

APRIL 14, 2018



DRAFT



COUNCIL MINUTES

RED LION HOTEL

B48 7LG

PRESENT

A Eavis	AE	Chair
Robin Weare	RW	BCA Acting Treasurer
Nick Williams	NW	BCA Acting Secretary/BCA PL Scheme Manager
Andrew Hinde	AH	BCA Cons. & Access Officer
Mark Sims	MS	BCA Equip. & Tech Officer
Les Williams	LesW	BCA Publ. & Info. Officer
Stuart France	SF	CCC Rep
Alan Butcher	AB	CSCC Rep
Jenny Potts	JP	DCA Rep
David Jean	DJ	DCUC Rep
Stephan Natynczuk	SN	ACI Rep
Tony Radmall (Badger)	TR	ASCT Rep
David Botcherby	DB	CHECC Rep
Idris Williams	IW	Club Rep 3
John Hine	JH	Club Rep 4
Mark Richardson	MR	DIM/CIM Rep.1
Will Burn	WB	DIM/CIM Rep.2
Phil Baker	PB	QMC Chair
Rostam Namaghi	RN	BCA Youth and Development
Tim Allen	TA	BCA CRoW Liaison/CNCC Rep
Wendy Williams	WW	BCA Membership Administrator
Claire Peacey	CP	BCA Clerical Assistant
Dave Warne	DW	Pengelly Rep

The meeting commenced at 11.09 due to travel delay.

1. Chairman's Welcome

AE welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made around the room and Phil Baker was thanked, in temporary absentia, for making it possible for Chair & Secretary to be in attendance.

2. Apologies

(Bernie Woodley, Peter Hall, Steve Holding, Ged Campion, David Cooke, Nigel Atkins, Alan Richardson, Matt Wyre, Dave Rose, Bob Mehew, Chris Boardman)

3. Items for Any Other Business

AE requested items for Any Other Business be stated. None were stated.

4. Minutes of the last Council Meeting on January 4th 2018 - circulated

The following corrections were required:

SN: Pg. 11 QMC in charge of "awards" not "rewards"

LesW: Pg. 3, section in italics, should be Sims with an "S" not a "C"

NW: Pg. 3, "CBD" should read "CPD". Pg. 14 should read "practising legal professionals" not "practising legal professions" Additionally name should be Derbyshire Caving Association, and "Meeting

recommenced” not “recommended”.

LesW: Noted that the shortform “LW” had been made to indicate comment by Les Williams in several places, instead of “LesW” as in the attendance log – the shortform “LW” referred to Linda Williams who was not present at the meeting.

DB: Pg. 36 should read “CHECC” not “CHEK”

AE: Minutes Accepted (with above stated corrections pending).

5. Matters arising for the Minutes of the Last Council Meeting

AE then covered the previous Actions List (For details, see log at end of report)

New Clubs:

It was noted there were no New Clubs to be presented. WW stated Derby Universities Dark Places Exploration Society had provided everything required, except the 100-word statement, so not ready to be presented as yet. She had emailed them with a reminder on the statement.

REPORT:

6. Chairman’s Report – Andy Eavis

I would like to start my Chairman’s report by saying that there was a mistake in my report for the last council meeting where I said I had done 2 terms of 3 years. Looking back over the years, through the minutes I realise I have actually done 3 terms of 3 years - 9 years in total. Time flies when you’re enjoying yourself!!

This is my penultimate report. I will be completing my 9+ years of Chairmanship at the AGM on June 3rd. In that report, I will do my reminiscences.

The work goes on within the British Caving Association and I think many ordinary cavers would be amazed at how much hard, dedicated, often stressful work is put in by a small number of mostly unpaid volunteers. I think British cavers owe them a lot. If you doubt the value of having a national caving organisation, please look on the website and particularly read my report entitled “*Why we need a national body*”.

I would like to take the opportunity to say I have been exploring caves for well over 50 years. I have enjoyed the experience immensely and I have enjoyed the company of my fellow cavers. One or two incidences that have occurred in the last few years have shaken this belief in our wonderful band of cave explorers. There are currently a number of people who possibly, inadvertently, are upsetting other cavers with mental and sometimes physical bullying tactics. Please can people stand back and look at themselves and remember that we are here to enjoy caves and to enable future generations to enjoy caves, we are not here to be unpleasant and awkward between ourselves.

There are certain issues going on currently within British caving which are unacceptable. The internet and everything to do with it has brought a lot of very good things into our lives and the dissemination of information can be very positive, it can also be very negative and destructive. It is easy to use a keyboard to create immense unpleasantness which simply wouldn’t happen face to face or even over the telephone. Can people think about this before typing.

However, moving on, there are a lot of positives. At the forthcoming AGM there will be some adjustments which I think will improve the British Caving Association and make it stronger going forward. I intend when I stand down as Chairman to keep an involvement, to tidy up the constitution and have an ongoing involvement with the CROW committee. I have recently met with Rick and Pat Halliwell and the time line for constitutional adjustments will be to give a brief outline of the programme to the forthcoming AGM and ask for suggestions from anybody for constitutional and structural changes to the British Caving Association. This application for suggestions will close before the autumn Council meeting when first ideas as to what to do with a constitutional adjustment will be discussed; changes could be very minor, or could be much more wide reaching. It's up to people to make suggestions and to stand for the constitutional revamp committee.

Training, I think, is getting into a better shape. It is unfortunate that some people don't understand the new system: the old position of Training Officer no longer exists and is now Recreational Training Officer, which will be named and properly designated at the next AGM.

However, I have now attended several meetings of QMC and Training Committees and know that there are a number of good, caring, competent and fair people involved in British cave training and it gives me a great deal of confidence going forward that we will improve a good system to make it even better.

Getting a new committee under a new leader to further investigate the CROW Act should, I believe, within the next year produce results. This should once and for all sort out this anomaly, but we do have to be very mindful of cave conservation. We should improve *Access and Conservation* for all caves, not only caves on CROW land but other caves as well. Systems for fair access control for caves which balance long term conservation with maximum visitation should be worked on. I believe BCA has a major part to play in this.

For me the forthcoming AGM will be a mixed pleasure, but I do intend moving forward to continue helping with these issues.

I would like to finish by particularly thanking Robin Weare and Nick Williams for their enormous of help to me and dedication over many months and add my thanks to many other people within the British Caving Association for their continued much valued efforts.

Andy Eavis, BCA Chairman – April 13th 2018

DISCUSSION:

AE: I should perhaps mention the Constitutional revamp - we had a meeting with Rick and Pat Halliwell who are interested in getting involved. A more detailed report will be presented at the AGM and if anyone in particular wants to stand on that Committee, get in touch with AE or Rick Halliwell – also if anyone wants change on structural or Constitutional issues, get in touch.

NW: I have received some proposals to go forward, on these lines, from Tim <Allen>: they will require wording changes, to be discussed at AGM. TA: Instead of just tinkering, we need some form of vision about where BCA is going in, order to guide Constitutional changes - tinkering will not inspire people to get involved but if we have an overall strategy we are more likely to get engagement. I have suggested this group should have a majority of younger cavers, no disrespect to older ones, as it's the younger ones who will be picking up the pieces in the future.

RN: Are you proposing Constitutional changes or a policy document?

TA: It's to define a vision for BCA and a strategy to lead that vision.

AE: The timeline is that we will sort out things like that for the council meeting after the AGM and then

we will get to grips with whatever the majority want. I've got an open mind and intend to stay involved.

NW: There is no fundamental conflict between what AE and TA have proposed – TA fleshes it out and sets a few challenges, but it can be resolved.

AE: We want to look at the CNCC's original and changed Constitution, to see what they did – certainly as far as cleaning up anomalies, Rick came up with a lot of suggestions for things we may be interpreting incorrectly. (RW joked that if he is interpreting them, they are being interpreted correctly).

AE: Moving on, I don't think the committee will be too big. AB: it's been about 20 years since last change so probably about time. NW: That's a good point. JP: The gang of 13 was 1993. AE: I am delighted to hear you say that, Butch <AB>, but there are people saying don't change it. AB: I'm a big fan of if it ain't broke, don't fix it. LesW: It's a good chance to get other people involved with things.

AE: I don't think there's anything else I want to say on my report, so unless anyone has anything else, we can move on.

REPORT:

7. Secretary (Acting) - Nick Williams

Including: Membership Administrator's Report – Wendy Williams

Mend our Mountains

Tim Allen has asked me to raise this in my report, although it could equally be dealt with in his. Tim wrote to me as follows in March:

"Last year BCA donated £500 to the BMC Mend our Mountains campaign. As you know Andy and I attended the launch at Westminster of a larger follow up campaign to raise one million. I brought this up at the last council meeting and suggested we make a further donation. Robin then insisted it came out of my CRoW budget. Not that it really has anything to do with CRoW but I doubt I have spent even a fraction of my £2000 budget and I would therefore like to propose that we send a donation of £1000 to the BMC campaign. If council will discuss and sanction this then council can instruct Robin to make the payment."

Details of the campaign are a little difficult to find on the BMC web site but <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/shaff-mend-our-mountains-goes-live> appears to give the most information. The BMC are hoping to raise £1m this year to go towards conservation measures on the most popular British hills.

On the pro- side is the argument for making a donation is the fact that many BCA members will benefit from the BMC's initiative and making a substantial donation will generate worthwhile goodwill; on the anti side is the question of whether this is a good use for our members' money when the caving community already participates in similar measures without needing to channel the money via BMC.

For the purposes of debate, I will second Tim's proposal.

Child protection/safeguarding

I am delighted to be able to say that we have a volunteer for the role of Safeguarding Officer, Chris Boardman. Chris writes:

Who I am

I'm an active caver and have been for over 30 years. I mostly cave in Yorkshire but I've also caved several times in the Vercors and have visited Mulu. The most challenging cave I've been to the bottom of is the Gouffre Berger.

I work in a school and one of my jobs is to be 'Safety co-ordinator'. This covers a multitude of sins including online safety and some aspects of child protection. I attend a course (run by police and psychologists) at least every couple of years to be updated. I'm on the mailing list for a couple of legal firms, HSE, NSPCC and numerous online agencies that specialise in child protection. This means I see a lot of traffic that keeps me informed about current thinking.

Where I would begin

I am very much in favour of short, pithy advice to members and clubs, which treats members with respect and gives them sensible, manageable procedures. I am certain that we can continue to keep children and vulnerable adults safe, whilst not imposing an onerous process.

I have read the BCA's child protection policy – the one-page A4 document. I suspect it was born from the excellent advice available from the NSPCC's child protection in sport unit who have their own dedicated website.

I think I would suggest writing a new edition of the advice. Firstly, it needs to incorporate vulnerable adults. Secondly, I think the current BCA policy doesn't give sufficient clear examples of good practice. NSPCC have a useful one-page document covering good practice which you can see [here](#) and I would wish to reference some or all of that. We should certainly look at the advice from BCA's insurers who have mentioned online advice.

It also makes sense for BCA to have a person that clubs could consult, either for advice (for example, if improving club accommodation), or in the unfortunate event of a suggestion of abuse. The policy should provide a contact point for clubs to reach out to, and indeed a suggested process to follow if there is a concern.

I am happy to get on with that, and of course to take the direction of the BCA Council regarding the way forward for safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults. Perhaps we can also adapt 'try caving' to have some events which are specifically aimed at young people, though that would need more thought.

I propose that Council appoint Chris as Safeguarding Officer.

Training related matters

QMC and Training Committee matters will be discussed under their own headings but I would draw Council's attention to the following:

- *QMC have been very active with all members showing a high level of commitment and activity.*
- *There appears to be much confusion over role of the Training Officer, not least from the Acting Training Officer from whom I have had 146 e-mails since the start of the year. The 2017 AGM set QMC up to report directly to Council, in parallel with original TC which now deals solely with recreational training. Originally, the TO was to have an ex-officio position on QMC, this seems to have been quietly dropped. It needs to be properly re-instated.*
- *There is confusion over the name of the Training Committee and the Training Officer title. I suggest the Committee is re-named as 'Recreational Training Committee' and the officer post is renamed to 'Recreational Training Officer'.*
- *(Recreational) Training Committee appear to be moving forward with proposals for training schemes which might be mistaken for qualifications for recreational cavers. Regional Council representatives and others who might be concerned by this need to pay attention and participate in the activities of the Committee.*
- *(Recreational) TC have a plan for a young persons award, BCA's Youth & Development group need to engage with this to get the best result for BCA's members.*

I propose that a motion be put before the AGM that Training Committee is re-named as 'Recreational Training Committee' and the officer post is renamed to 'Recreational Training Officer'.

GDPR guidance

We have received an increasing number of enquiries about BCA's position in relation to the General Data Protection Regulation and whether we will be providing guidance to clubs.

I am pleased to note that information on this was published on the BCA website on 5th April. I was considerably less pleased to note the singularly unhelpful response to this which was circulated by Bob Mehew on the Council mailing list shortly afterwards.

I am not in a position to know the rights and wrongs of either side of this debate, and doubtless some of the detail will come up under other reports. What I will say, however, is that it should be remembered that every person involved in the management of BCA is a volunteer and I do not see it as acceptable for anyone to criticise the efforts of others in such negative and trenchant terms.

CO2 document

No progress has been made on this. It needs someone else to take the initiative. However, I note from the report of the recent Conservation and Access Committee meeting that one of my fears with the original document appears to have come to pass with EN considering all caves as 'confined spaces'.

Radon

New regulations on controlling the risks from radiation in the workplace came into force on 1 January. They significantly reduce the threshold at which an employer has to take specific action to protect employees. One important point to note is that the requirement for action is based on the level of radiation in the workplace and not on the individuals' exposure level so it is not possible to get round the Regulations by claiming that the worker is only in the radioactive environment for a short period.

Our booklet on radon in caves needs to be updated to reflect the changes in the law, and we also need to support our award scheme holders who will be affected by this. This is covered elsewhere on the agenda. I raise it here to ensure Council is aware that it needs to consider the financial commitment involved and who might be involved in updating the booklet.

Charterhouse Caving Company Limited - Age limits

Charterhouse Caving Company Limited have recently felt it necessary to place a ban on all under 18s entering caves controlled by CCCL. This action was apparently based on advice received from the former L+I officer that parental consent forms are in breach of the Human Rights act.

CCCL subsequently asked me to intervene in a discussion between them and a representative of BCA's Youth & Development group which CCCL felt was leading nowhere and had caused issues between CCCL and the landowner who had been contacted directly.

It needs to be stated that CCCL are entitled to define their own operating procedures and BCA has no right to question these.

