



# British Caving Association

Minutes of BCA Training Committee meeting  
held on Friday, 8 December 2007 at Staffordshire Council Staff Club

The meeting commenced at 10:20 am.

## 1. Present

Graham Mollard (GM)	Training Officer
Tom Peacock (TP)	Chairman of National Co-ordinating Panel
Tom Redfern (TR)	ACI Rep
Idris Williams (IW)	Voluntary Organisation Rep
Karen Slatcher (KS)	Training Administrator

## 2. Apologies for Absence

Steve Long	MLT UK
Nigel Ball	Chairman of CIC Panel

## 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2007

- 3.1 **6.1 CIC Panel** – Line 3 - should be “CIC assessment” not “CIC training”.
- 3.2 **10.3 Fairy Holes** – Should be Weardale, not Weirdale.

## 4. Matters arising

- 4.1 **2.9 Geological Information** – Nigel Ball is going to adopt John Forder’s notes, which will be very useful at top LCMLA level and CIC level. He plans to revise them to ensure that they are user-friendly at a less advanced level.
- 4.2 **4.1 New Chair of NCP** – Tom Peacock ratified as the new Chair of NCP.
- 4.3 **Hidden Earth** – Training Committee were asked to attend Hidden Earth and Dena Proctor gave up a day to go. Unfortunately the event had not been advertised and what little space she was allotted was in the main hall in a corner and no-one was willing/interested in doing any training. GM suggested that we do not attend another year and all agreed. **GM will ensure this is in his report to Council.**  
Nigel Atkins and Nigel Ball currently have the six BCA SRT sets between them. GM has thanked John Cliffe for looking after them in the past and would like him to continue to maintain them and from now on claim expenses.
- 4.4 **5.3 Terms of Reference** – TR said there is information in the LCMLA Handbook for NCP in section 6.2.1.1 NCP Terms of Reference. The same is true for the CIC Panel in the CIC Handbook. **CIC and NCP Panels to look at these terms of reference and decide whether they are still correct. This meeting should look at putting together Training Committee terms of reference and this should be added as an agenda item for the next meeting.**
- 4.5 **5.7 Out of Date Qualifications** – GM said that we seem to be getting more and more of these and more candidates who are going for revalidation but do not have the relevant experience. TR has sent info to his panel, stressing 10 days personal caving.  
There was some discussion about whether the exact numbers of trips, as stipulated in the LCMLA Handbook, need to have been done, particularly as far as personal trips are concerned. GM confirmed that there is some flexibility, as long as candidates have done a ‘reasonable’ amount of personal trips.  
It was pointed out that paperwork should be sent to the Trainer/Assessor running the course at least one month before the course date, which gives the candidate some time to do more personal trips, if these are found to be too low.  
**GM suggested a circular to TAs to be sent by KS.**
- 4.6 **5.13 Weather & Flooding booklet** - Steve Long has offered his help to Dave Baines for this booklet. His book “Hill Walking”, which has a good section on weather, has been passed on to DB for reference.

- 4.7 **5.14 Porth yr Ogof** – see 7 below.
- 4.8 **5.16 Revalidations** – Another circular was sent out recently regarding costs for candidates and charges to BCA.
- 4.9 **5.18 Evaluation Forms** – This is still to be discussed at NCP.
- 4.10 **5.21 Southern England Panel** – GM cannot find any paperwork anywhere to do with Robbie Warke. IW is sure that there was some information and he remembers getting it from John Cliffe. As a result GM has written to Robbie saying that he cannot find anything, apologising and saying that if he wants to join the Southern England Panel he can, if they are happy to invite him.
- 4.11 **10.1 Exemption for Andy Phillips** – GM has not heard anything more.

