



**Draft Minutes of BCA Council Meeting held on Saturday, 28 March 2015
at My Big Meeting Room, Pinvin, Worcestershire**

Present:

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| Andy Eavis (AE) | BCA Chairman |
| Damian Weare (DW) | BCA Secretary |
| Nigel Ball (NB) | BCA Training Officer |
| Andrew Hinde (AH) | BCA Conservation & Access Officer |
| David Judson (DJu) | BCA Legal & Insurance Officer |
| Les Williams (LW) | BCA Publications & Information Officer / Webmaster / 2016 Convenor |
| David Tyson (DT) | Cambrian Rep. |
| Jenny Potts (JP) | DCA Rep. |
| Stephan Nantynczuk (SN) | ACI Rep. |
| Idris Williams (IW) | ASCT Rep. |
| Steve Holding (SH) | NAMHO Rep. |
| Thomas Stames (TS) | CHECC Rep. |
| Boyd Potts (BP) | Club Rep. 3 |
| Bernie Woodley (BW) | Individual Member Rep. 1 |
| Henry Rockliff (HR) | Individual Member Rep. 2 |
| Matt Wire (MW) | Individual Member Rep. 3 |
| David Cooke (DC) | BCA Cave-Registry / BCA Webmaster / IT Working Group / Club Rep. 1 |
| Hellie Brooke (HB) | BCA Youth & Development |
| Robin Weare (RW) | BCA Newsletter Editor |
| John Hine (JH) | <i>observer</i> |

The meeting commenced at 10:38am.

1. Chairman's Welcome

AE welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Nick Williams, David Jean, Bob Mehew, Emma Porter, James Begley and Paul Ibberson.

3. Applications for Club Membership

The Durham Cave and Mine Club has provided the correct paperwork and payment to become a BCA Member Club.

Proposal: *to accept the Durham Cave and Mine Club as a Member Club.*

Prop: HR, Sec: LW *agreed unanimously.*

4. Minutes of the last Council Meeting on 10 January 2015 (previously circulated)

SH: Page 4 attributes SH as saying: "However, were you to be seeking to set yourselves up as some kind of mine diving Constituent Body, then we would need to oppose this". Could this be amended to: "Were you to be setting yourselves up as a second diving Constituent Body, then we would oppose this in the same way as someone seeking to set up a second Mining Constituent Body"? If it is to be a separate Constituent Body specifically looking after mine diving, then we may view this differently."

DC: Was not present, but shown on the attendance list.

Proposal: *to accept the amended Minutes from 10 January 2015 as a true record*

Prop: AE, Sec: LW *agreed unanimously*

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the last Council Meeting

Review of Action Log

Action 36 (Manual of Operations): *Ongoing*

Action 54 (Liaise with SUI): *Ongoing.*

Action 83 (Produce Asset Register): *In progress - nearly complete.*

Action 116 (Weil's Disease Publication Update): BM has reviewed and redrafted the existing guidance, which was exceptionally approved for publication by e-mail. It is due for final publication to coincide with Descent's publication date in a few days. HB is now to research printing cards and possibly distributing.

Action 114 (TC's Request for video conference funding): Ongoing

Action 142 (Speleology Review): Ongoing

Action 143 (Liaise with BCRC re: AGM): see Secretary's report

Action 144 (Liaise over UKCaving Forum): liaised with Tim Allen following the last meeting and he is awaiting feedback from the Regions before he would like to discuss further.

Action 145 (Implement CRoW bullet points): see Secretary's report

Action 146 (Communicate progress with CRoW): see Secretary's report

Action 147 (Transfer £5k to 2016 account): Done

Officers' Reports

6. Chairman (written report previously circulated)

It seems to me, as BCA Chairman, that the one thing you need in British caving politics more than anything else is patience! There are a number of important initiatives progressing within British caving but they do take time.

There have been quite a few changes in some of the Regional Councils. A lot of work is being done with considerable progress. The debate on whether CROW applies to caves or not continues. It is clear that the majority of our membership want us to argue the case with Natural England and DEFRA, that the proper interpretation of the law is that the access to caves is the same as access to other land within the designated areas. Work is progressing in a number of areas for this, which I'm sure will be reported by other BCA officers.

Work has begun on organising the 2016 European Conference at Dalesbridge in the Yorkshire Dales. The date has now been set for 13-20 August. From recent meetings, it is obvious there is an enormous amount of work to do and we have a number of hard working people accelerating their efforts. I thank them very much and hope they will continue in the manner that is beginning to happen.

The 2016 forum has gone live on the internet and meaningful discussions and decisions have taken place. Although I personally need convincing that online forums are the best way of progressing this type of thing, it is certainly one approach, and has resulted in a considerable amount of interest. Let the hard work continue!

The AGM is now arranged for 12-14 June in the Forest of Dean. This will be held in conjunction with the British Cave Rescue Council, and we look forward to cooperating with them, and to what I'm sure will be a very enjoyable weekend. It will be excellent if the AGM is both constructive from a business point of view and enjoyable from a social point of view.

Again I thank my fellow BCA officers for their continuing hard work. I am standing once again for the position of Chairman at the AGM and promise that I will continue to do my best endeavours for British Caving if I return as your Chairman.

Andy Eavis

The Chairman's Report was accepted without discussion.