Following further investigation and correspondence with the former L+I Officer, it has become apparent that to characterise his advice as being that 'parental consent forms breach human rights' is a rather extreme interpretation and something of an over simplification. Nevertheless, I have also had contact from other clubs requesting clarification on whether BCA insurance covers minors (it does) and if there is any general advice about granting access to under 18s.

Given the potential this has to cause problems for our broader efforts to encourage young people into the caving community, I think BCA need to take this seriously and take proper advice, up to and including Counsel's Opinion if necessary. I have contacted one of our legal advisers as the first step.

Cadw meeting

On 12 December last year I received a request from the Cambrian Caving Council Secretary for BCA to send an observer to a meeting being held to discuss the situation with regard to damage to a scheduled ancient monument at Twll Du. Both the Chairman and I were due to be out of the country on 10 January when the meeting was scheduled and so Robin Weare attended on BCA's behalf with a brief to take an observational role. On 15 January, while in Mulu, I received a complaint from the CCC C+A officer to the effect that Robin had taken more than an observational role.

I am not going to waste my own or Council's time attempting to analyse this further in this report. If CCC wish to raise the matter further then they can do so directly. Suffice it to say that I think it is important that BCA should be seen to support Cadw in carrying out its statutory duties, but beyond this, the matter is a local internal one for CCC and is no business of BCA's.

Complaint letter

On 4 January I received an e-mail from Dr Peter Talling who was complaining about the article in BCA Newsletter No. 31 about Twll Du. I decided not to raise this at the Council meeting on 6 January since we already had a full agenda with various controversial topics and Dr Talling's message was only the latest instalment in a very long running saga.

As it turns out, it's just as well that I did not circulate Dr Talling's letter. On 8 February I received an e-mail message from Stuart France which threatened to take legal action against the BCA on the grounds that the executive had disseminated Dr Talling's letter which was allegedly defamatory of Stuart and others.

No such dissemination took place and there is no case for BCA to answer.

So far as I am concerned, this matter has nothing to do with BCA. Council needs to step up and support the Executive in standing firm against attempts by either side to drag BCA into the debate about the control of access to Ogof Draenan.

Role of the Executive

Tim Allen has asked me to raise the role of the Executive for discussion. His concern relates specifically to matters such as how the letter from Peter Talling and the attendance of the Cadw meeting were handled. He raised this in an e-mail to the Council mailing list on 30 January.

" Constitutionally the exec is there to carry out the administrative business of the association otherwise it should operate at the direction of council."

BCA's Manual of Operations (<http://british-caving.org.uk/wiki2/doku.php?id=executive:start>) says:

The Executive's main role is to manage the affairs of the Association between Council Meetings. In practice this means:

- *assisting with, and advising on, the running of Standing Committees and Working Groups, as needed;*
- *facilitating efficient working of the Association by acting as a 'filter' through which proposed changes are initially run;*
- *making any urgent decisions, and subsequent actions, that may become necessary for the good of the Association;*
- *calling an Emergency General Meeting, should the situation require it.*

Council can discuss if it wishes but unless someone has some specific proposals or substantive points to make then I would suggest we have better things to do with our time and should limit this to a very brief discussion.

Nick Williams, BCA Secretary (Acting)

DISCUSSION:

NW: I propose we take this in the order presented.

[BMC donation] For the Mend our Mountains proposal, I have seconded that for the purposes of discussion - I think we could get the same goodwill for half the money, but that's down to Council.

RW: If we are going to spend money donating to a charity I would rather see it going to a caving charity – last time we donated £400 and that was in 2016. Equally, if we are going to spend money repairing footpaths they should be going to caves not up mountains without caves AE: I respect that but we have had good dialogue with them and this could be a good way to keep them onside for future projects – do we give £500 or £1000? TA: If either of us were invited to Westminster on behalf of BMC on strength of our donation for repairing footpaths, this time it's much bigger. They are trying to raise 1mil through corporate and crowd funding. As Andy said, BMC could be a very useful to BCA if we started to look outwards more and not be so exclusive. Cavers do go walking on these hills as well so it's worthwhile and fosters goodwill.

LesW: Just an observation, not an opinion; we have interacted with BMC in the past to our benefit, but we should not lose sight that this is our members money that we are pledging without consulting them.

AE: To me it comes down to how much. JP: I would support donating £1000 – BMC have been very useful and helpful and we do maintain contact over common interests; the extra amount of money could be worthwhile for the goodwill at the national level.

DB <Botch>: Just to remind them of who we are, they make reference to us as the NCA not the BCA – this should be changed. NW: Let me know where that is and I will get that changed.

AE: What's the general feeling of Council?

SF: I support what Jenny is saying, we should donate £1000 and build a relationship – there have been a series of government consultations on access in Wales and on non-motorised recreation as well as a pressure group of CCC, BMC, Ramblers, British Horse society. It's better to act together than be fragmented – there have been very constructive results. For example, there could be conflict between cyclists and ramblers – supporting BMC is a good cause.

AH: Can we anticipate further appeals? TA: Probably but it's been 2 years since the last one.

MR: I'm all for it, but I think we should try to make the most of some BMC publicity - perhaps publish notice of donation? TA: it's £1000 out of a lot of big sponsors, but it will be noted as it was last time.

MR: If they tweeted a link to the New to Caving website, it costs nothing. TA: It can be put in the BCA Newsletter.

AE: Can we take it as done?

TA: Does everyone accept a £1000 donation?

NW: I think we should have formal vote.

MS: I think we should highlight the tangible benefits in the newsletter - how the BCA has benefited from the BMC - and get that out.

NW: The BMC does tend to get lauded as an example, but we do things as well as they do, in many ways.

LesW: BMC has a lot more clout.

TA: I'm representing CNCC as well as CROW

PROPOSAL

To donate £1000 to the BMC for the Mend our Mountains campaign.

Proposed: TA

Seconded: NW

In favour: All remainder

Against: 1 (RW)

[Safeguarding Officer] NW: I've been contacted by new person for post for Safeguarding Officer, who sends apologies for not being here. I would like to propose we appoint the officer, as detailed in my report.

PROPOSAL

To appoint Chris Boardman as BCA Safeguarding Officer (Acting)

Proposed: NW

Seconded: RW

In favour: All

Against: None

[Training Committee] NW: My next section relates to training, but I think it's important to discuss when Phil <Baker> is present.

AB: I am very much against changing the name to Recreational Training Committee as I don't think it encourages cavers to take the training seriously. There was a paper at the AGM or council meeting where the terms of reference were set as the role of the Training Committee should change to concentrate on recreational caving. This should have been reviewed but never was. I think we are in danger of casting the Training Committee adrift without a paddle – we need to give proper terms of reference to it and we won't need to change the name on it.

AE: We want to have a discussion on this, but we need to speak when Phil is here. AB: Am quite happy to discuss then. NW: Can I particularly draw your attention to my point on recreational training schemes as, at the moment, the training committee is going ahead with that and is in the process of sorting out awards. AB: We discussed how this might go forward before it was set up and we discussed provision of some form of advisory guidelines to give to clubs to provide training for members – this was never done, and the way it was stated in the training report of Sept last year (which Chris Binding wrote) caused distress. NW: I am in complete agreement, I do not think this is heading in the direction intended as the Regional Councils are not engaging.

AE: Let's pick this up when Phil arrives. AB: We did change the name but it was a change in the right direction. We need to discuss and clarify under training.

[GDPR] NW: GDPR guidance, report covers most of what I want to say, but my general point is not really about GDPR – it's that there is a lot of bashing in BCA and a lot less in the way of constructive criticism and helpful points – Bobs email was one of the worst I have seen in terms of not offering anything constructive. I do have concerns about what Cookie <Davide Cooke> has done, and we are on legal thin ground, but I also think that the practical risks are limited – I am wondering if we should have provided professional assistance.

TA: I couldn't agree more, if we were going back some six months, I sent an email to the whole Council list saying that the Sports and Recreational Alliance, who we pay to be members of, held a seminar on this issue late last year for organisations like us – DC said he didn't need to go – so to say at last minute that we need better advice – that advice was there and we could have taken it up.

NW: I don't want to turn this into an exercise to bash an overloaded volunteer, we need, as Council, to take this on for our overloaded volunteers.

TA: Am sure you have seen the vast amount of information out there. NW: I have been pointing clubs to the resources out there – Cookie has done the minimum required to inform clubs what we do with data when it is fed back to us. I have made a conscious decision to not get involved with GDPR, as I cannot do a good enough job with it with the time I have.

NW: In absence of Matt Wyre, Bob <Mehew> and Cookie <David Cooke>, we can't say too much about it - but we haven't done enough on it and we have relied on a volunteer.

JP: There is a requirement for BCA to contact all its members directly and ask for their approval for what BCA is doing with members' data. NW: Cookie's view is that it's been done as part of the annual insurance renewal. JP: It hasn't always been done. NW: Are we going to get some professional help in? It will cost a couple of thousand pounds - ultimately Council has to decide, in principle, if we do this.

TA: I agree, we need to take this as an example of putting too much on a single volunteer and we should have voted to spend the money and take it, in a positive way, off him.

AH: CNCC already has a draft of advice to member clubs, work has already been done – who shall we send that to at BCA? NW: Well that should go to Cookie but it's clear he's overloaded. SF: Well, the person who's being bashed here is Bob, and he was right? NW: He may have been right in what he said but not how he said it.

SF: The first aspect is that BCA is holding personal data, so Wendy's (WW) department, at least in terms of membership information – Cookie's responsibility is where the data is held in terms of data security. Members need to be consulted about how the data held.

LesW: Has BCA actually registered a data control officer?

NW: We have registered in the past. It was Bob Mehew, it may have passed to Cookie, if informally.

LesW: Legally, we need to know who the data controller is.

AB: The ICO have a toolkit, if you need to know what happens. We should have done a data audit as to

what we hold, then we should have written to all those we have email addresses for to ask if they are happy with the way we use their data.

TA: Do you have a motion?

NW: That we identify and engage a professional to do the job for us, to the tune of £2000

LesW: Who does it? NW: We will have to find the time. We may firstly circulate amongst ourselves to see. TA: Sports and Recreation?

PROPOSAL:

That the BCA Council identifies and engages professional advice on the matter of GDPR implementation, with a budget of up to £2000.

Proposed: NW

Seconded: LesW

All in favour: 8 in favour.

Against: None

Abstention: AH & AB

[CO2 document] NW: We were going to try to do something about producing a CO2 document, following on from the one that had severe reservations attached to it. I note one of those reservations has come to pass. Is it sufficiently important to council that we spend money on it?

DJ: I think you gave it to Richard? NW: He needed more support than I had time to give.

NW: Are we going to forget the idea? DJ: Richard can't do it alone: WB: Can we appeal to the membership for volunteers?

NW: The job is currently contacting the regions and coordinating what people are measuring in the way of CO2 but we need someone whose ear is to the ground, in terms of practical caving. I think we are looking at something less academic than the BCRA?

AB: Can we not ask for feedback via these minutes? NW: That's not generally been effective. LesW: We have a newsletter. DJ: Richard could look up contacts. NW: could we encourage Richard to do a brief article for upcoming newsletter (after May) to ask for information?

TA: Can I just clarify that last comment on Natural England isn't CO2 related. NW: I understand but the very mention of confined spaces is likely to engender this type of response. TA: But that isn't CO2? NW: It's that creep of association ...

AE: Radon, that's even more difficult, so we should move on.

[Radon] NW: So, moving on to Radon ... again this will come up later in the Training Committee report, but I wanted to make sure it was clearly on the agenda, as we publish a booklet for general cavers that will need to be updated and we need to be supporting our award scheme holders as to how it applies to them. In time, the award schemes will make the contribution required to cover the cost of paying someone to update the booklet.

LesW: It's going to come up under training? NW: We need to talk about the booklet. LesW: It's getting

approvals that's the problem – when we produced it, it was approved by HPA and HSE gave tacit approval. It took a lot of effort to get it to the point it's at – we don't want to go there again. We can produce the book but if we want it to be approved by various statutory bodies, someone will have to take it to them. NW: Let's discuss this under training as it will probably help - let's see what Phil comes up with as there are some people on the QMC side with an interest in this and useful contacts.

[Charterhouse CCL] NW: I don't propose to repeat my report but this highlights that there is significant misunderstanding around liability waivers and contracts around underage people. Lots of comments were made by people who are not professionally qualified to make them, and that has not been constructive. Hence, I think we need to take this problem seriously, I'm looking for help and this may take a while. We also need to frame the question correctly. CCCL and Youth and Dev need specialist advice.

AB: Graham Mullan changed it on website without any discussion. CCCL permit still says 16 years, there is no waiver.

NW: I cannot come up with a satisfactory reaction... AB: I think this was done as knee jerk reaction and it's just caused chaos. It would be a very good thing if the Association sorted it out specifically.

WB: Can I address the informal complaints to CCCL about me – I asked not to forward the email but is clear it has been shared. The first complaint was about behaviour and 'challenging tone' - I am first to admit I can be abrasive, I promise to further consult with other YMC members so I can challenge in a less challenging tone.

Second complaint was this sort of thing doesn't involve BCA as it's a regional thing, which I accept, but I have to note the 14 yr. old that contacted me told me that they had already asked the CCC and CNCC and hadn't received an answer as to why they had been excluded. I hadn't received an answer either which is why I contacted the landowner - but I agree with getting advice.

LesW Due to an accident of time, the fallout of this matter is being discussed this very minute. Predicated by a letter from Wessex which has asked questions – the largest caving club on Mendip are not happy about it, and there seems to be a groundswell against it, so we should just see how it goes.

NW: In terms of access to a particular set of sites, that's a fair comment, but we need to give a definitive statement to our members. LesW: I agree.

RN: Just want to say BCA Youth and Dev have acted entirely properly – I know the manner of the first few conversations could have been improved but I think there is a role for Youth and Dev to kick up a fuss about these things and our members have shown restraint, given some of the things which have been written on the internet. It's been quite challenging for us to sit back and I have had emails requesting action - there are people stopping young people going caving for non-substantial reasons.

NW: Nothing I have said was intended as a criticism of Will.

WB: Wessex have mentioned a 16-18 bracket; I am not a lawyer but I did get the opinion of a senior law lecturer and rec officer, which contradicted Bob's interpretation and I am happy to share these. No reason to exclude under 16's from caves either. We want to make sure the discussion doesn't get

trapped in 16-18 bracket.

