

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| BMC National Council | 22 June 2019 |
| Item 8.1.4 | Clubs |



BMC ODG Clubs work group Interim Report

Status: Issued for Endorsement (version for Approval to follow after NC review)

Version: 1.1

Date 17/05/2019

Authors:

Fiona Sanders - Work stream Lead, CN Director

Jane Thompson - Clubs Officer

Mike Spooner - Student Clubs Representative

John Holden - National Clubs Representative

Simon Crossland - Direct BMC member

Distribution

Name

BMC Board

BMC National Council

ODG Group members

Sign-Off

| Name | Position | Signature | Date |
|----------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <i>Dave Turnbull</i> | <i>BMC CEO</i> | | |
| <i>Lynn Robinson</i> | <i>BMC President</i> | | |
| <i>Gareth Pierce</i> | <i>BoD Chair.</i> | | |

Executive Summary

This document describes the recent findings of the Clubs Working Group's review and consultation exercises, and presents initial proposals for implementation of the ORG recommendations. Please note that this is an interim report and therefore some of the recommendations are about gaining approval for next steps.

Our research and consultation identified that:

1. Presently clubs have little formal representation within the governance structure of the BMC and this has led to a lack of understanding of the decisions made and a sense of lack of control over the direction and activities undertaken by the BMC.
2. The products and services on offer to clubs have not kept in line with the technological changes and shift in the types of clubs, the methods of communication and the membership make up.
3. Clubs have a desire to assist and be involved in the delivery of BMC objectives rather than simply be a user of services.

At the heart of this, we seek the endorsement of the following strategic goal:

- 1. Develop a collaborative approach to working with clubs**
 - 1.1. Develop closer relationships with clubs, increasing engagement with the BMC.
 - 1.2. Harness expertise and volunteer base of clubs to achieve national and local strategic goals.
 - 1.3. Ensure a mutually beneficial relationship between clubs and the BMC.

To achieve this, we therefore recommend the following actions for the National Council (NC) and the Board to consider, which will enable the Clubs Working Group to further their proposals:

- 2. Strengthen club representation and influence**
 - 2.1. Endorse the changes to the purpose and composition of the BMC Clubs' Committee to boost effectiveness and club engagement
 - 2.2. Endorse the recommendation that the Chair of the BMC Clubs' Committee (or representative) to sit on National Council as a full voting member
 - 2.3. Endorse a club member to be elected as a constituency member of National Council in order to complement the existing representation for Clubs as an entity
- 3. Review Clubs product and services**
 - 3.1. Support a future work plan to complete a review on Products & Services for clubs and for club members.
 - 3.2. Support the on going investigation of a consultancy project (Sport England funded) to explore the potential methods and product requirements to engage with the growing number of new and evolving club types.

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Collaboration of BMC and Clubs | 4 |
| 2. Representation & Influence | 5 |
| 2.1 Current Structure - Key Observations & Findings | 5 |
| 2.2 Future Structures - our objectives | 5 |
| 2.3 Future Representation Proposal | 6 |
| 2.4 Future Structure - Governance Changes | 7 |
| 3. Products & Services | 8 |
| 3.1 Findings | 8 |
| 3.2 Next steps | 8 |
| 4. New & Evolving Clubs | 9 |
| Next Steps | 10 |
| Costs | 10 |

Introduction

The overall aim for this paper is to provide the National Council (NC) and the Board of Directors with a recommended strategy to ensure it recognises the contribution of clubs and their members to climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering and further develop its strategies to support its broad range of affiliated clubs. In this paper we outline our headline approach:

Collaborative working through a shift in focus by the BMC to develop long term collaborative relationships with clubs, recognising not only the value of BMC-affiliation to clubs, but also the untapped potential of clubs to add value to the BMC's work.

