

JUNE 3, 2018



AGM MINUTES

DEAN FIELD STUDIES CENTRE, PARKEND, FOREST OF DEAN

PRESENT

Persons identified as representing a group ("rep.") provided written evidence to the Secretary at the time of the meeting

Andy Eavis	AE	Chair
Robin Weare	RW	BCA Acting Treasurer/Hades CC rep.
Nick Williams	NW	BCA Acting Secretary
Angus Sawyer	AS	
David Jean	DJ	DCUC (Plymouth Caving Group)
Richard Vought	RV	Pengelly rep.
Mike Higgins	MH	
Andrew McLeod	AM	EUSS rep
Wendy Williams	WW	BCA Membership
Tim Allen	TA	CRoW, CNCC rep.
Jane Allen	JA	
Dave Tyson	DT	Wirral Caving Group rep.
Stephan Natynczuk	SN	
Les Williams	LesW	WCC rep., BCA Publications & Information Officer
David Botcherby	DB	CHECC rep.
Louise Baddeley	LB	Sheffield USS rep.
Paul Taylor	PT	FODCCAG rep.
Steve Holding	SH	NAMHO rep.
Idris Williams	IW	Shropshire Scouts CT rep.
Rostam Namaghi	RN	BCA Youth & Development
Jenny Potts	JP	BCA Library/DCA Rep.
Geoff Dommet	CD	Buckfastleigh Caving Club rep.
Doug Parker	DP	BCG
Laura Elson	LE	BCA
Bob Billings	BB	
Helen (Hellie) Adams	HA	DIM
Andrew Hinde	AH	DIM/BCA Conservation & Access Officer
Chris Boardman	CB	BCA & KESCC
Nigel Atkins	NA	BCA Training Officer
Frank Tully	FT	WCC DIM
Alan Butcher	AB	CSCC rep.
Matt Wire	MW	BCA/BEC
Bernie Woodley	BW	SWCC
Stuart France	SF	Cambrian CC rep.
Sam Atkins	SA	DIM
Tony Radmall (Badger)	TR	West Sussex Scouts rep.
Will Burn	WB	DIM, BCA Youth & Development Group
George Plant	GP	DIM
David Cooke	DC	DIM/Cheddar Caving Club

The meeting commenced at 10.35

1. Chairman's Welcome

AE opened the meeting and thanked all for attending.

2. Apologies

David Webb, Andrew Ward, David Gibson, John Gunn, Phil Baker, John Hine, Ged Campion

3. Items for Any Other Business

Application for Group Memberships:

Lancaster University – re-joining, 100 word statement received.

Proposed: NW

Seconded: LesW

Lancaster University Membership accepted

4.1 Minutes of last AGM:

Corrections: 11 June Rotary centre

Proposed – Accepted as read

Proposed: RW

Seconded: JP

In favour: All

Opposed/Abstained: None

AE to sign

4.2 Matters arising for the Minutes of the last AGM

NW: Nothing specific to AGM

Proposed – Nothing arising, move on to next item

Proposed by: AW

Seconded: TR

In favour: All

Opposed/Abstained: None

REPORT:

5. Chairman's Report – Andy Eavis

Well, this will be my last BCA report as Chairman. I have now done 3 consecutive, 3-year terms, 9 years really is enough for anybody. When I took over from Mick Day in 2009, his final report wished me well and hoped I would look forward to a less stressful period of 'peripheral participation'. I am not at all sure that's happened.

In 2009 Damian Weare's AGM report amounted to 14 pages, Damian's last AGM report when he finished in 2016 went to 64 pages and last years' report was slightly shorter at only 48 pages. This could be an example of the increase of complexity that has gone on within the British Caving Association over these 9 years.

Interestingly, in 2009 - 23 people attended the AGM, in 2017 - 47 people attended, and finally for those of you who think the BCA members have gone down, in 2009 we had a total membership of 4,803 members, in 2017 we had a total membership of 6,148 members. Everything in BCA has increased significantly over the 9 years I have been in office, particularly the complexity! There clearly is a need to look at the British Caving Association in a different way: not many organisations of this complexity are operated purely by voluntary personnel and there is definitely a case for a review of BCA's structure.

When I started 9 years ago, my first major problem was the North/South divide over techniques, particularly ladders, bolts and SRT. Eventually common sense prevailed and new bolts were introduced which I am sure is to everybody's advantage.

Later there were a number of problems with professionally led caving parties and a number of accidents resulted in some very difficult situations. It was clear training needed a revamp and people had to view liability in a different way. I think it is resolving itself with the split between QMC and recreational training. Although there has been lack of understanding of how this split is set up, I think it is now clear that one organisation handles the training of trainers and the qualifications involved with this. The other organisation handles recreational training at general club level and also reports separately directly to BCA Council. Representatives of each organisation will sit on both committees as they decide between them.

The search for a good database for training is still continuing after many years. As many people will know an organisation called Tahdah was selected but looked financially risky and indeed recently part of their organisation has gone bankrupt, luckily before BCA got involved with them. QMC are now researching a selection of the databases and will go through the appropriate channels in BCA using the IT and financial expertise to try and get an effective long-term solution.

There is a lot said about problems with encouraging young people to come into caving and there is a worry in this regard. However, looking at the figures there is definitely a situation where people cave before starting families and then they have a sabbatical while the children grow up and then go back to caving again. If you look at the numbers in age, there is a drop between 30 and 50 years of age. I suppose this is inevitable, however, there is in my opinion an increase in night caving trips over what there used to be so there may be more people active in this age range than we realise.

Similarly, we are trying to bring young people into BCA Council, however this is always going to be very difficult because anybody with the right experience and ability who is working full-time is going to have a lot of trouble devoting adequate time to the British Caving Association matters. Looking back over the history of the BCA and similar organisations they are predominantly composed of retired people.

We should however undoubtably make every effort to encourage young people, and there are situations where people are not working full time and we have had some excellent BCA officers in that situation, a recent example being Damian Weare.

There have been other notable events over the past year. The Ghar Parau Foundation continues to have a number of good quality expeditions applying to it and I am sure the encouragement it gives makes a lot of difference to the success of British expeditions around the world. Hidden Earth was again a great success under the leadership of Les Williams, he is capable of a high level of leadership and Chairmanship.

The Royal Geographical Society event in December was a great success. All the talks have now been edited by Sid Perou and will be available very soon online. The quality of the talks was fantastic and my great thanks to everybody involved. Virtually all the speakers who were approached agreed to give their lectures and it was very much a showcase of British caving success over the last fifty years.

The number of attending delegates over the weekend was a little disappointing, although the sell out to the general public on the Friday night and the Royal Geographical Society on Monday night was very rewarding. I don't fully understand why cavers don't attend their own bespoke event, but the redeeming feature is the excellent lectures will soon be available online.

Current situation - access to caves continues to be a serious ongoing problem and indeed there are signs it is getting worse and could indeed into the future get worse still. We have a certain number of professional bodies who don't understand caving and would be delighted if nobody ever explored or enjoyed themselves in caves again. We must be mindful of this and particularly when we think of the situation with radon and carbon dioxide in caves. We need to have a professional front to make sure there's no problem in this connection. Anything we can do to help the general public and the aforementioned organisations understand that our sport is enjoyable, safe, sensible and pushing forward the boundaries of human knowledge both in pure exploration and scientific terms should be encouraged.

I am sure in the fullness of time the CROW Act will be seen to apply to caves, however we need to have a very robust access and conservation programme in place when that happens.

We talk about bringing BCA administration into the 21st Century and using electronic means to distribute information and receive back information from our members, all very good indeed and it is starting to happen, however we must be mindful of the recent Data Protection Regulation which again, means we need to keep our professionalism at a high level.

As mentioned earlier, we do need to encourage young people into caving. We must avoid putting unnecessary restrictions but similarly we must avoid subjecting young people to unnecessary risk. The Council of Higher Education Caving Clubs (CHEC) has come into action during my term in office and this is a very worthwhile idea and although I don't really want it to suffer any more regulation, keeping a relationship with BCA is a good thing for both organisations.

Similarly, establishing a Youth and Development organisation within BCA is a great idea!

Other organisations under the BCA umbrella are of course BCRA with its library. These continue to do very well, and I am grateful for the amount of work put in by its volunteers. John Gunn, Chairman of BCRA is doing an excellent job and I think there is a lot of evidence that the scientific reputation of BCRA is going from strength to strength. There's a lot happening in this area which is very exciting for the future.

Going forward I intend to keep an involvement with BCA Council and I would like to continue to help Dave Rose with his CROW campaign working with Andrew Hinde in Conservation and Access. In addition, I have been talking to Ric and Pat Halliwell in connection with a group to look at constitutional changes. I hope under Ric's direction a group can form that invites comments and suggestions helping in constitutional and possibly structural changes to BCA. Circulars will go around on this topic and preliminary ideas will be put forward at each of next year's council meetings. Having spoken to most people involved in the Ogof Draenen discussions I would also offer my services to try and help get a solution to that problem.

