The DoBIH editors met at Alston in March 2019 to discuss the future development of the database, paying particular regard to the results of the November 2018 user survey. Below are the main outcomes arising from the survey.

Hill lists

List addition has been the single biggest issue faced by the editors over the last 10 years. The responses reflect the polarisation we knew to exist in our user base. Although the majority are relaxed about the addition of lists, somewhat more people thought the DoBIH should exercise some form of screening than those who favour no discrimination. A third of respondents opposed new lists from guidebooks and nearly 40% were opposed to more Lake District lists. There was greater support for historical lists (60%), although in response to '*Are there any hill lists that you would like added to the database?*' no list attracted more than a few requests. Moss had the most at 6 requests, though respondents did not state whether they meant Edward Moss's 1939/40 list or Richard Moss's composite list (both offered on the haroldstreet site).

Some respondents commented that they didn't see a problem with adding lists, however small the demand. This maybe misses the point. Such is the influence of Hill Bagging, the addition of any list to the database popularises it. 66% of respondents said the DoBIH influences their bagging activity. Over the years several guidebook authors have asked us to consider adding their list. In our view it would be irresponsible to add a new list without considering its intrinsic merit.

Up to now we have taken the view that if a list attracts sufficient bagging activity without the help of the DoBIH, or is likely to in the future, it will usually merit inclusion. We see no compelling reason to alter this stance. However the survey suggests we should consider accommodating historically important lists. The decision on whether a list passes the 'importance' threshold is subjective and we are wary of adding lists that may have only niche interest. Consequently, the topic created much discussion at the review meeting, but as a first step we have decided to add the Yeamans and their E&W equivalents the Clems. These lists attracted a good deal of support in the 2008 and 2010 surveys and were the precursor to the Humps. We will review the situation at subsequent reviews.

Hill names

In view of the importance users attach to hill names, we will move away from giving all names in a single field, which is also clumsy when there are several. The main field will contain the name we believe is the most useful. This will be the name currently given first, subject to review. Alternative names will be given as a list in Hill Bagging and the Access database. In Excel they will be combined in a second field.

We will explore the feasibility of adding locally known names, without compromising usability. This will depend on assistance from third parties with the necessary knowledge.

Some alternative names may be dropped where perceived to be no longer necessary, e.g. the old spellings of Hebridean hills where OS changed 'val' to 'bhal' many years ago.

Functionality

We are sympathetic to the requests to make Hill Bagging more mobile friendly. Our preferred delivery is via an Android app, but this is a long term objective as we do not currently have the programming skills in house.

Many requests were around enhancements to Hill Bagging. We will investigate the feasibility of those that we judge to be deserving and straightforward to implement. However many suggestions are impracticable due to resource constraints or the speed of

running complex queries on a database with 1.2 million logs. Recording multiple ascents, requested by several users, is particularly problematical in the latter respect.

For a variety of reasons we will not be offering social networking on Hill Bagging. There are a number of forums and Facebook groups offering this facility.

We recognise the map access issues on Hill Bagging, due to limitations placed by OS and Bing on their free offering. This has become more acute with the increasing popularity of the website. We are exploring the feasibility of paid-for solutions. There is some money in the DoBIH fund that could be used for this purpose, but not enough to sustain the currently available commercial offerings in the longer term. The bulk of the cost would probably have to be financed by donations.

We hope to implement the structural changes in a major release around August.

Chris Crocker/DoBIH team
7 April 2019