strategic themes and over the year numerous courses have taken place to offer training and skills development for club members and students including first aid, training for club committee members and the annual student safety seminar.

With the Hill Walking event being the last to take place before the lockdown, the BMC looks ahead at how to continue to engage with the membership in the absence of face-to-face events by expanding its use of virtual engagement tools.

BMC Statistics

- Total BMC membership (24 Dec 2019): 85,076
- YouTube views 400,000 views per month
- Website visitors 200,000 visits per month
- Emails newsletters subscribers 80,000
- Facebook likes 100,000*
- Twitter followers 55,000*
- Instagram followers 41,000*
- Films on BMC TV 558

(* total across BMC channels)



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