



Agenda with Officers' Reports for the 2025 Annual General Meeting

Saturday the 7th of June 2025

Held in a multi-modal format via Zoom and in person at Clapham Village Hall, Cross Haw Ln, Clapham, Lancaster LA2 8DZI, starting at 10:00 am.

Click <https://zoom.us/j/97853403031?pwd=TNTyxfgqYC0jGhyFaQhsvogqA3KwPb.1> to join the scheduled Zoom meeting. Passcode: 312898.

Agenda Item No.	Agenda Item Name
1	Apologies for Absence
2	Persons present & Verification of Quorum
3	Current Composition of the BCA Council
4	Acceptance of the 2024 AGM's Minutes
5	Officers' Reports
6	Accounts
7	Election of BCA Council Members
8	Candidate Election Statements
9	Matters arising from the previous Annual General meeting
10	Proposals
12	Any Other Business
12	Chair's Closing Remarks

1.0 Apologies for Absence

2.0 Persons present & Verification of Quorum

"The quorum for any General Meeting shall be 10 individual members who are eligible to vote." – Article 7.6 of the Constitution of the British Caving Association.

3.0 Current Composition of the BCA Council

	Position	Name	Initials	Vote
BCA Executive	Chair (2024-27)	Rostam Namaghi	RN	N
	Treasurer (2024-27)	Chris Bolton	CJB	Y
	Secretary (2024-27)	Aidan Kuhlmann	AK	Y
Individual Members Representatives	Position 1 (2023-2025)	Jess Brock	JB	Y
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Andy Eavis	AE	Y
Group Member Representatives	Position 1 (2023-2025)	Aodhán Ó Gabhann	AG	Y
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Jenny Potts	JP	Y
Regional Council Representatives	Ogofa Cymru / Caving Wales	Allan Richardson	AR	Y
	CNCC	Todd Rye	TRY	Y
	CSCC	Linda Wilson	LJW	Y
	DCA	Mike Higgins	MH	Y
	DCUC	David Jean	DJ	Y
Constituent Body Representatives	Assoc. Caving Instructors	Stephan Natynczuk	SN	Y
	BCRA	John Gunn	JG	Y
	BCRC	Emma Porter	EP	Y
	CDG	Claire Cohen	CC	Y
	CHECC	Tom Phillips	TP	Y
	NAMHO	Steve Holding	SH	Y
	National Caving Scout Active Support Unit	Tony Radmall	TR	Y
	William Pengelly CST	Richard Vooght	RV	Y
Working Group Convenors	Conservation & Access Committee	Victoria Kocher	VK	N
	Training & Equipment	Steve Gray	SG	N
	Youth & Development	Isaac Neale	IN	N
	Countryside Rights of Way			N
	IT			N
	Publications & Information	Zac Woodford	ZW	N
	Qualification Management Committee	George Plant	GP	N
	Radon			N
	Constitution & Governance			N
Other Positions	FSE Rep	Allan Richardson	AR	N
	Insurance	Josh White	JW	N
	Newsletter Editor			N
	Safeguarding Officer	Chris Boardman	CBD	N
	UIS Rep	Ged Campion	GC	N
	BCL Representative	Jenny Potts	JP	N
BCA Staff	Artificial Cave	Katie Eavis	KE	N
	Bookkeeper	Karen Lydon	KL	N
	Training Admin	Mary Wilde	MW	N
	Membership Admin	Katie Eavis	KE	N

4.0 Acceptance of the 2024 AGM's Minutes

5.0 Officer Reports'

5.1 Executive

5.1.1 Chair (Rostam Namaghi)

When I first joined the BCA council 10 years ago it was a highly structured organisation that depended on a few key volunteers. These people were very inspiring and they showed me what can be achieved through a tightly knit network and the power of pooling our resources. Unfortunately the subsequent decade saw the organisation go from stability to chaos, and not overnight. The way it happened was slow, a few key people left and the rulebook was not consistently applied. Systems that relied on a lot of behind-the-scenes work fell apart.

So one year ago when I came in, I wasn't surprised to have no handover. A lot of things had to be reworked from scratch, as we've been muddling through since before Covid. Chris Bolton really deserves a lot of credit - from managing the response over the data breach, to Stripe not recognizing us as an entity that can take payments, to highlighting reports and policies that need to be filled to meet our insurance requirements, he really has done an excellent job and I cannot stress enough how thankful I am for his efforts. A lot of the things highlighted in his report will now become more automatic and done by the system rather than need a volunteer to step into the breach and reinvent the wheel each time.

My own work this year has been focused on recruitment and development. We have a new Y&D and C&A convenor, the P&I group is growing and publishing, and T&E has many volunteers and shows promise of becoming productive. Volunteers don't grow on trees and people need guidance, support and most importantly time. We also need to show that we value their efforts, and that's why I'm keen that we continue to professionalise the organisation. We have seen the benefits of moving routine work to our staff, who I cannot thank enough for their work - Katie, Mary and Karen really care and they provide reliable service for jobs that need doing. The membership is quick, responsive and easy. The books are kept up to date. The library is maintained and QMC continues to function well. Contracting out our IT work to Simon has allowed things to become more functional and secure. Their work means that we can get the basics done well and frees up our volunteers to pursue their passions on top of this.