7. Secretary (written report previously circulated)

Party Weekend: *This will be held at the Dean Field Studies Centre in conjunction with the BCRC, who are largely organising the event on our behalf. There will be loads going on, in addition to the BCRC conference itself, which delegates are welcome to attend. During the day on Saturday there will be caving and mine trips plus a surveying workshop. Saturday evening will see a meal, bar and band in the nearby Clearwell Caves. The bar will then continue back at the Field Studies Centre for those who can hack the pace! All this will be available, including weekend camping, for a bargain price of £24. Onsite bunkhouse accommodation can be added for a further £11. These prices include an advance-booking discount and will be available until 10 May only, so early booking is advised ... a booking form is available on the BCA website and can be returned by either e-mail or post.*

AGM: *This year the posts of Chairman and Training Officer are up for election, along with the usual 2 Individual and 2 Club Representatives. Details have been available on the BCA website for some time now, including nomination forms. The deadline for nominations is midnight on the day of our meeting (28 March).*

CRoW: *I have issued the following statement on the BCA website relating to progress with CRoW:*

Members will recall that the result of the recent postal vote of the membership returned a clear majority in favour of BCA campaigning for CRoW to apply to going underground.

Following publication of the result at the beginning of January, BCA's Council agreed that we should move forward as quickly as reasonably possible and requested that BCA Executive lead on this. An initial meeting was held at the end of January and in principle it was felt that the most effective course of action at the moment is likely to lie in close liaison with Natural England and DEFRA, rather than clear opposition to their approach. Indeed their existing guidance has been "clarified" a number of times in recent years and it is reasonable to assume that further "clarification" may be forthcoming if handled correctly.

In this respect careful diplomacy and measured pressure are key. This is not something we are going to achieve overnight, or indeed in the next few months but it is clear that this is currently the best way to bring about the desired result.

While this is going on, we will also be taking the opportunity to prepare our case, should our work with Natural England and DEFRA prove fruitless.

The letter accompanying the voting paper detailed a number of actions BCA would take. Work either has begun, or will begin soon, on all these. The only exception is that we will not yet be seeking a change in the Constitution. This is for two key reasons. Firstly we are not yet in a position to actually campaign for a change in the law and, therefore, do not yet need to make a change. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, there is a considerable cost and workload associated with any change, so it is sensible to include any other potentially desirable changes at the same time. A number of possible items have been proposed, but these are currently still at the planning stage. It is hoped that some or all of these can be combined with the CRoW change before the latter becomes necessary.

AGM Proposal: *As explained above, we do not feel that it is desirable to seek to change our Constitution at this year's AGM. However, pending discussion at this meeting, Andy and I are planning on making the following proposal to the AGM.*

This meeting confirms that the Constitution allows BCA to seek clarification from DEFRA and Natural England on their existing guidance on The CRoW Act and its application to caving.

Guidelines for Technical Advisors: *I have been asked by the Training Committee to submit the attached draft Guidelines for Technical Advisors (Appendix 1) for approval by Council prior to publication.*

Damian Weare

DW: The Constitution requires that we formally appoint a Chairman and a Recorder for the AGM.

Proposal: ***that Andy Eavis be appointed Chairman and Damian Weare be the recorder at the AGM.***

Prop: DW Sec: DC. *agreed unanimously*

HR: We need to be careful to properly explain the reasons behind the approach we are taking with the AGM proposal. There is a chance people might vote against because they disagree with the way we are dealing with things, rather than the motion itself.

DW: Suggest we discuss the Guidelines for Technical Advisors under the Training Report.

The remainder of the Secretary's Report was accepted without discussion.

8. Treasurer *(written report previously circulated)*

First of all, I must begin by passing on my apologies for this meeting as I will be out of the country.

Since the relatively recent Council meeting, my main issue has been work on preparation of the 2014 Accounts. Progress has been a little slow on this task, but I expect it to speed up over and after the Easter break and be completed in good time for the AGM. As usual, I would ask all Council members to advise me of any items relating to 2014 which have not yet been dealt with, in order that these can be incorporated in the final position for the year. I am conscious that the recording of Regional Council funding is somewhat behind schedule (and indeed some actual funding is to be finalised) but this will be a focus for me after Easter. Again, I expect that the loose ends will be tied up and any necessary adjustments made to the draft accounts.

Day-to-day matters have been maintained during the last couple of months; notably the payment of the Association's main insurance premium was managed without recourse to the deposit account and membership income has proved more than adequate to cover the current cash requirement. Getting a better return on that main deposit is still a source of some frustration, although the meagre premium presently available for tying up cash makes this less of a priority than it would otherwise be.

Other than that, I have little else to report other than my continued focus on trying to clear the 2014 Accounts and any other residual items before I hand over the cheque books etc in the summer.

Paul Ibberson

HB: Is PI resigning?

DW: It appears so, but he has not done so yet. Constitutionally, as his resignation will be mid-term, it is the job of Council to co-opt someone to fill the role pending approval at the subsequent AGM.

AE: We have this in hand.

The remainder of the Treasurer's Report was accepted without discussion.

9. Conservation & Access *(written report previously circulated)*

In view of the Yes vote in the CRoW ballot I have undertaken the following action point.

Continue to explore ways to effectively protect our more fragile sites

I have been instructed by the C&A committee to review the many caving codes that are in circulation. The C&A Committee concluded that the current Cave Conservation Code was too long and the Minimal Impact Caving Code was severe in its tone and over prescriptive. With the help of a few committee members I have drafted a shorter and more compact 'Caving Code' and a 'Minimal Impact Caving Guidance' which expands on the themes within the Code. I think it is important that we have an internationally recognisable MIC Guidance that will be familiar to delegates of the Speleo 2016 event.

The draft documents are included in the appendices.

The documents have been out to consultation with the full C&A committee. There was broad support for the 2nd draft of the caving Code and the 5th Draft of the MIC Guidance. The script will be part of a pdf with colour photos, illustrations and useful hyperlinks. The photos should support the text and enhance understanding. It is proposed to have flier and poster versions of the Code for caving huts and pubs.

I ask Council to approve these two draft scripts before proceeding to design and print.

I can report that the C&A committee has not met since November 2014 but I feel that it has been working effectively via e-mail on matters that require our attention. I would expect to convene a meeting of C&A before the 12 months are up or as soon as our workload demands.