LesW: Just want to slightly correct Rostam – there's two parts to this discussion, one part is very very specific, dealing with a regional access body – BCA is forbidden from interfering and we've still got to go through the right channels. RN: Proper procedure has been followed. LesW: Not arguing with what you are doing, just that you are acting against the BCA Constitution.

RN: Because we haven't made many statements or released emails, people can't see the chain of procedure.

IW: What is our lowest age for insurance? NW: There isn't one.

TA: I think Youth and Dev acted perfectly reasonably. I think it's very easy for regional councils to hide behind this constitutional block when it's actually of concern to a lot of people. The point is in the action log you read out of legal officers you wanted to consult and Linda Wilson wasn't on there. Bob Mehew wasn't on there either but he admits he has no legal authority.

AE: There are two others on there too, who do have authority.

TA: Let's get some sort of clarification. Linda Wilson could do this. LesW: Linda has said herself she isn't practicing.

WB: I wouldn't want it to turn into some sort of bashing exercise. I enquired as I think it's a national access problem – it's not a CCCL specific thing.

AE: think we are all in agreement that the CCCL thing is being sorted out on Mendip and we've already begun to get something started through BCA.

LesW: Do we need to authorise expenditure? NW: No, it's not there yet. I will report back to Council at the point where we can take it forward.

LesW: So, all at BCA are in agreement that we should be doing something? NW: I will work with Will Burn on this. This is an issue beyond individual protagonists.

AE: Move on.

[Cadw meeting] NW I've chosen my words fairly carefully... TA: I'll start the discussion – it really ties in with the other point, the role of the executive. BCA were invited on 12th Dec to send a rep to the Cadw meeting but this was not brought up in the council meeting on 7th Jan – I feel it should have been – to approve whoever was going and to give them some direction on the line they should take. We've mentioned the dispute in Wales having a detrimental effect for a long time and involved a lot of bodies and people, expanding ever outwards to other bodies. NW: Sure, you and I discussed this on the phone. TA: Andrew was elected to try to act as a mediator – that didn't work – I said BCA needs to take a neutral role and support the regional council as much as allowed. No disrespect, Robin, but I would have spoken against you going to the meeting because of your previous involvement.

NW: In retrospect, it was a mistake to not bring it up in the January Council meeting. I wanted to keep it as uncontroversial as possible and brief whoever attended on BCA's behalf to act as an observer only. At the Jan Council meeting, CCC reps were told Robin would be attending.

SF: This is also related to the next item, a complaint letter, also known about at last meeting and not mentioned to Council or me. I don't know why Alan Richardson [CCC Secretary] had asked BCA to send an observer but nobody on Cambrian was aware CCC had asked BCA to send an observer. It wasn't discussed at Council meeting – RW came to me afterwards and asked quietly if he could attend as an observer. I agreed on proviso that it was as observer only – but this was the first I had heard, informally and not officially.

AE: I think Tim and others think there is some sort of agenda going on there, and there genuinely wasn't - we didn't try to do anything but we should have taking it more seriously.

SF: I though Robin was coming to observe, I wasn't expecting participation...

RW: First of all, let me say I have been visiting Ogof Draenen for 20 years but have never been involved with its politics. I am more than grateful to the landowners who have allowed cavers to cross their land to gain access. That the present landowner has been prepared to continue to allow access despite the aggravation and unpleasantness caused by a very small number of cavers makes me even more grateful.

I will add that I am grateful to all the other landowners who allow access to caves situated on their property. I extend that gratitude to all the management committees and clubs who help the landowners to administer access and invariably commit huge amounts of their time and effort to conserving the caves for which they have accepted responsibility.

TA: what has that got to do with this? Talking about landowners when the question is about representation at a meeting?

AE: Let Robin continue.

RW: As I was saying, I am more than grateful to individual members who put in time and effort to conserve and help organise the caves they are looking after. It has always been my personal policy to comply fully with the terms of access agreements. That includes only using the sole approved access to Ogof Draenen.

I have no doubt whatsoever that the vast majority of members behave the same way and I deplore the activities of those few who bring our sport into disrepute.

I refer specifically to those who have consistently ignored the BCA policy, the Cambrian policy and the CRoW act by digging holes in and around Ogof Draenen without the permission of the landowner. And to those who have encouraged them by acting as their cheerleaders and apologists.

On 10th January I attended a meeting at the site of the Twll Du entrance to the Ogof Draenen system.

This followed a formal request from Cadw, conveyed by the Cambrian Secretary to the BCA Secretary, that BCA be represented at that meeting.

SF has suggested that I asked his permission to attend. My memory of that conversation is that I told him I would be attending to represent BCA at the request of the CCC Secretary and that I asked for a briefing.

The meeting itself comprised two parts. The first was a site visit by a large group which included representatives of CADW, NRW, the Brecon Beacons National Park, Torfaen Council and Gwent Police. That all of these bodies were represented is a clear indication that the authorities took this matter very seriously indeed.

Like most people I just listened to what was said by Cadw during the site visit. During the walk back to the car park I was warned by the NRW rep that the reason BCA had been asked to attend was that an article in the BCA newsletter was seen as being supportive of what they saw as illegal action – possibly by some of our members.

In those circumstances it would have been naïve of me to expect to avoid comment.

However, as some of those present indicated that they would not attend the second part I tried to do the same. I was then specifically asked to stay by one of the Cadw representatives.

I kept no notes but, as far as I remember, my first contribution came after the Cambrian representatives suggested that BCA would pay for restitution work. I have no idea why they thought they had authority to do that but I hope I was successful in persuading Cadw to find the money from their own budget.

One of SF's complaints was that I named the individuals who did the damage – I certainly would have done so if I had known who they were. There is no doubt in my mind that they should accept responsibility for their actions. Someone else gave 3 names. As far as I know I've met none of those people, although I did recognise two of the names mentioned.

During the meeting I replied to specific questions. I responded to a particularly negative comment about the newsletter article by explaining that it was the first newsletter from a new editor and that neither he nor the members of the executive who were in the country knew enough of the background to realise the implications.

I did say that it would not have appeared had I still been editor and may well have said that I tried to get an email through to stop it from half way up a mountain in Nepal but the e-mail arrived too late .

I subsequently put David Rose and Cadw in touch. David's editorial in the next newsletter was well received by the authorities and went a long way to repairing relationships.

I did state that BCA policy is that digging is only with permission and that we had recently published a document to that effect. I may have mentioned that an article in a recent Cambrian newsletter said the same thing.

I carefully avoided saying these policies didn't appear to apply to friends of the Cambrian Conservation & Access officer.

I was asked about access agreements and replied that the BCA policy must be to be grateful to any landowner who allows access and to comply with any restrictions he may impose.

After a strongly voiced statement by the authorities that no-one should be allowed to benefit from an illegal act even Stuart seemed to accept that Twll Du would be closed. That he went on to suggest that

CADW should try to persuade the landowners to avoid further trouble by leaving Drws Cefn open raised a few eyebrows and I think my jaw may have dropped when he announced that an entrance at the Nunnery, closed and sealed many years ago, had been broken open in 2016 and was in current use.

It seemed that no-one else present knew of this. The CADW reaction was that they would look into putting closure notices on those entrances as well. The NRW reaction was that they would look into accelerating the already existing plans to make Ogof Draenen a SSSI.

I'm quite sure that any other contribution I made would have been taken as personal comment.

SF's e-mail included that I said a prosecution would be the best way to deter such digging activity – I don't remember saying that but would agree with the concept.

TA: I think that typifies why we should have brought it up at Council and why we should have sent someone neutral.

AE: Hindsight is a wonderful thing, and let's learn from our mistakes.

SF: What's happened has happened. All I want to say, in conclusion to Robins speech, as the best witness to the amount of things he said, it wasn't simply observing it was active participation.

RW: It could not have been observation, once Cadw got us there, and had a go.

RN: The basis of the complaint is if you were there to observe or represent? If the BCA asked you to be there as a representative, as a point of order, Robin has done nothing wrong and Council bears responsibility.

LesW: Is this a formal complaint? If so, we cannot resolve it as we need it to go to our dispute resolution. If not, we have evidence from both sides, but no further.

NW: People have a right to say something, I made an error of judgement. I would be delighted to offer my resignation but it's clear it would not be accepted. Lesson learned and we need to move on.

AE: In the last few weeks I have met both sides on this and I think a resolution is possible. When I retire as Chairman, I would be prepared to get involved as in independent, non-BCA person.

LesW: As am sure most of you know, I took on the chair of independent management committee, I do believe we can move on to a decent resolution – whether that happens remains to be seen, but I believe it is a possibility.

[Complaint letter] NW: Next section is in some ways connected with previous one. I do not accept that not bringing Dr Tallings letter to the January Council meeting was wrong – I first saw the letter less than 2 days before the meeting and I did not have time to prepare an appropriate presentation of it to Council. I feel delaying it was the proper thing to do. I am horrified that SF should think it appropriate to drag other people into this matter and I think it's appalling that anybody should think it right to use volunteers' time in this way.

SF: It was a very long letter and about six pages of astonishing content that mentioned myself, and others, in such a way as to lower our standing in the eyes of right-minded people. It was written and sent on New Year's Day. It didn't come up in Council and I wasn't consulted. Robin received a copy in the middle of January as the original recipients were in Mulu – Robin then sat on it, and the same email then went through David Rose and other hands with the intention of it being circulated. Alan Richardson decided not to circulate it to Cambrian but that was when I heard about it. Contents came from a Durham University account and signed off by Dr Talling. I have contacted the University and that is an ongoing affair. I regard it as defamatory and wrote to BCA to try to contain it as to repeat a defamation is to issue a defamation. I feel I am owed an apology and anybody who has circulated copies of this may also be liable for same action.

TA: To belabour the point, but I did mention the letter as I was someone it got circulated to as well – I don't remember exactly when – but it should have come up at Council meeting as it's serious issue.

NW: I'm sorry I don't agree...

TA: Clearly some of the damage could have been offset...

NW: All that would have happened is that I would have had to circulate it to everyone on Council - which as SF has pointed out would be further defamation... damned if you do, damned if you don't.

IW: Can I propose a motion that this committee does not get involved in business between access and regional bodies?

LesW: It's in constitution... but we can we minute it.

AE: What do people think Robin should have done? AB: Should have said "no opinion".

SF: Most of the other bodies said nothing – except on specific bat access, that was all NWR said in proceedings – if BCA had taken same line as majority of other bodies, it wouldn't have been a problem. BCA should have said "no opinion".

RW: They were lucky enough to be allowed to escape, I wasn't

IW: Does this council agree BCA will not get involved in any dispute between access bodies and regional bodies and that's nothing to do with us.

LesW/AE: That's what the Constitution says.

LesW: If we were invited by regional council, we were there legitimately.

TA: Can I urge that we stress all parties involved in access disputes seek a resolution. If you and Les are going to be involved in different capacities, that would be great.

AW: I actually do think there is a solution to this. Are we in favour of Idris's (IW) motion?

JP: I suggest we amend it to say we reiterate what is said in the Constitution, at the start of Idris's (IW)

motion.

MOTION:

We reiterate the BCA Constitution statement that the BCA will not get involved with any dispute between access bodies and regional councils.

All in favour, None against

[Role of the exec.] JP: NW: do we wish to discuss this? TA: I think we have already covered it in the previous discussions.

*** Meeting broke for lunch 1300. Reconvened at 1340***

Membership Administrator's Report – Wendy Williams

- As at 31st March 2018
BCA Membership stands at
 - DIMs = 573**
 - Groups = 163**
 - CIMs = 4988**
- There are no Applications from New Clubs wishing to be BCA Member Clubs.

Membership Administrator, Wendy Williams

DISCUSSION:

WW: Membership as it stands is currently:

DIMS: 590

Groups: 172 renewed

15 outstanding

1 club is not renewing

2 who didn't renew in 2017 have not responded

2 which did not renew in 2017 have now done so

CIMs: 557

Incidentally, Cambrian Mines trust haven't renewed – I will send reminders this week.

REPORT:

8. Treasurer (Acting) - Robin Weare

The formalities connected with the new 1 year term deposit account with United Trust Bank were eventually completed on 25th January. Our main deposits are now with 3 separate banks, all within the limits of government guarantees and with repayments only to our main account. The rates remain historically low but are amongst the best available. Our average rate is 1.5% and nothing is tied for more than 12 months.

I have found and, after discussion with executive colleagues, am in the process of opening a deposit account with Charity Bank which pays 0.75% with no notice required for withdrawals. This fills the gap in our portfolio of deposit accounts allowing short term movements of funds which traditionally arrive during the early part of a year but are not disbursed until later. This bank fills all the criteria specified in the resolution authorising the executive to take such actions.

Much of January was spent preparing the accounts, which are included as an appendix. They are with the Scrutineer so remain as drafts and subject to possible amendment when he has completed his task.

Overall, the draft accounts show a surplus of £20,473 which has been added to reserves.

The detail of the income and expenditure is set out in the accounts but I am sure that a few general comments will allow Council to better consider them.

Subscription income showed a substantial and partly unexpected increase, particularly in the DIM category. The expected part was down to the increased charges to clubs and ACB's in 2017.

The other substantial swing from 2016 was that the training qualification scheme moved from a deficit of £1,286 to a surplus of £2,139. This was despite another fall in registration numbers and so was entirely due to the decision to increase charges in 2017. I estimate that without that increase the deficit would have been around £1,400. As may be obvious from the accounts I have completely revised the internal accounting for this part of our operations to separate the three strands of income. This change has allowed me to provide QMC with useful financial information on a regular basis. Revalidation courses operated at a surplus of £2,462, Registrations raised £9,460 and the fees charged to Trainer/Assessors were £2,755. Overheads amounted to £12,538.

By comparison with the budget estimates there were two areas of substantial and unexpected savings. The budget allowed for the ballot to cost us £6,000 and I compliment Bob Mehew & David Cooke for their efforts in making it a mostly online operation and getting it done for £1,511.

The budget allowed for a net cost of £1,000 in respect of the AGM weekend. My compliments to all concerned in the organisation of the weekend which operated like clockwork and cost us no more than £114.

It was good to see the increase in expenditure on Training Grants although it has to be said that £450 of the grants charged in 2017 actually related to 2016 and came in so late that they were not paid until 2018.

The cost of providing internet services for BCA, regional councils and other connected organisations was offset by the amounts earned from services provided to other users.

Regional Council claims included administration expenditure but mainly related to work undertaken for conservation & access purposes.

Donations of £10,000 to support the British Caving Library and £5,000 to support overseas expeditions were as budgeted and in line with previous years.