I would like to offer my assistance in setting up the next AGM weekend. Of the nine I have been involved with over the years I have been instrumental in organising six of them. If we are going to have another AGM in the North of England it will require the same amount of organisation as the previous ones.

Finally, I would like to say how incredibly grateful I am for all the help I have had over the last 9 years. Going through a list of names is dangerous but somewhat in chronological order I would say that Mick Day initially gave me a lot of mentoring. However, Damien Weare was unbelievably helpful during his time as Secretary. I felt we were a good partnership. I owe Damien a particular debt of gratitude!!

Dave Cooke has been helpful throughout the entire 9 years; Paul Ibberson came in at a difficult time and did an excellent job as Treasurer; Nick Williams has supported throughout my 9 years and for an awful lot longer he has helped BCA Council generally, Nick I am extremely grateful. Robin Weare continues to be extremely helpful; Bob Mehew has continually tried to be very helpful over the years in his own special way; Jenny Potts has been a stalwart throughout the entire period of BCA's existence and indeed continues to do so into the present time; Andrew Hinde has brought a professionalism into BCA which has been warmly welcomed and he has been a worthy partner to Tim Allen. I have valued the connection between Descent Magazine and BCA I thank Chris and Judith for their help and patience. Of course, Les Williams has done a huge amount and will continue into the future, thanks to you Les. Final thoughts are, an organisation is only as good as its members. BCA has some wonderful people, however more of them need to get heavily involved with helping the organisation. It is no good to stand on the fringe criticising, people have to get stuck in to help our national association. Constructive criticism and rolling up of one's sleeves is extremely helpful, other approaches could be seen as self-interest.

Finally, I wish the future Chairman, who I sincerely hope is Les Williams, every success and hope he can get as much out of the job as I have done.

Andy Eavis, BCA Chairman - June 2018

DISCUSSION:

{Short pause followed to allow for reports to be read}

Noted CHECC came into existence 13 years previously, not 9, as stated (HA).

Proposed report accepted and vote of thanks be given to AE

Proposed by: RW

Seconded: NW

In favour: All

Opposed/Abstained: None

REPORT:

6. Secretary (Acting) - Nick Williams

Including: Membership Administrator's Report – Wendy Williams

BCA AGM, 2018

Ac. Hon Secretary's report

I did a little research in my archives recently and discovered that my first foray into national caving politics was to help write part of the NCA submission to the UK Sports Council on behalf of the Ghar Parau Foundation in May 1991. I have held a Council post on either NCA, BCRA or BCA continuously since that time.

27 years later, it's long past time to move over and make room for some new ideas. I therefore give notice now that I will not be standing for re-election at the 2019 AGM.

Alongside my role as Secretary, I also wish to divest myself of the roles of PL Insurance Manager and Personnel Manager. I would also quite like for the BCA Cave to be found a new home since it's currently occupying one of a

limited number of parking spaces at my rented industrial unit and so it's costing me money (and has been ever since we got it)! My business also needs the space.

I am happy for my office address to continue to be used as the official postal address for BCA and BCRA for the foreseeable future.

Turning to matters in the year past, I do not intend to re-visit the content of my previous Secretarial reports: they are already a matter of record and available to be referred to by those who wish. Proposals put before this AGM on L+I and training are culminations of some of this work.

Looking to the future, I applaud the proposals for vision and other potential developments in BCA operations, but someone will need to make them happen. Simply loading them on to an already over-worked executive to pursue will not produce the results desired. People also need to learn that if they want to achieve things through BCA then they need to be prepared to put the legwork in to get others in their side. Far too often matters are brought to Council in an adversarial fashion and without due preparation of the argument. Politics is hard work and needs a lot of diplomatic effort if it is to produce successful and sustainable outcomes. Caving politics is no different. All too often 'solutions' are presented as a zero sum game where one side has to 'lose' if the other side it to 'win'. In practice, with a bit of effort, more often than not both sides can be winners.

Finally, I think it is necessary to make the point that while I generally support the move towards the establishment of a 'right to cave' under CRoW, it is far from the only important issue which BCA needs to get to grips with in the coming year. Risk assessment, Radon, the award schemes, indemnity waivers, IT and membership systems are all important matters which will require Council's time and effort in the coming year. We must also maintain the drive to increase participation by younger people on Council as well as in the wider caving community .

*Nick Williams
Ac. Hon Secretary
31 May 2018*

Nick Williams, Acting Secretary - 2 January 2018

DISCUSSION:

NW gave irrevocable notice of standing down as Secretary for following year. Applicants for position need to be actively sought.

“Artificial Cave” storage: PT suggested GCRG or DCRO – NW to follow up suggestions

NW stated help was needed from all quarters, rather than continuing to rely on Executive Board.

Proposed - Report accepted as stands

Proposed by: AE

Seconded: NA

- Membership Report, Wendy Williams

*As at 30th May 2018
BCA Membership stands at
DIMs = 660
Groups = 170
CIMs = 5124*

There are no Applications from New Clubs wishing to be BCA Member Clubs

*Wendy Williams
BCA Membership Administrator*

WW noted approximately 25% of DIMs this year are new to BCA with memberships being applied for just after events. NA stated that workshops have been actively joining people up and offered a vote of thanks to WW.

REPORT:

7. Treasurer (Acting) - Robin Weare

The 2017 accounts were prepared in good time and I am grateful for the co-operation I received. I must also record my appreciation of Katie & Mary who collect and bank our income, of Sue who runs the payroll and of Dave Cooke & Dave Gibson who between them keep the income systems running.

The accounts were subsequently scrutinised by Paul Ibberson, our Independent Examiner. I am most grateful to him for assisting us in this way and for the advice he has unhesitatingly provided whenever it has been needed.

Overall, the accounts show a surplus of £20,473 which has been added to reserves. This was rather more than expected due mainly to an increase in membership numbers and spending far less than feared on the constitutional ballot and the AGM weekend.

The detail of the income and expenditure is set out in the accounts but I am sure that a few general comments will allow members to better consider them.

There was a surplus on the professional training scheme which compares with a series of deficits in the past. Although a few more clubs applied for Training Grants than in 2016 the total still came to only £1,125. It would be good to see more applications this year, there is more money available.

The total of Equipment & Techniques expenditure was broadly in line with 2016 but the mix was quite different. The big one-off cost in 2016 was the refurbishment of the rope test rig whereas in 2017 it was the provision of a stock of bolts for use in the CNCC region. The balance in both years was the normal cost of supplying bolts and resin for installations throughout the country.

The cost of providing internet services for BCA, regional councils and other connected organisations was offset by the amounts earned from services provided to other users.

Regional Council claims included administration expenditure but mainly related to work undertaken for conservation & access purposes.

Donations of £10,000 to support the British Caving Library and £5,000 to support overseas expeditions were in line with previous years.

Tax relief has been claimed in respect of these donations for this and the previous 4 years, which has resulted in the recovery of the relatively small amount of Corporation Tax paid in that period. Assuming no change in legislation and continued donations I expect no Corporation Tax to be paid in the foreseeable future.

The Association continues to be able to meet running costs as they fall due and the Reserves position is strong in light of current expectations of requirements.

Robin Weare, Treasurer (Acting) – Jun 2018

DISCUSSION:

RW noted that figures were ‘better than expected’ as more members than expected had joined. Other factors for increase surplus included:

Savings on projected Ballot costs due to work by DC & RM

Savings on projected 2017 AGM cost & additional bar takings due to LesW & WW

E&T expenditure included a one-off outgoing.

Standard donations (Ghar Parau & BCRA Library) continue as before & have been redesignated as charitable donations. HRMC now recognise that BCA’s donations to these charitable organisation are eligible for tax relief both for past and going forward.

RW thanked Paul Ibberson for his stand as Scrutineer.

RW stated he was now willing to remain as Treasurer for further term.

After some further discussion it was

Proposed – Accounts accepted fully

Proposed by: HA

Seconded by: TR

In favour: All

Against/Abstained: None

REPORT:

8. Conservation & Access Officer - Andrew Hinde

Including: CRow-Liaison Officer Report - Tim Allen

October Council Meeting report.

Two major consultations have been engaged by regional caving councils in recent months.

Firstly, CCC have asked all cavers and caving institutions to consider supporting their report to the Welsh Government Consultation Document WG31811. This is an opportunity for cavers to have a say in the future of access for Outdoor Recreation in Wales.

Secondly, CNCC have orchestrated a coherent response to the YDNP Management Plan Consultation. This has elevated caving to one of the top 5 interests for visitors and residents within the National Park.

Last month I had the opportunity to take the owner of Fairy Holes Cave (Weardale) for his first underground experience in his own cave. This visit was at his request. He was genuinely astonished and thrilled at the extent and scale of the cave. He also owns the grouse moor surrounding the quarry site and clearly works and socialises with most of the major grouse moor owners throughout the country. It is absolutely invaluable to have a landowner who understands caves and caving as a rational activity and is capable of passing on this enthusiasm to his peers.