CNCC's Access Officer, Johnny Latimer, reports the following:

In addition to the last 12 months progress there are these two snippets:

Birks Fell Cave - I've been talking to the National Trust regarding Birks Fell. We've agreed with the tenant farmer (John Horner) to allow 10 months of access to the cave. The 2 month closed season is April & May to allow for lambing time. I'm waiting for the new agreement from NT which they assure me I will have before the end of May.

Langcliffe Hall Estate - I now have a reasonable dialogue with the Estate's land agent. I have requested any documentation regarding our (CNCC's) alleged access agreement and their HMRC tax exemption but nothing has arrived as yet. I have suggested that if we don't have an up to date agreement we should negotiate a new one which will be as inclusive as possible.

The many improvements to access in the Dales can be found at: <http://cncc.org.uk/>

Andrew Hinde

AH: After wide consultation the existing Code has been truncated from 12 points down to 6. It is hoped that this will be clearer and more memorable for all.

DT: There was concern at the Cambrian AGM about the general lack of documentation on conservation and mines. There is legislation that is likely to be passed where the archaeology in mines will be covered if there is also archaeology above the ground. However, it would not be covered if there was nothing on the surface.

SH: This was also discussed at a NAMHO meeting a week after the Cambrian one. The feeling was that there should be something adopted separately that relates to mines.

AH: Does not have the experience to offer advice on mining. Has always seen this as a caving code, and completely agrees that there should be something to complement it that is specific to mining.

SH: In NAMHO there is a perception and fear that there is now a greater footfall in mines and that much of this relates to cavers with little understanding of the need to conserve underground archaeology. SH feels this is incorrect in that it is probably people without any real caving background. We need to bear in mind the need to disseminate this sort of advice outside of our own circles.

LW: Does NAMHO not have existing documentation?

SH: Yes – there is a leisure use of mines, but it is somewhat out of date in that it says NCA, for example.

IW: Do we need a parallel document for mines?

AH: It is definitely worth taking a potential mining code to a full C&A meeting.

HB: Wonders if there is anybody in the room who has never broken any of these guidelines? In practice we are probably all guilty at some point of breaking at least one of these. Therefore it could be argued these are too restrictive and we may well be seen as too dictatorial. Could the code instead be seen as “things to aspire to”?

JH: Simply this can be termed “Good Practice”.

JP: The Minimum Impact Code has been amended to Minimum Impact Guidelines.

AE: A lot of caves do not have tapes, so could item 4 of the code be amended to include reference to “trails” as well as “tapes”?

LW: If you were trying to reduce the number of points in the code further, you could probably merge 2 & 5.

AH: There is a 7th Draft which will be circulated and will then go to the Regions for discussion and feedback.

IW: Should the other Committees see the document?

DW: Suggest it would be speedier overall if everyone is consulted at this stage rather than later.

Action: AH to send the 7th Draft to BCA’s committee convenors and Constituent Bodies, as well as Regional Councils.

BMC Meeting

AH: AH and AE met yesterday with BMC as part of the action on CRoW. This was attended by Cath Flitcroft (BMC’s National Access Officer), Rob Dyer (Regional Access & Conservation Officer) and Elfyn Jones (Access & Conservation Officer for Wales). They are all paid employees and in fact BMC has 75,000 members and 30 largely full-time employees. This was a very positive meeting that touched on both wider structural issues and also specific access-related issues. It is clear BMC is almost certainly our best ally on CRoW and what we are trying to achieve. Their approach pretty much mirrors Tim Allen’s suggestions in that we need to put pressure on MPs who will, in turn, put pressure on Civil Servants to change. In general Civil Servants do not move from an agreed published statement and it is only MPs who can encourage them to change. This is particularly the case if it might be termed a “reputational risk”. There is an all-party group on mountaineering and Cath Flitcroft is the chair of this. This includes Peers too. It is possible for an MP to approach the Natural England Board on our behalf. It is also clear that the Sport and Recreation Alliance is probably our most important partner when it comes to lobbying. The other useful piece of advice is that we should try to get a celebrity on board. This is because MPs do not get votes for caving, but do for photographs with celebrities. We must also celebrate the participation of women in caving. There has been a “This girl can ...” campaign on Twitter and social media recently and that is likely to attract the attention of MPs.

DT: Stuart and I had a meeting with Elfyn Jones about a year ago. At the time they were very much pro-access and making things easier. Nothing is going to happen until after the elections, but at the moment lots of money is being spent on the Pembrokeshire coastal path. The word “inclusive” is being used quite a lot and this could work to our advantage.

AE: The meeting was incredibly positive and all involved were very helpful. It is clear BMC are extremely professional in their approach. Scotland has its own Mountaineering Council with about 12,000 members. This is much nearer to our size and may, therefore, give us some useful ideas for our own structure. Has previously spoken to some Hull MPs about caving and they were not at all interested. We should definitely meet with Cath Flitcroft again – she spends an awful lot of time talking to parliamentary people and is clearly vastly more experienced than we are. We do not need to talk to lots of MPs, but a few key ones who will put pressure on DEFRA.

DJu: Was N. Ireland mentioned?

AE: They are separate again and, just like caving, are united in Ireland.

DC: We must remember that we cannot do any lobbying until we have changed our Constitution. This is important.

9a. CRoW Working Party (written report previously circulated)

The CRoW Working Party will support the BCA Conservation and Access Committee by continuing its work on the database recording the status of caves in terms of their position in relation to Access Land, SSSI/SAM status, current access situation and special conservation requirements.

Jenny Potts

AH: Thought we had co-opted some members of the CRoW working group onto the C&A committee and wonders where this leaves the CRoW Working Group?

JP: It is not a BCA Working Group but now a sub-section of the C&A Committee.