An organisation as large as ours shouldn't be operating on a shoestring budget. We have run down our reserves by not adjusting for inflation and it's left us in a limited situation. We can plan for the next twenty or thirty years, the BCA isn't going to just disappear. Things like spending thousands a year on rent for the library, would be better going towards a mortgage. We should be maintaining the reserve not just for disaster

(like the loss of a club hut) but for positive action - but we cannot do this if our house is not in order. The next step to modernise our National Governing Body is to look at whether we should become a company limited by guarantee, and the changes that will be needed to facilitate this. We will need widespread engagement and time to listen to feedback - and so I anticipate it needing more than 2 years.

We will have other challenges to face in that time, and the most significant was recently highlighted by the *Darwall vs Dartmoor National Park Authority* case. The dismissal of the appeal rejected the narrow interpretation of the right of access, which supports BCA's existing policy position; that CRoW does cover caving. We need to be more effective in representing cavers on a national level, and rather than going down a legal route, we are more likely to make a difference with some strategic campaigning. This needs to start with revamping the dormant CRoW working group following the AGM, and owning that title of a National Governing Body.

I would like to say what an honour it has been to represent British Caving in discussions with the SUI, UIS and FSE amongst many others. It was something new to me that I hadn't expected, to feel the warmth and respect other organisations have for British Caving and Cavers. Lastly, I could not close this report without mentioning the phenomenal work and the once in a generation level finds being uncovered in the Forest of Dean. The work those cavers have put in really showcases the very best of our caving community and makes me proud to be a caver.

5.1.2 Treasurer (Chris Bolton)

Annual Accounts

The 2024 annual accounts show a deficit of £21k, compared to £4k in 2023. The increase in insurance premium for £20M cover rather than £10M was a major contributor. Setting up the new membership system using JustGo was significant in the year, but in future most of the running cost will be balanced by a saving in staff time and no longer printing and posting out plastic cards. Modernisation of our IT, for both efficiency and security, will be cost neutral in the longer term but during the transition we have been paying for both old and new systems. Regional Council claims were higher than 2023, but vary from year to year depending on the amount of conservation and access work necessary.

Reserves are £144k, of which £80k is earmarked as Insurance Reserve and £61k as General Reserve, leaving a margin of only £3k before we dip into funds which we have previously agreed to retain for emergencies. 2024 was the last year in which we could keep membership fees down by drawing on reserves. Despite the fee

increase agreed last year, the budget for 2025 anticipates a deficit of about £6k.

Looking forward, we need to balance income and expenditure and have a margin for development as discussed below and in the Chair's report. BCA was set up to collect membership fees, bulk buy insurance and disburse money to Regional Councils and other constituent bodies. While we must ensure we don't waste money, cutting expenditure is both difficult and contrary to BCA's purpose. Fees are substantially lower than parallel organisations like BMC and Paddle UK. In order for BCA to provide a useful service to cavers and make sure it operates safely and legally, fees will need to go up again for 2026 or 2027.

Treasurer's role

I have had a busy year. My immediate task was to complete the transfer from the previous Treasurer and gain full access to bank accounts and other online systems covering tax and similar matters. For the bank and investment accounts, this took considerable effort as much of the information about how to do this can only be viewed once access is obtained.

The Constitution requires two people to authorise every transaction, unless Council agrees otherwise for specific instances. This is good practice, but was not the case when I took over. Council agreed an amount below which one person could authorise, but it turned out that the bank's system does not allow that, so I have implemented dual signatures for everything.

When BCA had surplus reserves, the main control on spending was that it gave value for money, and the amount spent was of lesser importance. With limited spare reserves, this mindset had to change from spending to budgeting. This was perceived by some as an attempt to take control away from Regions. The intent, however, was not to cut spending but to predict it, so that we know how much we need and can take action if necessary.

A major task for me, in my first year as Treasurer, was to understand the huge spreadsheet used to produce the annual accounts. My objective was to make this as rigorous as possible to get an accurate understanding of how much it actually costs to do what BCA does. I found it necessary to make some adjustments to the accruals in the 2023 accounts to achieve this. John Sheehy volunteered to scrutinise the accounts and was very helpful in advising me on accounting practice.

As a member of the BCA Executive, I have attended meetings of CNCC and DCA, to improve links with the Regional Councils.

BCA staff

I inherited responsibility for BCA's part time staff. This is not a big role as they know their jobs well and manage themselves. They sometimes ask me for guidance. I authorise their expenses and review their time bookings.

The staff do BCA and BCRA membership admin, assist with bookkeeping and insurance, administer BCA's professional instructor qualifications (QMC), look after the artificial cave and other miscellaneous tasks. They also work for the British Caving Library, for which BCRA reimburses BCA. They work from home or in the Library, to which I have made two visits to keep in touch. I have assisted Aidan with a review of BCA Health and Safety Policy, as we have specific legal responsibilities as their employer.

