

BMC Cymru Committee

Draft Terms of Reference¹

Rationale

The Wales work stream has identified a critical need for the BMC to develop a new structure in Wales. Substantial progress has been made in analysing needs and appropriate options (see paper previously submitted to the BMC Board (the Board) and National Council (Council) in Autumn 2019), and support has been received in principle from Welsh areas for this process. However, this work will not be completed in time to allow for the thorough consultation of the wider membership that is needed for such a substantial change in the BMC's governance, in time for the 2020 AGM, and conclusion of the ODG. The Wales work stream is therefore recommending the creation of the BMC Cymru Committee (the Committee), by the 2020 AGM, in order to start the work of steering the BMC's activities, engagement and policy work in Wales as well as concluding the review of options for future governance arrangements for the BMC in Wales. This was agreed in principle by the Board on 29th January, and the work stream was asked to draft these terms of reference. We believe the creation of this committee to be vital to the interests of BMC members in Wales, and more widely: all BMC members who climb, hill walk and mountaineer in Wales will benefit from improved representation here (see Annex 1).

Relationship between board, council and committee

The Committee would be constituted as a committee of the Board, with delegated authority. The Committee, Board and Council would agree delegated powers, and the principle that the Board and Council (as well as the competitions body and other specialist committees) should consult the Committee whenever they consider matters concerning Wales.

Reporting Lines: the Committee would report to the Board, with draft minutes sent to the Board. The committee will also communicate with BMC staff (based in Wales and elsewhere) in order to ensure coherence of working.

Role and objectives

1. To conclude the work of the ODG Wales workstream, including:
 - a. finalising the review of options for future governance arrangements for the BMC in Wales
 - b. overseeing the consultation of BMC members on the proposed options
 - c. following this consultation, recommending a preferred option to the Board and Council and, subject to their approval, presenting this to the BMC members at the 2021 AGM.

¹ Subject to consultation with ODG core group, clubs' committee, areas, council and board.

- d. after approval by the 2021 AGM, and in conjunction with the Board, overseeing the implementation of the option (which would replace this Committee²) during 2021-22.
2. Until the final option for the BMC in Wales has been implemented the Committee would:
 - a. provide a national forum for the discussion of issues pertinent to climbing, hill walking and mountaineering in Wales.
 - b. represent (alongside BMC officers) the interests of climbers and hill walkers in various fora in Wales, including to the Welsh government and the Welsh Parliament³.
 - c. advise the BMC (including officers, specialist committees, volunteers) on Welsh issues.
 - d. develop and review the BMC's Welsh language policy, and Wales specific communications, including a Wales area of the BMC website.
 - e. advise on the appointment and priorities of BMC officers in Wales.
 - f. develop the BMC's links with other relevant bodies in Wales, from all sectors.
 - g. help grow the BMC's individual and club membership in Wales.

Committee composition

The composition of the committee will aim to:

- Be flexible and accommodate different levels of volunteer availability.
- Cover a range of skills, knowledge, experience⁴
- Ensure representation of different parts of the BMC membership (e.g. individuals, clubs).
- Ensure links to relevant structures of the BMC (e.g. areas, NC, board).
- Ideally to represent the full diversity of climbing, hill walking and mountaineering: in terms of backgrounds, interests and characteristics.

With this in mind, the committee will be composed of 9-12 members, as follows:

Ex officio members (6):

These would form the core of the Committee, and be in position from the start.

Four area reps (chair and/or secretary of north and south areas, or their nominated stand ins⁵)

Two Council reps, one from each area (if Welsh areas continue to elect two reps each, one rep would attend each committee meeting).

² One of the options under consideration is a BMC Cymru committee. If this option were to be recommended and adopted, this interim committee would develop into a permanent committee, and the terms of reference reviewed and updated accordingly. In the event that a final option is not supported by members for implementation after the 2021 AGM, the Committee would continue to function, subject to annual review by the Board.

³ From 6th May 2020, prior to that, Welsh Assembly.

⁴ A skills matrix will be developed to identify gaps in committee expertise, and will include: genres of activity (e.g. bouldering, trad, sport, indoor climbing, competitions, adventurous hill-walking, winter climbing mountaineering, ski mountaineering); access & conservation; membership engagement; clubs; training; policy engagement; partnership engagement; governance; strategic planning; Welsh language policy. The committee will take into consideration the expertise of BMC Cymru officers attending the committee, e.g. on access and conservation.

⁵ Options for representation from the mid-Wales "outreach" area are still under discussion, this might be through co-opted members or through the north Wales area reps.

Clubs representative (1)

[Suggestion pending consultation with clubs committee]. The Committee would have a representative specifically drawn from BMC member clubs with significant membership resident in Wales (either by number or proportion of their members⁶). The committees of these clubs would be invited to nominate candidates, and then to elect the representative (on the basis of one club one vote).

Board Representative (1)

One Board member would be selected by the Board to serve on the Committee.

Mountain Training Cymru representative (1)

Mountain Training Cymru would be invited to select one representative on the Committee.

Co-opted members (up to 3)

Up to three BMC members could be co-opted in order to fill specific gaps in expertise etc. One of the first tasks of the core 'ex officio' committee members would be to review the skills, knowledge, backgrounds of ex officio members, with reference to a skills matrix. The Committee would then make open call for BMC members to fill the gaps identified. Applicants would be chosen by the Committee, subject to approval by the Board.