Although it has little apparent impact on these accounts I consider it to be of prime importance that after a long and detailed negotiation HMRC has agreed that we are entitled to tax relief in respect of charitable donations and have refunded with interest the small amount of corporation tax we have paid in recent years. Without this

deduction there would have been tax liabilities of around £1,250 in respect of 2016 & 2017 but I see the main benefit as ongoing, especially if interest rates improve. At current rates of tax and donation we could save up to £3,000 each year should otherwise taxable income reach or exceed £15,000.

The Association continues to be able to meet running costs as they fall due and the reserves position is strong in light of current expectations of foreseeable requirements.

I am still searching for a suitably qualified replacement and ask Council members to keep this in mind whenever they speak to a caver with a background in accountancy.

Robin Weare, Treasurer (Acting) – Jan 2018
(BCA Draft Accounts Appended as separate document)

DISCUSSION:

RW: Couple of updates – Charity Bank have demanded personal info for every Council member so we are no longer opening a deposit with them as that was untenable.

We have run out of Weils disease cards. The cost of another purchase will exceed amount in budget so I want council approval. The quote is for £744 - £500 had been allocated in the budget. May I propose we buy a new batch?

LesW: Before we have them printed, there is an error, but somebody needs to review that the info on them is correct. How many cards do we get for £750? RW: 7000.

AE: Who produced them last time? (General answer) Bob Mehew

NW: Where have we been sending out a card? WW: Every DIM gets a card, every CIM gets a card – new members get a card, Clubs get a card.

LesW: What's the lifespan of 7000 cards? RW: About three or four years. LesW: It might be of benefit to not have so many in one go, as info might change.

SF: Why isn't on website? LesW: It is, but this is something to go into their wallet. SF: It costs nothing to put in the newsletter and ask the regional councils to point to it. I've got enough bits of plastic in my wallet.

JP: They have been useful in the past with local farmers as PR, as they don't get much from us.

SF: I don't think thousands of cards to give a few to farmers is a good use of money... everything needs to go electronic.

WW: I know personally of someone using the card to spot a case – that's just one case, and that was a sewerage worker.

SF: Why don't we just laser print it and give them as needed?

IW: I tend to give them out to Scouts on their first trip, as we are obliged to inform them and it's very handy to give them a card like that – I often don't have an email address for them.

AE: How out of date are they likely to be? LesW: They just need to be renewed. AE: I like to have tangible things we can give out and there are places where it's good to have one, but I'm prepared to have a vote on it.

WW: How much does it cost to print a single membership card? NW: About 30p. I'm in favour of printing them but SF is right, we should question it. Let's put it to a vote.

PROPOSAL:

Council proposes that £750 is spent to have 7000 Weils disease information cards printed.

Proposed: NW

Seconded: JP

In favour: 11

Against: 2

Abstains: 4

AH: I still have dozens. NW: Give them to Jenny.

RW: Currently this year we have donated £5000 to Ghar Parau and to BCRA for the library – otherwise I have nothing else to add to this aspect.

RW: I have managed to persuade HMRC that their website is wrong – what it says is that charitable donations by Limited Companies are deductible in the year they are made. We are not a Limited Company but we pay Corporation tax – the legislation actually says we pay Corporation tax so are deductible.

RW: I spoke to Paul Ibberson and whilst he still had work to do, he was happy there were no substantial changes to be made.

TA: I enjoyed reading the accounts, that was a great job – got a couple of questions – first one related Minute of Council of Southern Caving club purchase of additional locks, could we elaborate on what that's for? RW: Anything to do with conservation and access, the regional councils have authority to spend up to £500 – if they want to go above in any given year, their Treasurer applies to all the other Treasurers for prior approval. Regional Treasurers may forget to apply, so the agreement to be funded may be retrospective; in practise, that's the norm. In this particular case, Cookie sent out a memo at the end of last year requesting approval for planned expenditure, which included replacing the locks.

TA: Is that for the whole lock programme?

AB: The CSCC has a programme where a lock has multiple keys and the locks can be easily cleaned, so just keeping access as easy as possible.

TA: Roughly, what is that worth?

AB: 40-odd locks at around £18-£20 each.

LesW: As to necessity, the lock supplier had been discontinued so we needed to replace with a different manufacturer and rekey en-block.

TA: Don't get me wrong, I don't begrudge it. Having looked at the money spent on regional councils, there seemed to be a discrepancy – in 2016 one claimed £400, another £1000. Given CNCC is a pretty large council, is the system actually right?

RW: There are two parts to it – essentially admin expenses are all reclaimable, that's a broad brush. The second and main part is Conservation access expenditure – historically this has been channelled through finance, for whatever reason - that's how it works.

TA: We do plenty of conservation and access work in the Dales, but we do do other things as well. Surely there must be a better way of allocating funding.

RW: You have a very competent regional treasurer. TA: Surely there must be other opportunities for support from BCA when there is an imbalance between areas.

David Jean: This doesn't apply to caves for which there is an access charge? RW: No.

SF: To the conversation that TA is referring to I added Cambrian caving council £900, CNCC £800, Derbyshire £800. What did the other 2000 get spent on? RW/LesW: Loxton, water wheel...

SF: So they are digging projects? RW: No, they are excluded.

AE: So are there things TA could be claiming for? RW: No, there aren't.

AH: Am I right in thinking there is a £500 limit...? RW: No, if the region spends *up to* £500 it can be authorised by the region; if it goes above £500 then the region has to apply for approval from all the other regions. AH: So something like a cave shaft that had collapsed??? RW: ... yes... all claimable...could be put up as a project for approval. It is also part of the rules that other sources of funding should be applied first.

LesW: It doesn't come under Con and Access budget but am presuming the North is claiming for the anchors? Is that something that could come under BCA? There's disproportionate amounts due to different types of claim.

NW: The bolting program is fully funded by the BCA.... TA/LesW: That's a different budget.

TA: I'm very tempted to propose a motion to the AGM that we somehow review how money is allocated to the regions, as it doesn't seem to be fair to be that disproportion as to what we can claim, against what others can.

JP: That's the wrong approach – we should be saying that BCA should be able to fund what is a priority and everyone has something different to claim for.

LesW: Whatever any regional council is claiming is for the benefit of all our members, as our members don't stay in one area – it just means more is being spent where it's needed for the benefit of all our members.

Andrew H: We have other sources of incoming that are sparing BCA... AB: You have about £18000 in the

bank, we have about £4000... AE: With respect Butch, that's not relevant.

TA: I'll put a motion in <for the AGM> before midnight.

LesW: This was set up as one-stop-shop for All Caving -go look at the regional council funding paper on the website.

TA: I just think it should be allocated evenly across the regions... RW: It will tell you what I have just explained in finer details.

TA: I think we feel from CNCC that we are being fairly hard done by with BCA funding. DJ: We are a large region and we are very frugal.

LesW: Anything over £500 is done on a case by case basis... you need more, put a case in.

SF: The PMG charge £20 which covers key changes. The locks are there to conserve the cave and protect species/geology, they are not to keep cavers out. This could all be made self-funding through the community or Natural England.

LesW: The reason this funding model was set up is because we stopped having members locally – CNCC was funded by its local members, then the National Body later took on funding the regional councils to the level that they are used to spending. That's one point, the question is are we actually funding in Cambrian the work that Roy Fellows is doing?

SF: No?

RW: I have suggested to the Cambrian mine society treasurer that they should be a funded body.

LesW: Roy is basically funding out of his own pocket...

RN: We're essentially arguing something that is about .25p per card, can we move on?

REPORT:

9. Conservation & Access Officer - Andrew Hinde

Including: CRoW-Liaison Officer Report - Tim Allen

BCA CRoW Policy Statement.

The following text was drafted and approved by the BCA Conservation and Access Committee via a Webex meeting on 6th February 2018.

Begins

BCA policy statement on the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)

- 1. The British Caving Association holds the opinion that the CRoW Act already permits access for recreational caving. (Note: this view has been verified by the legal opinion of Dinah Rose QC and supported by many external organisations and individuals as well as its own members).*

2. *The access principles of the CRoW Act are in accord with BCA's own principles of improving access to caves. The BCA encourages caving bodies who have control of access to caves on 'access land' to renegotiate access agreements to reflect the rights provided by the CRoW Act.*
3. *The conservation of caves is important. The BCA Conservation Code applies to all caves regardless of the land designation. The BCA agrees with the CRoW guiding principle of the least restrictive option to meet the conservation or safety need.*
4. *The BCA believe that any particular conservation concerns on CRoW 'access land' can be adequately dealt with by those means already set out in the legislation. The BCA recognise that many of the concerns raised prior to the introduction of the Act never materialised and access to caves should be no different.*
5. *The BCA will support cavers in their work to develop access to caves on CRoW access land.*

Reference documents;

1. *Dinah Rose opinion*
2. *Conservation Code and Guidelines*
3. *Educational strategy for conservation*
4. *Section 26 advice to ACBs. Ends.*

The background to this Policy Statement is summarised below.

BCA council has asked C&A to come up with a short policy statement on CRoW. Councils motion states,

"C&A committee to prepare a draft policy statement, kept as brief and meaningful as possible, that BCA believes with good reason that the CRoW Act, as-is, applies to caving."

It is worth noting that the membership poll in 2014 gave the association a mandate to run the campaign and the membership ballot of 2017 removed parts of the constitution which had been held up as an impediment to that campaign. BCA consider that the membership has made itself clear on this matter. Furthermore BCA cannot run a campaign which argues that the CRoW Act already permits caving if it is not prepared to make that clear in a policy statement.

It is important to note that the BCA campaign is not seeking to change the law at this stage. BCA argues that the law as it stands already permits recreational caving.

BCA have sought clarification on this matter. Defra/NE have presented a view that the Act does not apply to caving. They do concede that the Act allows access to the entrance of caves and to an undetermined point underground such as the limit of daylight. They have been clear that their view is not definitive and that in the end only a court can decide. BCA argue the Act does permit caving in line with the legal opinion of the barrister Dinah Rose QC. This view is supported by a number of outdoor organisations such as the BMC, S&RA, BC, etc. Both sides have put their views forward robustly on this matter and one must consider that the Act may already apply to caving just as equally as it may not. Therefore any issue of trespass is very difficult to establish until this is fully settled.

In the meantime BCA does offer advice, codes, strategy and guidelines in relation to conservation. Also of course, BCA are unable to tell regional councils what to do so ultimately it is up to them how much notice they take of any BCA statement.

UNESCO Caves meeting in Ardeche.

I had intended to go to this conference. Unfortunately it has been cancelled.

Conservation and Access Officer Post.

It is my intension to retire from this post in 12 months time. I will then have completed 2 full terms as a BCA Officer. I would encourage anyone interested in considering putting themselves forward for this post to contact me. They will receive practical advice and encouragement.

Andrew Hinde, Conservation & Access Convenor

- CRoW-Liaison Officer Report - Tim Allen

Brexit

The dreaded Brexit is looming and naturally this is likely to have an effect on both farming and access to the countryside. Agricultural subsidies keep many farms going but also provides some landowners with huge amounts of public money for doing very little. At the moment this money is paid out by the EU. Small farms and particularly upland farms are where many of the country's caves are located. Post Brexit the government has pledged to maintain the current level of subsidies until 2022 – after that nothing is very clear.

We were, however, given a few clues in January when Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs addressed the Oxford Farming Conference. He gave the clearest signal yet on how those agricultural subsidies will be administered after Brexit indicating that subsidies will be linked to 'public good' such as access to the countryside. He said, "The more the public, and especially school children, get to visit, understand and appreciate our countryside the more I believe they will appreciate support and champion our farmers..... So public access is a public good." This positive tone from Gove together with that from other sectors is certainly something for the CRoW campaign to work with.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

The House of Lords select committee has reported: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/nerc-act-committee/>

The BCA submitted evidence to this committee which was entitled, 'is the NERC Act still fit for purpose'. This is the Act which established Natural England and basically the conclusion is that budget cuts have led to concerns over their ability to perform core functions. This ties in with changes to come following Brexit and concerns over the environment once we leave the EU and the laws that protect it. The Government already expects to establish a new environmental body. Recommendations related to access include more resources to promote access to the countryside. Payments for maintenance and enhancement of public access in any new system of payments. Revision and relaunch the Countryside Code. Read the full report for more details.

CSCC

In February I attended a meeting of the Council of Southern Caving Clubs. I welcomed the invitation to attend and pleased that the occasion also gave me the opportunity, on behalf of CNCC, to deliver a specially made cake. The message I received was that CSCC liked things the way they were and they didn't want any change. They stated that they do not have to support the BCA democracy and although they acknowledge that CRoW access will have little effect on their area they are still concerned about what effect it will have on British caving. The meeting showed no interest in reaching any form of accord which took into account the wishes of the wider BCA membership and northern caving in particular who have realised the benefits of having a legal right of access to so many caves. Overall I felt the views of the old vocal majority dominate the council and I did wonder whether they represented the views of all Mendip cavers – various messages I received post meeting suggested that they do not. It is a confusing situation on Mendip and such a shame that with so little to worry about themselves they are not willing to get behind the democratic position of the National Body. I can only hope that a new generation will think differently.

Friends of the Dales

Friends of the [Yorkshire] Dales is a 35 year old organisation set up 'for the protection and enhancement of the Dales and to encourage everyone to value and enjoy this special area'. I was invited to write an article for their magazine following my representations on caving with the Local Access Forum. I was delighted to find that they had included a postscript to the article which read, "FOTD is very supportive of efforts to improve access to caves and we will continue to help campaign to make this happen". This follows support given to the campaign by similar groups last year. I very much welcome the support given by these organisations who look after our natural environment but it does puzzle me why these organisations are so supportive in the north and yet their equivalents in the south seem to be against both access rights and access for young cavers. Why should that be?

BCA policy statement

I have assisted the C&A Officer in drawing up the policy statement on CRoW as directed by council.

"C&A committee to prepare a draft policy statement, kept as brief and meaningful as possible, that BCA believes with good reason that the CRoW Act, as-is, applies to caving."

Constitution 4.6

Changing section 4.6 became a big issue for some cavers and was championed by those who oppose access under CRoW. Council had dealt with the matter in early 2016 but it still rumbled on for another year following the AGM on Mendip. Of course it was a delaying tactic but in the end the 2017 AGM voted to remove the sentence and this was ratified up by a ballot of the entire membership at considerable effort and expense. A thumping majority voted for its removal. So why am I dragging this up again? Well, the sentence is still there in the constitution despite several prompts from myself to remove it. In respect to the membership decision I think it should have been removed some time ago. This is a further prompt.