JustGo have been providing the framework for QMC for several years and have now been engaged to handle BCA's membership admin as well. This is now much easier to run, more secure and more versatile, and we hope clubs and individuals are finding the same.

Business Risk Assessment

For many years, BCA has been allocating funds to Reserves, but particularly for the General Reserve it has not been clear what events it is required to cover or how the amount required was arrived at. Now that reserves are tight, we need to know if this amount is adequate or excessive. It is also important for any organisation to understand the risks it is exposed to, in order to mitigate the consequences. I have therefore initiated a formal Business Risk Assessment and circulated a draft to some key contributors. If any BCA members have experience in this area I would welcome more volunteers.

While still a draft, some conclusions are already apparent. BCA's status as an unincorporated association makes many things, such as opening a new account with a bank or payment agency, more difficult. It also exposes both BCA and its officers and members to unnecessary risk. I can find no other national sport or recreation body that is still unincorporated, and many individual caving clubs have formed themselves into limited companies. A company limited by guarantee.

Overall, it is clear that, like every organisation, the drivers to manage our affairs in a more formal, documented way are increasing. This is often not the way cavers do things, but is something we must address.

IT and web services

In the absence of a volunteer IT Co-ordinator, BCA recruited Simon Mullens, a BCA member, to provide self employed IT support at a discounted rate. Simon has initiated a number of changes to modernise BCA's IT, making it more reliable, cheaper, capable and secure. I have acted as liaison between Simon and the BCA Executive and report here on Simon's behalf.

BCA email and web hosting was previously provided via a server maintained by BCA/BCRA volunteers and shared between BCA, BCRA and numerous other caving organisations and individuals. At one time BCA marketed a hosting service to defray the cost of the server, which was then made free of charge due to the administrative effort of collecting the fees. This server was overloaded and unreliable and Simon has co-ordinated transfer to a hosted service provided by Krystal. This continues to host caving organisations but individuals are being assisted to arrange their own hosting. BCRA's websites require a more complex server configuration and are being moved to a new BCRA server; once this is complete the old server can be decommissioned.

BCA's main website was hosted by Amazon Web Services (AWS) with the original intention of developing a membership database. Following the decision to move membership to JustGo, this was unnecessarily expensive and the website has now been moved to the new Krystal server and the AWS contract reduced substantially to provide backup storage only.

BCA email has been transferred to Google Workspace, which also provides a secure environment for officers and staff to share and store documents.

Simon also re-commissioned and managed the BCA's custom electronic voting system which will be used following the AGM. This year the emails to members will be sent using JustGo which should reduce the number ending up in spam.

5.1.3 Secretary (Aidan Kuhlmann)

Over the last year I have been working to improve the transparency and professionalism of the BCA as an organisation so that it can better represent itself with cavers and other bodies whom it interacts with on their behalf. This has primarily taken the form of working to better publicise the work of the National Council meetings and change the structure of the National Council's minutes to make it simple for cavers to understand who represents which bodies on the Council and how engaged and active they are, meaning cavers' representatives can be better held to account. In addition to this there is a new page on the website that details the council's previous motions, enabling everyone to clearly know what decisive actions have been taken and on which date so that the minutes can be found and the decisions better understood.

Additionally, I have been engaged with developing new Health and Safety Policies relating to the work conducted by BCA staff and volunteers in-line with our legal duties, work which I have done alongside Chris Bolton. These are administrative documents that do not affect cavers but are required for us to have as an employer and as a

volunteer reliant organisation. Consequently, we feel that these topics should be excepted from being required to be voted on by the entire membership under Article 7.11 of the Constitution. We do not believe mass scrutiny and input on these policies would be useful or productive to such a purely managerial task. Should the proposed amendment pass, we will bring these policies to the Council to discuss and ultimately vote on.

Looking forward, as part of improving the professionalism and organisation of the BCA it has become clear that the transition from an unincorporated association to an incorporated is necessary and prudent to ensure that the assets and any liabilities the organisation may accrue are separate to its officers and members. The current situation unfairly makes the volunteer officers of the BCA and, following them, all its members jointly liable for its actions. This is an untenable position if the BCA wishes to continue to develop and expand its activities as it seeks to further benefit cavers.

Furthermore, the BCA's status as an unincorporated body is a unique situation among other national sporting bodies, and especially so among for one which is both a National Governing Body and administers a professional award scheme as is done by the Qualifications Management Committee. Consequently, a Working Group will be established to navigate the legal complexities of such a transition, alongside suggesting the necessary constitutional amendments and operational changes that will need to be made to ensure a successful transition.

In light of this, following the AGM I will be bringing to the Council a new proposed Manual of Operations. This is the advisory document to the Constitution, which is non-binding, and provides the 'how' to the 'what' that is the Constitution. The changes are to update it to better fit the Constitutional and structural changes the BCA has undergone in recent years. The ambition is that it will work to ensure better accountability and transparency is provided for the activities of different subordinate branches of the BCA, such as Working Groups.

