

National Caving Association

Minutes of Training Committee Meeting 27th September 2003
10.00 a.m. at Stafford County Council Sports and Social Club

Present	Idris Williams	NCA Training Officer
	Paul Ramsden	CNCC & CIC Panel
	Steve Holding	NAHMO
	John Cliffe	Co-opted
	Jenny Potts	DCA & Speleoscene Editor
	Ian James	Invited Scout Association Representative.

IW Opened the meeting by introducing Ian James, the Scout Association Headquarters Caving Advisor, to the committee and suggesting that Item 5 be discussed ahead of all other business so that Ian could leave early.

1. Apologies for absence.

Apologies had been received from Nigel Atkins (DCA), Jenny was standing in for him, Graham Mollard(NCP Chair) and Eric Hoole (CCC)

2. Minutes of meeting 26th July 2002

It was pointed out that Tony Flanagan (ACI) had been present but not recorded as such in the minutes.

3. Matters arising from the minutes.

Risk participation, this had been left from the previous meeting as PR had not been present. The Committee agreed that it would be a useful item to add into NCA literature at the appropriate places and resolved that Council be recommended to adopt the following wording:-

The NCA recognises that cave and mine exploration are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

Advice to cavers. This matter had been put on hold as reported. However, it seemed as if NCAs Sport Council grants would be restored next year.

Action:- IW to report to Council and request funding for this project.

Location of SRT kits. As far as could be ascertained the last sighting of these was at Hidden Earth 2002. NCA treasurer was suggesting writing these off and that seemed to be the only way forward. The 6 new sets were still with RM.

Action:- IW to contact RM to ensure that they were available at Hidden Earth 2003 and passed on to JC.

Trainer assessor matters. IW reported that the discussion at the last meeting, (kept confidential as individual names were involved), about routes for revalidation for non- standard cases had proved to be incomplete. Other names had been raised and some inconsistencies noted. The matter had gone back to NCP to finalise.

Council of Higher Education Caving Clubs draft advice. IW reported that unfortunately he had not had time to overhaul this. He had asked Chris Jewell to

rewrite/rearrange the document, but had received the reply that CHECC considered satisfactory in its' present form.

Action:- IW

4. Composition of the Committee.

IW stated that in attempt to update the contact list on the website some anomalies in representation had been noted. It had been apparent that the Forest of Dean Access Group was strictly speaking not a regional council. The Committee also needed the presence of the chairmen of NCP and CIC.

The Committee resolved to co-opt the following members.

Steve Tomalin.

Chairman of the National Co-ordinating panel.

Chairman of the Cave Instructor Panel.

5. Scout Association Authorisation Scheme.

IW Opened this Item by summarising the history of these negotiations:- During Spring 2002 the Scout Association approached the then Training Officer with a request to endorse/approve their new Leader Authorisation Scheme, to help design, set up and run, an Assessor's Training Course and to help set up and run an SRT Instructors Course. A meeting was held in June, and a further meeting with Bob Mehew in October. However, little progress was made due to various misunderstandings. In December, Bob involving The Training Technical Advice Provider and myself held a further meeting. Considerable progress in understanding was made. In December, I outlined the scheme to Training Committee, who seemed very warm to the SA proposals. A meeting was held in March with involving myself, TTASP, Paul Ramsden, and Scout Association representatives, Ian James and David Ridout. As a result TTASP produced the 1st Draft advice. Training Committee considered this in April and various sticking points were discovered. The National Coordinating Panel discuss in the matter in June, resulting in TTASP 2nd Draft. Training Committee discussed this in July and reaches position that:-

NCA should welcome those sections of the Scout Scheme, which utilise the LCMLA training.

Endorse the advice for over 18s to be given similar to University Clubs.

Endorse the use of LCMLA/CIC Qualifications in respect of mines.

In respect of an authorisation/assessment scheme, that NCA should not be involved, but should suggest that SA take on CICs to help them develop the Authorisation Scheme.

The reasons behind this stance are

1. Fear of insurance/legal complications if an accident investigation backtracked, and found an authorisation scheme to a lesser standard than LMCLA/CIC.

2. Fear of setting a precedent for other organisations.

3. Fear of watering down the NCA schemes.

Regarding the insurance I discussed with Nick Williams and he believed NCA would, or could, be covered.

Regarding the precedent I believe that NCA would be able to treat any other organisation on its merits, or say that the Scout Scheme was experimental and we would be monitoring its progress for another X years.

Regarding the watering down aspect, that is an inevitable part of any viable Scout Scheme, as the cost in time and money for volunteers to undergo LMCLA training is prohibitive..

What would happen if, the Scout Association were to go down the road of full LMCLA is that responsible leaders would be forced to stop taking scouts underground and the irresponsible would ignore the rules.

IW. Stated that he thought the committee & Council needed to think carefully about this advice.