CRoW Liaison Officer role

After three years 'in the job' I have decided not to stand for a fourth year in this very important BCA role. Therefore after the June AGM, BCA will be looking for a new CRoW Liaison Officer to help fulfil the wishes of the membership in this respect.

To many people I have become closely associated with the CRoW campaign to the point that some elements insist on referring to it as 'my campaign'. I'd like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that it is a BCA campaign, run on behalf of BCA members and the wider caving communities. I was not even a BCA member when our National Body ran a poll on whether to commence a campaign to ensure caving was recognised as a permitted activity under the CRoW Act. The poll resulted in a strong mandate for CRoW. Later when it transpired that the BCA Access Officer was unable to pursue a campaign due to a conflict of interest with his employers a new BCA role was created and I volunteered for it.

I committed a lot of time to the campaign particularly in gathering support from other organisations and individuals, researching details of the Act, liaising with the authorities, promoting an awareness of the campaign through media as well as working on the conservation and landowner issues that run parallel. Most of my efforts have been recorded in my reports to council for all to see. Many cavers have offered kind words of support and that has been most welcome. Practical campaign help has been quite limited but I would like to single out Bob Mehew, to whom I am very grateful for the huge amount of research he has conducted behind the scene.

Unfortunately it has been the internal battles of the campaign within BCA that have been most challenging. Not just against the minority anti-crow lobby, but also against an executive which for much of the time appeared to hold a two thirds anti campaign bias. Following the ballot last year I informed the exec that their lack of support on that and other crucial issues had been demoralising and I would put more of my efforts into supporting caving elsewhere. I've not heard anything from them on the matter since.

Members of the exec (and those who are due to succeed them) are reminded that campaigning for CRoW is one of the few things that has been asked of them by the membership. BCA as a whole has not served its membership

well in this. We're leaving the EU on a 51.9% vote. The CRoW campaign received a 62% majority for the poll and an 85% & 88% (club/individual) majority to remove the impediment. Despite all the negative history BCA should now be firmly behind the campaign for the freedoms of access the CRoW Act delivers.

Council will be pleased to hear that someone has contacted me and shown an interest in taking over the role. The last council meeting supported my proposal to establish a 'working/campaign group'. I hope to establish the core of this group before June in order to give confidence to the new CRoW officer that he will have support for the role. I will be available to offer advice, particularly on the work I have already done, if that is needed.

Tim Allen, CRoW Liaison Offer

DISCUSSION:

AH: Nothing to add really...we've had a meeting and agreed the CRoW policy statement as asked by this council, which has now been widely circulated. The UNESCO caves conference was cancelled. AE: Why? AH: Lack of interest? AE: I don't believe it... that's an excuse. But anyway.... AH: Just floating out that I shall be retiring from this post in twelve months. AE: How long have you done? AH: I've done five years so far.

IW: What was actually meant by Hyde in the statement of "so if I provoke, one way or another, an argument with a landowner, will my legal fees be paid?" AE: Comments? AH: I don't think that's what they had in mind... IW: That's one way to interpret it though. AH: It doesn't say 'financial' SF: It's more about developing the terms of that access – the access agreement for PenWyllt is that they have to use the ticket system – as that is now CRoW land, it makes sense to have a conversation with the landowner and people can now go there, as a walker would – we're not talking about digging holes. AB: Or paying for someone's legal battle.

TA: Is it in line with the BCA constitution that BCA would support increasing access to caves on CRoW land...?

IW: That's not my interpretation.

NW: Andrew, are you going to be presenting this policy statement to the AGM for endorsement? AH: Is that necessary...? NW: The constitution says it should be presented - I can consider it sent to me for Council, to send to the AGM.

LesW: Are we recommending it presented as a policy statement for Council to present to the AGM?

TA: It will be at the AGM anyway in the annual report. NW: It has to be a proposal.

LesW: So Council needs to propose this to the AGM? If so, I will propose it.

PROPOSAL:

That the policy statement is presented by Council to the AGM for endorsement.

Proposed: LesW

Seconded: NW

In favour: 18
Against: 1
Abstains: 1

IW: I didn't feel my query has been fully answered.

AH: Abstaining due to possible conflict of interest.

AE: Move on to CRoW. Tim, Brexit?

TA: I do want to highlight the meeting at CSCC but did want to highlight the comment that they don't have to support BCA democracy. AB: Can I just say that those Minutes are yet to be approved, they are only draft.

NW: The revised constitution is now on the website. TA: Good.

TA: There is a successor to take over from me, David Rose, who I am sure will do a much better job of moving forward the BCA campaign to get the CRoW act applied to caving

AE: Dave Rose is standing for the position. The first thing Dave has done is phone Linda Wilson and have a chat with her about it.

TA: You will need to co-opt him at the council meeting after the AGM. I will be available to him to help out, but I feel my name has become so closely associated with the campaign that it has taken the focus away from it being a BCA campaign – I feel too that the Exec hasn't been as supportive as they could have been, in some cases, but to have someone new taking over is good.

AH: Something to think about in the future, the position of Conservation and Access officer would normally have dealt with the CRoW matters, but maybe when I'm gone in 12 months, maybe there could be some reunification into one – I think it's a good idea to have a group to share the work but reuniting under one position in the long term.

AE: It's a good thought and I appreciate you giving proper notice.

REPORT:

10. Equipment & Techniques Officer – Mark Sims (Acting) Including: Rope Testing Officer - Bob Mehew

Report on the E&T committee:

As stated in the report for the last meeting, I have been extremely short of time recently, making progress tricky. Unfortunately, availability of members has also meant a meeting of the E&T group has not been feasible since the last meeting. We are hoping to meet at the end of this month, but this is awaiting confirmation from most members. I hope to be able to report decisions and progress at the next BCA meeting.

Mark Sims, E&T Officer

- Rope Testing Officer, Bob Mehew

Nothing further to report, at this stage, on rope testing.

DISCUSSION:

MS: I've nothing further to add, but any questions...?

NW: Have you got representatives from all the regions? MS: Yes, I believe so, despite communication being tricky.

AE/LesW: Well done...

SF: Can I just ask Mark if there are any hot potatoes in the E&T committee? MS: There are some immediate things that need addressing, such as admin and reimbursements that we need to talk about – there are wider questions about the anchor scheme which we hope to address but I don't think there is anything imminently concerning..

SF: Obviously things are happening as there has been expenditure... MS: Yes, the scheme has been happening so there is expenditure. SF: It sort of gives the impression nothing has been happening but clearly it has. MS: The regional councils can claim that back and it doesn't have to come via me.

NW: There is a stock of anchors and resin freely available to the regions and we fund other items as requested.

TA: The IC anchor is a much improved and more conservation sympathetic anchor but it's only available to the CNCC and the CNCC has bought 650 out of their own money at around £3500 but we can't claim that back...

RW/NW: That's not true... MS: They are being reimbursed but at the value of the anchors to all the regions, we are meeting to discuss the extra.

NW: To explain the circumstances of this, I felt entirely comfortable about refunding CNCC to the value of current anchors, but the additional needed an E&T meeting and there has not been one since that decision was made.

RW: I had a claim from CNCC, calculated and offered the money and was told they were waiting for other funding.

TA: The point I would like to make is that funding was made available for 40 gates but we have a huge use of anchors, have developed a better type, but at the moment we still haven't been able to get agreement on funding for them.

NW: You have been offered approximately three quarters of the cost, and it was turned down.

LesW: Funding is available, you can claim for it.

MS: I need to discuss this at a meeting, before moving forward, as part of E&T.

SF: Does [the rope test officer's report] mean no ropes have been tested or that there is nothing of concern to report? NW: No ropes have been tested, as far as I know.

REPORT:

11. Legal & Insurance Officer

Including: Insurance Manager's Report- Nick Williams

Meeting with Howdens

I held a meeting with Howdens (our broker, formerly known as Perkins Slade), and Hiscox (our insurers) on 21 March in Birmingham. The principal purpose of the meeting was to introduce Hiscox to the EUG and CDG training programmes so they could see how we minimise the risk in these fields. We also discussed the extent of landowner/occupier liability concomitant with our members' access agreements, the publication of guidebooks, child protection, the implications of open access to caves and the distinction between caves and mines. I am grateful to Martin Grass, CDG Chairman, who also attended the meeting. The feed back was very positive.

Property insurance

The Membership Administrator continues to compile this data. Howdens/Hiscox indicated they were comfortable with the work being undertaken.

- Insurance Manager's Report – Nick Williams

DISCUSSION:

NW: I have nothing to add to my report.

REPORT:

12. Publications & Information Officer Les Williams

Nothing further to report, which has not already been covered below

**Including: Media Liaison Officer (Andy Eavis)
Newsletter Editor's Report (David Rose)
Webmaster's Report (David Cooke / Matt Wire / Les Williams)**

- Media Liaison Officer (Andy Eavis)

There have been a number of significant media contacts in the last few months. The most notable being:-

- 1. National Geography of China (nothing whatsoever to do with the National Geographic magazine) wanting to do an article on Mulu to compare it with caves of China. I put them onto Tony Waltham who has produced a significant article for them in a very short time scale and it will be published shortly.*

2. **NHK.** The national television company of Japan have approached BCA wanting to film the next scanning trip in China. This I have put onto Richard Walters and they will join with him to film when he has his next scanning event in China which will be this autumn.
3. **Windfall Films** are proposing to make two completely different programmes for BBC2 Horizon. They would like to film in their series 'Secret Britain from the air'. They would like to film a drone flying over the surface and disappearing into a cave. I had some personal discussion with them and all they finished up interested in was Gaping Gill, although it was pointed out it had been done before and the logistics might be quite difficult. However, they currently will not be persuaded otherwise, so I have put them onto the Bradford Pothole Club who are in discussion with them. They told me they had the contract, but it would appear they are still tendering for the job.
4. **Windfall Films** again, are proposing to make a film of a guy spending two weeks in a cave without knowledge of the time on the surface. Again, it was pointed out this has been done several times before. They seem however determined to continue investigating the project and are making contact with the caving world all over the place. I directed them to Rick and Pat Halliwell who have been involved with this type of event before. Rick and Pat have been in Australia. It transpires that they had already had the conversation with Windfall Films before going to Australia and they were being very impatient trying to fulfil their endeavours before Rick and Pat got back. Again, they appear not to listen to anything covers are suggesting and currently we don't really know what they are doing.

It is true to say there has been considerably more interest in caves and the underground by the media. Dave Rose is interested in having an involvement in this which I warmly welcomed.

Andy Eavis, April 12th, 2018

- Newsletter Editor (David Rose)

David Rose, Newsletter Editor

I published my second edition of the newsletter since I became editor at the beginning of February. I am planning to produce the next one in early May. Please let me have any submissions by the last week in April.

David Rose, Newsletter Editor

- Webmasters Report (David Cooke, Matt Wire, Les Williams)

There is little to report on the website this quarter since my time has been taken either preparing for or being on the Meghalaya Caving Expedition.

Claire Peacey, our Clerical Assistant has been making regular posting to the BCA Facebook page to keep members up to date with events and items of interest. They have been well received. The number of page likes has been steadily rising and currently stands at 439.

Newsletter 32 was successfully distributed by email. It was somewhat fraught due to last minute discussions delaying the final copy. The Newsletter was finally distributed from Delhi airport mere hours before I disappeared into an Internet wilderness for a month.

David Cooke, Apr 2018

Web Services

The general work of keeping the web server up and running, supporting the clubs and organisations that we host and doing the financial book keeping continues quietly in the background.

David Cooke, Apr 2018

DISCUSSION:

LesW: I have nothing further to report, as it says.

Media Liaison Officer

AE: My media liaison officers report – Nat Geo of China is excellent, nothing to do with Nat Geo Magazine but Tony has done a great article. NHK is Japanese national tv company and they were great in Mulu, working on a film.

TA: Have you heard anything from the extreme sleepers? AE: Yes, that's one of the Windfall ... TA: No, it's just sleeping overnight halfway down Gaping Gill – it's a fundraiser that's being filmed, they're 'extreme sleeping.' LesW: They are really not going to get much sleep. SF: They tried to do that In Og Dryfn but they are doing it in a different cave now – I will have to look up the film company.

LesW: Question to AE - the Japanese films about caving, are we going to see them? AE: Well it's 90 minutes long, in Japanese and no subtitles.

AH: Do you remember being approached by the Guardian on SE activities? You've been quoted as saying we 'barely' have a fatality a year. I saw it online so it can't be that long ago. AE: I've definitely not said that. AH: This is important, did you use any data on the rate of fatalities for caving? AE: I'd can't remember saying it at all - all I would have said was that we haven't had a fatality in years; I always say caving is extraordinarily safe.

Newsletter Report:

AE: Newsletter, we've had this report, that's concise.

Webmaster Report:

TA: I've got a couple of points on that, some time ago I asked if the IT working group too much relied on one person to activate if something went down. We were assured that if one person was away others could take up the strain, but it would seem only Cookie can still press the button on delivery of the newsletter ... had he been away, we would have had to wait...

AE: I think there was problem here that we wanted to approve it ... LesW: Only Cookie, in practise, can 'push the button' as only he has the list of members to circulate it.. the delay this time was that there was stuff that needed doing to the newsletter, and there were issues on both sides with the editor being abroad for amendments.

NW: The problem with pushing the button is taking the membership database and turning it into a mailing list – it's not impossible for anyone else to do it, it's just that Cookie can do it fastest. Les W: The main cut and thrust of your point is on web services, which is not just uploading to the website. TA: We had to wait for a month and it doesn't seem right that it's down to one individual. LesW: It's not that it's just one person, it's just often more practical for it be the person who's most experienced. There are four other people who could pick it up and do it if they had to.

AE: We should move on.

REPORT:

13. Training Officer (Acting) - Nigel Atkins

BCA Training Committee

This is looking very healthy and we have no problems to report at all. The membership is strong and we have a team of very experienced and dedicated volunteers.

BCA Training Grants

We are in the process of setting up national workshops and look to BCA council to support our proposals below.

BCA Training Officer

*BCA training officer is by history the 'go to person' to answer all of those enjoyable questions about what we do? what we use? how do we do this? etc. I get emails and calls regarding all aspects of training in the BCA including concerns about continuity in the schemes. I think this will always continue to be the case and I have no problem with talking to BCA members as I have the enthusiasm and time to give to this role. **Appendix 2.** I also continue to arrange permits for CIC's to operate in systems that require them.*

*I attended the QMC meeting on Monday February 26th 2018, which was not a good experience for me at all. This was because of confusion in the original QMC set up. I went there to update them on all the support I have from BCA members to continue as training officer and to give as much help as I could. I know the bad feelings and misunderstandings that have gone around and I wanted to help sort this out for good. I had previously spoken to most of the QMC members before this meeting to inform them that I wished to continue to uphold the training officers role in the QMC and support and help when required. Indeed, the CIC rep quoted that this was a new start for QMC. However, my report was not on the agenda which was a shame as I never had the opportunity to share all the work I had done. With more time to prepare, I can get this sorted for the next meeting. **Appendix 1.***

The QMC members are all doing a sterling job picking up the pieces of what looks like an awful mess. I feel that they not only have some really good, dedicated and experienced people working very hard, but they are doing everything they can to keep the ship floating, however they have also been miss informed in the past but it now looks like we are all working together again.