I would strongly encourage all regions to offer this sort of experience to their major Landowners/Manager. Very few would accept such an invitation, but those that do can be very influential (provided you do not make their first experience too character building)

I would like to ask Council to approve the allocation of £100 to cover my symposium fees for a cave conservation seminar in the Ardeche – March 2018

Title - To know and share caves and karsts - Understanding, conservation and geotourism

<https://dhuquet.wixsite.com/cavesymposium2018/>

I have asked Natural England to co fund by contributing to my travel expenses.

I think it is important for the UK experience to be represented at European level.

The next project for the C&A committee is to develop new content for the C&A pages of the BCA website. Club websites have not improved their provision of conservation content in the last year -so I would like to be able to offer a link to useful content on the BCA site.

Andrew Hinde

C&A Convenor

January Council Meeting Report

Work on a first draft of a BCA policy statement on CRoW and Caving is underway.

I have booked onto the UNESCO Cave and Karst Conference in the Ardeche,(6th/9th March 18) where I hope to present a short lecture on UK cave conservation projects.

Nothing further to report.

Andrew Hinde

Conservation & Access Convenor.

Dec 2017

April Council Meeting Report

BCA CRoW Policy Statement.

The following text was drafted and approved by the BCA Conservation and Access Committee via a Webex meeting on 6th February 2018.

Begins

BCA policy statement on the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)

- 1. The British Caving Association holds the opinion that the CRoW Act already permits access for recreational caving. (Note: this view has been verified by the legal opinion of Dinah Rose QC and supported by many external organisations and individuals as well as its own members).*
- 2. The access principles of the CRoW Act are in accord with BCA's own principles of improving access to caves. The BCA encourages caving bodies who have control of access to caves on 'access land' to renegotiate access agreements to reflect the rights provided by the CRoW Act.*
- 3. The conservation of caves is important. The BCA Conservation Code applies to all caves regardless of the land designation. The BCA agrees with the CRoW guiding principle of the least restrictive option to meet the conservation or safety need.*

4. *The BCA believe that any particular conservation concerns on CRoW 'access land' can be adequately dealt with by those means already set out in the legislation. The BCA recognise that many of the concerns raised prior to the introduction of the Act never materialised and access to caves should be no different.*
5. *The BCA will support cavers in their work to develop access to caves on CRoW access land.*

Reference documents;

1. *Dinah Rose opinion*
2. *Conservation Code and Guidelines*
3. *Educational strategy for conservation*
4. *Section 26 advice to ACBs. Ends.*

The background to this Policy Statement is summarised below.

BCA council has asked C&A to come up with a short policy statement on CRoW. Councils motion states,

"C&A committee to prepare a draft policy statement, kept as brief and meaningful as possible, that BCA believes with good reason that the CRoW Act, as-is, applies to caving."

It is worth noting that the membership poll in 2014 gave the association a mandate to run the campaign and the membership ballot of 2017 removed parts of the constitution which had been held up as an impediment to that campaign. BCA consider that the membership has made itself clear on this matter. Furthermore BCA cannot run a campaign which argues that the CRoW Act already permits caving if it is not prepared to make that clear in a policy statement.

It is important to note that the BCA campaign is not seeking to change the law at this stage. BCA argues that the law as it stands already permits recreational caving.

BCA have sought clarification on this matter. Defra/NE have presented a view that the Act does not apply to caving. They do concede that the Act allows access to the entrance of caves and to an undetermined point underground such as the limit of daylight. They have been clear that their view is not definitive and that in the end only a court can decide. BCA argue the Act does permit caving in line with the legal opinion of the barrister Dinah Rose QC. This view is supported by a number of outdoor organisations such as the BMC, S&RA, BC, etc. Both sides have put their views forward robustly on this matter and one must consider that the Act may already apply to caving just as equally as it may not. Therefore any issue of trespass is very difficult to establish until this is fully settled.

In the meantime BCA does offer advice, codes, strategy and guidelines in relation to conservation. Also of course, BCA are unable to tell regional councils what to do so ultimately it is up to them how much notice they take of any BCA statement.

UNESCO Caves meeting in Ardeche.

I had intended to go to this conference. Unfortunately it has been cancelled.

Conservation and Access Officer Post.

It is my intension to retire from this post in 12 months time. I will then have completed 2 full terms as a BCA Officer. I would encourage anyone interested in considering putting themselves forward for this post to contact me. They will receive practical advice and encouragement.

Andrew Hinde, Conservation & Access Convenor – Jun 2018

DISCUSSION:

AH: BCA CRoW policy statement provided by C&A committee – Acceptance of report is presumed to be acceptance of statement.

NW: Restated that to be crystal clear, acceptance of report was acceptance of statement.

LesW: Best to separate the two as a policy statement should be clear in its own right.

Vote required: Two House Vote

Proposal – BCA Policy statement on CRoW is accepted.

Clubs and Organisations in favour: 15

Clubs and Organisations against: 1

Clubs and Organisations abstaining: 2

Individuals in favour: 26

Individuals against: 0

Individuals abstaining: 2

Proposal – Report is accepted in full

Proposed by: NW

Seconded by: LesW

- CRoW-Liaison Officer Report - Tim Allen

Report to BCA AGM June 2018

This should be my last report as BCA CRoW Liaison Officer as I pass on the baton after three difficult years in the job. The co-opted position is a significant role in BCA, effectively running the BCA campaign to ensure the Countryside and Rights of Way Act applies to caving. There can be no doubt this is the direction the membership want BCA to take after both a poll and ballot on constitutional change were in favour by a large majority.

Looking back over the last three years we [the BCA] have achieved much with just a small group of contacts and confidants. We have gained considerable support for the BCA position with other organisations and influential individuals who find it in their nature to recognise the freedoms we seek and are keen to offer help. We have made our case clearly, beyond our own caving bubble, through mainstream media channels and elsewhere which has put the entrenched authorities under pressure.

We have now arrived at a stalemate where the CRoW Act can easily be argued that it already applies to caving, we just need the will from the authorities to accept that position. There is certainly no need at present to seek a change in the law. However with an entrenched view prevailing at DEFRA/NE we must look for opportunities where change can be made and continue to lobby for that change. There are opportunities ahead which are sure to come from the BREXIT fiasco and a Natural England in its death throws which surely indicates the establishment of a new statutory body. I'm sure my successor will be well placed to take those opportunities.

I am pleased to see that democracy has prevailed at the BCA although it has taken a rather long time. If we look back to the position taken by the BCA before the CRoW 'debate' gathered momentum we can see what a stark contrast it is compared to the position which has been democratically arrived at and before this AGM. I include them both in my report.

The first was drawn up by the then BCA Legal Officer and although never approved by council it was publicised in Descent magazine and on the BCA's website. Dressed up as such, it was taken by some to be official BCA policy and used by landowners in at least one major access dispute.

BCA

British Caving Association

Legal + Insurance Officer: David Judson
01684 311057 d.judson@bcra.org.uk

CAVE and LAND OWNERSHIP, ACCESS and the LAW

I have been asked to make a clear statement concerning the law in relation to land ownership and access to caves in England and Wales.

1. LAND OWNERSHIP

The law here is very clear and has not changed for many centuries. Landowners own the surface of the land and all that is below it to the centre of the earth.

2. MINERALS RIGHTS

These are not general rights, but as with land ownership, they must be specific and written down in legally binding documents. They only apply to specifically named minerals, e.g. metallic ores, or coal deposits, and absolutely not to caves, (since these are merely air or water filled cavities).

3. COUNTRYSIDE and RIGHTS of WAY ACT 2000 (CRoW)

This was a major Act of the UK parliament which received Royal Assent in December 1999. It came into effect progressively (largely through secondary legislation, known as statutory instruments, that it specifically enabled) from the year 2000 up until 2008.

Prior to this the Act had been loudly heralded as "Right to Roam Legislation", something that has been very misleading to the general public, especially city dwellers.

On areas of land above 600 metres above O.D. and on lower land that has been very carefully agreed and mapped, now depicted upon 1:25,000 scale Ordnance Survey maps, and known as **Access Land** there is a right to roam. However, even this right can be removed or restricted in specific circumstances for fixed periods of time, e.g. lambing, high risk of fire, etc.

Whilst CRoW does (with limitations) give access to rock faces, (they are regarded as land that just happens to be vertical rather than horizontal), **it absolutely does not give legal access to caves, potholes or abandoned mines.**

NCA (now BCA), together with BCRA and NAMHO, were all consulted during the drafting of CRoW and its associated statutory instruments (1998-2005) and fully agreed and accepted the CRoW proposals. Think about it, free access to caves and potholes would be quite inoperable (and dangerous) in many situations including popular sites such as Lancaster Hole, Gaping Gill, Ogof Fynnon Ddu, Swildons Hole, etc.

The law in England and Wales is thus absolutely clear, **access to caves and disused mines is entirely at the discretion of the landowner and/or occupier (e.g. the farmer).**

4. THE LAND REFORM (SCOTLAND) ACT 2003

Confusion might have arisen in some cavers' minds because in 2003 the above Act made major changes to the laws governing Scotland. Broadly, this Act gives free access for the purposes of education and recreation, **to the land, space above the land and space beneath the earth (i.e. caves).** For better or for worse there are very few caves in Scotland and so far as I am aware none of them have yet reached the status of 'honeypots'! But, as its name implies it only applies to Scotland.

