



British Caving Association

Minutes of BCA Training Committee held on Monday, 8 December 2008
at Staffordshire Council Staff Club, Stafford

The meeting commenced at 10:00 am.

1. Present

Graham Mollard (GM)	Training Officer
Bob Mehew (RM)	Equipment Officer
Tom Peacock (TP)	Chairman of National Co-ordinating Panel
Tom Redfern (TR)	ACI Rep
Idris Williams (IW)	Voluntary Organisation Rep
John Cliffe (JC)	Co-opted
Nigel Atkins (NA)	DCA Training Officer
Juliet Parker-Smith (JPS)	Association of Heads Rep
Mary Wilde (MW)	Training Administrator
Karen Slatcher (KS)	ex Training Administrator

2. Apologies for Absence

Nigel Ball	Chairman of CIC Panel
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3. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2008

The minutes were accepted.

4. Matters arising

4.1 Nothing that will not be covered below.

5. NCP Report

- 5.1 **4.3 New aspirant CIC Trainer/Assessors** – Tom Peacock and Duncan Morrison were chosen as aspirant CIC Trainer/Assessors. Phil Baker was also chosen, but because he has only just passed out as an LCMLA Trainer/Assessor he will not start his probationary period until September 2009.
- 5.2 **8. Multi-activity Insurance-** taken up by 5/6 people already.
- 5.3 **Sponsorship** – Chips Rafferty suggested this option to help pay for the scheme and agreed to talk to Ben Lyon.
- 5.4 **4.4 Weather & Flooding Booklet** – Dave Baines is still working on this and there should be progress by February. MLT (UK) have agreed for us to use the diagrams from their Weather Handbook, written by Steve Long. Jo Ellis and Des Marshall had done some work towards a document of this type in the past and this will still be used, if still relevant.
- 5.5 **4.1 Geology Booklet** – The document got some criticism from John Gunn because it had been over simplified – mainly because information regarding free ions was not included. In the meantime, someone else with a geology background has come forward and offered their help.
- 5.6 **Level 3** – The suggestion has been made for an extra level that allows LCMLA leaders to teach SRT on short, straightforward pitches without deviations or rebelay.

TP and TR agreed that LCMLA is about leading people underground and CIC is about instructing them, and SRT falls into the instructional level. The situation should not arise where a 'guide', who does not have sufficient experience of rescue techniques, is teaching people underground. NA added that if an organisation feels the need for a particular pitch to be used, then their technical advisor could pass someone out to use abseil for groups or ascending on jammers, using a releasable rope.

The argument was also made that although Level 2 is quite adventurous, minimal skills are required because it is possible to use ladder and line on short pitches, ie Valley Entrance into KMC. If a leader feels the need to progress, why not go straight to CIC?

JPS confirmed that this is also the feeling of the CIC Panel.

KS said that adding another level would almost certainly produce more and complicated administration, which could be confusing.

IW said that something along the same lines had been proposed four or five years ago, but was not passed then.

It was agreed that this should not be discussed further at the present time.

- 5.7 **Child Protection** – This was brought up at the last Council meeting and it was agreed that there will be a review of the current BCA policy as it was felt that BCA should be promoting taking children underground.

IW had proposed the following wording:

- 2.05 – The BCA wishes to encourage the participation of children and young persons in caving and mine exploration, provided that:*
- a. the introduction of caving to these persons is carried out by suitably experienced adults;*
 - b. the introduction is done in a progressive manner attuned to the physical and mental capacities of the participants;*
 - c. During this introduction the conservation requirements of this unique environment are stressed as part of the ongoing development of the individual.*

to replace:

2.05 – Underlying this it must be borne in mind that BCA does not proactively promote the participation of young persons in caving or mine exploration. It takes this stance for a number of reasons:

- a. caving can often be a strenuous activity requiring a mature physical and mental approach;
- b. a working knowledge of weather patterns and limestone hydrology can be vital for safe caving;
- c. caves are a strictly limited physical resource which deserve a mature appreciation of their conservation requirements.

If it can be proved that caving is a sport for youngsters, it may be possible to gain new funding for BCA.

TR pointed out that BCA cannot be tied to two conflicting policies – the CIC scheme is in conflict with the present BCA policy. The last policy included a rider for members of the training schemes regarding the issue of there always been two adults with any youngsters and therefore could be lived with. It seems that the current policy has been pushed through very quickly.

GM asked for two people to go through the current policy and draft a new ‘all inclusive’ policy for discussion at the next Council meeting in January. TR suggested that IW should be involved as he had proposed the above change and NA offered to help. **IW/NA to circulate before the Council meeting on 10 January 2009.**

BM suggested that ‘vulnerable people’ should also be considered whilst drafting a new policy. He said that there is a legal definition of this and there are subtle differences from ‘young people’.