10. Equipment & Techniques (written report previously circulated)

I am sorry but I must offer my apologies for this meeting. I have spent all of the weekend just gone helping to present a BCRA EUG training course on Mendip and the Sunday before was an E+T meeting. I’m afraid I have matters more pressing at home than a third weekend of caving matters in a row.

We held another successful meeting of the E+T Committee on 5 March and I am pleased to report that CNCC and DCA have now resumed attendance as participants, although DCA were unable to field anyone for this specific meeting. There was a report of some very useful work on the use of anchors in slate and while these served mainly to show that more work remains to be done, we have turned a few ‘unknown unknowns’ into ‘known unknowns’ and some basic recommendations and observations as a result of this work will be published shortly.

We have identified a second resin as being suitable for anchor placement. This is more widely available than that we have previously been using, and comes from an impeccable source (Fischer). Additionally, we have approved a second anchor as suitable for placement under the Anchor Placement Scheme. This is the IC anchor which is made from laser cut stainless plate. It has several advantages over other anchors including that it uses a smaller hole and permit holes to be more readily re-used.

Nick Williams

LW: Should we be formally accepting the anchor?

DW: It is the job of convenors to include an update on any items of substantive progress in their Committee. Our protocol is that we then accept, by default, any items mentioned in reports that we do not discuss or amend during our meeting. Therefore we will either accept the anchor or send the item back to E&T. Personally believes this is a better anchor than the BP anchor because, crucially, it is replaceable. Wonders what the potential financial implications are of accepting this anchor, and whether there is anything we can do to mitigate these.

BP: About 100 of the BP anchors are scheduled to be installed in the Peaks shortly.

AE telephoned NW during the lunch break and NW suggested there wasn't anything to worry about.

Action: NW to report on the financial implications of having two approved anchors and whether there is anything we can do to minimise any possible financial loss.

Rope-Testing (written report previously circulated)

I am behind with testing submitted samples due to other demands.

Bob Mehew

The remainder of the Equipment & Techniques Officer's Report was accepted without discussion.

11. Training (written report previously circulated)

Since the last BCA Council meeting there has been one Training Committee meeting. The following items were raised there. Following on from the request from Council for Training Committee to review its current position, a statement has been agreed, as follows:

"NCP was created out of this committee (TC) and the CIC panel was created later for the same purpose: to have authority to run their schemes. TC was tasked to have oversight and to generally rubber stamp decisions made by the NCP and CIC panels. TC's role is to monitor the activities of the panels."

The majority view of Training Committee is that it is functioning as it was designed to do and it should not be controlling the NCP and CIC Panels, merely supporting their decisions.

The CCC reported back that their SRT training courses are and have always been popular with cavers. Previously, the funding for these events has come from Sports Wales but in the future they would like to apply to BCA through Training Committee, for grants. It was agreed that this would be supported.

The DCA reported that things are currently very busy and that the Cliff Hanger event had been very successful. The DCA rep asked how personal SRT techniques could be formalised for cavers who reach a recognised standards. The issue of insurance was raised and the rep stated that currently this was on his own professional insurance. It was stated that only approved BCA assessors could deliver / assess this "qualification". It was suggested that club training officers could become involved with this especially if Training Committee give out a resource pack of coaching content / guidelines.

The D.C.A. submitted four applications for training grants and they were accepted by Training Committee.

Feedback from the NCP was that the LCML syllabus needs to be re-written in a slimmed down version.

The CIC Panel put forward a statement that assessments for this award should be controlled centrally by T/C admin to share the work around all Trainer/Assessors. The Training Officer felt that candidates should be entitled to choose assessors as in other NGB awards. There was some disagreement about this and it was returned to the CIC Panel for further discussion.

Training Committee has now agreed on the format of paperwork regarding the moderation of BCA training and assessment courses. This will now be used for all future courses.

The Training Committee are going to review the criteria for offering training grants at the next meeting. It was felt that they may need to be brought up to date.

The future of the BCA Local Cave Leader Level 2 Award is in question in South Wales. There are so few sites where training and assessment can be delivered. Access restrictions are severely hindering the progress of the scheme.

The data for the BCA schemes for leadership and instructing are as follows, since the last Council meeting:

Local Cave & Mine Leader Award

Enrolments: 54, Level 1 Assessments: 5, Level 2 Assessments: 10, Level 1 Revalidations: 3, Level 2 Revalidations: 4, Level 1

Core Skills Reassessment: 1, Level 2 Core Skills Reassessment: 0

Cave Instructor Certificate

Registrations: 5, Assessments: 0, Revalidations: 12

Current Award Holders:

Guidelines for Technical Advisors

RW: We should really remove the abbreviations “Tech Adv” and NCP.

Proposal: that “Guidelines for Technical Advisors” be accepted for publication save that the abbreviations above be amended. Prop: BP Sec: LW agreed unanimously

HB: Does not feel we should be able to dictate who should assess anybody. People should be allowed to pick someone who they feel will put them at ease on assessment.

HR: You cannot choose who should assess you for a driving test or in rope access.

HB: But throughout Outdoor Education the principle is that people should be able to choose their assessor.

NB: There is a key principle in place that there should be more than one assessor, but people should be able to choose.

HR: There will always be different approaches to assessments and an open market encourages people to be “softer” in assessing.

SN: We now have a moderation scheme in progress for LCMLA. The Panels appoint assessors for revalidations, so the precedent is set. People can then choose a time and a place.

DC: What is the thinking of the Committee? Why do they want change?

NB: Some people are not getting as much work as others.

HR: While it might be common practice in the outdoor industry to choose an assessor, nowhere else does this happen.

SN: There are only 7 CIC trainer-assessors, so this is somewhat academic.

NB: Each candidate will see 2 assessors.

HB: Which sites do the South Wales Panel wish to use for Level 2?

NB: Understands that currently all assessments are made out of Porth-yr-Ogof.

