

Why does British Caving need a national body?

There are several reasons why I think we must have a viable national organisation in British Caving.

The BCA gives British caving a broadly-based stable platform on which to secure and develop the future of our sport.

Whether we like it or not, in this day of litigation, we need insurance. In the case of an unfortunate event blame could be pointed at someone with potentially significant financial consequences for both an individual and their club. It is a disaster waiting to happen and we need to insure against it. Also of course the BCA insurance gives other advantages such as landowner protection helping towards easier access etc.

We need to have a training scheme with good quality certification to enable leaders to take novices into caves as safely as possible. Government legislation suggests all organisations of our type have an appropriate scheme in place or risk it being foisted on us from outside. Training and certifying the professionals who lead novices into caves helps to ensure that caving maintains a good name in the public eye which benefits us all, promoting conservation and encouraging interest among new recruits to the sport.

Similarly, the Government dictates that we have to have a Child Protection Policy to give guidance to people working with young children and vulnerable adults.

In my opinion it is very good that we have an equipment and techniques group to research caving procedures and equipment and make both as safe as possible. Cavers across the country benefit from the anchors which are placed with the assistance of the scheme organised by BCA's E and T committee.

The British Caving Association does and always will treat cave conservation and access as a cornerstone of the organisation. To give even more protection to the underground environment there may need to be changes to the law and the BCA needs to be able to lead this.

Our publications section that is nationally funded and organised, regularly produces high quality material which is freely available to all its members.

The science section of British caving under its BCRA umbrella is well respected throughout the world as a premium scientific institution.

The British Caving Association in conjunction with its science partner BCRA has a very good caving library, available to all members.

International work, including supporting British expeditions via the Ghar Parau Foundation has enabled British cavers to explore more caves around the world than any other nation.

BCA, through its officers, should be negotiating on behalf of its members with Government institutions wherever the activities of government have a potential impact on caves, cavers and caving.

We appreciate the help we get from British cavers and would like even more help and understanding into the future.

As chairman of the BCA I am NOT naturally a bureaucratic person so I can't say I like all the bureaucracy, however, I accept it's something that somebody must do and coordinate.

Cavers often compare BCA with the British Mountaineering Council, there are several very significant differences.

- (1) The BMC has over 82,000 members, we have 6,000.
- (2) They have over 30 paid staff many are full time, we have 4 part time.
- (3) BMC has some government funding partly because of "sport climbing" now being an Olympic sport. BCA receives no government funds.
- (4) Their annual subscription is about twice that of the BCA.

They generally do succeed in putting on a professional front. However, they have recently had their own political problems.

My fellow officers and I do it all entirely unpaid, we put an enormous amount of time, effort and worry to try and make British caving better for its members. We need the help and support of BCA's membership to take it forward and make it better still. There are cavers with appropriate skills who could be extremely useful and help in many interesting areas such as IT, equipment testing and development etc. also with all kinds of administration.

Cavers with ideas on how to help or improve BCA including making it more attractive and relevant to its members should contact me at chairman@british-caving.org.uk

Andy Eavis BCA Chairman May 2017.