PROPOSALS to be discussed and voted on at BCA Council meeting Saturday April 14th 2018

- 1) - *To support the working of the BCA Training Committee's work in creating national coaching guidelines for recreational cavers.*
- 2) - *To support the BCA Training Officer working together with the QMC members in looking at any changes and/or confusion that may have arisen since the 2017 set up. I have spoken to the ALO's and the co opted members of QMC who have all been very helpful and supportive to me in sorting many of the questions and concerns raised by BCA members, candidates and TA's. QMC members have also confirmed to me that if I was to continue doing the training officers role as in the past, this would addresses any need at all for a vice chair as this is what training officer has been doing in the past, supporting the chair. I have the experience and the knowledge of the schemes, the enthusiasm to get on with it, the friendship with the QMC members to work together and most of all, I have the time to give.*
- 3) - *To agree the original make up of the QMC and accept the 2018 addition with the new rep from training committee. **Appendix 3.***

Maybe I can run a 'BCA training' talk with a question & answer session at the September caving conference to show how much BCA has done for training, are doing and what we can offer to BCA members in the future.

Nigel Atkins. BCA Training Officer (Acting) 09/04/18

Appendix 1

Report to BCA Council from the Training Officers experience of the QMC meeting on Monday February 26th 2018

I signed into the QMC meeting as BCA training officer (acting) as discussed and voted on at the January 2018 council meeting with 2 witnesses and I took a photo of the page which has subsequently shown up as 'TC rep' and NOT training officer on the minutes. This new position of TC rep was not set up until after I had signed in. Training Officer (acting) was a title I was offered by BCA council and is the position I was in at both BCA council meetings that I attended. At the start of the meeting I wanted to update the QMC with what I had learned and input a lot of the work that I had done but my report was not discussed as it was not on the agenda. I felt very uncomfortable there to the point that I got up and informed them that I would go but the QMC members present asked me to stay. This was a really nice thing for them to do and I am grateful to them for doing this as it felt like they really wanted the training officer back in place. This was all down to a misunderstanding in the past about the original QMC set up.

In the absence of my input, they went on to discuss someone from training committee having a position on the QMC which is a positive step forward as the training committee would have a voice on the QMC and the QMC can talk directly to training committee. Training committee are looking at caving techniques and standards on behalf of BCA members and this information is also useful to QMC and the award schemes. Recreational and professional techniques should be the same. BCA needs to have the highest standards and this is where training committee can be a useful resource to QMC.

This position from the training committee was duly voted in as a full voting member of the QMC which is a brilliant step forward for BCA and QMC, however it had nothing to do with why I was there. At the next QMC meeting I can clarify what I am able and willing to do to help.

This was followed by a discussion on the title of this representative from the training committee and they wanted to change this to be the 'recreational training officer'. I stopped the meeting voting on this I was concerned for 3 reasons:

- 1 - I am pretty sure that this not in the QMC's remit to change BCA officers role titles, what I have learnt as a member of council is that we need to stick to what BCA set up, agreed and voted on. Things like this have to be done properly.*
- 2 – The title of BCA training officer has always been associated with the training committee and the BCA award schemes in the past. It is deeply embedded into all of the BCA award schemes and everybody in BCA recognises it as a main point of contact for training in the BCA.*
- 3 – A couple of members at the start of the meeting explained to me how they missed having the BCA training officer on QMC, but sadly Nigel Ball resigned last year which is a huge loss to BCA as Nigel knew just about every nut and bolt of the schemes. Over the years Nigel Ball and I have worked out and agreed lots of BCA 'approved' ways of doing things which have been shared to both recreational cavers and instructors.*

As the QMC had now co opted in a rep from the training committee as a full and voting member, I was able to input and help make decisions. What I took back to training committee was their wish to change the title of the training committee rep to something like 'recreational training officer' or 'sports training officer' which is what they proposed and tried to vote on but I think this will still cause confusion to many people as any title with the words training officer in it points to QMC and CIC as this is the title of the role that is in print on everything out there in the award schemes. Hopefully at the next QMC meeting I can clarify my position and help move things on smoothly and take a lot of pressure off the chair and other members.

Conclusion

Training committee are happy for this new position on QMC to remain simply as 'Training Committee Rep' which is what this person will sign into the next QMC meeting as. I will attend as BCA training officer (Acting) as Nigel Ball did in the past. It looks like we now have things back in place where there should be and the future of BCA training is very positive indeed.

My personal thanks go to all those on BCA council, the past training officers, Exec members Nick and Andy and especially Robin who has put me on the straight a narrow on a number of occasions helping me through a tough time during the last couple of months.

Best wishes, Nige

Appendix 2

Training Officer has continued in doing what has always been done and is still working hard behind the scenes.

I am writing to raise my concerns about a couple of things which are to me incorrect about our QMC.

- 1. Historically I believe that what is constitutionally correct is how QMC was set up & run 1 year ago. GM was chair because a) he was there as ALO for Yorkshire, then b) he was elected from among us. Thus I don't believe we can (constitutionally) offer this role to anyone from outside QMC.*
- 2. A year ago Nigel Ball was T.O. and therefore had a voting role on QMC. As TO he should have been like NA dealing with sport caving too. Therefore it is quite correct that **NA does this now as acting TO. He should retain this title.***

It strikes me as pragmatic & sensible to have a chair of QMC who may also attend BCA council as an invited person, in the same way the AHOEC rep attends QMC. Whether our chair has a vote at your meeting is up to you.

I would like to see this mess sorted out amicably ASAP so that we can function once again as a good team & get on with the job we were given to do! Please can you help us.

Regards

ALO Rep

Regarding QMC and training Officer. This is all a bit of a mess and possibly because there is poor communication and lack of common purpose. The agreement at last Council is crucial here as that should be what everyone expects. Not sure why things are not joining up, could be 'ghosts in the machine' though not sure about details on this.

All good wishes

ALO Rep

Report from North Wales Panel Meeting 2018

- 1.1. Highlighted how the role of Training Officer had been taken on by Nigel Atkins. Nigel presented to QMC that the original agreement at BCA AGM was that the role of Training Officer would sit in both the sport "Training Committee" and QMC. QMC agreed the Training Officer should have a seat at the QMC table with full voting rights*
- 2. NA has been receiving concerns through his role as Training Officer relating to items that should really be dealt with through QMC. NA brought some of these issues to the Panel:*
 - 2.1. Load bearing belts. Panel discussed suitable broad belts such as those available from Lyon and Caving Supplies. Discussed the paper Pete produced following a DCA meeting*
 - 2.2. SRT: Discussed the level of proficiency needed to attend a course. The Panel agreed that this statement as a pre-requisite is not fit for purpose with North Wales level 2 courses, and would prefer it re-worded or removed from the syllabus*

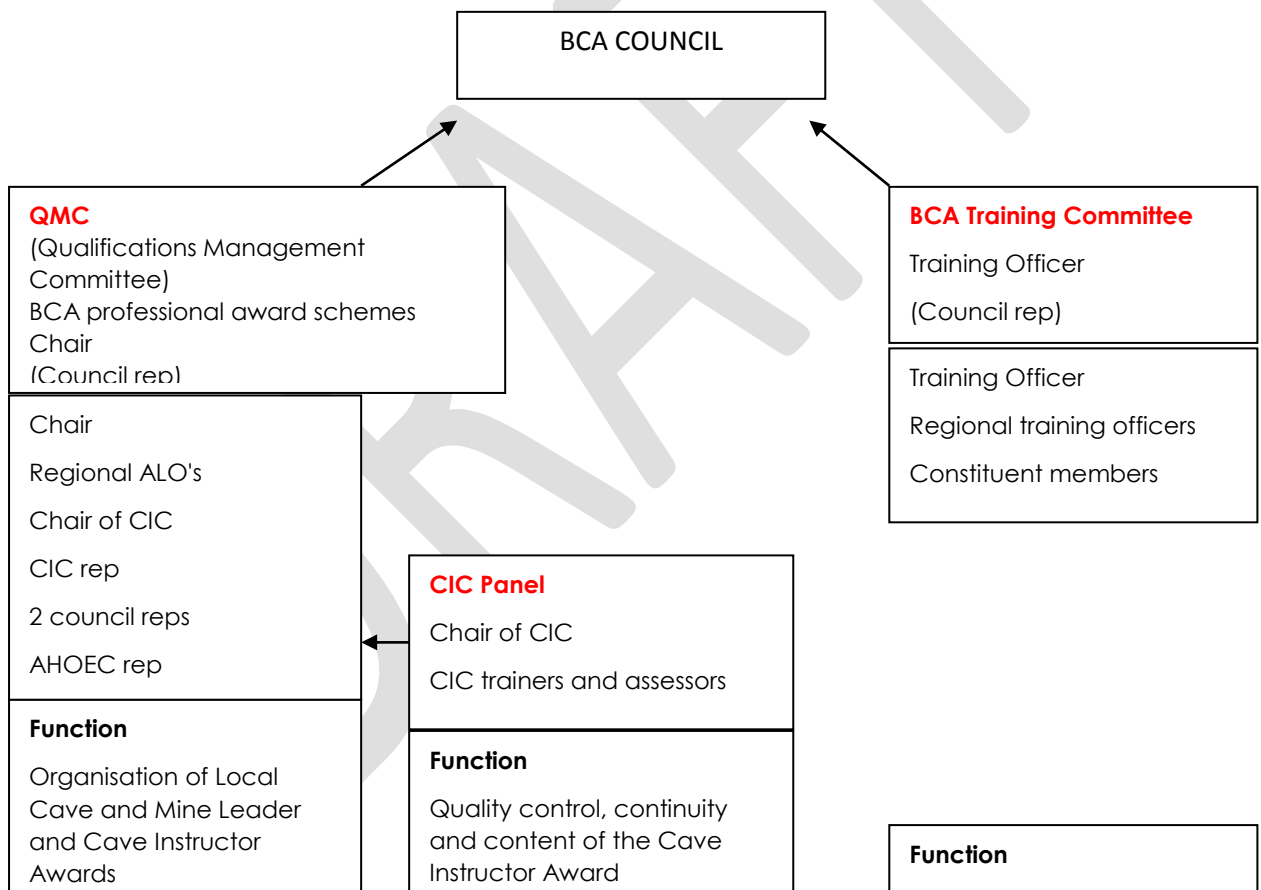
2.3. *Belaying with half loaded STOP: Suggestion that this was suitable for belaying, however if planning to lower then the STOP should be threaded fully*

Training Officer on the CIC panel

BCA Training Officer (acting) applies for cave permits for use in the CIC scheme. Training officer does this as a member of the CIC panel. This has nothing to do with recreational caving confirming that training officer function still crosses over to the professional awards. 4 permits have been granted to BCA training officer this year for CIC panel members.

APPENDIX 3

2017 set up



2018 set up

From the last meeting, they actually had this:

- Chair
- Regional ALO's
- Chair of CIC
- CIC rep
- Training Officer
- 2 council reps

Function

Organisation of Recreational training events and workshops. Issuing of training grants. Creation of recreational coaching guidelines.

To look at training techniques on behalf of BCA members and create statements if needed

DISCUSSION:

AE: We have here the Training officers report ...

NW: This is where we need to come back to my report, covering the issues of training.

PB: Can I correct 2nd page of report – proposals – item 2 - “QMC members have also confirmed to me that if I continued to do the” ... In my report when I refer to the minutes of that meeting, the exact opposite was said – as a point of correction, that is an incorrect statement.

TA: What’s the nub of the problem Phil? This comes around at every meeting - what really needs sorting?

PB – QMC was set up specifically to deal with the award schemes, and anything to do with the awards schemes, to ensure that standards and techniques are consistent across the country, just like a driving test. Previously the Training Officers role was to cover recreation and award led items – that’s no longer the case as QMC’s governance is straight to Council, where changes and queries can be discussed and a national message sent back. The issue is that the Training Officer's title has remained the same so there’s a lot of confusion in both awards schemes and recreational caving as to who to go to with those questions – so at the moment Nigel is getting a lot of questions that aren’t relevant and potentially giving answers without the level of detail that would be available from the QMC. We are suggesting tweaking the title to make it clear.

TA: What do you consider recreational caving? PB: anything that’s not award related. Just want to make it clear what that role is. Previously the Training officer was side-lined and not invited, which caused difficulties.

AE: Perhaps Nick should say something..

SN: The CIC rep was only by accident in the boxes...

NW: Nigel Atkins has taken over the role of Training Officer and has gathered a group of people who are mostly from prior to the QMC – Nigel is well liked and a good training officer but has got mixed up over the line between QMC and not QMC – there are difficulties in clarity and he needs some help to get on top of what is his role. In his emails he provides a lot of anonymous commentary, some of which directly contradicts verbal conversations I have had. I am concerned that there are aspects of things he is driving

through at the moment which Regional Councils need to be aware of. Having said that, he is doing a good job of training organisation, hence I have put forward the proposals on the new title.

Under the new arrangements of the QMC chair, it is much more organised, developing very well and it is not appropriate for any award related queries to go through Nigel when they should be going via the proper QMC channels. One of the issues is that, historically, the position has been held by an award holder and their answers may have been personal and not necessarily consistent with the award schemes – there is a need for consistency that can only be given by committee and procedure. I would welcome comment from award holders/QMC here today.

AB: We had a discussion on this over lunch... I have no problems with the way the QMC is set up and now that it's up and running, that's fair enough. I think the problem is that we didn't define the terms of the committee and the role has now changed. NW: I agree, that was unfinished business.

AB: We need to add a training policy into their remit as the training committee is the only one that has regional and constituent representation. We need to review the terms of reference for the training committee and cover all things it will deal with – for example, the University guidelines reference the Training Officer, but we need to make sure who we correctly reference.

NW: I agree, there is a lack of joined-up thinking on this. AB: To my mind the QMC was stampeding it through the council, but that's in the past and we need to move forward. The best way is to properly specify the terms of reference for the Training Committee.