Our proposals for work to achieve this aim splits into 3 main strands:

1. **Improving club representation and influence within the BMC** and on the work done on their behalf. We provide you with a number of recommendations that can be implemented easily that will strengthen this relationship, increase club engagement and provide a platform for collaborative working.
2. **Reviewing the products and services available** to affiliated clubs. We offer an overall approach to future engagement with affiliated clubs and request support for further work before presenting a fuller strategy for future engagement and growth of clubs within the BMC.
3. **Exploring the conversion of external clubs and groups to BMC affiliation** using a Sport England funded consultancy to identify the best way of engaging with groups not currently under the traditional BMC Club umbrella, to explore how the BMC could support these growing groups or potentially attract them to affiliate.

We have worked alongside BMC Clubs Committee, a range of clubs and partners to explore the options and review our ideas. Further we have engaged with the National Council Reconstitution group, the Chair of the Board, and the Membership Engagement Group to ensure our approach is in line with other work stream thinking.

It is important to note that in this work, we have been careful to ensure a distinction between club members, and clubs themselves as entities. We have focused much of our work on supporting the club itself as a partner in the BMC; many of the issues around engagement of club members as individuals have been addressed as part of Work Stream 8 - Member Engagement.

Recommendations

1. Collaboration of BMC and Clubs

As a result of our further discussions with clubs after the amended ORG report was issued, this group established that many clubs felt that since the shift to one member one vote, their role as key players in the organisation had disappeared. The following overall themes were evident from our conversations with clubs:

1. There are many clubs who are not engaged with the BMC's activities, for whom affiliation is sometimes a transactional process, and do not see the added value in being part of a wider community of clubs.
2. Many clubs expressed a desire to be involved in BMC initiatives and activities as a way to give back to the mountaineering community, but many were unaware of what opportunities exist or who to contact.
3. The value of clubs to the BMC is not communicated and the idea of being a member of a club rarely actively promoted. Clubs are often not considered as a vehicle to achieve the BMC's strategic goals.

We believe that there is a clear opportunity to work in co-operation with clubs to deliver a range of activities and services that would promote clubs as adding value to the BMC and be mutually beneficial for both parties. There also exists a pool of expertise and willing volunteers that is currently underutilised. Examples of initiatives that could take advantage of this include:

Local Area level

- clubs to host/ manage crag clean ups
- managing walks and other activities at BMC run meets/festivals
- volunteers for crag watch initiatives
- organising local activities and events under the banner of national BMC campaigns

National level

- using clubs to support mountain heritage initiatives
- promotion via their communications of BMC activities and need for volunteers
- monitoring planning issues or access problems
- working to drive initiatives for clubs such as WIRED guides, hut access promotion and wall to rock activities

In addition, we believe that the value of the work of clubs 'on the ground' with new entrants to climbing and mountaineering activities should be recognised. With huge ongoing shifts in how new participants enter the sport, and new, more casually-constituted groups forming, the BMC can extend its reach to new climbers and walkers through collaborations with existing clubs and helping casual groups mature into fully-fledged clubs.

1. We therefore recommend that the National Council and the Board supports developing a collaborative approach to working with clubs as an overall strategy to further our relationship with clubs in order to achieve the following:

- 1.1. Increase club engagement with the BMC by developing closer relationships with clubs, tailored to clubs needs and fostering two-way communication, where clubs feel their voices are heard within the BMC as well as receiving clear information about opportunities and support where required.
- 1.2. Harness the expertise and volunteer base of clubs to achieve national and local strategic goals, develop straightforward opportunities for clubs to be involved in BMC initiatives and encourage and facilitate interaction and cooperation between clubs to share knowledge for mutual advantage.
- 1.3. Ensure a mutually beneficial relationship between clubs and the BMC, where clubs experience the benefit of affiliation over and above services received are empowered to make significant contributions to realising the BMC's strategic goal and the BMC recognises the value

2. Representation & Influence

2.1 Current Structure - Key Observations & Findings

The effectiveness of the current structures for the support and representation of clubs within the BMC was reviewed by the working group, and clubs were consulted on their perceptions and engagement with the current system. Club views were gathered through a process of reaching out to clubs identified as being representative of the club population, and an open workshop held at the 2019 AGM. Our observations are detailed in [Appendix I](#), whilst responses from clubs are summarised in [Appendix II](#).