I have primarily been involved with two working groups: Training & Equipment and the dormant Countryside Rights of Way Group. With Training & Equipment I have worked to encourage the group to undertake new projects concerning the centralising of anchor research into one document and to begin the slow process of looking to approve BCA anchors in metamorphic and igneous rock mediums.

With the technically dormant Countryside Rights of Way Group I have been in discussions with them as we have followed the Darwall and Another v Dartmoor National Park Authority [2025] UKSC 20 appeal case with great interest. Please view this section of my report as a report of the group's work and not as solely my work, to not do so would be an injustice to the hard work of the BCA volunteers involved.

The case primarily concerned the interpretation of the phrase 'open-air recreation' as used in the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 s10(1) in relation to wild camping. It will not be lost on some members that this is the same phrasing as is used by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 s2(1). Consequently, while concerning the statutory interpretation of a piece of legislation that doesn't prima facie effect the interests of Caving, the case had the potential to cause big changes. Thankfully, the appeal has been dismissed in favour of a broad common-sense interpretation of the phrase. This judgement certainly benefits caving and reaffirms the BCA's CRoW Act Policy. However, as to how much it does so and how much proactive work that should be done following the case is yet to be determined. Reinstating the Working Group will be explored with a potential view to interacting with and coordinating ourselves with similar bodies to work to lobby the government for access improvements and to better inform the public of access rights. This year such work has been limited and shared between the Executive, of whom Chris Bolton deserves the most credit.

I should not fail to mention that as all Secretaries know, the job never fails to provide an eclectic and never-ending range of tasks and responsibilities – ranging from communicating with the media and answering enquiries from a parish group concerned about surveying flooded culverts to helping approve banking transactions for the Association, working on updating the website, collaborating with our counterparts at the Speleological Union of Ireland, attending caving events, and being involved with different Working Groups on top of the usual creating of agendas and minutes

5.2 Regional Council & Representative Body Reports (Optional)

5.2.1 CNCC (Todd Rye)

“Following our AGM on the 22nd March, there have been a few new faces added to the roster of elected officers, Kath Davis as treasurer, James Alderson as access officer, and Todd Rye as chair. Moves have been made to better represent independent (non-club affiliated) cavers by giving the individual cavers rep a vote on the council, and this will be addressed more by a working group going forward as well. Anchoring of caves continues, and topo audits are under way as well. Overall, the work remains the same as before, improving access and safety for cavers.

The great wheels of the training program continue to turn as well, with a good number of cavers signing up to learn and progress their skills.”

The above is excerpted from my report to the last council meeting.

Further to this, Tim Allen has been hard at work with his digging team, reopening and doing conservation work on North End Pot, which we hope to soon have anchored. Other bolting projects and conservation news can be found in the minutes for our AGM.

I would like to express a huge thanks to my predecessor Andrew Hinde, who led the organization very well for multiple years. His efforts in many of the CNCCs projects cannot go unrecognized, and we hope his talents will continue to grace our project agenda in the future.

5.2.2 DCA (Mike Higgins)

There is really nothing much to report since the last meeting as DCA's efforts to recruit a new Equipment Officer, in order for Pete Knight to move back to his Project Officer role, have met with no success whatsoever. Minor works on gates and shaft lids have continued to be carried out thanks to assistance from local covers but larger projects are at a standstill.

The new owners of Masson Quarry are carrying out works to tidy up and improve access and parking, and discussions have taken place regarding fitting a gate to the Great Masson Cavern entrance to reduce the problem of littering by inexperienced visitors. A site meeting has been arranged with representatives of the National Trust to discuss access to the newly discovered workings on Faucet Rake.

5.3 Working Group Convenor Reports

5.3.1 Conservation & Access (Victoria Kocher)

I have taken on the role of C and A Convener in January.

I am aware that at the previous AGM the annual allowances for each region for projects has been increased to £3,000. This allows each region to carry on with smaller projects.

The land purchase around Wet Sink in the Forest of Dean had been completed by Caving for Wales and the Forest of Dean.. A grant was procured for the Forest of Dean Cave Conservation and Access Group using the UK Cave Conservation Emergency Fun.

I have proposed a meeting of the C & A Working Group in June. I am waiting to hear back from some of the members to confirm the date. I am hoping that with regional representation I can get up to speed with conservation and access issues in all the regions. Consequently, I am unable to give a detailed report to the AGM. It will be interesting as the year progresses to see how C & A Working Group will operate within the new financial arrangements whereby the budget for major projects (ie those over £750) will be held by the Working Group. So far, I am unaware of any submissions for approval under the new regime.

5.3.2 Countryside Rights of Way (Dormant)

5.3.3 Information Technology (Vacant)

5.3.4 Publications & Information (Zac Woodford)

First of all, I would like to thank all the volunteers who have given their time to the P&I working group this last year.

I also would like to thank the other officers of the BCA for their patience with the P&I group during this last year.

This year has been characterized by an exploration of the space P&I occupies and what services we can provide our members.

However, that's not to say that we have been completely inactive. Thanks to the work of our volunteers, we produced the annual demographic report and are now in the position to imminently deploy a survey of our membership.