## 5. Report from the Chair of NCP

- 5.1 **3.4 Gorge Walking** – TP has received a long letter from John Cliffe, saying that we should have some ideas ready, but not push these forward.  
TR proposed that next time the LCMLA Handbook is updated, under Core Skills 2.3.1.2.(a) the list of subjective hazards, ie flooding, rock fall, deep water etc, should read deep **or fast** water.
- 5.2 **4.8 CIC Scheme changes** – Nigel Ball has proposed a more formalised process for assessing trainee CIC.
- 5.3 **6.1 Geology/Karst booklet** – TP to collect whatever information Richard Hill has and pass it on to GM, and then contact Tim Fogg to ask whether information can be used from his book and if he would like to write the booklet!
- 5.4 **6.2 Weather booklet** – Dave Baines' thesis has been scanned and circulated for all to read before the next NCP meeting on 4 February 2008.
- 5.5 **7. Porth yr Ogof** - See 7 below.
- 5.6 **8.3 Northern Panel's Procedures for accepting people** – These are not being adopted for all, but may be useful to other Panels.
- 5.7 **10.1 Training Fees** – GM had said at the last NCP meeting that, after discussion with the BCA Treasurer, training was not currently self-financing and therefore fees would have to go up.  
GM said that he will not be pushing for putting fees up at this time.  
IW said that before he finished as Training Officer, he had been asked for figures for Cambrian Caving Council of LCMLA and CIC people trained in Wales, so that CCC could get a grant for training. KS confirmed that she had also been asked recently. GM asked **TP to find out what CCC are spending their grant money from Sport Wales on**. TP said that grant money might be available for the South Wales Panel. GM said that Sport England have made it clear that there will be no more funding from them for mountaineering and caving. TR suggested that BCA should be applying to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for grants if there are none available from England. GM suggested that **TP could find out who the contact is for funding from Sports Wales and IW suggested that we should go through CCC to find out. GM to talk to Mick Day about these possibilities.**

## 6. Report from the Chair of CIC

- 6.1 **Weather booklet** – Nigel Ball had said that IW had information from Chips Rafferty regarding this and GM said he would ask about it. IW said that he has a floppy disk with a document Dave Baines wrote some time ago, but he has been unable to open it as **the disk appears to be corrupted**. Chips Rafferty had a paper copy that he scanned for IW. **IW to send disk and scanned document to KS to pass on to Dave Baines.**
- 6.2 **4. Dave Elliot** – Would like an illustrator for his publication.
- 6.3 **9. Ingrid Mathews** – She started her CIC assessments in September 2006 and has not completed them because she had a baby. GM asked the committee for permission to give her twelve months extension to September 2008. This was agreed - **KS to produce a Section 4A for her.**
- 6.4 **CIC Mines Module** – GM spoke to Nigel Ball last night. He is worried that when candidates in North Wales do a mines assessments at LCMLA, they could be doing them in mines that are not certified. Also, mines that would be required for a CIC module, would probably not have an inspection certificate either. **GM wanted to speak to Steve Holden of NAMHO to find out which mines are**

checked by them in the Alston area, North Wales and Derbyshire, but unfortunately he was unable to attend the meeting.

6.5 **Terms of Reference** – See 4.4 above.

6.6 **Serious Incidents** - CIC Panel feel that in the event of a serious incident, BCA as a National Governing Body should be making comment on it. GM agrees, but is aware that Council is reluctant to do this.

Following briefing from the CIC Panel, GM has been in touch with Gavin Howat, the senior HSE Inspector overseeing recommendations after Manchester Hole. He feels that it is important that in future the BCA Training Officer is consulted, if professional cavers are involved, before the incident goes to tribunal or inquest. GM feels that it should go through not just the Training Officer, but both the CIC Panel and NCP.

Gavin Howat has said that there will be a document of ‘lessons learned’ following the Manchester Hole incident. He feels that he should be able to consult with BCA as an NGB. For this incident GM was told by Council that he would be attending as a Technical Expert. He now needs to get Council permission to say that any Training Officer should be given the mandate that they are spokes person for BCA with regard to training and should consult with the NCP and CIC Panel before making a response. **GM to speak to Mick Day initially.**

6.7 **Trainer/Assessors** – CIC Assessors and the CIC Panel would like to appoint more CIC TAs because they are all very busy, particularly now that Tony Flanagan is so busy. Last time this was done they used an external panel, so that the Training Officer is not involved and could therefore hear appeals. The panel consisted of Mick Day, Nigel Ball and Juliet Parker-Smith – **KS to check they are happy to do this again.**

They do not want to specify a number of people to be appointed. Last time they had three vacancies, one of which was not filled, one person who was taken on has not been able to do any assessments and the other is doing fine. GM suggested that it might be possible for one Trainer/Assessor to assess trainees for 3 modules, or to extend the time period (temporarily) over which they can take the various modules, but it was agreed that each candidate be taken individually and given extensions as necessary.

