

Red Rope National Committee meeting, Sheffield, 17th Jan 2026

Minutes

Present: Richard Bennett, Stuart Bloom, Jon Marsden, Gill Platt, Humphrey Southall, David Symonds, Hugh Wallis, Pete Watson, Sue Whittle, Steve Wright.

Attending online via Zoom: Becky Bates, Sarah Bates, Janet Saunders.

Apologies: Michael McDermott (Scotland rep; Richard Bennett deputising)

(1) The meeting agreed that Pete Watson would chair and Humphrey Southall would take minutes.

(2) Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted.

(3) Matters arising – Steve Wright went through action points and will circulate.

(4) Responding to British Mountaineering Council policy of annual increases

This was not a “matter arising”, as the BMC notified us of their new policy two days after the previous NC meeting.

It was pointed out that under the current constitution only the AGM could revise membership charges, and that even if we moved the AGM date it was impossible for it to respond to new rates set by the BMC at the start of October, as the constitution required 28 days notice of AGM motions and the new rates had to be online on 1st November. One response would be to disaffiliate from the BMC but it was agreed this was not an immediate option. Three other options were discussed and voted on:

- A minimal change to the constitution enabling the NC to raise all membership charges by the same percentage, the percentage to be not greater than that used by the BMC (7 votes).
- A wider transfer of financial authority from the AGM to the NC. Many AGM participants would probably be happy leaving all charge setting to the NC, but a few might be strongly opposed (1 vote).
- No change: our current reserves enable us to absorb the increases and future AGMs can try to adjust for them (3 votes).

It was agreed that the National Treasurer would prepare and circulate a constitutional motion and background note implementing the first option. It was noted that this would not cover the 2026 BMC increase which had already happened, but that could initially be absorbed from reserves, and that the background note would warn that the revision to the banding system (see below) would almost certainly require further revisions of membership charges by the 2027 AGM.

(5) New Banding proposals

Three possible systems had been identified by the previous NC meeting:

- A revised financial formula still to be specified, based on household incomes but also incorporating housing costs and numbers of dependents.
- A “points” system. This had been tried out by NC members themselves at the previous meeting, but the national treasurer had to apologise for not having organised a wider trial.
- A system based on descriptions, with no quantification, as circulated in the most recent Bulletin.

Following a short discussion, it was agreed there was no support for the points system. In a vote, there was one vote for a revised formula and 11 for the descriptions method.

The proposed system includes six bands, Band A being equivalent not to the current Band 1 but to the hardship band. The need for this was questioned, as only one person had ever been on that band, but we had never publicised it and it was designed for categories of people, such as asylum seekers, who were currently unable to take part in the club.

The national treasurer pointed out that replacing the current formula with the descriptions method was a very large change and it was impossible to estimate the consequences for the overall distribution of members between bands, and hence for total income. However, our substantial reserves meant we could afford such a gamble, provided it was carefully reviewed after a year.

It was agreed that David Symonds would prepare and circulate an AGM motion and background note, replacing the current Appendix 2, “Calculating Income Band”, in the club policy document.

(6) New Transport proposals

The national trip treasurer’s proposal was discussed. Richard Bennett proposed an alternative system, already used in Scotland, under which member using public transport pay as if they had travelled by car, and all fares are reimbursed. It was noted this meant members had no incentive to economise. The committee voted on the alternatives: 7 for the treasurer’s proposal and 3 for the Scottish proposal.

(7) Annual gathering

The Foundry Adventure Centre in Great Hucklow in the Peak District has been booked for October 2nd to 4th. We currently have 31 places but this could be increased. There was a detailed discussion of what to charge, given that subsidy from the admin account will be limited to a new member subsidy and possible funding for training. Agreed that a 25% multiplier would be applied to standard weekend trip charges, with one-third off for new members. Day visitors to pay £5, or £10 if staying for the evening meal.

(8) Motion on new quorum for AGM: the NC agreed to bring a constitutional motion to the AGM reducing the quorum to 20 members.

(9) AGM Business:

- The AGM will be on Wednesday 18th March. Officers reports needed to be with National Secretary by 18th February, motions by 2nd February.
- The Club Policy needs to be revised to link to the new Code of Conduct. Sue Whittle will prepare a motion for the AGM.

(10) Any Other Business

- The NC welcomed the election of Bob Blenkinsop onto the NC as the new Bristol/ South West regional rep.
- Becky Bates has an old tent which belongs to Red Rope. The NC agreed she could keep it and use it for her chickens.
- Richard Bennett suggested we should enable members who also belong to other clubs to manage such multiple memberships through WebCollect. The membership secretary said this would not work with the BMC system.
- Richard also pointed out that it is club policy that regions, as well as national officers, should report to the national AGM, but this had stopped happening.
- It was proposed that we should establish a separate “Friends of Red Rope” for aging members, no longer able to go on trips or walks. It was noted that having a separate category of national membership that was not affiliated to the BMC was problematic under BMC rules, affecting our liability insurance, but that regions could less formally involve such ex-members e.g. on social media. In a vote, 3 were for the proposal and 9 against.
- Term limits: The NC agreed that, while an earlier proposal to limit all NC members to 2 year terms was impractical, there should be some limit. Janet Saunder agreed to draft an AGM motion.
- Face to face meetings: There was general agreement that there should be one such meeting each year, but as a one-day event in a city such as Birmingham or Sheffield rather than as a weekend in a but such as C.Y.

(11) Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 7th May, online