

*Minutes of the meeting of the Association's Equipment Committee held at the Stafford County Staff club,
13 February 1999*

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1. Administrative

1.1 Present: Les Sykes, Glenn Jones, Owen Clarke, Adrian Fawcett, Nick Williams (convenor)

1.2 Apologies: Les Williams, Dave Cook, Chris Jones, Mark Evans, Mark Lowe, Jenny Potts, David George

1.3 Minutes of the last meeting: were accepted without amendment.

2. Anchor replacement programme (ARP)

2.1 Regional reports

2.1.1. CNCC: A written report was tabled by CNCC and is appended to these minutes. CNCC have noticed some deficiencies with HITC50 resin – some of the anchors placed with this resin can be made to rotate slightly in the hole. This appears to be a function of the way the resin has filled the hole, rather than the age of the resin, in that all the holes which are showing rotational movement also show some sort of slumping of the resin in the hole. This problem has not been observed in any anchors placed using the Resifix resin. In any event, there is no danger of catastrophic failure - the bolts are still 'a nuisance' to get out of the hole, even when there is some rotational movement.

2.1.2: CCC reported that no underground placements have taken place since the last meeting, although 12 anchors have been placed for training purposes at Dinas Rock.

2.2. Following a discussion about the placing of anchors in sites where they are not going to be used by cavers (or to which cavers do not have access) it was generally agreed that NCA and its constituent bodies should not have to take any responsibility for these sites. This does not preclude persons involved in the NCA policy from placing anchors at 'non-caving' sites - indeed there are clear advantages for all parties if NCA trained installers are used at (for instance) BMC controlled sites. However, the costs and long term service of these sites are issues for the bodies controlling access to them, and not for NCA/regional councils.

2.3 The issue of insurance for the bolt placers and inspectors was discussed in some detail, following feedback from the BCRA insurance manager and the DCA. Following some discussion, it was agreed that the discipline of an annual administrative fee for each nominated installer was beneficial to the scheme. Therefore, an annual fee (of a few pounds only) will be levied on each person involved in the placing or inspecting of anchors.

2.4 For the avoidance of doubt, persons placing anchors are expected to have undergone training or a refresher course within the previous twelve month period. Persons inspecting anchors need only to have done the installation course previously. In each case, the person must be listed by the regional council as one of their appointed personnel, and a fee must be paid on their behalf

The installation guidelines will be amended to reflect this. With the addition of the following wording:

An annual fee shall be paid to the NCA for each trained installer or inspector within one month of the commencement of the Association's Financial year.

The level of the fee, and how it is to be paid, will be raised at the next meeting, following consultations with BCRA. For 1999, the fee is set to £2.00.

2.5 The committee has had an enquiry from an Irish student who wants to build a hydraulic test rig. LS has responded, and it has been indicated that we may be given the resulting rig when the project has finished.

2.6 The long term test programme is covered in CNCC report. They now have a programme proposal, and required funding. CNCC would like to see some form of test programme in each caving area in the UK, and also in each overseas area. LS has a proposal for the programme which can be applied in each area.

3. Rope testing programme.

3.1 Progress has been slower than hoped for due to other commitments. The change to doing tests with wet rope has also absorbed a lot of time since it requires a review of the baseline data. However, because the ropes are weaker when wet, the number of steps which can be applied using the existing test rig is greater since smaller weights can be used. More steps result in more data!

3.2 No progress has been made on the long term tests proposed at the last meeting. In order to get things moving. GJ will purchase rope and drive things forward. OC will provide some feedback to GJ regarding log sheets. However, following a long discussion, it was decided that rather than recall each rope at a specified time interval, it would be recalled after a specified number of usages (100 caver uses). Testing will continue until the rope is no longer safe to use.

OC was concerned that we should do the normal recommended test on each length of rope during the test. GJ and LS took the view that most people who use ropes are capable of making a decision as to whether or not they have faith in their ropes, and that part of the purpose of the test is to determine whether it is possible to apply the results obtained by testing a rope end to the whole rope: therefore the tests should not be done until the whole rope can be cut up. AF suggested that the ropes which are to be kept in use for longest should be made longer than the others to allow for a section to be tested. This was agreed to be an eminently sensible compromise. .

3.3 NW has sent OC a copy of the BMC draft ropes booklet. OC to propose a draft a contents for the NCA version.

3.4 Correspondence from James Evans was noted, and any input which he can offer to the programme will be welcome.

4. NCA AGM and Equipment committee

1. NW pointed out that he has decreasing amounts of time for spending on Equipment Committee matters, and that it is always at the expense of other caving issues (esp. EUG). Thus, he feels that he cannot continue as Eq cttee convenor unless he can limit this to the activities of two days meetings per year, but that he could continue to attend meetings and prepare minutes so long as the other administrative tasks could be better distributed.

GJ agreed to deal with circulation of the minutes and ensuring the web site is maintained. LS will deal with casual enquiries, OC will deal with the circulation of agendas.

2. OC and LS agreed to e-mail copies of their reports to NW as soon as possible after the meeting for inclusion in the annual report.

4.3 Jenny Potts has already submitted a list of NCA assets to Alan Wood directly. LS agreed to supply a full list to NW as soon as possible. NW agreed to contact Andy Pryke (DCUC (to whom CNCC has passed one of its old Bosch Drills) directly.

5. Fixed aids policy.

5.1 Modifications proposed by Paul Seddon, Jenny Potts and Graham Mullan were considered, along with comments from those present. A new draft of the policy was issued and is attached to these minutes.

5.2 The most contentious issue related to clause 2.2, where objections and problems had been raised because the policy implies that the fixed aids should only be in caves which are freely open to all member clubs of NCA, and maybe not in caves where bodies which are not members of NCA have responsibility for the control of access.

The committee discussed this at some length and decided that two general principles should apply:

1. the policy should cover all caves where NCA clubs have access, even though that access may be restricted by the requirements of the local body which organised access (be it club or regional council)

and

(b) that where access controlling bodies want to benefit from this policy they should be prepared to make a contribution towards it by paying to become members of NCA (in some way). They are, of course, free to make their own arrangements for insurance and maintenance of fixed aids in the caves they control.

It was anticipated that this topic would be the subject of more discussion when the policy is presented to the National Council for adoption, and therefore only minor changes were made to the clause at this meeting.

6. Operating plan proposals.

6.1 Because of the need for transparency in the objectives of the committee for the purposes of accounting to the different Sports Councils (English and UK), it was agreed that we would try to assign the whole of the proposed ARP long term tests to the ESC, and the remainder of the equipment committee spend to the UK SC.

If necessary, this can be justified since the need for vertical caving is, to a very large degree, confined to Yorkshire, which is in England (!)

Therefore, we could delete the Anchor replacement programme from the UK sports council objectives. However, in order not to change the draft proposal already presented to UKSC to radically, it was agreed that the following objective should remain in the operating plan:

4.3.1 Provide a resource for enquiries regarding the Anchor Replacement programme so as to promote the benefits of the NCA approach in other sports and internationally.

7. Other business.

7.1 The charge levied by the BCRA conference in regard of the damage done by the rope test rig was discussed. It was agreed that it was necessary to review the circumstances of each individual case where charges of this nature were made, and that it should not be considered that Owen's agreement to pay a proportion of the costs sets a precedent.

8. Details of next meeting

1. The time, date and location for the next meeting were set as - Saturday 25 September, 1999
11.00 am. in Stafford.

Nick Williams, Convenor

14 Feb 99

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