RW: Believes the problem is that they want to be allowed access to OFD.

HB: They could use Will’s Hole.

RW: Has previously suggested Slaughter to Richard Hill and has even secured permissions for it to be used, so there are alternative venues.

BP: Can we have support for Cliffhanger again this year?

DW: That is from the Youth & Development budget so should be raised there.

The remainder of the Training Officer’s Report was accepted without discussion.

12. Publications & Information

LW: Apologies for the lack of written report, but there is nothing to add to what is being reported elsewhere.

a. Webmaster

I’ve written a new maintenance screen so that the Diary is once again updatable by the Secretary and any other designated individuals. The ability was lost when the website was upgraded in Jan 2014. In the meantime all changes have been done tediously by hand by the webmaster.

I have been using the Google Analytics service to give some idea of how much the website is being used. In the last quarter (Dec-Feb) it shows 21,689 page views, 6,563 Sessions and 4,357 individual users. The average user stays for 2 minutes 33 seconds. For the same period the most popular sections in decreasing order were the Front Page, News & Events, Training, Jan Newsletter, Membership, Insurance. Whilst Google Analytic figures need to be taken with a pinch of salt, they do suggest a fair number of people find the site useful.

David Cooke

DC: It is interesting to note that a lot of traffic comes from links from UKCaving.

b. 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. The server remains reliable with no reported unscheduled outages in the last quarter.

David Cooke

MW: Could we have an update on progress with upgrading the back end of the site?

DC: It has stalled and help would be appreciated.

MW: Happy to help.

c. Newsletter (written report previously circulated)

I set a very tight deadline for my first official news-sheet mainly in order to establish feasibility. I was delighted with the speed with which contributors responded to my requests and with the quality of their input. My thanks to everyone concerned.

My deadline was set at the Sunday evening following the last Council meeting and as I was able to send a draft for Executive approval some hours sooner I now know what it is possible to achieve.

I had been concerned that the approval process may have taken longer than I'd have liked. In fact the draft I submitted was converted to a web based version, approved, published and advertised on UKCaving within 24 hours. That is impressive – and I am grateful to all concerned.

After realising that the numbers reading the posting on UKCaving were very low I sought and gained approval to ask the Regional Councils to send a link to their members. Once again, I am grateful for their co-operation.

Whilst I am hoping that it will soon be possible to distribute direct to all members as an e-mail attachment I have to say that I'm more than pleased by the extent of the current readership.

By the date of this report the newsletter had been viewed on 762 occasions of which 555 were unique. This compares with the previous issue's 497 viewings of which 420 were unique. The average reading time has increased from 2m 30 sec to 3m 08 sec.

Robin Weare

RW: DC reports that we are getting near to being able to e-mail the newsletters to our membership.

d. Handbook (position vacant)

e. Speleology

I am still awaiting contact from Andy Eavis and Les Williams regarding action 142, "AE, LW To look at the future of Speleology".

A discussion of Speleology is on the agenda as a "matter of importance" for the BCRA Council Meeting on 29 March. Since Speleology remains a BCRA publication, but is largely funded by BCA, it would seem that a joint discussion would be beneficial at some point.

David Gibson

The remainder of the Publications & Information Reports were accepted without discussion.

13. Legal & Insurance

DJu: Nothing to add to Insurance Manager's report.

a. Insurance Manager

I have received information from UK Cave and Mine Exploration about their training programme and am now in correspondence with them before I consult with the insurer.

The new insurance policy details have now been uploaded to the BCA web pages I have also received an updated version of the FAQ from Perkins Slade and will publish this as soon as I can find time.

Nick Williams

RW: Relating to the Forest of Dean, the Forestry Commission report they are not willing to extend permissions to dive outside of CDG members.

BP: Spoke to Perkins Slade about club buildings insurance, but they do not seem to be able to beat our existing quote.

Other Reports

14. Youth & Development (written report previously circulated)

Here was a new adoption so happy times but apart from that not much else has happened there are more leaflets if people want them.

Hellie Brooke

HB: Joel Corrigan is running a student expedition training workshop this weekend with over 50 students attending.

LW: We should be helping to fund this. People who have attended in the past have said it is very worthwhile and attracts a lot of different people.

DW: There are clear guidelines on what is acceptable for funding, but this event probably doesn't meet the requirements.

HR: Has run an event in the past, but it was not eligible for funding.

AE: It is clear that the meeting supports the principle that this sort of event should be funded. We just need to work out

how we can do it.

Action: HB and NB to liaise with Joel Corrigan to find a way to support future events financially.

15. Membership Administrator (*written report previously circulated*)

BCA Membership to 22nd March 2015

- DIMs 439
- CIMs 4734
- Clubs: 158
- Associates: 4
- Access Bodies: 6

New Clubs: *The following clubs have supplied the correct paperwork and payment in order to become BCA member clubs: Durham Cave and Mine Club*

Factoid: *Membership number 7000 was issued in September 2006. Membership number 10,000 was issued in March 2009. Membership number 15,000 was issued in February 2015.*

Glenn Jones

AE: What is the significance of the membership numbers?

DW: The theory is that each individual has a unique membership number and this continues for life. Therefore we have had 5,000 new people join us between 2009 and 2015, despite overall membership numbers remaining fairly constant.

The remainder of the Membership Administrator's Report was accepted without discussion.

16. 2016 Working Party

LW: Apologies for a lack of written report. We have a contract, venue, dates and a group of people who are working hard in the background. Plans are well afoot. The meeting has just chosen the logo and the website will probably be live shortly. There are currently vacancies for promotion and sponsorship if anyone knows anybody suitable. There will be pre- and post-events in the caving regions.

HB: May be willing to take on promotion and/or sponsorship.

A discussion followed about the potential pricing structure to aid the organising committee.