David Judson

24 March 2010

British Caving Association: Registered Office: The Old Methodist Chapel, Great Hucklow, Buxton SK17 8RG

This unfortunate set of events was probably the catalyst to the deep divisions of the CRoW debate. To some extent BCA must accept responsibility as the architect of at least some of the problems which have arisen with CRoW over the last five years. BCA largely ignored the CRoW Act during the noughties which were the major years of discussion and implementation and allowed a minority voice to set the scene for years.

At this AGM we have before us a very different policy on CRoW. This policy has followed due process. Beginning with a poll of the membership over the CRoW campaign and later a ballot vote on constitutional changes. BCA council then passed the following motion in January, "C&A committee to prepare a draft policy statement, kept as brief and meaningful as possible, that BCA believes with good reason that the CRoW Act, as-is, applies to caving." This was duly done and passed by the C&A committee and handed back to the April council meeting and is now before the AGM for final ratification.

BCA policy statement on the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)

- 1. The British Caving Association holds the opinion that the CRoW Act already permits access for recreational caving. (Note: this view has been verified by the legal opinion of Dinah Rose QC and supported by many external organisations and individuals as well as its own members).**
- 2. The access principles of the CRoW Act are in accord with BCA's own principles of improving access to caves. The BCA encourages caving bodies who have control of access to caves on 'access land' to renegotiate access agreements to reflect the rights provided by the CRoW Act.**
- 3. The conservation of caves are important. BCA conservation code applies to all caves regardless of the land designation. The BCA agrees with the CRoW guiding principle of the least restrictive option to meet the conservation or safety need.**
- 4. The BCA believe that any particular conservation concerns on CRoW 'access land' can be adequately dealt with by those means already set out in the legislation. BCA recognise that many of the concerns raised prior to introduction of the Act never materialised and access to caves should be no different.**
- 5. The BCA will support cavers in their work to develop access to caves on CRoW access land.**

Reference documents;

- 1. Dinah Rose opinion**
- 2. Conservation Code and Guidelines**
- 3. Educational strategy for conservation**
- 4. Section 26 advice to ACBs**

Finally I shall voice the same concerns I have voiced several times over the last three years. Namely the abuse, and efforts to undermine my position, by the anti-crow brigade. This should be an important issue for BCA and it is one where I feel BCA has made a poor account of itself. I was pleased to see the retiring chairman finally mention the subject in his newsletter report but he will remember that some of the on-line abuse I suffered was fuelled by one of his own executive colleagues. I hope that this will not be allowed to continue under our new chairman and that my successor will be much better supported in his endeavours to fulfil the expectations of our membership.

Speaking of my successor, David Rose has put himself forward to take on the role. David has a good understanding of the task in hand with excellent contacts in government and is well positioned geographically to further our policy. I wholeheartedly support his appointment and hope council will co-opt him into the role following our AGM. I have established the basics of a CRoW working group for my successor to take over and I am happy to participate myself where required.

For those who had hoped to see the back of me at council meetings I am sorry to disappoint as for the foreseeable future I shall be acting as CNCC rep to BCA. See you there.

Tim Allen, CRoW Liaison Officer – Jun 2018

DISCUSSION:

TA: Nothing further to add to report, except to say pleased statement was voted as accepted.

Proposed: Report accepted in full

Proposed by: SN

Seconded by: AH

In favour: All

Opposed/Abstained: None

REPORT:

9. Equipment & Techniques Officer – Mark Sims (Acting) (Absent) Including: Rope Testing Officer - Bob Mehew (Absent)

Mark Sims, E&T Officer – Jun 2018 - no report

I regret that owing to the pressure of other BCA duties, I was unable to do very much as Rope Test Officer. If someone comes forward with a desire to take over the Rope Test Officer role and take it forward both in terms of the BCA Rope Testing service and the development work that I and others have been doing on the Bradford Pothole Club's rig, then I would be more than happy to hand over the role.

- Rope Testing Officer, Bob Mehew

DISCUSSION:

Nothing further discussed.

REPORT:

10. Training Officer (Acting) - Nigel Atkins

BCA Training Committee

Looking back at the last 12 months, myself and a small group of dedicated regional training officers have kept training committee afloat with regular meetings and numerous conversations by phone and email. We have flown the flag for BCA and introduced a fresh input into club training. A big thank you goes to Nick Williams who sets up these meeting on web ex and 'coaches' us on how to keep us on line. Without Nick's help in the last 12 months, we would not have been able to achieve this with such ease, thanks Nick. The Training Committee is now 15 people strong with representation from equipment specialists and cave rescue. We are also providing SRT training to the standard required for entry into the BCA qualifications.

The work of this committee has become all things training in BCA now apart from the qualifications themselves, which is QMC.

The BCA Training Solution

This is quite simple: - LEAVE EVERYTHING EXACTLY AS IT IS AND STOP MESSING WITH IT!

Everything was working fine until after the AGM last year when things got changed and arguments started. This is all down to individuals changing things to meet their own agendas, without transparency or democracy. The result of this is that BCA was not told the truth about certain and important changes.

December 2016, the QMC chair and the training officer very abruptly 'abandoned' the training committee leaving myself and one other to pick up the pieces. This is all in the minutes. At this time, BCA sort of had 2 training officers in place, the one signing into the June 2017 BCA AGM (the traditional, National training officer) that moved over to the QMC and my temporary 'convenor' of the training committee. If it wasn't for myself sorting this out, training committee would have folded instantly as no one else was interested, however I have always been there to help BCA.

At the 2016 AGM Nigel Ball was reappointed as the training officer, nothing had changed and he continued with QMC in this role. I was fine with this and happily continued to run training committee concentrating on recreational caving as like many of us in BCA, we trusted our officers to work with integrity, honour in a professional way. However, The training officer role was 'removed' from QMC almost as soon as QMC got started.

At the October BCA council meeting, the chair of QMC informed everyone that the 'Training officer' did NOT have a role on QMC, this is in the minutes. The chair of QMC also reported from QMC about more changes to be made, however, as training committee now had members in it from QMC, I was fully aware of what QMC was doing and I knew that these changes were in fact the opposite of what QMC wanted. The chair of BCA brought me in at this point to clarify what QMC was actually doing. The day after this meeting I had QMC members phoning me for clarification and they were not happy with what the chair had reported as they were not the proposals of QMC at all. Following this meeting, I was also contacted by members of council who were also concerned.

In January 2018 after the chair of QMC had stood down, members of BCA council and QMC worked very hard with me to establish what had gone wrong. It was at this point when the truth about the training officer role became clear. You can imagine how concerned we all were to find out what had been done.

It has taken me 5 months of dedication to BCA and a promise to the chair of BCA that I would work with what we have in place and I have finally done it. We now have a good working solution and the only confusion out there up to the last QMC meeting was the role of training officer on the QMC which was only confirmed to them only 2 weeks ago.

Proposal: BCA Training Committee

*Leave everything as it is and do not mess with it anymore. This is a dedicated group of volunteers working hard on behalf of BCA. They have unanimously confirmed that they **DO NOT** like the change in title to include the word 'recreational' so a vote for any more changes is a vote against this committee.*

Actions that were voted on at BCA Council meeting Saturday January 6th 2018

- To fully support the working of the BCA Training Committee

To propose any changes to training committee without any consultation with them is in breach of what was agreed in January. Training committee should be reporting to BCA what brilliant work they have and are doing, not being told what to do by people not involved.

Maybe you should vote for 'Professional' Training Committee as they are providing training at a professional level. Training is Training.

BCA has an opportunity here to launch training to the masses as it should be done. BCA Training Officer should be the person to head this up and co ordinate these training activities. We are waiting for BCA to vote in a full training officer and give training committee their full support and I urge you to do so before enthusiastic volunteers lose interest and vote with their feet.

Proposal: BCA Training Officer

Leave the BCA Training Officer as it is and do not mess with it anymore. I have worked really hard on behalf of BCA to establish what was working before and get things back on track, which is working now. The word 'recreational' is already in place as the training committee rep on QMC so a vote for any more changes will cause even more confusion. You will see that the training officer has been working hard promoting both the training committee and the QMC during the caving club talks, LC/MLA and CIC updates, cave rescue workshops and with retailers and manufacturers alike. This is your 'National Training Officer' and you are free to do whatever you decide to do with it.

I have done everything I have been asked to do and more. I am now drained of all enthusiasm. I have been lied to, shouted down, accused of not understanding the system, told to 'push off' and had to undergo some difficult conversations with my friends in QMC. If this is how BCA officers are to be treated by trying to do their job, I want no more of it. All I have ever asked for is to have those brackets removed from my title. If I am to be the last of the 'National Training Officers' then I have been proud to represent BCA in this way.

BCA Training Grants

We have had more applications for training grants than ever since the word has been out that training committee is looking after recreational cavers. We now have 5 approved training events for 2018 already confirmed. This is a potential spend of up to £1,250 so far (max £250 for each event). Having been involved with training committee for decades, I can assure BCA that the grants are taken very seriously and have supported very well organised and run training events all over the uk.