We are also in the process of compiling a handbook on how to operate a student caving club. We hope that this will prove to be an invaluable resource for future caving club committees.

I am now happy to say that we are in a strong position to deliver more for our members this coming year.

5.3.5 Qualification Management Committee (George Plant)

The QMC has been a busy place for the last year. The change over to JustGo is still throwing up the odd problem, and the addition of membership for the BCA added a bit more work, albeit very good and worthwhile work! Mary deserves a big thank you for all that she does.

All our course descriptions, syllabus and processes have either been rewritten or re-formatted over the last year, as well as a few new articles and useful documents. Gethin spends an inordinate amount of his free-time doing this, as does Rich so thank you to them too.

We have a small but really good team who all volunteer their own time to help with all sorts of matters, and it is all massively appreciated.

Northern mining has taken a step forward with Dave Hollingham putting in a great shift along with Dave Baines. A whole raft of venues have now been inspected and are good to go for visiting groups. These are in the North Pennines and the Lake District and have been without inspections for a while.

We have had a good number of registrations to the scheme throughout 2024 (it's hard to get financial year data, so this is just the last years).

Stats 2024	
Total Registrations	127
Log Books sold	19
Total Courses Authorised	312
Of Those Cancelled	66
Of Those Completed	230
Of Those Not Completed	16
Total Run	246

We also had a good number of candidates on LCMLA courses – 74, and 23 for CIC. We could really do with more Cave Leaders moving up to CIC and then some more CICs becoming Trainer/Assessors, so please apply!

5.3.6 Radon (Dormant)

5.3.7 Training & Equipment (Steve Gray)

The Group has been moving forward and evolving over the last year

We have not had a lot of meetings but there is a lot going on behind the scenes.

The group consist of the regional training officers and the people who assist them in their roles, The equipment officers and any interested parties that have specialist advice and roles to make the group function.

We are striving to get most people talking and working together to share information so as to not have to duplicate things

Some people still hold the view that training and equipment together is too big a group to manage and that we should split it again.

I hold the view that that this is correct in some instances but am happy to continue if that is what the memberships wishes.

The biggest thing we are dealing with is trying to collate all the bolting information and stocks.

Currently regions are contacting me for stock and I am authorising Alan to distribute what we have to recognised installers. He is keeping records of this.

We will need to resupply soon and decisions need to be made as to how we do this.

Most regions are running well subscribed training to BCA members and a lot of my contact with members is to steer them towards this.

I have had contact with a few clubs for club specific training and feel that we should set up a pathway for this.

Individual and new cavers contact me on average 6 times a month for guidance on how to access training and I am currently steering them towards the regions or local caving clubs.

New to Caving seems to be popular and I have had a few contacts with people who wish to take the sport up.

I would like to thank all the members of our group for their hard work, advice and contributions in keeping us going.

When I took this role on it was on the proviso that I had someone to take the minutes at the meetings as this is not something I feel I can do

properly, or am prepared to do whilst chairing a meeting. Unfortunately no one else wants to do this either. I would like to ask the membership if there is anyone who could help me on this please?

I am happy to continue in this role if the membership would like me to.

I am also happy to hand it over to someone with the drive and more time to give it the attention it deserves.

5.3.8 Youth & Development (Isaac Neale)

At the time of the AGM I will be passing my 8th month in the role of Youth & Development Officer. In this time there have been two main aims, both of which are still works in progress. The first one is getting Y&D running again in a project support function, offering support for projects that will enhance youth caving or provide opportunities to the youth caving community. The main tool at Y&D's disposal is its wide network of contacts and volunteers, through which a wide range of support can be offered to these people with projects and ideas they'd like to develop. This of course requires projects to act on however, and the second aim of mine is getting Y&D loud and shouty so people come to the working group with projects that we could provide assistance for.

The way I see it, in my own role as Y&D officer, my job is about constantly investigating new opportunities, throwing ideas at the wall and seeing what sticks. Coming into the role Y&D was at a total stand still with no ongoing projects. Subsequent actions have revolved around finding ones to start; a student surveying project was an early idea that was flirted with. Again though the idea had to revolve around the new doctrine of Y&D being project support, and I think the surveying project is a good case study to explain what I mean by this. The mind immediately jumps to one of "to get students surveying let's run a survey training weekend", however we know that these weekends, however amazing the training is, generally result in a good one off hit which subsequently has little follow up and the skills learnt quickly lapse. A student surveying project needs to be able to provide a structure in which students can regularly attend sessions and embed their skills. Unfortunately for the student surveying project in this case a suitable opportunity never arose. A search is still in place though and if you have a cave in mind that could do with re-surveying, and would be willing to get students involved with, please get in touch and let me know! And to be clear I'm not saying that a survey training weekend will never be run, but if one does happen it will only be run once there is a structure in place to continue practicing the techniques.