- 5.8 **Joint Services** – Steve Higgins, Commanding Officer, should be attending Training Committee meetings. Registering works in the same way and courses run by Chips Rafferty or Barry Albutt count as an exemption for Level 1 and Level 2. No complete assessment can be done within the military, one assessment must be done outside.

Steve and Barry have been offering information on military equipment etc and have said that all are welcome to go to Ripon and use their facilities.

- 5.9 **Revalidations** – A proposal was made to change the ratio of Trainer/Assessor to Candidates on an assessment or revalidation workshop from 1:6 to 1:8. NCP had agreed that this should remain at 1:6.

6. CIC Report

Nigel Ball was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments.

- 6.1 **Re-write of Handbook** – A timescale of January was agreed for completion of the re-write of the first module and the assessment procedure for the first module. The intention is to ensure that the results of an assessment get passed from one Trainer/Assessor to another, to ensure that if there are any weaknesses they can be re-visited later.

- 6.2 It was also agreed that a maximum of two Trainer/Assessors will see any candidate at CIC and there will be a lead assessor who will correlate the four modules.
This was agreed by all.
- 6.3 **Timescale** – A sub-committee has been agreed to review this.
- 6.4 **First three modules** – It has been proposed that these be done in two blocks of 3 days and 2 days.

7. Porth yr Ogof

The document needs to be presented at Council for a vote to be taken. The current document has a slightly amended map after Steve Higgins pointed out that the two shakehole exits near the resurgence were missing.

At the last Council meeting, the concern was that the landowner, the National Park, objected to the use of the resurgence entrance. TP has a letter from them, which confirms that they have no objection and BM suggested that a copy of this letter should be circulated at the meeting. Is Helen Pie definitely speaking on behalf of the National Park. Does Cambrian CC have a formal statement that states the opposite?

GM has received a letter from Mick Day supporting the idea of a site specific advice.

Overall it is felt that as cavers will use the resurgence entrance, whether they have permission or not, it is better to put advice out than not.

8. LCMLA – Core & Group Day Modular

Due to anomalies in assessing modules, in particular Module 4, a change in the wording of 2.5.1.d of the LCMLA Handbook has been proposed.

TR has requested that every candidate at Level 2 be assessed in a multi-pitch cave or, at the very least, more than one pitch.

GM said that a modular system had been proposed where a candidate could have Ladder & Lifeline Single Pitch, Ladder & Lifeline Multi-pitch or Ladder & Lifeline multi-pitch + SRT for Leader (see 5.6).

TR proposed the following for 2.5.1:

- d) The second part of the assessment for all Modules 1 to 6 requires a practical assessment at an appropriate location, normally underground. For Modules 1 and 3, the Trainer/Assessor will choose sites to enable all aspects of the syllabus to be assessed, including short climbs at Level 1 and more than one pitch at Level 2 For Modules 2, 4 and 6, the candidate should nominate a site that is equivalent to the upper level of difficulty of the sites on their submitted list and agree it with the Trainer/Assessor, noting that for Module 4, the suggested site must be one with a vertical element. For Modules 2 and 4 the candidate will also provide their own group (£ a minimum of five at Level 1 and four at Level 2), group equipment and optional assistant leader. The duration of the assessment is at the discretion of the Trainer/Assessor and would normally consist of a full day.

The above proposal was agreed by all..

9. Training Officer & Training Committee response to flooding

GM suggested, and it was agreed by NCP and CIC Panel, that we need to circulate a document bringing the attention all cavers' to the problems that have occurred with rescues in caves that flood on a regular basis.

TR reported that a recent article in Descent from CRO quotes “that two-thirds of incidents involved ‘instructor-led’ groups”. While it is true that there were 15 caving call-outs in 2008, over half of which involved flooding, only three of these incidents had anything to do with lead groups. There were 3 incidents at Long Churns and 2 of these 3 were instructed groups, the ‘two-thirds’ mentioned above.

During 2008 there were two serious near-misses involving LCMLA lead groups, either of which individually could have been worse than the incident in Moss Dale. Both incidents were inexcusable, as what happened was totally predictable – the weather forecast and waterlogged ground conditions,

the rain falling on groups on the day. The BCA-trained people were also highly qualified in other outdoor activities, one in canoeing one in mountain leadership, and their ability to interpret a forecast should not have been in doubt, but they made poor judgments. One leader ended up cut off from their group and the other nearly drowned trying to get out to get help – there are lessons to be learnt. Ingleborough Hall have changed their working practices so that one person is no longer solely responsible for making decisions about where to go.

It was reported that in Dow Cave neither of the people were qualified, but this is also not true, one was trained, but not qualified.