Training committee looked into BCA events to be set up by regional training officers in the future and grants now support these. This way, more BCA members get access to the workshops in all regions and will get to meet the BCA training officer, other committee members face to face and receive top level training.

BCA Coaching Scheme – potential for

In DCA, there are no clashes of opinions, just shared experience. Over the last 12 months I have shared the DCA scheme with caving clubs out of our region with a view of moving this forward nationally. There has not been any negativity at all to this, only positive feedback. It is a coaching scheme for DCA cavers and concentrates on training the trainers as well as club members through workshops and training courses run by club members themselves assisted and mentored by myself, a BCA trainer and assessor for all the BCA schemes of which I have over 25 years of experience.

There is a comment going around about qualifications being introduced for recreational cavers. This is not true! We have introduced a competency for personal SRT in the DCA scheme, which is driven by the caving club members. What we now do in TC is support BCA members, not tell them what to do. Any developments in this scheme are direct results from feedback by BCA members using it.

BCA Training Officer

For years, BCA Training Officer as a title is something to be proud of. It is not just a position, it is (or should be seen as) an honour to represent cavers in the UK.

BCA training officer is and should be the 'go to person' to answer all of those enjoyable questions about what do we do, what do we use, how do we do this etc.. We do this in DCA and most of the DCA member caving clubs work alongside with an agreed syllabus of training, which was passed around Training Committee in February 2017.

Actions that were voted on at BCA Council meeting Saturday January 6th 2018

- 1) - To fully support the working of the BCA Training Committee
- 2) - To increase funding to the BCA Training Committee
- 3) - To support the BCA Training Committee in exploring the opportunity to create a BCA Coaching Scheme for recreational caving.
- 4) - To support BCA events to be set up by regional training officers in the future.

- 5) - To support the BCA Training Committee in co-option of additional members to the training committee is an avenue which will be utilised whenever it can be.
- 6) - GM QMC paper. Members that will make up the BCA-QMC include 'The Training Officer'.

I have known that the training officer is a member of QMC since January 2018, however it has taken until the May QMC meeting for this to be confirmed to them. This is 5 months of work I have done working with QMC members that will not get recognised until the next meeting. I have been accused of not understanding the new system however the opposite is true, I am fully aware of what has gone on and what is in place.

QMC meetings

I signed into the QMC meeting on Monday February 26th 2018 as BCA training officer (acting) as discussed and voted on unanimously at the January 2018 BCA council meeting. Training Officer (acting) was a title I was offered by BCA council and is the position I was in at both BCA council meetings that I have attended. At the start of the meeting I wanted to update the QMC with what I had learned and input a lot of the work that I had done but my report was not discussed as it was not on their agenda. I felt very uncomfortable there to the point that I got up and informed them that I would go but the QMC members present asked me to stay. This was a really nice thing for them to do and I am grateful to them for doing this as it felt like someone was trying to 'throw the training officer' out.

In the absence of my input, they went on to discuss someone from training committee having a position on the QMC which is a positive step forward as the training committee would have a voice on the QMC and the QMC can talk directly to training committee. This position from the training committee was duly voted in as a full voting member of the QMC. This bridge has now been firmly put in place, which is a brilliant step forward for BCA but had nothing to do with why I was there.

This was followed by a discussion on the title of this representative from the training committee and they wanted to change this to be the 'recreational training officer'. I stopped the meeting voting on this I was concerned for 3 reasons:

- 1 - It is not in the QMC's remit to change BCA officers role titles. Things like this have to be done properly.
- 2 – The title of BCA training officer has always been associated with the training committee and the BCA award schemes in the past. (Appendix 1) It is deeply embedded into all of the BCA award schemes and everybody in BCA recognises it as a main point of contact for training in the BCA.
- 3 – A couple of members **BEFORE** the start of the meeting explained to me that they were told that training officer was gone from the QMC and a role of 'vice chair' was in discussion to fill that gap. They welcomed me back when I explained to them what had gone on. What I took back to training committee was their wish to change the title of the training committee rep to something like 'recreational training officer' or 'sports recreational training officer' which is what they proposed and tried to vote on but I think this will still cause confusion to many people as any title with the words training officer in it points to QMC and CIC as this is the title of the role that is in print on everything out there in the award schemes. At the April training committee, Kevin West stepped into this role and the members agreed to honour the proposal by QMC to give this position the title of 'Recreational Training Officer'. QMC now has BCA Training Officer - which could be in the role as Vice chair as before and 'Recreational Training Officer' - the Training Committee rep. (Appendix 2) I did not have any involvement with this as my position is to listen and support people.

Suggestion: Establish the Training Officer into the post of Vice Chair of QMC

Since the AGM last year, the chair of QMC has taken on most of the duties that the training officer had. If BCA wish to have the training officer involved in QMC, the newly appointed BCA Training Officer would work closely with the new Chair of QMC and agree together what they can and would like to take on. This would help the chair of QMC to concentrate on what he/she needs to do. BCA putting the Training Officer into the role of Vice Chair of QMC establishes what most of us thought was in place after the AGM last year.

What the current BCA Training Officer (acting) has achieved whilst being in the post:

Professional:

- *Listened to what BCA asked and delivered a workable solution to Training Committee and QMC within what is set up at the moment*
- *Visited caving clubs on their evening meets to run workshops/talks in 'All Things SRT' looking at standards for both recreational and professional level which is the same now thanks to the hard work of BCA training committee.*
- *Visited a DCRO cave rescue training session promoting the hard work of BCA training in both TC and QMC*
- *Raised funds for cave rescue by donating any donations with the recent BCA training officer talks to caving clubs*
- *Arranged personal discounts for cave rescue members from reputable suppliers*

- Taken delivery of donated SRT equipment from 3 main caving equipment retailers to add to the BCA pool of SRT equipment to be used by all BCA members
- Arranged a discount deal for BCA to buy in new SRT harnesses etc at trade
- Looked into all the confusion relating to BCA training which took 5 months and hundreds of emails, phone calls and some personal meetings
- Highlighted to removal of TO from QMC and got it reinstated
- Listened to concerns from trainer and assessors in the award schemes and assured them that things were now being dealt with
- Had in depth discussions with fellow members of QMC in problem solving and coming up with proposals
- Made input to 2 LC/MLA regional panels and offered help with dealing with any confusion in BCA training
- Attended and made input/received valuable feedback from 2 LC/MLA updates
- Attended and made input/received valuable feedback from a CIC update
- Clarified any confusion arising from the QMC/TC split to all that have made contact
- Ran a BCA/CNCC training event in the Yorkshire Dales, the first of BCA's National events
- Spoken in depth with manufacturers regarding training related matters with equipment
- Produced statements with regard to training at a professional level
- Obtained permits for CIC trainers and assessors as a member of the CIC panel

Recreational:

- Continued to chair training committee meetings
- Allocated training grants together with the TC
- Set up BCA National Training events together with the TC
- Reported to BCA council meetings personally or sent in a report (April 2018)
- Doubled the training grant
- Promoted recreational training guidelines to caving clubs and BCA members

What the BCA Training Officer could offer in the future:

- Continue to work as above
- Offer a talk to the Caving Conference on all Training in the BCA
- Work in partnership with the QMC and define the training officers role/work as vice chair
- Continue to produce a basic set of best practice guidelines for BCA together with the TC
- Offer advice and help to clubs in recruiting new members
- Continue to develop policies regarding the use of equipment for all covers at all levels together with the TC and members of the Equipment committee
- Promote BCA training
- Develop the BCA Equality Policy
- Develop training for the under 18's

I would like to end by thanking a few people who have been very supportive through these last few difficult months. Robin Weare is without doubt one of BCA's biggest assets. Without him, I could not have done things professionally and in line with BCA policy. I also wish to thank Nick Williams for supporting TC in setting up our meetings, without him we would have really struggled and Andy Eavis who I have had some meaty discussions with but has kept me on track to get me to come up with a workable solution for BCA training. Thank you to Andrew Hinde who inspired me to write up this report instead of a resignation letter to explain what has gone on and what I have had to endure.

I also wish to thank all of the past training officers and a lot of you BCA council members for your wisdom and advice in looking at the BCA training concerns. I know a few of you have had many emails to and fro but it was needed to clear up what was a real mess.

Thanks and best wishes go to all on QMC which has been a struggle as this is where all the confusion sat with my role being messed with, however, none of us were to blame and I wish you all success, you are doing a great job.

Whatever the outcome of the AGM, I would like to thank every BCA member for their support and enthusiasm they have shown me as BCA Training Officer (acting).

Nigel Atkins

BCA Training Officer (Acting)

30/05/18

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Appendix 1

BCA Training Officer

We need to tie this training officer business down once and for all. BCA wanted someone not involved with the professional schemes. I personally can't see any credibility in this position unless we take it seriously and move forward:

BCA Training Officer Terms of Reference

BCA Training Officers Duties 2017:

The post is a voluntary position and is filled by election every three years. The Training Officer sits on BCA Council, the QMC and reports the work of the Training Committee to Council. Normally LCMLA and CIC candidates have little reason to contact the Training Officer other than to lodge an appeal.