**KS to check the CIC Handbook regarding advertising for new CIC TAs – a letter to be sent to all CICs, giving the same criteria as before, ie must have five years experience as a CIC etc.**

6.8 **Problems with CIC Assessment Modules** – Nigel has had reports from being assessed and people observing assessments, that there seem to be considerable discrepancies in the way modules are run, particularly Module 1 Vertical Skills Surface Check-out, which has been run underground or in a cafe. This should be a very practical session run on the surface in a suitable location, ie a gym/climbing wall. This seems to be primarily one Trainer/Assessor, who attended a CIC workshop where changes to the CIC syllabus were discussed and this TA has incorporated them and dropped everything else. Nigel was hoping that the discussion at this workshop would bring about more consistency, but things are now worse.

After consulting with GM, Nigel Ball send out an email to the TAs at this CIC workshop saying that the changes discussed were not set in stone and that they still need to be agreed by the CIC Panel and then ratified by Training Committee before they could be followed. Nothing has changed following this correspondence and GM suggested that Nigel talk directly to the person in question.

GM asked for guidance from Training Committee. TR said that during another recent CIC training/workshop these problems were still evident. He suggested asking Nigel Ball to ask this person to use the training checklist from the CIC Handbook as a checklist for training, then if all the points are not covered and the document has been signed off, there is evidence that this is not working.

Once the changes are made to CIC Assessment Modules there will be a report for every candidate from each module so that the next TA can see exactly what has been done before and at what level the candidate is performing.

6.9 **Updates to CIC Handbook** – This is ongoing and changes will be presented to Training Committee as and when they are ready.

## **7. Porth yr Ogof**

- 7.1 TP was invited to go to a Cambrian Caving Council meeting, where they discussed the document that NCP had put together. TP said that they are very supportive of the leaflet, but are not happy for it to be placed in shops or Tourist Information Centres or on the display board in the car park. Their main concern was that venturing into/across deep water in Porth should not be 'advertised' in case it might cause people to go looking for a trip, plus the fact that people tend to ignore signs.

They had concerns that the hazards at the resurgence entrance had not been pointed out, ie smooth rock and no hand holes, so TP had agreed to add the following:

*"The passage through to the Resurgence is particularly dangerous as it is deep, narrow and both side walls are smooth and severely undercut; swimmers have drowned under these ledges."*

Elsie Little, CCC's Conservation & Access Officer, is happy with this. A photo will be added next to this piece of text and the document shown to CCC again. TP suggested he could ask Clive Westlake to do the photo. This was agreed as a good idea and GM said that we can pay his travel expenses.

TP said that the other issue is that CCC are not happy about anything being added to the notice in the car park. He said that he had spoken to Gary Evans (who is a member of CCC and also the South Wales Panel) last night and he had suggested putting up a sign in the cave by the other two signs, stating something along the lines of not proceeding further if not wearing a wetsuit and buoyancy aid and having a floating rope. Gary Evans thinks Elsie Little will be happy with this. This also gives people in led groups the opportunity to point out what the necessary equipment is.

Following comments about CCC having been involved with the document from its start, Elsie Little was invited to this Training Committee meeting, but was unable to attend, and in general CCC officers do not attend Training Committee meetings. They were given the information when it was felt it was appropriate and NCP started it because it was seen as a training issue.

## **8. Manchester Hole – the way forward**

- 8.1 GM said that certain things came out during the court case that were not reported fully before. One thing was that John Gunn said, in court, that he accepted that there had been a partial blockage between Manchester and Goyden, causing a back-up in Manchester Hole and, on the day, the hydrostatic pressure blew this debris out causing water levels to drop suddenly back to normal. He also agreed that most of the flooding was due to the new sink (opened in January 2005) just outside Goyden Pot. This new sink opened naturally, but has probably been enlarged by diggers.