Kirklees Authority put a total ban of schools going into Long Churns. This has now been lifted and schools are now able to use providers, if school staff are happy that the provider has taken notice of what has happened. Outward Bound Ullswater had put their own ban on using any streamway caves, now lifted, which meant that more groups were going into other caves that are perceived to be less dangerous, such as Thistle Cave. Last January an aspirant CIC and the group they were leading only just escaped from Thistle Cave with their ears in water. In November, a group, expecting water levels to come up quickly, went straight through Thistle Cave to find that the water levels back at the entrance had risen by 18 inches.

On 11 May 2008, Great Douk flooded to the roof throughout most of its length upstream of the duck, with flood debris in the roof and at shoulder height in the cascades.

TR wants BCA to spell out the dangers as some LCLs operate individually or for centres whose technical advisors are there in name only, ie they are not CICs.

GM is happy to put together a document from TR's thoughts and his own and envisages that it will be added to the newsletter, which will reach all cavers. TP suggested mailing it to all cave leaders.

Training Committee agreed that GM and TR put together a document for the BCA newsletter.

There is a question of whether LCLs have sufficient pre-assessment experience to lead groups. Currently to get exemption from training candidates need to have undertaken 60 trips, 25 in different caves. TP has added this issue to the agenda for the next NCP meeting. BCA, as the NGB should be reviewing where the schemes are at, not just putting information out. TP has spoken to some members of the NCP and they confirmed that they feel candidates should have had more experience.

10. Finance

The balance of the Training Account currently stands at £7,132.74, but KS's wages are still to be taken into account. However, £5,000 was removed earlier in the year to the high interest account and all the payments for recreational training and youth leader grants have been taken from the Training A/c and they should not have done. Overall GM believes we have a buffer of about £4,000.

The various options suggested by NCP for raising more funds were discussed.

KS proposed that registration fees be raised by £5 – LCMLA from £40 to £45, CIC from £20 to £25 and the combined fee from £50 to £55 – and this was agreed by all.

11. New Training Administrator

Mary Wilde, the new Training Administrator, had been introduced to the committee and gave a brief outline of her experience as a caver and administrator.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 **BM: Equipment Team** – They have been reviewing what is in their handbook and the following was agreed at the last meeting:

“In respect of techniques, it is responsible for providing advice on new or developing techniques in caving, techniques required for the installation of fixed aids as covered by the fixed aids policy and an option for appraising equipment. By default therefore techniques in this context do not apply to personal caving skills.”

BM asked for a response from Training Committee. It was pointed out that most caving techniques are to do with personal caving skills and BM was asked for clarification. He admitted that he would need to take this back to the Equipment Team.

- 12.2 **IW: Scouts First Aid** – Would it be possible to accept the Scouts ‘First Response’ scheme as an acceptable first aid requirement for LCMLA and CIC. TR responded that it has always been a requirement to attend a two-day course with a practical element, whereas the scout course is a day (6-8 hours) with no element of assessment. GM agreed that it would not be possible to do this, but that there are many other options as courses are run at centres and by individual trainers.
- 12.3 **IW: Llanymynech Ogof Copper Mine** – IW has this mine on his Section 5. Dave Carlisle assessed it a couple of years ago and reported that Figure Eight passage, a particularly tight passage, should not be used. It was suggested that this was potentially because he was unable to check the passage. **GM to speak to Dave Carlisle about his reasoning.**
- 12.4 **GM: Graham Derbyshire** – He has completed the requirements to become a Level 1 Trainer/Assessor.
- 12.5 **GM: A CIC award holder** has written to GM with some queries.
- Prior to doing his CIC training the leader discovered at the last minute that he needed to do his SRT for Leader. He was also due to revalidate and was unhappy that his SRT for Leader did not revalidate his qualification.
 - A colleague’s Section 5 had Porth yr Ogof on it, but when they revalidated it became Porth yr Ogof (excluding deep water) - why are BCA putting riders on certain caves? GM had responded that there are now accepted routes in certain caves, certainly at Level 1 and this is the way it is.
 - He felt that mines involve more of a commitment than for any other NGB award. Training Committee did not agree – could use site specific.
- 12.6 **GM: Rocksport Access & Conservation-** GM attended a meeting. The CRoW Act is under review and there is a movement to look at the underground during this review – this may affect access to caves.
- 12.7 **GM: Skills Active Conference** – He will be attending on behalf of BCA - the conference is representing all NGBs to users.
- 12.8 **GM: AAC Committee Meeting** – GM will be attending a committee meeting on Wednesday.

13:00 Nigel Atkins left the meeting.

13. Dates and place of next meetings

10:00am – Tuesday, 5 May 2009	Staffordshire Council Social Club, Stafford
10:00am – Monday, 14 September 2009	Staffordshire Council Social Club, Stafford
10:00am – Tuesday, 8 December 2009	Staffordshire Council Social Club, Stafford

The meeting closed at 13:20.