To deal with applications for exemptions from formal assessment, to arbitrate and make decisions regarding reassessments, technical and procedural queries and to resolve disputes relating to individual candidates.

To oversee the disciplinary process but play no part in the investigation stage.

The Training Officer is responsible for ensuring the training schemes are maintained and generally promote the development of training in all areas of caving in the BCA.

Then training officer is the contact for all training activities of the BCA. For any enquiries relating to specific topics, the BCA training officer will direct these to the appropriate contacts.

To authorise all award certificates and sign all Cave Instructor Certificates before they are issued.

To operate as Line Manager for the Training Administrator

To liaise and build relationships with the recreational side of caver training and support the work of the BCA training committee

NOTE: *Since the AGM last year, the chair of QMC has taken on most of the duties above leaving nothing for the training officer. If BCA wish to have the training officer involved in QMC, I suggest the newly appointed BCA Training Officer works closely with the new Chair of QMC and agree together what they can and would like to take on.*

Essential qualities

Must be completely open to all training needs and practices undertaken around the country and not impart personal preferences – This is (or should be) a highly respected position in BCA, someone in this position with their own agenda will undermine the hard work that training committee has been doing in the past

Must have interpersonal skills to the level of communicating in an open and friendly manner to all who contact them in their position – This position can seen by many cavers their second point of contact with BCA (after Mary & membership)

Must be able to coordinate and possibly chair BCA training committee meetings – the future success of the training committee relies on this

Must be able to communicate with all fellow training committee members – this person must be able to talk, at times in depth, with regional training officers and other training committee members – on various subjects

Must be able to communicate with club training officers – this person must be able to discuss items with club training officers with an clear understanding of current training needs and issues

Must have a proven track record of involvement in recreational training – this position to have any weight within the recreational side of caving needs someone who has been involved at the top level of club training

Must have enough time to give to this position – this position is not to be taken lightly as a 'title' of BCA Training Officer! The real work needs to be done, voluntarily, in between the meetings

Must attend ALL training committee meetings – this position is not to be taken lightly as a 'title' of BCA Training Officer! Theses meeting are important as the results will be shared to hopefully every recreational caver in the UK either as an individual member or through their clubs.. and maybe even further

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Ideal qualities

To be a current CIC holder – without this, where is the proof of technical ability in order to share and discuss technical issues with fellow cavers

To be aware if not involved with the professional schemes – there are clear differences in techniques being taught at professional and club level, it is important that we know these and understand them to be able to offer advice to recreational cavers

To have been involved with BCA training committee in the past – proves dedication to the cause, nuff said

To be a current regional training officer or have been open in the past – as above!

Have a clear understanding of training and practices undertaken around the country, standards and contacts – without this, the question arises why someone wants this position?

Nige, Nigel Atkins, DCA Training Officer, 20/02/17

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Appendix 2

BCA Recreational Training Officer
Terms of Reference

BCA Recreational Training Officer's Duties:

*To attend all QMC meeting as rep for the BCA Training Committee.
To support the work of the BCA Training Officer (National Training Officer)*

Essential qualities

Must have interpersonal skills to the level of communicating in an open and friendly manner to all who contact them in their position

Must have be able to communicate with all fellow training committee members – this person must be able to talk, at times in depth, with regional training officers and other training committee members on various subjects

Must have enough time to give to this position

Must attend ALL training committee meetings – Theses meeting are important as the results will be shared to hopefully every recreational caver in the UK either as an individual member or through their clubs.. and maybe even further

Ideal qualities

To have been involved with BCA training committee in the past

To be a current regional training officer or have been one in the past

Have a clear understanding of the BCA recreational coaching guidelines

To be a current club training officer or have been one in the past

Nigel Atkins

Acting BCA Training Officer

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DISCUSSION:

AE requested if anything further to add. Only a statement by NA added:

“not really, it’s just been a lot of confusion out there and am not blaming anybody – everyone is just doing what they have been asked to do – I’ve loved doing what I’m doing and if there are changes

ahead, and I'm not convinced they are for the right reasons but will work with BCA and do whatever they want me to do."

HA noted a need to take into account NA's comments with regards to the state of harmony within BCA.

Proposed – Report accepted in full

Proposed by: JP

Seconded by: TR

In favour: All

Against/Abstained: None

REPORT:

11. Publications & Information Officer Les Williams

Including: Media Liaison Officer (Andy Eavis)

Newsletter Editor's Report (David Rose)

Webmaster's Report (David Cooke / Matt Wire / Les Williams)

Publications and Information Officer's report - 2018

Looking back at last years report, I find myself reporting a similar position concerning Publications and Information this year as previously.

Primarily any volunteer organisation relies on a small number of volunteers to carry out a large amount of the work. The volunteers working under the Publications and Information heading have certainly stepped up to the mark and continued to keep the Publications and Information services of BCA functioning throughout the last year. They have their own specific reports to present, so I have little to add except to take this opportunity to give my thanks for the work they have done.

Again I would particularly like to thank Dave Cooke for the continuing work he has done maintaining BCA's web presence, and to those officers and others that have helped maintain the information within our website. A website in this day and age is a prerequisite for any organisation but is a massive amount of work to keep up to date, work that in our case is mostly carried out by volunteers.

I would like to thank David Rose for stepping into Robin's shoes and producing the Newsletters this year, and to all the officers and others that have contributed material to it.

Both the Website and Newsletter are an important part of communicating with our members but it's generally a lot of work for a small number of people and their efforts are not necessarily recognised by our members.

Web services continue to provide BCA's online IT systems and also provide reliable hosting for many caving institutions, thanks to all that have helped in keeping this service professional and reliable for the users.

I have enjoyed my tenure as P&I Officer but I must resign from this position, as I find myself in a new position on Council. It is not a particularly onerous post and I hope a volunteer comes forward to fill it.

Les Williams

Publications & Information Officer

DISCUSSION:

LesW: Nothing further to add, but reiterated thanks to those involved and reminded that it is done by volunteers.

LesW then stepped down from position due to taking up another position on Council.

Media Liaison Officer's Report (note; not included in draft minutes in error; added to final)

Over the last year there have been a number of media enquiries, including local radio and local newspapers. These I have referred to appropriate people in the regions involved.

There is a fair amount of interest in caving. A lot of people see it as one of the few areas of original exploration, however it continues to have a reputation so enquires start with "What have you discovered? and who has died recently?" So, we have to be very careful.

In addition, there have been a number of requests to help make television programmes. Again, film makers don't take a lot of notice of covers and it is very difficult to be helpful when they refuse to take a lot of notice of what you are telling them. They also have a wonderful habit of a scattergun approach where they talk to a whole load of different people involved in caving without mentioning to any of them that they have spoken to somebody else. Beware!

However, there have been some rather good articles in the media. A certain amount of positive publicity flowed from the Royal Geographical Society event and indeed the Kendal Film Festival. The Geographical Magazine of China has recently produced an article, unfortunately only written in Chinese but it was written by Tony Waltham and looks very good.

The National Geographic of America is producing a major article on caves for their autumn magazine. Films on drones across Britain and in caves is pending and another film on somebody yet again spending time in a cave without any knowledge of the time of day and night to see what becomes of their daily rhythms.

I will be getting others to take over parts of my media liaison role, particularly Dave Rose and if anybody else is interested in giving me a hand, please can they approach me. I see my role in this connection as distributing enquiries to the appropriate people.

Andy Eavis, 1 June 2018

Webmaster Report:

Web Services

There are currently 74 domains registered through BCA Web Services with 60 websites hosted. The BCA funds 16 of those websites including the Regional Councils, BCRA, BCRA's Special Interest Groups, Cave Registry Data Archive, Caving Library and some of the cave rescue organisations.

The general work of keeping the web server up and running, supporting the clubs and organisations that we host and doing the financial book keeping continues quietly in the background.

The introduction of the new anti-spam protocols (DMARC/DKIM/SPF) during the year caused some problems delivering mail, especially mass mailing such as for the ballot and the Newsletter. This required some reconfiguration of the email and upgrades to several software packages. That is now complete.

I would like to thank David Gibson, Matt Voysey and Les Williams for their help with the server and Katie Eavis for her help with the book keeping and banking.

*David Cooke
June 2018*

DISCUSSION:

DC: Apologised for accidentally leaving Matt Wire out of report and noted Matt had contributed greatly.

DC: Newsletter uptake is declining, suspected due to people preferring to read on website rather than be emailed.

AE: Asked if newsletter could just be emailed. Discussion followed on negative impact of GDPR on several other businesses and that it now had to be an opt-in not an opt-out. Suggestions made to sign people up for receipt at Hidden Earth, through CHECC and forum.

Newsletter: Dave Rose noted there was nothing further to add regarding the newsletter but information for the newsletter needed to be more forthcoming. JA requested a newsletter link be added to UK Caving.