GM said that he has been checking the new sink and at present it is well and truly blocked, but a couple of weeks ago there was daylight, so it is possible that this could happen again. GM feels that the inquest were not willing to listen to the history of water passing through the cave. Goyden is known to flood rapidly, leading to similar worries about Manchester Hole and the issue of the reservoir overflowing. Water coming over the reservoir is irrelevant in this case and regarding Manchester Hole in general. Local knowledge is what is important.

On the day of the incident the new sink was adding extra water, there was a blockage in the drain to Goyden Pot and the group were in the wrong place at the wrong time. We know that below Fossil Crawl does flood to the roof, but conditions were not 'normal' for what was known historically about the cave and the leader had no choice given the circumstances but to head for the surface. If he had known that the water would all disappear half an hour later, he would no doubt have sat it out with his group in the oxbow.

## **9. Assessors not performing to standard**

- 9.1 **CIC Assessment Modules** - Partly covered in 6.8 above.

- 9.2 **LCMLA Revalidations** – There have been a series of problems recently. Things have been done in the wrong order, a one-to-one revalidation workshop was done and then claimed as a standard revalidation and it was proposed to put fourteen people on a Revalidation Workshops with two Trainer/Assessors.

GM has also had questions about why a local scheme allowed revalidations out of area. This option has to exist in case people cannot get to a workshop in their own area, plus it gives them the opportunity to add caves from other areas/experience other areas. The reminder letters will soon be

sent out twelve months in advance and candidates will then effectively have two years to do a revalidation.

GM also stated that in the instance of a candidate having more than one area, it is the Trainer/ Assessor's job to contact a Trainer/Assessor in the other area(s) (if necessary) to check competence.

## 10. Website

10.1 **BCA Home page** – In an attempt to clarify the difference between membership of BCA and registration to the LCMLA and CIC schemes, KS proposed having two brief paragraphs explaining the two things on the BCA Home page. She has emailed Glenn Jones (Membership Administrator), Les Williams (Webmaster), Dave Cooke (Treasurer), Nick Williams (as Line Manager of herself and Glenn) and GM asking for comments.

10.2 **Training Section** – Following several pieces of feedback from candidates about the website and one person in particular who knew nothing about BCA, KS proposed a complete overhaul of the training section, including adding something to the Training heading in the left-hand column along the lines of “Training – LCMLA & CIC Schemes”. TR suggested “Training/Qualifications”. KS had also suggested at the last NCP meeting adding a FAQs page to help answer common queries.

All agreed that this section of the website needs an overhaul and offered other feedback. It was agreed to add Sections 4 and 5 to the existing pdf copy of the new Edition 4 LCMLA Handbook, so that it can be downloaded as a whole. It would appear that there are some Revalidation Workshop dates may be missing from the Northern England Panel – **KS to check their last set of minutes for these and add them if necessary.**

## 11. Any Other Business

10.1 **GM: Request for Exemption** – GM had received an email from Alan Fielding from Scotland, for exemption from CIC training for himself and two friends. As they are not even registered for LCMLA, it was not felt that this was appropriate and that they should be advised to start with Level 1 training. **GM to respond.**

10.3 **KS: Jez Parr's TA Status** – Jez has completed his training to be a Level 1 Trainer/Assessor and has been passed out by NCP. This was ratified by Training Committee. **KS to inform him.**

10.4 **KS: LCMLA Revalidation Workshop Application Form** – KS had realised very recently that we do not have a form to send out with reminder letters. She had put together a form using the CIC Workshop application form as a starting point and several changes/additions were suggested. **KS to make these amendments and start sending out asap.**

10.5 **IW: Scouts Advisor** – Ian James has resigned (he had almost completed his five year term) and they are now looking for a new Technical Advisor. There is to be an advert placed within the scouting organisation for a CIC to take over this role, but IW thinks that it is unlikely that a candidate will come forward. He asked if any technical queries could come to BCA and this was agreed. TR, as ACI Rep, offered to send an email regarding the above to all ACI members, if this was felt appropriate.

## 12. Dates and place of next meetings

12.1	10:00am – Monday, 19 May 2008	Stafford
	10:00am – Monday, 8 September 2008	Stafford
	10:00am – Monday, 8 December 2008	Stafford

The meeting closed at 1:15pm.