PB: I completely agree with AB actually... the rationale for stampeding it through was to try and get some movement but nevertheless QMC is now reasonably slick machine as it stands alone, but it has left Training Committee floating a bit. I don't, and I don't think QMC will have a problem with redefinition if all award policies are dealt with by QMC. AB: I agree... PB: I invited Nigel back onto the QMC, as we need crossover.

AB: The Training Officer is the link between the two. PB: Exactly, we can inform them as to what we need to do in this area.

AB: Nigel is very enthusiastic and does a lot of work. PB: Yes, but we need consistency.

AE: I'd like to make the comment that Nick's motion to change these names is absolutely fundamental and that will help Nigel tremendously to know where he is and what he is doing.

IW: We can wind down the development of techniques which doesn't get communicated to the recreational side - it is essential there is a route by which new techniques are developed on one side and communicated to the other. AE: That was the original plan. IW: Provided there is someone who understands both sides of it - when I was Training Officer it was a very steep learning curve to understand how the professional side worked, despite my experience.

Badger: Being that I am probably the only person on both committees (aside from Nigel) and also having questions thrown at me from recreational cavers, there is a big confusion over what each bit is doing – although I think it's quite clear, there is a lot of confusion and I think there is a failing on the part of the

BCA on getting that message out. It's right that Nigel can feed back into QMC and QMC can feed back into rec caving. Nigel feels he can do both roles, but it's too much for one person.

AE: His motives are honourable but it's too much for one person.

Badger: It might not be quite in his final addition in the flowchart – but that needs to be adapted. AE: that's Graham Mollard's flowchart. PB: You are dead right, that's the flowchart that needs to be sorted out.

LesW: We need to set terms of reference - QMCs weren't really set and debated fully – someone or a group needs to define that.

SN: I absolutely welcome any attempt at clarity on these roles – and a clear policy on what these two strands actually stand for – and that goes back to something TA was saying about a strategy for the BCA - this is an example of a lack of clear strategy. AE: It has been further confused by individuals.

AB: Annex 2 of AGM Council meeting complains of a basic Mandate for the QMC – we did not review at the 6 months in January. We need to ask QMC to review, if they feel that is still relevant and if so we need to go through it. On the rec training side, I think we need to put together a set of terms of reference to the Training Committee. And that the provision of non-mandatory guidelines should be available to recreational cavers, should they so wish to use them. That they are responsible for all other training related matters excluding those matters for QMC. And finally, that the Training Committee should maintain an overview of BCA policy.

NW: I think that is the challenge, and the issue is do we want to create another committee to do it?

AB: I look on the overview as being Training Committee as it's the only place Regional Councils can be represented.

PB: And you can read 'overview' as just that, an 'overview' and anything award related can still go to QMC.

AB: Someone may come forward with a new award which can be passed to QMC to be developed but we need to move forward with somewhere where people can bring forward new ideas.

NW: I think you run into to problem that the committee will not be broad enough to deliver and we need to give it more thought.

IW: Could we not ask QMC to come up with what they think BCA training policy should be? Flowchart is missing a two-way arrow between the two committees and also that the rec Training Officer has a permanent seat on QMC.

PB: Can I also suggest a QMC rep is on rec Training Committee?

NW: Butch, is there a case for turning your statements into a motion for the AGM? AB: I'm happy for that to go on – I think we should look at it, as we should all our policies – if the relevant committee

doesn't have the capacity for full oversight, it should go to the Council. NW: Can I get together with you to agree a wording for the AGM and then we'll get it clarified? AB: Yes.

PROPOSAL:

That a motion be put before the AGM that Training Committee is re-named as 'Recreational Training Committee' and the officer post is renamed to 'Recreational Training Officer'.

Proposed: NW

Seconded: SF

All in favour: 16

Against: 0

Abstain: 2

IW: Can we proceed with asking the two different training committees to provide their vision? NW: That's in progress.

AB: Can we just minute that we need to get this done, as this is a very important thing and we need to get it nailed down by the AGM.

PB: On QMC, the Chair's role is an Acting Chair's role - at the last QMC meeting of 26 Feb we agreed that the Chair's role is passed on to someone they think would do a good job. We also want to be more open and transparent so we are going to try to recruit both Chair and Deputy Chair - it's a big role, probably about 2 days a week. The job description is currently in draft for both roles, as is terms of reference for QMC, for the meeting of 21st May – it will go out to any trainer assessor with at least 2 years' experience. That will limit the number of applications, but will be an open and fair process, rather than just between mates.

LesW: Is the chair of the QMC not a council matter? RW: it's a working group. PB: Ideally, we'd like someone from Council to be on the application panel. LesW: Do we have to appoint you? (Phil)

AE/LesW: Carry on as 'acting' until AGM.

AE: PB will have job description sorted, but probably not person in place, by AGM.

AE: Theoretically, whoever is chosen should then be approved by Council but there won't be another Council meeting for four months. PB: I fully accept that I will be Acting Chair until next meeting.

<There was general agreement that this was acceptable. >

AB: I think after the AGM we can move forward with a positive direction. LesW: I think the problem is that nobody has a clue of what is actually going on, and I don't mean that flippantly – it's something that nobody else really engages with, beyond a few people and it's such a complex beast. Which is what worries me about oversight – if none in Council has a clue about the depth of it, how does that work?

NW: As an organisation I don't think we invest as much in our training schemes as we should – by a couple of orders of magnitude, the biggest group of people who go caving in the UK are through the award schemes and we don't do enough with that.

REPORT:

14. Cave Registry Working Group - Dave Cooke

Nothing to report.

David Cooke, Apr 2018

DISCUSSION:

AE: Cave registry...nothing to report.

REPORT:

15. IT Working Group – Dave Cooke

Work continues on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which comes into force in May 2018 and will affect BCA.

I have produced a Privacy Notice which is available on the Website. The membership renewal letters sent out at the beginning of the year referred members to the Privacy Notice. So in respect of our membership we do not need to collect any opt-ins nor go to the expense of contacting them all by post.

In my last report I said “The Privacy Notice is a living document and will be updated to reflect BCA’s current policies and working practices. As such it would be tedious for Council to have to approve it each time it is updated. A method of working would be for Council to approve specific policies and then the Privacy Notice be updated accordingly. The Privacy Notice is open to discussion by Council if it was felt that it didn’t accurately reflect approved policy and working practices.”.

I don’t see the Privacy Notice as a policy document and thus bound up with the bureaucracy that that entails. The policy is “That we shall implement GDPR” or “We shall obey the law”. The Notice is the implementation.

There is more work to do internally, largely to document what we do and make sure we adhere to our Privacy Notice. I will produce an article on GDPR for the next Newsletter specifically to advise the clubs and how it impacts them.

David Cooke, Apr 2018

DISCUSSION:

AE: IT working group. Anybody any comments? <No comments>

REPORT:

16. Qualifications Management Working Party – Phil Baker Including: Training Administrator – Mary Wilde

Information for BCA Council 14th of April regards instructed caving response so far to IRR17

QMC have set up a Working Group to address issues/queries that Award Holders and Employers have.

The first point of contact (via John Gunn recommendation) is a Radon Protection Adviser with cave experience at Public Health England (Tracy Gooding). Questions QMC have are:

- How can we best calculate the annual concentration of Radon within a particular cave or mine system?
 - Some regions have adopted a method of taking samples during Summer and Winter (placed for 1 month), with the sample device placed in sections of the cave/mine where groups may tend to gather for an extended period of time (such as pitch heads, lunch spots etc.)
 - Some regions are sampling monthly
 - Some regions have assigned a personal dose meter to an individual with another left at base, so over a period of a year (in 3 month cycles) comparisons can be made between the base and underground samples and an annual level of exposure calculated
- Would PHE be willing to operate as a recommended Radon Protection Adviser (RPA) for the caving/mine exploration community through QMC/BCA?
 - If so what would that cost?
 - How would this work?
- Would a radon calculator (spread sheet) be appropriate to try calculate staffs exposure to Radon over a 12 month period and assist in building up part of a providers “local rules” to manage Radon exposure?
 - Can we have some guidance or checks to the calculations used within the spread sheets?
 - What should be our cut of (in mSv) for staffs annual exposure to Radon be?
- Are there any other measures we should incorporate into regional local rules?

Another thing QMC would like to address relates to funding. PICA, AHEOC and poss BCA have suggested funding may be available. QMC feeling is this should be target to support the advice and RPA, with regions funding Radon monitors.

PICA have also issued advice to their members, supplied as a second attachment (following)

Update on IRR2017 and the current PICA position on radon

One of the reasons PICA was first set up was to help outdoor providers deal with their obligations under UK legislation with regards to their duty to employees exposed to radon during their work. There has been a recent change to legislation that has prompted some discussion and confusion amongst members as to the requirements placed on them by these laws. The new regulation, Ionising Radiation Regulations 2017 (IRR17), supersedes the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1999 (IRR99) and came into force on 1st January 2018. PICA does not currently have anyone who is able to definitively advise its members on the requirements of this regulation, something we aim to address shortly.

The regulations provide basic safety standards for the protection of the public and workers against the dangers of ionising radiations including radon. IRR99 came into force 1st January 2000 and applied to any work in an atmosphere containing radon 222 gas at a concentration in air (over a 24 hour period) of 400 Bq/m³. Measurements made in some Peak District caves/mines (and other venues around the country) exceeded this limit at various time of the year. In Derbyshire the development of radon measurements at specific cave/mine venues used by groups (initially through Whitehall Centre then Peak Instructed Caving Affiliation (PICA)), led to a spreadsheet allowing employee's radon exposure to be monitored and prevent it exceeding the recommended dose in any one year. This has been accepted by AALS as an appropriate way of meeting IRR99 in subsequent inspections. Your organisation should be following these protocols currently.

IRR17 has lowered the threshold to an annual average radon concentration of 300 Bq/m³. In addition, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) are requiring all employers (*the definition of employer in IRR17 includes a self-employed person*) with radon levels above the IRR17 threshold to notify HSE. This is a simple and free process and needs to be carried out by the employer. The link is: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/radiation/ionine/notification-process.htm>

You may wish to discuss IRR17 compliance with a suitably qualified and experienced Radon Protection Advisor (RPA). Notification was supposed to be completed by 5th February but the information is only recently getting disseminated across the caving community.

The BCA's Qualifications Management Committee (QMC) on 26th February 2018 formed a Working Group to develop an industry led approach to IRR17. It is anticipated that the work PICA does now will help guide this national approach to radon. As a result of this working group forming, further guidance should be forthcoming from the BCA in the future. PICA understands that it may be some time before BCA has a system in place which we can rely on for advice or that legitimately covers our members for their obligations under IRR2017 and so, at a meeting on the 13th March 2018, the members present agreed to contact an RPA at Public Health England with a view to engaging their services to review the current radon protocols in place to see if they meet the requirements of IRR17. It was agreed to fund this out of PICA's current small reserve for this year and see where we are by the next AGM. Paul Booker (Lindley Trust) kindly volunteered to help coordinate PICA's search for an RPA but, it should be noted that he is not an advisor for PICA members' approach to the radon regulations.

In summary, PICA is currently not in a position to issue any guidance to its members on the IRR2017 regulation. It is activity seeking to engage an RPA to advise us on the best course of action. In the interim, members are advised to read the regulations for themselves and take whatever action they see is required by them. Further guidance and updates from PICA will be sent out as soon as we have something to send.

This statement is a collaborative work and is based on advice issued to PICA by Public Health England in a letter received at the start of the year and on the view of the members present at the 13th March 2018 meeting at the Adventure Hub. For more information on this matter, please contact the PICA Chairman or Secretary.

DISCUSSION:

PB: So the other issue where we need support is Radon - there's two documents in the Appendix and centres all put money in and monitor cave radon. And have done so over the last 15-20 years. Radon regs changed on 1st Jan, lowering background levels, which impacts on all instructed cavers and members of the award schemes – we now have to notify HSE that we operate in those levels. We all have to have access to a radiation protection advisor – this can be expensive, and most have experience relevant only to buildings, not caves, so we need to get an RPA to say how we monitor is relevant. And we need to get that information out to our members – PICA has pledged some financial support to get an RPA on board. We would like that from BCA as that way we could sort it all out at once.

Prof John Gurn has recommended Tracy Gooding from Health Protection England – no response as yet but we hope a BCA approach may help – and with cost, as this may be expensive.

My view is that we all need to notify as operators but once that's done we then need to approach HSE and say this legislation was never intended to use this for caves; ask them is this acceptable for how we monitor this, but state we need a higher level approach.

LesW: This is very similar to the work at height rope regulations where we got a degree of exemption.

PB: We would like a BCA rep to join the Radon working group and, in principle, to agree to contributing to a cost.

AH: You want to ask the Treasurer to put something aside?

NW: I'm reluctant to ask Council for a blank cheque, but initially I would like to propose we put aside £500 so we can at least keep moving forward until we know how much more we may need.

RW: There is money that can be allocated, not sure how much at this point.

AE: are you happy with this? PB: Yes.

RW: As a general point, if people who have spending projects can let me know in advance of Council that would be useful.

LesW: We need to revisit our Radon advice anyway, is it worth approaching Clarke Friend with this or not?

AE: I don't know him well enough.

SF: I support a lot of what NW says about this - I am concerned that BCA council is getting itself involved with something that is down to Employers rather than BCA taking on responsibility for monitoring Radon. As far as I know there has been little done in Wales but what has been done has shown great differences in orders of magnitude at different times of the year in the same cave.

It's difficult as professional cavers are also recreational so they could be getting doses from amateur vs professional activities, so how does the employer handle an accumulation from amateur activities which prevents them from carrying out professional activities. We're not in a position for scientific surveys.

AE: We're not suggesting that... BCRA is doing a lot of work on it and it could be a serious issue for all of us. I think £500 is a good step forward for getting someone to look at the legal side of things.

SF: By all means we need to provide information but let's not go down the route of segregating cavers into different buckets – in terms of science and radiological risk monitoring that's down to the employer.

AH: I think rec cavers can benefit from this information ...

PB: I can give you the spreadsheet that gives you our current information, and if BCA does develop this, any caver can have access to it.

SF: What you know is the levels on the dates they were carried out... you can't extrapolate that to overall levels.

LesW: As a representative body of our sport we have a moral duty to keep our members informed of any risk. NW: The Radon has not changed, but the legislation has changed, and the impact on the arrangements should ultimately be self-funding - but we need to see this going forward – a very limited number of people understand the cave environment enough – so I am going to propose that we put a budget of £500 to one side to carry forward, agreed between PB, NW and RW.