REPORT:

12. Legal & Insurance Officer

Including: Insurance Manager's Report- Nick Williams

- **To be presented in Council Meeting following AGM**
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**13. Membership Administrators Report – Wendy Williams
(missing)**

REPORT:

**14. Qualifications Management Working Committee – Phil Baker
-Including Training Administrator – Mary Wilde**

Report for BCA AGM from BCA Qualifications Management Committee

This working group has made significant progress initially under the Chair of Graham Mollard and more recently with Phil Baker as Acting Chair, assisted by Gethin Thomas as Acting Deputy Chair. Mary Wilde has again carried out a tremendous job as Training Administrator in a complex and demanding role. The group is made up of a number of other people all of whom have committed much time and energy developing and supporting the BCA Award schemes.

Some headline items from 2017/18 include

1. *Resources - QMC have started developing a series of resource documents to support not only the award schemes but recreational and club covers. Once completed these will include*
 - *LCMLA Level 1 Rope Work*
 - *LCMLA Level 2 Rope Work*
 - *Geology*
 - *Rigging Tyrolean Traverses*
 - *Cave Anchors*
 - *Hazards – Cave and Mine*
 - *Access and Conservation*
 - *Equipment*
 - *Knots*

QMC would appreciate input from the various appropriate BCA constituent bodies once initial drafts are available

2. *Finance – The BCA Awards generated a surplus of £2139 last financial year following a restructuring of the charging regime within the schemes*
-

3. *Award Scheme numbers – these remained largely static last year*
4. *Membership of BCA – all Trainer/Assessors (T/As) for the award schemes are now members of BCA and this forms part of their Trainer/Assessor agreement*
5. *Governance of QMC – this has been clarified/discussed with BCA Council who will be proposing a final governance and structure at this AGM.*
6. *Radon and the Ionising Radon Regulations 2017 (IRR17) – a radon working group led by QMC with BCA, Association of Heads Of Outdoor Education Centres and Peak Instructed Caving Affiliation representatives has sourced funding from all three bodies to allow ongoing work with Public Health England. This aims to ensure instructed caving meets HSE requirements, under the new IIR 2017, and update BCA radon advice .*
7. *Chair and deputy Chair of QMC roles – a new process for recruitment for these roles has been agreed. Applications for Chair and Deputy Chair will be welcomed from any current T/A who has been operating for at least three years in that role. He or she should also have been working for a minimum of two years on a group or role for the BCA or constituent body. Job roles will be circulated mid June to all T/As and the interview panel will include a member of BCA Council, QMC and the Training Administrator.*
8. *Work is continuing to seek an appropriate data base management system to support the overall management of the scheme*

Phil Baker 26 5 18

DISCUSSION:

NW: Phil sends apologies, SN is present to answer any questions.

SN: Summarised happy to see increase in efficiency. AE, NW & RW also stated positive change happening.

REPORT:

15. Cave Registry Working Group - David Cooke

The Scottish Cave and Mine Registry came online during the year. It uses the same software that Matt Voysey developed for the Mendip Cave Registry & Archive. Although not officially launched you can see a preview at <http://registry.gsg.org.uk>

The software that Matt developed has been a great success. It has been used by the Mendip (mcra.org.uk), Derbyshire (thedca.org.uk) and Scottish (registry.gsg.org.uk). It will be used by the Devon registry as well. Matt has generously made the software available free of charge.

The Northern Caves Registry (northerncaves.co.uk) arrived during the year, launched in conjunction with the publication of the excellent Northern Caves Guide book. It currently covers The Three Counties System and the North West.

The BCA hosted Cave Registry Data Archive (cave-registry.org.uk) has continued to grow and is now a substantial 27GB in size. The Archive is the place to keep your survey data safe. Not only is the data kept secure and safe but the archive provides version control tools to help manage and coordinate larger projects. The Archive will accept data from UK cavers for any project, large or small, either here or overseas, where there is a significant UK caver involvement. My thanks to Andrew Atkinson for his tireless work on the Archive.

David Cooke, June 2018

DISCUSSION:

DC: Close to complete coverage of country now with Derbyshire registry online & Northern Caving Guide. Only major area still outstanding is Devon & Cornwall – caves have been completed but not mines, however things are moving there.

RW: Glos. Cave registry with maps & database is now online as a test site.

Requested surveyors make sure they input their data.

REPORT:

16. IT Working Group – David Cooke

The IT Working Party (ITWP) exists to provide expertise to BCA on IT matters. It also provides IT support. The ITWP is comprised of a small group of techies and a representative from the Executive. The following are items that the ITWP have been involved in.

Selection of Training Administration Software System: A considerable amount of work went into the selection process. That included the due diligence necessary to minimise the risk of escalating costs or loss of control of our data. We were about to cross the finishing line when the long held concerns about Tahdah's financial stability were realised. Tahdah was not purchased. The process of looking for a replacement is beginning again.

Ballot: A significant amount of time was spent sending the email ballot papers and associated emails. Since this is the first time we have processed the ballot in-house, this was inevitable. Much has been learnt for next time. Many thousands of pounds were saved by running the ballot in-house.

Software Development: The work on enhancing BCA Online and the Membership System continues. The BCA-Online software that I've developed for BCA has been open-sourced. It is available on GitHub. This is the best way to manage software development with a team of volunteer programmers. If you are a programmer and keen to be involved please get in touch.

GDPR: The General Data Protection Regulation came into force on 25 May 2018. The BCA Privacy Notice has been published on the website. An article entitled "GDPR for Caving Clubs" has been published on the website. Consent to process members personal data was gained from them as part of the renewal process. The renewal forms included a paragraph on data protection and also drew the members' attention to the Privacy Notice. GDPR compliance should be seen as an on-going process. There is more to do.

Help and advice has been given to Wendy Williams, the new Membership Administrator, whilst she learns what is needed for her new role.

David Cooke, June 2018

DISCUSSION:

DC reiterated work done on database project now needed further revisiting and that GDPR was ongoing, along with documenting processes & formalising practical help for clubs. Nothing further to add.

REPORT:

17. Youth & Development Working Group - Rostam Namaghi

BCA AGM Youth and Development Report 2018

As BCA Y&D Officer I have to thank the dedicated group of people who have joined the group and have really changed the way we do things. It might be my name on it but it certainly isn't all my work and so I'll swap to the 'we' and 'our' pronouns for the rest of this report.

The Youth and Development Working Group has continued to go through many changes - piece by piece we are getting closer to a good sustainable framework that will allow BCA to effect significant change on our currently unbalanced demographics.

Standing Committee Application

Our application of the Working Group to become a Standing Committee serves to formalise its existence and will grant the Youth & Development Officer a vote on council. Structurally it will require us to invite representatives from Regional Councils and National Bodies, however many of whom are already keen participants. On the face of it this is largely a cosmetic change but underlines a symbolic permanence and commitment that BCA has towards supporting and expanding Y&D.

The Charterhouse Question

One of the members of the working group, was asked on behalf of a BCA member why they were refused access to CCC Ltd Caves, namely under the provisions 3.1, 4.6 and 4.7 of the BCA constitution. Despite a small furor, misconceptions and miscommunication, a clear path to resolution of the issue has emerged with the BCA obtaining a legal opinion (the question written by representatives of Y&D, the Executive and CCC Ltd). Hopefully a solution can be found in the next few weeks.

We would like to reiterate that we in fact acted in accordance with the constitution and have also complied with the request that we not publish our version of events.

Lancaster University and other Phoenix Clubs

If you've read any Y&D report in the last 9 months you will be familiar with the recreation of LUSS, who have gone from strength to strength and have now applied for BCA membership. Our (as well as caving in general's) support will continue as the first major test of a club is seeing how it can attract new members and gain a body of caving experience. We are looking to see if this model can be exported to other areas of the country. This will be done in a variety of ways:

Documents - now a tried and tested batch of everything from constitutions to risk assessments, the Student Handbook having been taken on by CHECC and expanded into a wiki (a comprehensive guide to running a club).

Equipment - a lend to buy scheme from BCA allowing us to support new student clubs by removing that initial capital cost hurdle.

Local links - we have a very well connected team able to make introductions and find the appropriate sources of support for newly started clubs.

Mountaineering Caving Sections - we are taking an in-depth look at the way we can help grow new clubs in the same way many traditionally started.

Under 18s advice and Meet the Members

Our campaign for Under 18s advice and clarification is temporarily on hold given the Charterhouse question. However we will be running a meet the members campaign through the summer whereby members of BCA Y&D will be available to attend clubs/regional councils for advice/help on how to improve/implement youth and development policies. We can't emphasise enough that we are expecting to learn just as much (if not more) from the membership than we could teach. Our main aim is to build up a network of expertise.

We're all looking forward to the coming year, and delivering on what's been promised.

Rostam Namaghi, Youth & Development Training Officer – June 2018

DISCUSSION:

RN stated that the budget in the report was illustrative only and did not need to be voted on by the AGM as it would be discussed further in Council. The Charterhouse issue seemed to now be coming to a resolution.

LesW stated he would like to have put on record that the Youth & Dev work was some of the most important that the organisation could be involved with, that he felt the right person was in the role and that Council should support them as the future of caving. There was a general consensus of approval from all.