The key points arising from these exercises are that clubs feel that:

1. They have little engagement with the current representation system, and little understanding of the role of their area reps. Clubs have little direct say in who holds key representative roles.
2. Local Areas are not currently effective, either as they do not consider views of clubs as entities, or aren't relevant for geographical reasons.
3. They have little or no say in decisions by the Board or National Council. They have no direct vote to influence BMC strategy & policy.
4. They are presently 'hands-off' in BMC processes and activities, but would be willing to work more closely in collaboration with the BMC, where opportunities arise that would be beneficial to all.
5. Many express a desire to foster greater inter-club links, support and discussions, e.g. in a forum-type setting.

Further we also established that:

6. BMC Clubs' Committee reps find engaging with clubs to be a significant barrier to effective representation as many clubs don't value or understand the current structure, and therefore the reps find it difficult to act as a channel between clubs and National Council / Board of Directors.
7. The different support and representation needs of national, local & student clubs is not necessarily reflected in the structure.
8. The variety of clubs who are affiliated are not necessarily all represented on BMC Clubs' Committee or in volunteer roles.
9. Generally, roles and responsibilities of existing volunteers and committees are unclear to clubs. Role description and activities of the Clubs Officer is set internally and limited engagement with clubs or club committee is undertaken to agree strategic plans.
10. There are many clubs and groups in existence not engaged with the BMC. These clubs play a significant role in supporting their members to participate in mountaineering activities, and we need to establish how best we can engage with them to further the strategic objectives of the BMC.

2.2 Future Structures - our objectives

Considering our findings above, we suggest that the following criteria need to be attained, to ensure that any future representation structure is effective in meeting the needs of all BMC affiliated clubs.

2.2.1 Clubs should have a role within the governance of the BMC.

- 2.2.2 Stronger links between clubs and their representatives should be fostered, to support more effective working relationships and better representation.
- 2.2.3 Clubs should have a clear say in who is carrying out work on their behalf.
- 2.2.4 Volunteer roles should focus more on providing the facilitation and support clubs require, aligned to the needs of the different club types.
- 2.2.5 Clear and efficient lines of communication should improve awareness of the work carried out to support and represent clubs.
- 2.2.6 Interactions between clubs for sharing knowledge, discussing issues and coordinating activities should be accommodated and encouraged.
- 2.2.7 These changes should, where possible, build on existing structures, utilising existing volunteers and recruitment mechanisms.

2.3 Future Representation Proposal

ORG R6: 'The BMC should create a strategy and organisational development process to ensure that it remains relevant for both existing and prospective members'.

In order that clubs are more engaged in the strategic planning for supporting clubs, work more as partners with the BMC, and are able to access club volunteers easily the following recommendations are made:

- 2.3.1 Clubs' Committee is refocused as the Clubs Strategy Group (CSG), whose purpose will be involvement in the development and oversight of the Clubs Support Strategy. This will include convening working groups to complete projects as required, carrying out reviews or other surveys to evolve and improve the BMC's provision for clubs whilst building collaborative working between clubs and the BMC.
- 2.3.2 The present volunteers on Clubs' Committee to focus their effort within their area of representation e.g.
 - a) Local Area Club Coordinators, are freed up to develop relationships with other area volunteers such as youth and training, access and hill-walking reps to link their clubs to area activities to encourage local level collaborative working.
 - b) National Clubs forum is provided to enable clubs to support each other more effectively and the National Clubs representatives have a better way of engaging with their National clubs to communicate as well as generate ideas on collaborative working.
 - c) Student Clubs forum is built on as it already exists to some extent and has proved a useful way of engaging with clubs and dealing with issues and sharing updates etc.
- 2.3.3 A representative of each strand would sit on the CSG alongside a National Council (NC) constituency member, BMC officer, Huts Group representative and Nominated Director for Clubs and any other co-opted member to support the strategic planning. This provides a broad spectrum of expertise whilst keeping the group small enough to act decisively.
- 2.3.4 Roles and responsibilities of club volunteers and working groups should be clarified so that they can function effectively and make it easier for clubs to engage with said volunteers.