PROPOSAL:

That the BCA sets aside a £500 budget, to help support, if needed, developments surrounding the change of Radon level legislation.

Proposed: NW

Seconded: Badger

In favour: 16

Against: 0

AE: Thank you Phil.

REPORT:

17. Youth & Development Working Group - Rostam Namaghi

Youth and Development Report - 14th April 2018

Kit lend scheme proposals:

We engaged with Lancaster University SS to see what they have and may need in the near future, however on further discussion with they mentioned that they would not feel comfortable with a further financial commitment for equipment. This is because they are currently indebted to CHECC and would prefer to pay that off first. The attached document was created prior to this but the various proposals would still provide us with the opportunity to pilot a kit lending scheme in the event we have another club start. We ask that council set a budget if they would like to pursue the endeavour.

Liverpool University:

As you may know discussions regarding the requirement of LCMLAs for a university club to go caving have been ongoing since October - and despite many emails, phone calls and visits to the Guild Office we have yet to receive a reply - We would ask that the following letter could be sent on behalf of the BCA:

'To the Liverpool Guild of Students,

The British Caving Association would like to clarify the current situation regarding Liverpool University Potholing Club and the stipulation that they require a Local Cave and Mine Leader Award to go caving. The Youth and Development Officer, Dr R. Namaghi, has been in touch to recommend that this not appropriate but has not received any result of any guild meeting.

Please update us and if any further clarification is needed please contact us on...'

Access Issues:

A representative of the Y&D group asked, on behalf of a 14 year old enquiree, the Charterhouse Caving Company (CCC Ltd) as well as the partners in its agreement why under 18s are banned from the caves that CCC Ltd administer. A satisfactory answer was not received. Inquiries will continue at a later date.

Further, the Y&D has noted that the BCA Child Protection Policy and its accompanying guidelines could do with an update. This will be undertaken by a Y&D member to be reported on for the next meeting, mostly using the advice of the NSPCC as well as several other organisations.

Kit lend proposal

Following the recent success of Lancaster University SS (LUSS), the BCA Youth and Development working group would like to put forward a proposal that will help develop the club's SRT capability. It was briefly ventured that perhaps the BCA would be able to buy kit to lend to this new club/set up a scheme available to other clubs should they come along.

The LUSS currently has:

- 5 Helmets (with lights - unspecified)
- 11 Club Oversuits
- 5 sets of Kneepads
- 15 pairs of wellies
- 2 SRT Kits on Loan
- 2 Furies

The majority of this came when CHECC seized upon a large sale of kit for a low price and consequently were able to pass the savings onto a club with little financial capability, as and when they were able to afford it. As you can see there is a conspicuous absence of rope and limited capacity for SRT full stop. This would be my rough estimate of necessary kit to ensure SRT capability (following discussion with the kit secretaries of Northern University Caving Clubs).

- 3 Helmets with lights
- 4 SRT kits with spares (footloops, cowstails, a stop, pulley)
- 2 30ft Electron ladders
- Ropes (m): 80, 60, 50, 30, 30, 15
- 20 Steel mailions
- 2 bothies and first aid kits (with daren drums)
- 4 tackle sacks

Cost Estimate:

- £270 Helmets and Lights
- £1000 SRT Kits and spares
- £320 Ladders
- £350 for Rope
- £70 Mailions
- £140 for Bothies, Drums and First Aid
- £160 for Tackle Sacks

Total: £2310

Rostam Namaghi, Youth & Development Training Officer

DISCUSSION:

RN: I'll start with a few things from the report – what's the appropriate escalation from Liverpool university? I am not getting any response from their Guild. DB: Uni was asked if they would have a CIC rep on the ground, sent an email detailing but Uni did not respond. RN: University does not respond and puts off Guild meetings.

NW: Letter to Vice Chancellor? Am happy to work with you to create that. RN: Should I email rather than bring to Council, just bringing this up as a procedure? NW: Yes, no problems.

RN: There is a Wiki being developed that provides advice on how to run a club – day to day skills such as accounts, etc. SN: I've seen the draft and the bit about commercial caving and qualifications – could we replace the words “commercial caving” and replace that with ‘formal qualifications’? DB: What is the reason for that? SN: Commercial caving is quite contentious. RN: The difficulties we have with Unis and athletics is trying to make them aware of the difference WB: How about “professional”? AE: “qualifications for professional cavers”? RN: I can't agree with ‘formal’ due to confusion with Unis.

LesW: Professional does not always involve money. RN: The reason I don't like the idea of introducing ‘formal’ is that it becomes a requirement with these places. NW: I think you need to remember these are a very specific set of guidelines for a very specific set of people. SF: It's more for access situations... RN: That's not where it's used.... SN: These guidelines are leaking into other areas.

WB: The problem is that they don't consider caving to be a sport so it's not actually in the athletics union. So the club is in the Guild - so it's seen as a society.

SN: “commercially acceptable”? WB– it's the Unions it applies to... DB/RN agreed “commercially acceptable” could work.

SN: The word appropriate... DB: They are not considered to be appropriate in a club environment. SN: Sure, I was just thinking about the ethos of training not being accepted.... LesW: No, 'training' is appropriate, 'qualifications' less so. DB: The syllabus states training as part of a competent environment... SN: I thought that it was confusing... WB: The problem is that the qualification costs thousands of pounds and the turnover in the club is three years. SN: Yes, I'm more concerned about the message this gives to people coming into caving - that it looks as if commercial caving is the spawn of the devil.

NW: That's not what these guys are really having to deal with. RN: I don't think that many cavers are ever going to see this document – it's being created as a tool to settle issues with Guilds and Unions – settling questions on guidelines so we can say a peer review system is perfectly acceptable. We have to specifically tell them that the qualifications are not appropriate – the problem is the Uni then thinks that qualification covers everything – and the full CIC is just not workable. SN: Is it not enough to say that the training guidelines are enough? LesW: No because you are having to debunk entrenched ideas.

AB: You could add in there that training is available to recreational cavers. DB: This is a draft, we can add that in - just saying qualifications is fine and remove the 'commercial' bit.

RN: The final thing I would like to raise is the kit lend scheme proposals – Will has reminded me of another option we may have available – Lancaster Speleological Society (not yet a BCA member) – they have been constituted but they are currently in a £1000 debt to CHECC for equipment which CHECC has bought on their behalf. Is there any money to ameliorate that? LesW: They haven't even applied for membership... RN: They're not asking for money, we are on their behalf ... they have turned down any kit lending proposals and they responded with 'we are not very comfortable with taking more equipment from people with a financial responsibility further down the line'. They have paid some of the money. TA: Just going back to a point a few meetings ago, I think Youth and Dev should be set a large budget which they can decide to spend it on. AE: Is this a bad debt we are being asked to cover? DB: Do, it's not a bad debt, this is being paid back.

RN: The kit lend proposals are what we were working on – at the moment they don't really have a vertical caving set up although they have managed to train 20 people in SRT and there is a lot of help and goodwill around Lancaster. What I had envisaged this lending proposal as doing is giving them the kit they need for vertical caving as they are in the Dales, and that's what they are going to be doing – SRT kit will be expensive. And if we agreed a lending proposal now, that could be there for next September for freshers, so we could lend it and get that club growing - and if they happened to source that elsewhere, it could be used for other clubs – Harper Adams and Birmingham.

LesW: Youth and Dev used to have a budget and an artificial cave on the back of a lorry - it was a really good thing and I absolutely agree with TA that they should have a budget...

RW: Youth and Dev have a budget ... don't ask me what it is, I can't remember but you have been reminded that you have a budget and can spend it.

LesW: Youth and Dev is a constituted committee with the BCA with an officer that resigned but didn't but can manage his own business with a budget, which if it's enough, should just get on with it, and if it's not enough he can ask BCA for more.

RW: Last June ...what we currently have is a Youth and Dev working group as opposed to Rostam as chair of Youth and Dev committee... the fact is, it doesn't overly matter.

AE: The budget was substantial, it was at least £1000... RW: Come and talk to me!

LesW: I can't believe anyone here is opposed to what you are trying to achieve. RN: How much of a budget could Youth and Dev command? RW: We need to discuss that outside of this meeting. MS: Would we have to wait for the next council meeting? RW: We don't need authorisation for that budget. LesW: You manage your own business, you just have to report back to us with minutes and accounts as to what you are doing with that, but that's just for clarity.

RN: The only thing I am worried about if we leave the meeting and it turns out we only have a couple of hundred pounds, can we propose that now? RW: No, because it's not appropriate to be bounced into a

decision, we need to discuss this. RN: Will we have to wait to another council meeting? AE/NW: No, we can make an Exec decision.

AE: Rostam, call me and we can talk about gear store advice. RW agreed also to discuss budget with RN.

DB: What's the process for publishing these guidelines by the BCA? LesW: There is a procedure in the manual of operations – it's very straightforward but it needs approval from the Council as part of this process. DB: Can that approval come now? The only thing I'd change would be the Conservation section to put it in line with BCA guidelines and remove 'commercial'. LesW: There is a procedure because what you write has an impact on many areas, but if there's not substantial changes we can look at that.

PROPOSAL:

Subject to approval by the Secretary, the guidelines can be published.

Proposed: NW

Seconded: LesW

In favour – All

None Against/No Abstains

It was agreed that the Secretary will consult with the Publications Officer in matters of copyright, etc.

REPORT:

18. British Caving Library Rep - Jenny Potts

Work at the Library continues as usual: a mixture of continuing to re-catalogue the contents held in the original BCRA Library whilst at the same time keeping up with the cataloguing of new acquisitions, plus dealing with enquiries and visitors.

Enquiries

We continue to deal with enquiries, which have stabilised at around ±100 every year from 2013 to 2017. The proportion of enquiries requiring us to carry out research has increased over the years; some 50% now involving several hours of research, as opposed to a request for a simple scan/copy of an item from our shelves.

Visitors

We welcome visitors coming to do their own research and the numbers have stabilised during the last two years at around 75 each year. If possible we organise the material before the visitor arrives to enable them to make best use of their time.

Donations and Bequests

There are ongoing problems in cataloguing the Beck/Nash legacy, partly due to the sheer volume of the material and partly due to the way that the periodicals have been bound; some bound volumes are partly duplicates, which overlap but do not coincide with our existing bound and catalogued material. Our work is limited by the time the Librarian and I are able to spend and we are actively searching for volunteers to help, particularly with the Peak District surveys, of which there are many hundreds.

Jenny Potts, 31-3-18

DISCUSSION:

JP: Nothing further to add to report.

REPORT:

19. Child Protection Officer (Acting)

No report – position previously vacant. Filled during this meeting

DISCUSSION:

AE: The Child protection officer has now been appointed.

REPORT:

20. FSE Rep - Ged Campion

Not too much to report at this juncture. The FSE currently represents 31 countries representing around 38,000 cavers.

The last General Assembly (GAM) took place on the 17th September this year at the 11th Eurospeleo Forum in Ferriers Belgium under the auspices of the Speleologische Dagen (Caving Days). This was organised by Belgian and Dutch cavers. Around 300 cavers from many European countries participated.

The business of the GAM in Belgium was presented in the report to council (September 2017).

The next GAM will be held at the Eurospeleo Forum in ES Forum in Ebensee, Upper-Austria on 27th August this year.

Just as we manage to resolve the representation of one country another country struggles to confirm its National Organization and this is now the case with Serbia. Two separate organisations are vying for national recognition. The FSE is trying to encourage the two groups to reach an agreement.

The European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) has been the most active commission in (details in September 2017 report to council). Unfortunately, the French symposium 'Understanding Conservation & Geo-tourism' was held on 6th March this year in the Ardeche but there was insufficient interest so it was cancelled.

The FSE will be actively supporting the International year of Caves & Karst 2021 the initiative led by the UIS.

Euro Speleo project funding from the FSE continues to be actively awarded to expeditions. Beal ropes withdrew as an equipment sponsor in February, so a new rope sponsor has been found, Sacid-Cordas of Spain. We are currently drawing up the contract with this sponsor.

Timetable of Eurospeleo events & General Assembly Meetings over next 3 years that involve the FSE.

ES Forum 2019 will be in Dryanovo, Bulgaria September.

ES Forum 2020 will hopefully be hosted in Spain, but this is still to be confirmed

ES Forum 2021 will take place at the UIS Congress in Lyon, France.

Ged Campion, FSE Delegate for the BCA.

DISCUSSION:

AE: Nothing further to report.

REPORT:

21. UIS Rep - Andy Eavis

Recently there has been a field meeting in China, attended by several senior members of the UIS bureau, unfortunately I was not able to attend, but the BCRA chairman John Gunn was at the meeting. John reports back that there is a debate going on whether a Karst Technical Committee should be established within the International Standards Organisation (ISO), which can develop standards for cave related matters.

I understand that issues such as standardisation in the field of karst terminology, sustainable development of Karst resources, environmental protection and management of karst environment, as well as investigation and assessment, and standardisations of terminology are on the agenda for this ISO committee.

John and myself have independently discussed it with Nick Williams, who from his company spends a great deal of time working with ISO has severe reservations. Nick says transfer of this standardisation activity from the UIS to ISO would potentially have some significant implications. ISO operates on the basis of national delegates, and so UIS could easily lose control of the standardisation process. Furthermore, ISO may require financial commitment from the national bodies in order to fund the operating costs of the committee, and even if it doesn't, it will be another volunteer post which will need to be filled.

I also have severe reservations as I think the main UIS organisation could fulfil this role on its own without involving the bureaucracy of ISO. It could also obtain kudos from this in much the same way BCRA has obtained kudos from its surveying standard scheme. I will keep an eye on the situation and report back in the future.

In addition, a number of video meetings have taken place with reference to the proposal of UIS to have a 'Year of Caves and Karst' in 2021. This of course is the year when the International Congress will be in Lyon, France. UNESCO, the base for any "international years" is based in Paris, so not out of the question that UIS will be successful in its endeavours. I wish them great success.

Otherwise, there are various international meetings taking place around the world under the auspices of the UIS, please look on their website. There's a large number of events, probably the most useful is the Euro Speleo Forum, a condensed version of the congress we held in Ingleton in 2016, which this year will be held in Ebensee in Austria from 23rd to 26th August.

Andy Eavis, April 12th, 2018

DISCUSSION:

AE: Bulgaria in September should be quite good (I might well go).

AE My report on the UIS is mainly talking about ISO, for which Nick has the most important opinion on – do have a look on the UIS website for caving expeditions.

Any Other Business

None

Next meeting 3rd June, Dean Field Study following the AGM

Meeting closed: 16.00

DRAFT