The remainder of the 2016 Report was accepted.

17. Cave Registry

My thanks go to Andrew Atkinson for the work he puts in to the Data Archive and the following report.

The BCA Cave Registry Data Archive goes from strength to strength with the survey areas recently added including Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean and significant updates to China. Yorkshire appears to be used the most and by the most people. A new Biology data repository now exists, with the Hazelden spreadsheet as its main data at the moment; there are signs of others wanting to use it. It was always envisaged that other data would also be stored on the archive, it is good to see it happening as more people realise it is a useful collaboration tool that happens to archive. I am sure we will see more of this type. The total size of the archive now stands at 18GB.

David Cooke

HR: How much is the data costing us?

DC: We charge £4 per year per gigabyte via Web Services, so the direct cost to us is fairly minimal.

LW: We have lost all sorts of data over the year and this is a service we should be providing. We have had to resurvey sites such as OFD, Swildon's and the Three Counties System in recent years.

AH: Would the Hazelton data be searchable by cave? This could potentially be very useful for the Dales monitoring project. We would quite like to have links from the Cave Monitoring website through to the Registry surveys.

DC: That might be technically possible but not with the archive as it is structured at the moment.

AH: The EuroSpeleo Forum in Salerno this year is specifically related to Cave Registry.

The remainder of the Cave Registry Report was accepted without further discussion.

18. IT Working Party

I've spent quite a few more hours developing the online members' contact management system to deal with the structural issue I mentioned in my last report. The live system now resides at its proper location which is <http://members.british-caving.org.uk> (note: no www). The live data still needs loading, which I will complete by the end of the month. Once Council and the Membership Administrator have had a chance to review it and assuming favourable comments, it can be announced to our members.

As it stands the system will allow members to login under their own membership number and set their own e-mail contact preferences. They can change their e-mail address and password as necessary. They can review their membership details (membership status, insurance status, address etc) as held by BCA. If those need to be updated, they can e-mail the Membership Administrator. Behind the scenes there are routines to sanity check and upload the latest spreadsheets provided by the Membership System. Members will be notified of changes to their profile by e-mail. This will provide BCA with a verified and maintained list of email addresses and crucially, to remain legal, the consents to use them.

David Cooke

DC: Really wanted to be able to say that everything is ready by this meeting, but unfortunately time ran out.

DW: This is very promising – many thanks.

The remainder of the IT Report was accepted without further discussion.

19. International Representative

Not very much has been happening on the international scene recently.

The UIS are proposing an international year of caves and KARST to be recognised by UNESCO, and it's likely to be 2021. It has been done before when there was an International Year of KARST, but it is to be hoped this time it will be rather better publicised and more people know of it.

A lot of work is going on for the 50th anniversary of the International Union of Speleology which takes place in Postojna in Slovenia from 14-20 June 2015, coinciding with the KARST school which normally takes place at this time in Slovenia. The programme looks pretty good and there will be a lot of scientific and exploration talks, coupled with caving in many of the spectacular Slovenian caves. It's a good opportunity for anybody who wants to see possibly the best caves in Europe.

Closer to home we are gearing up for the European conference which will take place in Ingleton in August 2016, but I'm sure Les will say much more about that in his report.

Andy Eavis

a. FSE

No report.

The International Report was accepted without discussion.

20. Media-Liaison

No report.

The remainder of the Media-Liaison Report was accepted without discussion.

21. British Caving Library Report

Enquiries and visitors: *We have noted an increasing number of enquiries coming from abroad - BCL now has an international reputation - and we make increasing use of scans to answer enquiries, rather than posting photocopies. It appears that the total number of enquiries was slightly down in 2014 but the number of hits on the on-line catalogue is increasing, suggesting that cavers are now more confident in making use of this for themselves. The Library Facebook page now has around 600 followers and this continues to increase, in particular since the BCRA Facebook page went live. A full set of statistics will be provided for the BCA AGM in June.*

Problems with the Library PC: *The PC bought for the Library in 2008 has now ceased to function altogether and a replacement is being sourced (plus an upgraded OS for the PC donated to us last year). We intend to ensure that all PCs in the Library run compatible systems, both for our own use and for visitors. All our files are backed up on both hard drive and cloud storage so we are confident that nothing will be lost in the event of machine failure.*

Increase in the size of the Library and the type of holdings: *We are once again beginning to run short of shelf space, now having over 200 m of shelf length (up from the original 70 m of the BCRA Library at Matlock), plus cupboards, filing cabinets, map chests, etc. We are seeking second hand shelving, which we can put up for ourselves to provide the necessary increase. We continue to receive donations of publications and materials, which now include photos and surveys, which were not recorded at all in the former BCRA Library. We are also being given an increasing amount of archive material, which we catalogue and store separately. Some of this archive material has been digitised and is now accessible via the Library website, in addition to the very popular Audio Archive.*

We continue to pass on duplicate material to other caving libraries round the country using "caver post" with the aim of encouraging others to stock as full a range of publications as possible.

Jenny Potts

The remainder of the Library Report was accepted without discussion.

22. Date, Time & Place of next meeting

The next Council Meeting will take place on Sunday 14 June 2015 at Dean Field Studies Centre, Forest of Dean.

23. Any Other Business

HB: Can BCA tweet? We should be using it as a tool to attract people's attention.

DC: We need to think carefully about the way we manage it. We need safeguards in terms of content and also managing other people's comments.

DW: Would be happier if we trial it for a period before we go live to ensure we have sufficient material and are going to do it in a "safe" way.

Action: HB, DW and DC to investigate using social media more effectively.

January Meeting

AE: Cannot make the meeting on 9 January 2016. AE could attend if it were switched to 2 January 2016, or alternatively it can stay at 9 January but we will need to find an alternative Chair.

The meeting agreed to stick to the 9 January and find an alternative Chair.