2.4 Future Structure - Governance Changes

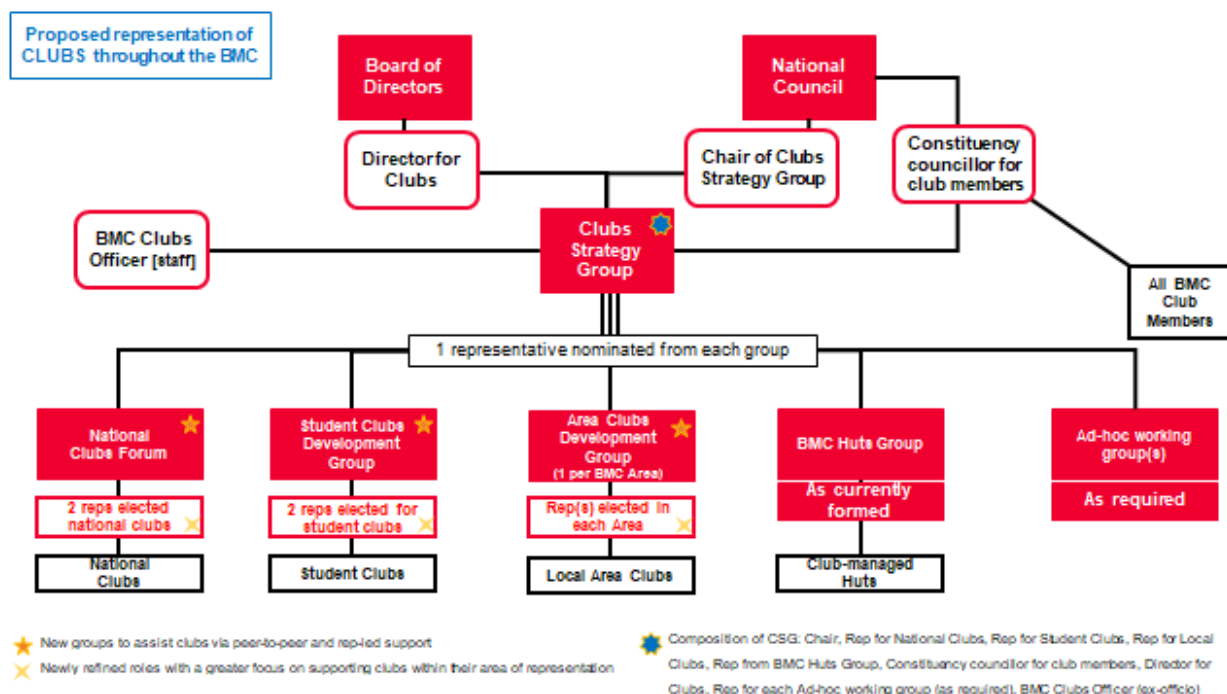
R4 'The BMC exists primarily to serve its members. It must therefore be open and transparent and develop specific strategies, policies and structures that engage members democratically in determining its future.'

Clubs provide in the region of 28% of the membership of the BMC and as such are a key link to a large group of members. Therefore, as well as recommending more collaborative working it is also requested that the National Council and the Board endorses the following recommendations:

- 2.4.1 Clubs Chair or nominated person from the specialist committee (CSG) to become a full voting member of the National Council. This would provide NC with advice and guidance on the position of clubs on subject matter, to support clubs engagement and to highlight relevant issues and concerns. Further it gives clubs a clear voice in the future direction of the BMC.
- 2.4.2 National Council constituency member is recruited and as such democratically elected by club members to represent the views of club members on Council. Further, this person would have an additional role in sitting on the CSG to ensure that there is direct input from an elected club member into the strategic thinking and to provide a direct feedback loop to club members.
- 2.4.3 Nominated Director for Clubs role - this role already exists, however a review of the process for election to ensure that clubs have a clear, visible and effective voice in the process.
- 2.4.4 In the long term the Clubs Chair becomes a club elected role to ensure that clubs again have a voice in electing this person. **However** this is reliant on clubs becoming more engaged and technological advancement identified in the members' engagement strategy being implemented. Therefore we would like to review this recommendation once the membership engagement strategy is put in place alongside the other club work group recommendations.

