**Castle club – draft response to BMC organisational review**

**Why this is important**

* The British Mountaineering Council (BMC) represents clubs, climbers and walkers in negotiating for access and conservation; and generally represents our interests. All Castle club members are automatically members of the BMC, as the club is affiliated.
* The organisational review proposes fundamental changes. One of these is to increase representation of its membership – which is us.

**Why was the review needed?**

* The structure of the BMC was not legal, and put individual members of the executive committee and national council at personal risk. One consequence was with-holding of a Sport England grant, which is about 20% of BMC income.
* A need to improve the representation of members and clubs – highlighted by the opposition to the proposed name change. The motion of no confidence at the BMC AGM this year showed the need for another way for members to make their views felt.
* The sport has changed because of the huge growth in numbers of indoor climbers. From the BMC survey only 1% of members only climb on indoor walls. In contrast, 38% of members do all of; indoor climbing, rock climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering. We don’t have exact figures – but people who just climb indoors will be hugely under-represented in BMC membership. These will probably be given a further boost by it being an Olympic sport. This change in the type of participation reflects general trends away from team sports and ones that take a long time to do; - towards ones people do informally, as individuals, and at times which suit them.
* Competition climbing needs a governing body.

**Recommendations of the review.**

The document is 77 pages long with 51 individual recommendations. You can see it on the BMC web site, or summaries in the club room. This is my interpretation of the main points.

1. Change the structure to make it legal and remove the personal liability of individuals.

2. The management body will be a Board of Directors. This has legal responsibility for the BMC. However, on key decisions [examples of which include a name change – see p50 main report] a ‘Members Assembly’ will have to be consulted. This assembly has 16 members; ten of which will be nominated directly the areas; and 4 of which are nominated by the Assembly itself. This provides a link between area meetings and decision making at a national level.

3. Local area meetings will be made more effective – partly through training of local volunteers. On-line voting will be used more at the BMC AGM – to expand participation.

4. The Board and Members assembly should create a new ‘vision’ for ‘all climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering activities’.

5. The BMC ‘must recognise the importance of indoor climbing as an activity in its own right, as an introductory pathway into climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering, and as a significant area for future membership’.

6. The BMC should encourage participation. 77% of members said the BMC should do this – while being careful to balance this with conservation and care for the environment. It wants to encourage participation by women, families and specifically the under 25s.

7. It should support clubs to ‘continue to be a key pathway into climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering, and further enabling them to be key advocates and educators for responsible, safe, traditional and ethical participation’. P 40, rec. 12.

**Suggested response**

* We recognise the huge amount of time and effort contributed to the review by the volunteers in the review group.
* Overall, the recommendations for changing the governance of the BMC should be supported. We encourage all our members to vote for these at the 2018 AGM, to help get the required 75% majority.
* We welcome the improved link between members, clubs, area committees and the BMC at national level. We encourage our members to contribute actively at area meetings.

The review sees clubs as taking a role in increasing participation, especially by women, families and – specifically – young people below the age of 25. It implies there is a pathway from indoor climbing to the other forms of the sport and clubs can provide this.

We agree that the sport is changing, such as practically everybody now enters rock climbing through climbing indoors. Hillwalking is different. The BMC, and clubs, need to respond to this change. There is not a natural progression from climbing indoors to climbing outdoors or hillwalking or mountaineering. Some indoor climbers may choose to take this path; some won’t. If they do – they need help learning the skills, the ethics or outdoor climbing and the importance of care of the environment.

Therefore:

* The BMC needs to consider what it can offer indoor climbers who don’t want to do any other form of the sport, and also, don’t compete. Otherwise they will continue to be greatly under-represented as BMC members.
* If the BMC aims to encourage indoor climbers to go outdoors it must consider is the increased pressure on crags close to the road and how this can be managed.

Recommendation 12 states the BMC should help clubs to introduce indoor climbers to rock climbing outdoors. This will expand club membership and affiliations to the BMC. Expanding BMC membership would mean less reliance on Sport England funding.

The review does not go on to give details of how clubs should do this. Suggestions are:

* Give clubs grants to pay for training in instruction skills
* Give clubs guidance on working with members under the age of 18. We think the problems of liability and complying with DBS requirements are such that we can’t see our club doing this [unless under 18s come with their parents].
* Discuss with Sport England a programme where clubs targeting young members would receive a grant per member aged under 25, to encourage targeting this group. This could be linked to free training in instruction for club members. [similar programmes exist in Switzerland and Denmark for sports clubs in general. ] If there was a programme of ‘pathway clubs’ which did this it could include giving grants to members to take SPA level qualifications.
* The BMC producing a set of standard posters to be displayed in climbing walls – directing indoor climbers to a web site where they could find their local clubs.
* Provide clubs with good practice in hanging on to new members gained in this way - we don’t gain anything for our club by training up new members who then leave and climb independently of the club.
* Provide models of clubs who cater for the whole spectrum of indoor climbing, rock climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering. For example, university clubs are increasingly split, with climbers forming a separate club.