Advice

AH: Has received communication from Cambrian CC asking Andrew Hinde to mediate in the Draenen access issue. How can he respond?

DW: Constitutionally we are not allowed to involve ourselves in the affairs of two members unless requested to do so by both sides. Therefore at this stage we need to refuse.

The meeting closed at 3.10pm.

Action Log (as at January 2015)

| No. | Action by ... | Details of Action |
|-----|---------------|-------------------|
|-----|---------------|-------------------|

| | | |
|----|----|-------------------------------------|
| 36 | DW | Put together a Manual of Operations |
|----|----|-------------------------------------|

| | | |
|----|----------|---|
| 54 | NW & DJu | Liaise with SUI with a view to helping them streamline their insurance situation. |
|----|----------|---|

October 2011

| | | |
|----|----|--|
| 83 | PI | Produce an Asset Register and liaise with NW/EP over the total replacement value of our insured equipment. |
|----|----|--|

June 2014

| | | |
|-----|---------|---|
| 116 | HB / BM | HB to liaise with interested parties and Executive and arrange for a new Weil's disease card to be produced, as well as advertise it via social media. BM to review the existing website documentation and decided if it needs updating. Updated Mar 15: HB to investigate card printing and distribution. |
|-----|---------|---|

October 2014

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| 141 | NW, DC, PI and NB | To consider Training Committee's request for video conferencing funding. |
|-----|-------------------|--|

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|-----|--------|--------------------------------------|
| 142 | AE, LW | To look at the future of Speleology. |
|-----|--------|--------------------------------------|

January 2015

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 144 | DW | To liaise with UKCaving owners to agree a system for BCA's use of UKCaving and then implement it. |
|-----|----|---|

March 2015

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|-----|----|--|
| 148 | AH | To send the 7 th Draft to BCA's committee convenors and Constituent Bodies, as well as Regional Councils. |
|-----|----|--|

| | | |
|-----|----|---|
| 149 | NW | To report on the financial implications of having two approved anchors and whether there is anything we can do to minimise any possible financial loss. |
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| 150 | HB, NB | To liaise with Joel Corrigan to find a way to support future events financially. |
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| 151 | HB, DW, DC | To investigate using social media more effectively. |
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Appendix 1: Draft Guidelines for Technical Advisors

Recommended BCA Guidelines for Technical Advisors

Draft 5 17/10/2014

Who should be a Technical Advisor?

1. For Caves – a CIC holder
2. For Mines – a CIC + Mines module holder or LCMLA for the region
- LCMLA Mines trainer/assessors (Level 1 objectives only)
3. A Trainer/Assessor for the LCMLA Scheme may be desirable if providers are requiring their staff to attain Awards or 'Certificates of Competence'.

Self Protection

- A. Set up a dated and date limited contract/formal agreement stating what you are offering. Only work within the remit of the agreement and your qualification and experience.
- B. Keep yourself aware of what the provider is doing – consider an annual visit to check operating systems, staff qualifications/experience, equipment, and venues being used. Make it clear if you are unhappy about anything the provider is doing.
- C. Always keep copies of conversations, phone calls, emails, letters etc. For a verbal conversation, precis as a letter or email and be sure the provider confirms their understanding.
- D. Get appropriate insurance and set a reasonable fee for the work done.

The Role of the Technical Advisor

- E. The role of the Tech Adv needs to be appropriate to the provider's undertakings.
- F. What a Tech Adv has to do depends on the experience and requirements of the organisation i.e. an established OEC going underground for 20+ years with LCMLA staff may require less than a new venture with inexperienced staff.
- G. The responsibility for the activity *always* rests with the provider – make sure this is clear! Traditionally the role has been that of advisor – a Tech Adv cannot be held responsible for advice not carried out.

Responsibilities

- H. Keep yourself up to date with current best practice, LCMLA and CIC schemes, equipment, venues, conservation and access arrangements as appropriate.
- I. Be prepared to answer occasional questions through the period of the contract/agreement.
- J. Give good advice – refer the question to someone with greater expertise if you cannot answer.
- K. Consider using the visit in B to give a good service – include staff training/workshops, induction to new venues or staff monitoring as appropriate.
- L. Provide links with LCMLA training and Assessment.
- M. Remember you have a 'duty of care' to deal with any unsafe practice that you see or become aware of.
- N. Offer links to Mine Inspections and Radon reports if appropriate.
- O. Be prepared to coordinate information regarding changing hazards and access between providers.

In – house qualification or 'Statements of Competence'

- P. Due to H & S and mines legislation the leader is seen as in an 'at work' situation in both mines and caves if remunerated. The meeting at Bootle 1993 between the Mines Inspectorate and the then NCA stated that leaders should be LCMLA qualified. This has now been superseded by AALS (HSE) which has accepted the CIC and LCMLA Awards as the best way to show competence and also a sensible 'Statement of Competence' approach with conditions and time limits for lesser and limited undertakings.
- Q. Statements of Competence should be issued with the following guidelines in mind:
 1. The standard of any underground leadership approved will be that of the LCMLA.
 2. Site/s approved are listed on the Statement.
 3. Trained at the appropriate level.
 4. Personal underground experience beyond the proposed approval and also consideration as to whether the leader holds other similar outdoor activity qualifications e.g. ML, SPA.
 5. Assessment by an external or internal Technical Advisor.
 6. Level 2 leaders will ideally be level 1 assessed, level 2 trained and it is advised as a minimum hold the MIA.
 7. 'SoCs' should be dated and have a shelf life. They could either be considered as an interim agreement with assessment sought at the earliest opportunity or could be revalidated on receipt of updated training/assessment.

Appendix 2: Draft Caving Code and Minimal Impact Caving Code

Caving Code 2nd Draft

- 1 Cave with care and prior thought.
- 2 Disturb nothing without consulting other cavers.
- 3 Avoid touching formations
- 4 Never cross conservation tapes.
- 5 Take nothing but photographs.
- 6 Do not pollute the cave, leave nothing behind.

Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines

5th Draft March 2015.

Introduction

Caving is a fascinating recreational activity which attracts the interest of a diverse range of people and groups, who all benefit immensely from the experience. However, some areas within caves can be sensitive to human interference. By following the few simple guidelines set out in this booklet the cave environment can be conserved for future generations to enjoy

This code is divided into two sections, one relating to general cave visits and the other relating to the exploration of a newly discovered cave or section of cave.

General Cave Visits

1. Every caving trip has an impact. It is important to select a site to visit that is appropriate to the group and type of trip being undertaken. Certain caves are less susceptible to damage and more suitable for novices. Advice is available from the Regional Caving Council or local clubs.
2. Where a Cave Conservation Plan is in existence abide by the recommendations contained therein for the conservation of the cave.
3. The party size should be appropriate to the vulnerability of the cave. The more vulnerable the cave environment, the smaller the party size needs to be. Cave Conservation Plans may stipulate a minimum and/or maximum party size. Access Controls Bodies may also limit party size at some caves.
4. Cave as a team. Help each other through the cave and ensure that party members stay together. Stragglers may take the wrong route and enter vulnerable alternative routes.
5. Cave at a sensible pace for the party. You will see and enjoy more, and there will be less chance of damage to the cave and to yourself. This especially applies when one is tired and exiting a cave.
6. Take care yourself and constantly watch when your party members are moving towards sensitive areas such as relict sediment deposits and speleothems e.g. stalagmites, stalactites and flowstone. Warn party members before they are likely to do any damage.
7. If there are novices on a trip, make sure that they are close to an experienced caver, so that the experienced caver can help them when required e.g. in difficult sections
8. Keep tackle bags and packs as small as possible and transport them carefully.

9. Stay on marked or obvious paths. If no paths are marked or none is obvious take particular care. If in doubt don't proceed.
10. Learn to recognise cave deposits or features that may be damaged by walking or crawling on them such as cracked mud floors or flowstone floors.
11. If it appears necessary to walk or crawl on a sensitive floor do not proceed. If others appear to have walked over it, confirm that this is the route before proceeding and then only proceed with the utmost care having removed boots and other clothing as necessary. Remember that someone may have previously mistaken this as the route and further damage should be avoided.
12. Throughout a cave the established marked routes must be used. Single tracks should be followed and care taken to avoid spreading of mud. Mud-throwing or modelling is unacceptable.
13. Restore any missing or damaged marker tapes or route markers. If not possible, report the problem to the appropriate Regional Caving Council as soon as possible. Also report any instances where tapes or markers appear to be ineffective.
14. Treat all cave wildlife with respect, watch out for them, and avoid disturbing them. Also avoid directly illuminating cave wildlife if possible. Bats are protected by law.
15. Ensure that all foreign matter is removed from caves. This includes human waste. If long trips are to be made into a cave, ensure that containers for the removal of liquid and solid waste are included on the trip inventory. The use of carbide is strongly discouraged as it causes soot deposition on the cave roof and speleothems.
16. If any damage or degradation is noticed report this to the appropriate Regional Caving Council as soon as possible.
17. CAVE WITH CARE.

New Cave or Extension Explorations

1. Modification of cave entrances and passages, including changing water levels in sumps or ducks and diversion of streams, should only be undertaken after all possible effects are assessed and the appropriate permission obtained from the landowner. Any modifications must be the minimum required. The long term impact of any work and materials used must be considered. If the site is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest or a Scheduled Monument, a 'Consent' will also be required from the Statutory Conservation Body.
2. Use the cave survey to ensure that all alternative routes are examined prior to crossing sensitive or fragile areas. It may not be necessary to enter some areas as they can be by-passed.
3. Do not enter new cave or passage if you do not have the equipment required to undertake the minimal activities of surveying, taping and photography.
4. Make a full photographic record before any other work is undertaken or visits made which are likely to result in any damage or deterioration. Copies of the photographs should be placed in a suitable library for safe keeping and submitted to the regional cave registry or caving council for record purposes.
5. Discuss taping and route marking within the party and ensure that all ideas are evaluated before marking is undertaken and before the sensitive area is crossed.

6. If a sensitive area must be crossed, reduce future damage by defining a distinct minimum practicable width of path using conservation tape.
7. Scientific investigation should begin as quickly as possible. Advice may be sought from the British Cave Research Association. The existing microbiology of the new cave, both fungi, bacteria, and a world of protozoa, will almost certainly be irreversibly contaminated on the first trip. If cave microbiologists are available then include them on initial explorations so that they may collect uncontaminated samples.
8. Bones or other archaeological material should not be moved at all unless under imminent threat. Collection should only be undertaken with permission from the relevant Statutory Conservation Body if the cave is a Designated Site. Photograph any find in situ if possible and contact the Regional Caving Council for advice. It is unlikely to hold up explorations beyond a few days whilst an archaeological record is compiled.
9. Collection of specimens, which must be approved by the appropriate statutory authority, should be kept to the minimum required for study purposes only.
10. Camping in a cave should only be considered when intending to undertake a specific speleological or conservation objective. All human introduced wastes, including carbide, foodstuffs and excreta, must be removed from the cave and disposed of properly.
11. Caves must not be disfigured by unnecessary marking, including 'direction arrows'. Survey markers should be small and inconspicuous.
12. Make a plan right from the beginning to remove all redundant equipment upon completion of an exploratory dig. If the dig fails "to go" provision should be made to clear up before all interest is lost. Leave the dig in a safe and tidy condition. Seek help from other cavers if necessary.
13. Instigate the production of a Cave Conservation Plan.
14. CAVE WITH CARE.