The proposal is represented diagrammatically below. Although it initially appears complex, there are in reality only two additional volunteer roles depicted compared to the present situation and two additional virtual forum-type groups. Gains in effectiveness are expected to be obtained through refocusing and more clearly defining many of these roles and groups.

Proposed representation and governance structure



3. Products & Services

The BMC provides a range of products and services for clubs which have evolved over the years, often depending on the funding available from external sources such as Sport England. The Clubs' Committee also pushed for particular aspects of support to be made available which included a full time Clubs Officer and specific areas for training for club officers and club members. We believe that the range and depth of products and services made available to clubs needs a full review, identifying those which are most important to clubs and those less so. We therefore offered clubs the opportunity to review the present range on offer and make suggestions on the strengths and weaknesses.

3.1 Findings

Observations of the working group, internal BMC stakeholders and feedback from clubs themselves was sought on each of these products and services individually, and the responses are summarised in [Appendix IV](#). The following highlights the common themes:

1. Consistent concerns expressed about the website, in particular the lack of easily accessible information, the poor search function and a lack of a single section relating to clubs.
2. Although overall awareness of Products and Services is generally good, there are notable gaps (e.g. certain training offers, e-Summit) that require greater promotion across the club membership.
3. Communication is a significant issue. Targeted messages from Clubs Comm reps or from staff are not distinguishable from general BMC newsletters (complaints of a "fog" of BMC messages). Concerns that there is too much content in each message, plus the emails / contact is sometimes intermittent.
4. Clubs repeatedly requested facilitation of communication between clubs, e.g. in a forum-type environment for peer-to-peer advice.
5. Clubs requested greater promotion of the benefits of club membership generally, particularly to young people. Suggestion of facilitating transition of members from student clubs to senior clubs was repeated by many.
6. It was also noted that during the research it was established that the full-time Clubs Officer has been reduced to a part time role.

Further, through our review of the available data on existing affiliated clubs, we have identified the following target areas for the development of existing clubs:

- Addressing recruitment of younger members and women.
- Supporting families, juniors and members with disabilities.
- Developing and supporting small clubs.

3.2 Next steps

3.2.1 Provide recommendations on:

- priorities for change, inclusion or removal of particular products and services.
- opportunities for collaborative working between clubs and the BMC.
- ways that the BMC, alongside the Clubs Officer, can take a more proactive role with engaging with clubs to promote the benefits of the BMC to club members.

4. New & Evolving Clubs

R8 - 'The BMC should responsibly encourage growth and participation in all areas of the activities that it represents'

In the Active Lives report published in April 2019 climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering is reported to be the 6th most popular activity that adults in England participate in, with a total of 3.1million regular participants – 3 million more than are members of the BMC¹. These individuals are already participating in mountaineering activities in a variety of ways, and one of these is via groups that aren't engaged with the BMC.

In our review we identified a number of climbing/hillwalking clubs or groups that are not-affiliated to the BMC, and perhaps sit outside the traditional scope of a 'BMC Club'. Nevertheless, many of these clubs and groups still play a significant role in facilitating participation in mountain sports and often act as a gateway into outdoor and adventurous activities. These groups can typically fall into one or more of the following categories:

1. Casual clubs, regular meetups, social groups, local walking groups.
2. Indoor clubs, based around a local climbing wall.
3. Social media based groups, organised more formally through platforms such as Meetup or Facebook.