A larger project which I am excited about and will be happening when conditions are appropriate is being done in conjunction with the Descent Youth Correspondent. You can read about this more in the prior set of BCA minutes, but in short it is a video for a non-caving

audience focusing on promoting caving and specifically highlighting women in the community. I have also been reaching out to schools in my local area with an aim to eventually set up more family caving weekends. These provide great opportunities as they can target both demographics lacking in BCA membership; under 18s and 35-45. A great blueprint can be found in the family weekend ran in Derbyshire a few months ago (Independently of the BCA). Hopefully via liaising with the organiser of that event, and by locating willing volunteers around the other caving regions this could turn into a wider beneficial practice.

By Hidden Earth in September I'm hoping that the ball has been set rolling on these aims. With Y&D up and running it provides a more enticing sight for people to bring their own projects forward to.

As for the skills I personally bring to the Y&D officer role my enjoyment of chatting to people and continuing to build a larger network has been serving me well. I have picked up many new leads for Y&D projects in this way; Bristol university physics and electronics students producing a LIDAR survey of Wookey Hole, a scheme to re-home pump organs in caving huts (saving them from destruction and developing a speleomusical culture) and being approached by a local caving club about a Y&D angle to their upcoming speleological exchange trip with Cuba.

I am going to be around the Dales at the time of the BCA AGM weekend, if you run into me and would like to share your thoughts on Y&D I'd be more than happy to hear them. Similarly I will also be at Hidden Earth in September and equally happy to discuss any matters or hear ideas then. In the meantime please reach out to me on social media or via emailing youth@british-caving.org.uk.

5.4 Additional Reports by Appointed Officers

5.4.1 British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)

The British Caving Library (BCL) grew out of the former BCRA Library, and was inaugurated in 2009 thanks to co-operation and a promise of funding from BCA; now managed by BCRA but funded by both BCRA and BCA. BCL is now accessible online at any time; there are a knowledgeable Librarian, Library Assistants and volunteers to help with enquiries, from both Britain and abroad, or provide scans which can be emailed to you. BCL contains standard publications such as books, periodicals, maps, surveys, and aerial photos; items stored electronically and an increasing number of archive collections.

The British Caving Library (BCL) continues to expand its work and the services it offers to British cavers and others: foreign enquirers, non-cavers and even UK "officialdom". We continue to track the varying division between simple requests for a scan of an item, as opposed to carrying out some research for the enquirer and possibly involving

many hours of work. It is encouraging that so many of those we assist make a monetary donation to the Library and also that we receive acknowledgement for our help from authors of articles in caving journals as well as books.

The use of the Library for meetings and events continues with BCRA Council Meetings and Field Events; DCA Council Meetings and AGM as well as less formal events with visiting speakers, etc. We are able to manage these meetings face-to-face and online as well, allowing people to participate via our online systems. Although the majority of our work in dealing with enquiries is dealt with online we are also happy to host visitors wanting to do their own research.

Our online presence is due to long-term volunteers: creating and maintaining the Online Bibliography/catalogue, the BCRA Online Archives (photographic material) and the Audio Archive. All this information can be accessed via the Library website: caving-library.org.uk. Our Librarian runs a Facebook page with over 2000 followers from Britain and abroad and we also post to UKcaving.com.

The BCL Online bibliography/catalogue continues to grow with information on all material coming into the Library passed on electronically by the Library staff to the volunteer who maintains it. It also includes information on items we do not ourselves hold so that it has become a very valuable resource for all enquirers.

The collection of BSA/Simpson archive material, on permanent loan from the Library to the British Geological Survey (BGS) at Keyworth since 2009, has at long last been made accessible to enquirers online via BCRA Online Archives. This includes the main "Record Books", photos, correspondence, documents, finished surveys, and Log Books of various kinds - an enormous archive which now has an online index to help enquirers. The project has been achieved by the co-operation of BGS staff in Keyworth and Edinburgh, volunteers from Grampian Speleological Group doing the scanning and our volunteer IT experts.

In addition to the BSA/Simpson material the BCRA Online Archives also host other important collections: the largest of these are the Peter Binns photographic collection and diaries (the originals remain in Australia with the family) and the Jack Myers collection (the originals held by Northern Pennine Club). Other collections include material from the 1920's up to and including material from the 1990's.

Cataloguing the backlog of archive surveys and maps is done by our two volunteers and these items are stored at Glutton Bridge; more such material continues to appear in the form of donations. The backlog of modern surveys and maps is being dealt with by our Library Assistant and volunteers with new surveys added to the catalogue as they arrive.

A major collection of material received during the autumn of 2024 came from the late Don Mellor: two complete van-loads of it, unfortunately unsorted and uncatalogued. As well as important archive material this also includes hundreds of duplicates of books, journals and surveys which the Library already has, giving us huge task to sort through and select what we should keep. In addition we received a generous donation from Oxford University C.C. of the collection left by the Late John Wilcock and, again, this included some duplicates. With the help of the BCA Membership Administrator we have been able to contact all the BCA clubs with a Library with a view to offering to pass on any of these duplicates they want. Once we have the complete list to circulate and the clubs have told us what they would like to have we shall organise boxes of items to be passed on via "caver post" or at Hidden Earth.