NCA has always criticised SA for using LCMLA as an assessment qualification. Rightly because LCMLA has no assessment training.

NCA is now suggesting SA should use CIC as an assessment qualification, which also has no assessment training.

There is only one body, which holds any experience and ability in assessing cave leaders, the NCA. Can NCA morally slam the door on the S A and prevent access to this valuable but monopoly resource?

IW then invited Ian James, the Scout Associations Caving Adviser, to speak.

Ian James pointed out that the existing Scout Authorisation Scheme was unsatisfactory, in that no formal training for caving leaders was involved, and that the sole qualification for assessors was possession of an LMCLA. Whilst in an ideal world all Scout Caving Leaders would hold LCMLA or CIC, as appropriate, the cost in time and money for volunteers to undertake this was prohibitive and not achievable. Ian then outlined the setting up of his working group drawing on Scout Cavers operating in all the main caving regions. This group had met on numerous occasions and had drawn up a scheme which it was believed was robust and achievable building as it did on LCMLA Level 1 Training. He felt despondent that whilst he had discussed the scheme with NCA representatives on several occasions and felt that progress was being made that this progress had now been reversed.

JP queried how this proposed Authorisation process compared to other activities.

IJ said that there was a mix of methods. Some activities followed NGB training and assessment totally, in others the Scout Association had drawn up entirely separate schemes. The proposed caving scheme closely mirrored the arrangements for Hill Walking where Plas-y-Brenin ran an Assessors training course. The entry qualification for this was a minimum of Summer Mountain Leader. These trained Assessors then assessed leaders who had undergone Summer ML training and experience as a group leader or assistant.

JC Compared the situation in canoeing where the Scout Association followed the BCU system. IW pointed out that the ethos in caving was different, in that canoeing had a progressive system of training and leadership and that possession of canoe instruction qualifications were commonplace in club canoeing, unlike the situation in caving.

JC stated that whilst NCA wished to help the Scout Association in this matter the difficulty was that the LCMLA Level 1 had always been seen as the absolute minimum qualification to take young people underground and it was felt that this was not negotiable. He said that really the Scout Association was at liberty to use any scheme they liked and NGB approval was not needed and the suggestion to use CICs to draw up an in house scheme would be more appropriate.

Ian James indicated that the Scout Association considered the matter of an Assessment Training course was paramount and that all other aspects of the scheme were negotiable. Endorsement of the overall scheme and the SRT course, whilst desirable, were not essential.

JC explained what the function of the CIC in the suggested scheme would be.

Discussions carried on over the same ground with no further progress being made, with the committee taking the view that from the NCA stance the only acceptable scheme to NCA was one in which the end result was of, and could be seen to be of, the same quality.

IJ expressed concern that members of the Training Committee were passing judgement on the scheme without having had access to the full set of draft documents drawn up by his working party.

IW Stated that whilst that was true, TTASP's first draft advice had been drawn up following study of these documents and represented a fair representation of the scheme.

IW Called discussion to a halt at this point.

Having rejected a suggestion that Trainee Scout Assessors, under any scheme drawn up for assessment training by the Scout Association and it's future CIC advisors could, purely on a non-committal basis, observe assessments carried out by NCA Trainer/Assessors, The Committee passed the following resolution:-

Training Committee recommends that Council

A. Welcomes the use of the LMCLA/CIC training as a basis for the Scout Caving Leader Authorisation Scheme.

B. Endorses the proposal to provide over 18s with advice based on the NCA advice to Higher Education Caving Clubs.

C. Endorses the proposal to use full LCMLA/CIC Qualifications as the basis of mine Exploration by the under 18s

D. Suggests that the Scout Association takes on CIC(s) to assist in developing, setting up and monitoring their authorisation scheme.

E. Instructs Training Committee to make a priority of providing skills training to Members of the Scout Association.

6. NCA 4year Development Plan

IW. Reported that he had redrafted the training section of the above and sent it to RM who was compiling the whole. Unfortunately, the Sports Council had taken objection to the format of last year's report, which IW had followed. Following a meeting between IW and RM during the week it had been agreed that the next submission would include the previous proposals, together with the addition of "Provision of Advice to cavers" "Extension of club trainer training from Derbyshire to other regions" and "Investigation into the possibility of developing a course for the assessment of cave leaders"

7. Training Grants.

Report on grant applications received. IW handed out a printout showing the current position with this year's grant, which it had been hoped to circulate with the agenda. There were 3 grant applications pending.

CHECC had now detailed their application for £200 (as previously allocated) to provide a CIC for one days SRT training in a sports hall as part of their December Seminar. This was approved.

DCA had an application for £170 for Self rescue training (this had been pending since the last meeting) This was approved.