Sport England Membership Conversion Project - an opportunity

The BMC has been invited by Sport England to be part of a project to support sports in reviewing and improving their membership offer to encourage more participants to become members of their governing/representative body. This project will support the BMC in identifying how to attract these clubs/groups who don't currently engage with us. The project will run through to August 2019, after which the ODG Clubs Group will review the outcome and make appropriate recommendations to the National Council and the Board.

¹ The Active Lives 2017-2018 data released on 11/4/19 showed 2.8m people engaged in climbing and adventurous hillwalking, and 300k engaged in climbing (indoor and outdoor).

Next Steps

We propose the following timeline, which is subject to the outcome of the decisions and levels of support provided by the NC and Board. The Board has already provided some suggestions which are incorporated into this paper and was shared with Clubs' Committee and National Council Reconstitution group on the 1st June 2019

- The updated paper is presented here to the National Council
- Feedback from National Council is incorporated in a Final Version of the Paper which is submitted to National Council via electronic means for review & then as part of an abridged version to the areas
- Final approval by NC on the 21st Sept and the Board for approval on the 25th September
- The Clubs Strategy Group terms of reference and membership is determined alongside the Clubs' Committee and BoD by 25th September 2019
- SE funded project starts with completion due in August 2019. Recommendations to be offered for approval by the BoD and by National Council as above
- ORG group to establish if any recommendations require AoA changes to be part of the above recommendation

Subject to National Council and the Board Approval on 25th September, the following should happen:

- Setting up the National Clubs Forum is delegated to the Clubs Officer and Marketing Manager, who will report to the CEO to be completed within the first quarter 2020. Further it is dependent upon the digital strategy being implemented.
- Resetting the roles and responsibilities of the CSG sub groups is delegated to the Chair of the CSG and Clubs Officer who will report to the National Council and the Board. An expectation is set that the new CSG and its associated groups will meet within their new remit within the first quarter of 2020
- Setting up of the Local Area Club Forum will be delegated to the Clubs Officer and Marketing Manager and it is anticipated that this will be completed by the end of the first quarter of 2020
- All elements of the CSG will be functioning by the end of first quarter of 2020
- Any requirements for AoA changes will be actioned by Board

Costs

These changes to the ongoing representation should generally be cost neutral as:

1. Only one group (the CSG) would meet in person, which would mirror the current situation with Clubs Comm.
2. Groups such as the National Clubs Forum and Club Development Group could function effectively as virtual groups, without the need to meet formally. The Student Advisory Group is currently able to operate this way using systems the BMC currently uses, including Teamwork, Skype, social media etc., although using Slack for group communication may be a more effective tool in future. However a review may be required for a larger group.

3. Roles such as the Area Club Coordinator would only be needed to attend local area meetings, as reps currently do now, and much club contact will occur by email and phone. Improvements in effectiveness will mostly be realised by refocusing and clearly defining.

However it is anticipated that additional costs will be incurred in the workload required of initiating these changes through the use of the Clubs Officer, IT expertise and Marketing expertise. There also may be costs associated with the PR and communications required to inform clubs of the changes and engaging with them in the selection of future volunteers.

It is also expected that the Report delivered by the consultancy (the Sport England funded project) is likely to require further costs but will be provided at the time of the report.

Appendices

The following documents give supporting information and are available from the ODG [website](#) (<http://tiny.cc/oy977y>) by clicking the hyperlinks in a digital version of this document or by typing the address into a browser if you are viewing a paper copy of this document:

Appendix I - Representation Problem Areas

<http://tiny.cc/56877y>

Appendix II - Clubs Feedback; Representation and Influence

<http://tiny.cc/xo977y>

Appendix III - New Roles/Group Acceptance Criteria

<http://tiny.cc/up977y>

Appendix IV - Clubs Feedback; Products and Services

<http://tiny.cc/5q977y>

Appendix V - Terms of Reference ODG Work Stream 7

<http://tiny.cc/as977y>