We try never to throw away duplicate publications but do our best to arrange for them to be passed on to other clubs or cavers. Hidden Earth 2024 enabled us to put a large amount of material on our BCL stand, leading to donations amounting to over £700 to the Library funds from cavers who helped themselves to items. Further donations of over £100 came from a BCL stand at the Derbyshire Explorers Forum in February 2025.

The increasing amount of archive material we have received has already made BCL, de facto, the British Caving Archive and we maintain links with other caving or independent organisations which hold collections of caving archives. This increase has implications for storage and costs and we are having to assess what we might need to do to manage both the archive and the ongoing library collections as the space we have available to us at Glutton Bridge is limited.

5.4.2 FSE Representative (Allan Richardson)

The FSE meets twice a year, I and most of the other delegates were unable to attend the one in Southern Italy in November 2024 for a variety of reasons, in my case it was going to be difficult and expensive to get there due to the location and time of year. I requested to join online, but was told that this was not possible. Interestingly the FSE Forum in May of this year was online, with a large attendance. It seems they got the message.

The meeting was interesting seeing how the FSE works, an hour or so was to do with sorting out competing claims as to who represented Greece on the FSE, the result of the vote was that the main Greek organisation (The Hellenic Speleological Federation) was the FSE representative.

The rest of the meeting comprised mainly of reports on various projects carried out under the auspices of the FSE and being financially supported by the FSE. The details are in the FSE Newsletter.

The FSE is currently supporting a number of Europe wide projects, these have been advertised by the BCA with a request for cavers and clubs to get involved.

A number of British based caving expeditions have been supported by the FSE, both in terms of cash and equipment, all that is asked is that they supply a report on the expedition to the FSE. Guidelines for funding applications are on the FSE website, the funding covers projects both in Europe and worldwide.

5.4.3 Insurance Manager (Josh White)

As advised in previous reports, the majority of the work as insurance manager is carried out around renewal periods, and most of this has been handed over primarily to Katie to undertake the administration, on a paid basis.

I have fielded several queries in the meantime and continue to work on updating the FAQs on the website.

I've struggled to upload the latest documents to the website due to access issues, but hope to have this resolved shortly.

As of this AGM, I will be formally stepping down and the insurance@british-caving.org.uk inbox will be monitored by Katie, but I continue to be available to Katie the executive for specific advice where required.

5.4.4 Safeguarding Officer (Chris Boardman)

5.4.5 Newsletter Editor (Vacant)

5.4.6 UIS Representative (Ged Champion)

I attended the last UIS bureau on 15th May.

The main issues are:

International Congress of Speleology (ICS) 2025

The 19th ICS is being held in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil between 20th and 27th July. The General Assembly Meetings (GAMs) will be held on 20th and 27th July. Field trips are organized before and after the main event. For more information see volume 63-1 Page 13 of the UIS Bulletin at <http://uis-speleo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/uisb631.pdf> We anticipate strong UK attendance to promote ICS 2025.

International Day of Caves and Karst

Work continues to promote the UNESCO International Day of Caves and Karst initiative (IDCK) The purpose of this is long-term conservation and sustainable management of caves and karst worldwide. Work continues to encourage national organisations and bodies to support this initiative. BCA, BCRA and Descent have pledged their support.

Cave Rescue

The 18th European Cave Rescue Association (ECRA) meeting will be held in Wojcieszow in Poland 25 to 28th September.

Habe Prize 2025

For those wishing to submit an application for the Habe prize, promoting cave and karst protection, you will find details on following link: <http://uis-speleo.org/index.php/karst-and-cave-protection-commission/>

International Congress of Speleology (ICS) 2029

A planning group has been established to submit a comprehensive UK bid for 2029. The production of a promotion video showcasing UK is currently under way.

Romania has also submitted a bid for 2029 ICS. Delegates at the ICS General Assembly Meeting on 27th July in Brazil will cast their vote to decide which country should host the ICS in 2029.

I will be stepping down from the UIS bureau this year and from the role as UK delegate to the UIS. However, I'm happy to be UK vice delegate if there are no other takers.

5.5 Reports by BCA Staff

5.5.1 Membership Administrator & Artificial Cave (Katie Eavis)

Membership:

The New membership system:

At the last AGM in 2024 we were in the process of moving BCA membership to JustGo.

We went live on the new system in September and ran all of the 2025 renewals through the new membership system.

This was a big moment for unifying BCA services.

There has always been a disconnect between the qualification scheme and membership, and in recent years club membership and individual membership were also being managed via different systems.

It is brilliant to have been able to get them all on one platform.

Now a member can log in to one system, update their personal details once (if required) and then administrate their own membership of BCA, BCRA, the qualifications scheme and their club memberships all in one place.

Of course there were some teething issues this year, and it was a steep learning curve for the club administrators, but overall it went pretty smoothly and certainly has lots of advantages over the old system for

me and the clubs. (which I could write a whole essay on, but I won't do that here....)

Most clubs are happily using the new system, as are most individual members. A few clubs, and individuals, haven't yet got to grips with it. However I am very happy to do this for them, for as long as needed.