BCRA's Hidden Earth indoor SRT training for 2 half days indoor with a CIC had been estimated at £150. However the detailed application had been received for £357 which included a CIC for 2 days and overnight expenses of £30. Discussions between IW and RW and further information had revealed that this was intended as loss of earnings for the CIC who would be attending. The committee agreed that £150 should be adequate for the training to be provided and approved that amount.

The total of grants approved was now £1995. This being from a budget of £1950.

The approval at the last meeting of a first aid course by Devon SS compared to the refusal of grant aid to first aid course by CSCC was queried. IW explained that the CSCC grant had originally been refused, as it was a course, which led to a HSE qualification. The last committee took the view that, the course proposed by Devon SS, whilst it led to a certificate was not a HSE course and therefore was not a "professional qualification." IW stated that he was personally not in favour of grant aiding first aid courses as they seemed extremely expensive for the number of people trained, and that while funds were short they should be concentrated on main caving activities. It would be possible for cavers to receive informal training in first aid without the high fees involved if any certificate were involved.

Proposals for next year's budget.

IW suggested that since this year's budget had been allocated and some applications had been refused due to this that Training committee should allocate budget sums against expected events.

The DCA/NCA (Cavers Fair) event had already requested £600.

Hidden Earth had traditionally employed a CIC for 2 half days. £150.

The CHECC seminar should be allocated £200 for SRT training.

IW Outlined some proposals for a joint NCA/Scout Association SRT training event. It was hoped that an event could be organised at which say 12 Explorer Scouts (14-18 years old) could receive basic SRT training. At the same time say 6 adult leaders could receive rigging and self rescue training. The Scout Association would provide accommodation, food, administration and transport and NCA would provide grant aid for the hire of 2 CICs. Some discussion followed regarding Child protection issues but it was agreed that The Scout Association would cover this aspect. IW initially had suggested that the CICs would be involved in an underground day following the surface day, however, the committee suggested that this might be not the best economical use of resources.

It was left that detailed proposals would be submitted in due course.

Changes to guidelines. It had become apparent since the last meeting that IW had not been aware of certain NCA rules affecting these grants. Grants were only to be available to NCA members (Constituent bodies or Member Clubs). Also that, no member of the committee should receive wages or fees from NCA grants.

Action:- IW to make the necessary amendments to the Guidelines. In respect of the committee member receiving fees IW stated that application of this rule could work against training in the regions. Many constituent bodies appointed CICs to act as their training officer and representative on Training Committee. These persons would then be unable to offer grant-aided training within their regions defeating the object of their appointment.

Action IW :-To report to Council requesting an increased budget, a list of member organisations and some form of relaxation to the ruling on Committee Members.

8. Any Other Business.

PR. Brought up the matter of CIC re-validations, which CIC panel had discussed. They were keen to encourage early re-validation up to a year before. It was thought that this would require a syllabus change. [Later checks show that this is included in the current draft handbook]

Regarding the Re-validation fee agreed at £120 at the April 5th meeting. It should be clarified that this was the Course Directors daily fee, not the attendance fee to candidates. The participants would pay £15, to the NCA as a revalidation fee. The Course Director would charge £60 to participants.

P.R. Queried progress on P. Rafferty's request for publications to be written on Weather for cavers and rigging. I.W. Reminded the Committee that this had led on to the overall subject of advice for cavers on all subjects.

P.R. raised the subject of the equivalence and route to conversion from Joint Services Cave Instructor Award and CIC. At present applicants wishing to convert are to apply to CIC panel for a partial exemption and are treated on an individual basis. The committee felt that it would be useful to create a route which covered all applicants by comparison of the two syllabuses, Action IW to request TTASP to carry out the comparison and report to CIC panel with a proposed standard route.

CIC Handbook The draft was now with IW. TASP had done some work proof reading the draft and RM had commenced bringing the style and format into line with LCMLA Handbook. RM's personal circumstances had made it impossible for him to complete this task. IW stated that he would try to make substantial progress before the next meeting. Failing this another volunteer should be sought.

P.R. Raised the matter of insurance. Award holders were encountering difficulty in re-insuring. Some Insurance companies were no longer offering to insure, or exorbitant premiums were being quoted, some were asking for Award holders to be NCA members (which was not possible). There was a feeling that current negotiations for the recreational caving policy were also causing difficulties for Award Holders. After a long period of discussion I.W. Stated that insurance was not the remit of this committee, and asked what it was required that Training Committee should do? A further long discussion followed, but no clear request emerged beyond the need to flag up the problem of award holders with NCA Council. The problem went beyond the day to day business of Award Holders as

insurance was required by Award Holders while acting on NCA,s behalf running courses and assessments.

Action I.W. To raise the matter with NCA insurance negotiators.

9. Dates of next meetings.

20th December 2003, 3rd April had previously been agreed. I.W. Stated that he felt that the July meeting this year had been poorly attended, probably due to the holiday season so the following was agreed to be 25th September 2003. All meetings to be 10.00 a.m. At Stafford.