Other (non-voting) attendees

BMC officers based in Wales would normally attend Committee meetings in a non-voting capacity, to advise the Committee and facilitate communication between volunteers and staff. Other BMC officers or volunteers, or representatives of partner organisations, could be invited to attend meetings or specific agenda items (probably by tele/video conferencing), as and when their expertise was required.

Terms

As the Committee's work may lead to revised BMC governance arrangements in Wales, initial terms of office of all Committee members will be the shorter of (i) two years; (ii) the time until successor BMC governance arrangements are in place for Wales; or (iii) expiry of the "ex officio" role from which their involvement with the committee derives.

Committee modus operandi

Meetings: The Committee would meet at least four times per year, including at least one, ideally two, face-to-face meeting per year (which might be timed to coincide with BMC AGMs, Council weekends or other events held in Wales to minimise travel/venue costs). Other, shorter meetings, to be held by video/teleconference. Smaller issues arising in between meetings could be discussed and resolved by email.

Minutes to be published on the Wales section of the BMC website, and circulated to areas and clubs.

Chair and secretary to be elected by the Committee from among its membership, at the first meeting of the committee, and on an annual basis thereafter (subject to approval by the Board). In the case of non-attendance of either chair or secretary at a meeting, replacements for that meeting can be elected by members attending the meeting.

⁶ Illustrative numbers only – pending consultation with the clubs committee and analysis of the BMC membership database.

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Quorum: At least five members, including at least three ex officio/club rep.

Decisions: to be made by simple majority vote of those members present. In the case of an equal vote, the chair will have the casting vote.

These TOR to be reviewed annually, until the replacement of the committee by a permanent option.

Annex 1: The case for change: Wales is a nation not an area.

(Excerpted from the Wales Workstream report to the Board and Council, September 2019).

Culture. Wales is a bilingual country, with a distinct culture. 19% of people resident in Wales speak Welsh, this rises to over 40% of 10-15 yr olds, and well over 50% in many of the most important areas for climbing and hillwalking, where many land managers are first language Welsh speakers. Even for non-Welsh speakers, Welsh culture and society is distinct. Climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers in Wales need a Wales-based, bilingual organisation, embedded in Welsh society to better represent their needs.

Policy and politics. Since 1999, almost every area of policy related to BMC activities has been devolved to Wales. These include: access; National Parks; environment; farming and rural affairs; sport and culture; planning; marine and coastal management; education (including universities); some energy and transport; local government; and health. Devolution has continued, with further powers devolved in 2006, 2011, 2014, 2016 and 2017, and more (e.g. over environmental taxation) on the way. While the BMC is recognised as the official representative and governing body in England, it does not have this status in Wales, and has no official recognition from the Welsh government or Sport Wales. Climbers, Hill Walkers and Mountaineers in Wales need a distinctly Welsh entity that can achieve official recognition in Wales, and engage with government and wider civil society in a similar way to the BMC does in England.

Civil Society. Public life in Wales feels ever more distinct from England, and many civil society organisations have followed suit. Most sporting and outdoor organisations, from Ramblers Cymru to Canoe Wales now have a distinct Welsh identity, with significant Wales-based staff and operations (Table XX). Many environmental organisations from the large (e.g. RSPB) to the small (e.g. Buglife) also have dedicated Welsh offices, entities and policy staff, as do other interest groups like landowners (e.g. Farmers' Union of Wales and CLA Cymru). Other changes since the BMC was established in 1944, most notably the establishment of Mountaineering Scotland in 1970, have made the BMC's approach to Wales seem increasingly anachronistic.

Influence. The BMC has lagged behind these changes, and its influence over issues affecting climbers, hillwalkers and mountaineers in Wales has been compromised as a result. Despite the excellent work of its one Wales-based officer, it is often perceived as an English organisation, and often lacks a voice in important discussions (for example, the Snowdon partnership). Excellent initiatives such as the All Party Parliamentary Group at Westminster have no current equivalent in the Welsh Parliament. Its capacity to engage with other Welsh civil society organisations has also been compromised by its lack of staff capacity, and lack of a distinctive Welsh identity.

Future risks. So far, the Welsh policy environment has been broadly beneficial to BMC members. The Welsh government has committed to further significant access improvements, and has led on many environmental issues including agri-environment, climate change and statutory duties to sustainability and improving wellbeing. However, if the policy environment became less amenable to climbers' interests, we believe the BMC would not be well placed to challenge this, and ensure BMC members' voices are heard.

The case for greater BMC support for Welsh operations

We believe that the interests of all climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers are aligned, whether they are resident in Wales or they visit Wales to climb and walk. Advocacy and action on the part of one serves the other. We believe that all who climb in Wales, from Britain and beyond, will be better

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served by a body with a stronger Welsh identity, and greater presence in Wales, which will allow the BMC to achieve greater influence in Wales.

At least in the short to medium term, this will require financial and officer support from the BMC centrally. This is easily justified by the importance of Welsh hills and crags. Unsurprisingly, given England's higher population density, and Wales higher density of hills and crags, there is a considerable net flow of climbers, hillwalkers and mountaineers from England to Wales. Quantification is difficult, but, while only 7% of English & Welsh resident BMC members⁷ are resident in Wales, 19% of climbs logged on UKC in England and Wales were climbed in Wales⁸, while 32 English or UK-wide BMC clubs have huts in Wales⁹. Better representation of Welsh climbers, hillwalkers and mountaineers will clearly benefit all BMC members, wherever they are based.

⁷ This excludes BMC members resident in Scotland, NI, overseas, national clubs and non-specified.

⁸ <https://www.ukclimbing.com/logbook/graphs.php>

⁹ <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/Download.aspx?id=12>