Throughout the renewal period, and going forward I will continue to change and improve the membership system in response to feedback from clubs/ individuals and my own understanding of how it works, and how cavers are interacting with it.

2025 Renewals

Seven clubs who were 2024 members didn't renew for 2025. This is more than most years, although we usually lose 3 or 4 a year.

Some of these clubs have just dwindled and aged, and therefore haven't re-joined.

The majority of them have made the decision to join BCA as individual members instead this year. These clubs were all very small and essentially just friends who caved together. They were not making use of any of the benefits of joining BCA as a club.

New/ returning clubs since the last AGM:

Combined Services Caving Association and Newcastle University Caving Club have re-joined after a gap of a few years.

Newly formed clubs Out on Rock and Subterranean Exploration Club have joined BCA.

Established club Morgannwg Caving Club have decided to join BCA for the first time.

Cardiff Underground explorers joined BCA as a new club in 2024, but have decided they aren't using the club in a way that requires BCA membership, so didn't renew for 2025.

Artificial Cave:

The BCA has now been lending out the cave for over 14 years!

In 2024 the cave went to 10 events.

It has been to 3 events so far in 2025, with another 10 booked.

The storage cost for the trailer is paid up until August 2025.

The trailer was serviced last in October 2024.

Over winter Aidan reviewed and suggested improvements to the cave's documentation – the information sheet and risk assessment.

Insurance:

This year I helped Josh with the insurance renewal. I completed the pre-renewal questionnaire, for Josh to review and have added the Hidden Earth equipment to the policy.

The more common insurance queries I am able to answer, but I pass anything to Josh that is more complex/ unusual.

Communications including social media:

In 2024 I sent brief membership newsletters to the clubs in Jan, May and October.

This year I have only sent one in February so far.

I am aiming to get into a more regular pattern of sending these out to clubs, ideally 4 a year. But with the BCA work being very seasonal it can be hard to find the time.

I aim to post on the BCA Facebook page, and UKcaving regularly to update our members about the BCA and what we do. This mostly relates to the areas I know about - membership, the cave or caving related events. However it would be great to hear more about the rest of the work BCA do, such as conservation, access, equipment etc.

So if you ever have any news/ items that would interest BCA members please feel free to email me and I can help.

6.0 Accounts

7.0 Election of BCA Council Members

Roles and Vacancies up for Election	Incumbent	Nominee	Proposer	Secunder
Individual Members Representative - Position 1	Jess Brock			
Group Members Representative - Position 1	Aodhán Ó Gabhann			
Vacant Roles Appointed by Council				
Countryside Rights of Way (Dormant) Convenor	Vacant			
Information Technology Working Group Convenor	Vacant			

Radon Working Group (Dormant) Convenor	Vacant			
Constitution & Governance (Dormant) Convenor	Vacant			
Newsletter Editor	Vacant			

N.B.: Vacant Roles approved by Council are included to provide continuity and a record for the AGM, though volunteers for these roles should make themselves known to Council.

8.0 Candidate Election Statements

No candidate election statements have been received at the time of publication.

9.0 Matters arising from the previous Annual General Meeting

No proposals were brought forward, and neither were any discussions undertaken under Any Other Business.

10.0 Proposals

10.1 To amend Article 7.9

Current Wording:

"Any person may speak at a General Meeting, subject to the Chair's agreement. All motions must be first voted on by individual members present at the meeting and eligible to vote. All motions with support from at least 25% of those individuals who vote, or 10 individuals (whichever is lower) must be taken forward to an online ballot of all individual members eligible to vote."

Proposed Amended Wording:

"Any person may speak at a General Meeting, subject to the Chair's agreement. All motions must be first voted on by individual members present at the meeting and eligible to vote. Any motion supported by at least 90% of the votes cast is passed at the AGM without further action. Any motion not passed at the AGM must be taken forward to an online ballot of all individual members eligible to vote."

Proposer: Rostam Namghi **Seconder:** Aidan Kuhlmann

This constitutional change is aimed at reducing the number of amendments that go out to a full member ballot. The intended purpose is to allow the passage of policies that affect the organisation but are not contentious or need regular updating - like the privacy policy or health and safety policy for example.

It would also allow some consequential voting at AGMs but with a safeguard to allow a national vote. This is to prevent regional interests stacking a meeting and avoid the back-and-forth policy change seen pre-Covid.

The changes that allowed us to hold AGMs during Covid brought easier ways to ballot members but we should ballot members for consequential things.

- Rostam Namaghi

10.2 That the following policies be delegated to the National Council for regular update: Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding, Bullying and Harassment, and Privacy Policy.

Proposer: Rostam Namaghi **Secunder:** Aidan Kuhlmann

This would allow for updates of the current policies that have not been politically contentious to be done by council rather than go to AGM. This means they could be updated through the year but cannot extend to new policies - this would be helpful to tweak policies to comply with insurer/banking/employment requirements.

- Rostam Namaghi

11.0 Any Other Business

No items have been received by the Secretary.

12.0 Chair's Closing Remarks