REPORT:

**18. International Representative – Andy Eavis
Including FSE Representative (Ged Campion)**

The major International Union of Speleology happening over the last year was the international congress in Sydney, Australia during July 2017.

This, as ever, was a fantastic do attended by well over a thousand delegates from all over the world. It was immensely enjoyable, and a lot of good caving work was done. It was obvious that there is an enormous amount of wonderful original exploration going on all around the world coupled with a lot of original science. Our caves contain a fantastic history of the planet going back many millions of years. There is an enormous amount more to be unravelled.

The new bureau of the UIS was put in place in Sydney. The President is George Veni from the USA, the Vice Presidents are Efrain Mercado from Puerto Rico and Zdenek Motycka from the Czech Republic, Fadi Nader of the Lebanon is General Secretary and there are adjunct Secretaries from ten different countries.

The bureau is very strong and is doing a lot of constructive work. Notably, they are hoping to persuade UNESCO to introduce A Year of Caves and Karst in 2021 to coincide with the International Congress of Speleology happening in Lyon in France, so please diary in July/August 2021 International Congress in France.

If the UIS don't succeed with "A Year of Caves and Karst" they will almost certainly get a day which will be a step in the right direction. The UIS commissions are also operating very well with active exploration and science meetings going on in various regions of the world. It can all be reviewed on the website: uis-speleo.org

The regions of the UIS continue to strengthen with the introduction of the Asian region with Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, China and other countries of the West Pacific having a regular conference, much the same way as the European Federation and the Federation of Latin American countries in Central America are doing.

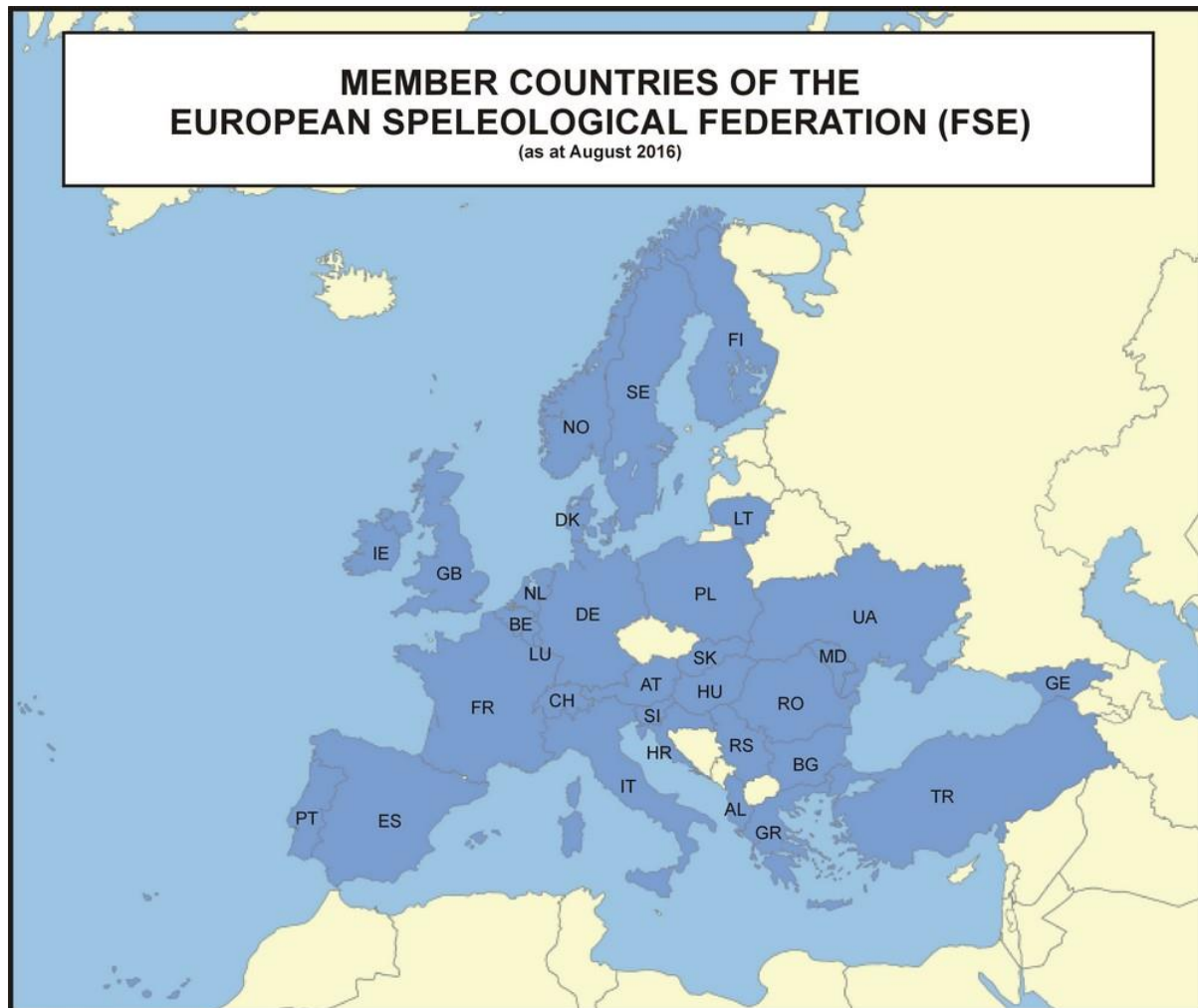
I am sure the UIS will continue to go from strength to strength.

I continue as one of their honorary presidents.

FSE Report BCA AGM June 2nd 2018

FSE Membership

The FSE comprised a membership of 31 countries in June 2017. However, at the end of last year Monaco, dropped out, due to non-payment but Georgia joined. This year Turkey withdrew, due to non-payment, so we are currently at 30 members for this year's General Assembly Meeting (GAM). Albania have promised to send an overdue payment, but this now looks unlikely.



Disputes between internal organisations in member countries continues to take up a considerable amount of the bureaus time, with two organisations claiming to be the only one who can represent that country in the FSE. Only after time-consuming e-mailing exchanges, internal coordination within the FSE Bureau and repeated checks in the FSE archive can a resolution be achieved. We are currently in this position with Serbia.

Information & Publicity.

The FSE Facebook page, updated regularly by Henk Goutier (Netherlands), is continuously visited by thousands of cavers and non-cavers thus representing an excellent outreach for European speleology. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/eurospeleo>. Also, with the help of our partners of the WikiCaves organisation keep the FSE website updated on a regular basis.

The work of the ECPC commission

The FSE, through the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) is now a member of the Board of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) in Brussels and thus directly involved in the EEB decision making working with EU commissioners and the different directorates within the EU. The ECPC has direct input into two working groups, 'Bio-diversity' and 'Water'. FSE will be actively supporting the International year of Caves & Karst 2021 an initiative led by the UIS.

The European Cave Rescue Commission

The post of chairperson for the ECRC is now held by Ms. Antonia Vlaykova from the Bulgarian Federation of Speleology (BFS) this is for a 4-years term. UK cavers are actively involved in this commission.

The International Caving Expeditions database (ICE db)

Treasurer Henk Goutier maintains the contact with WikiCaves. The ICE db is steadily growing. The idea is to provide all speleologists with data and contact information about caving areas world-wide. This is done in collaboration with the UIS. All reports of EuroSpeleo Projects are now also available on the WikiCaves website. WikiCaves currently provides major translation assistance e.g. for the FSE Newsletter

Change of role on the FSE bureau

We now have a new General Secretary in the FSE bureau, Alena Gessert from Slovakia. Although new to the bureau she is an active caver committed to the busy post of secretary. Michael Laumans has moved to post of ESP projects and Mladen Garasic from Croatia was elected into the role of FSE Vice President.

General Assembly Meeting for 2018

The GAM for this year will be held in Austria on 25th August. The Speleological Society of Ebensee together with the Austrian Speleological Association and their partners for organising the event in the picturesque region of Salzkammergut of Upper Austria. This will be the 12th Eurospeleo Forum organised in Europe. The theme of the congress is 'Connecting science and crossing borders'. The congress has already drawn interest from over thirty countries across five continents. Further information can be found at www.Eurospeleo.at

Eurospeleo Projects

Considerable work is invested in maintaining the system of sponsoring European projects, such as the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESP), the EuroSpeleo Forums (ESF), as well as the EuroSpeleo Protection Label (ESPL). This year one long standing official partners of the FSE, Beal Ropes, withdrew their sponsorship but fortunately, the FSE projects officer acted quickly and managed to secure a contract with Sacid-Korda's from Barcelona who are now the FSE's new rope sponsor. Also, Aventure Verticale (AV) have reduced their contract which has resulted in substantial changes to our guidelines and the applications for ESPs, ESFs and the ESPLs. The new guidelines can be found on the FSE website.

Further afield, the new working agreement between FSE and the Asian Union of Speleology was successfully demonstrated with two joint EuroSpeleo Projects in Cambodia and Vietnam.

Work continues to encourage more applications from the UK.

The table below shows EuroSpeleo Projects (ESP) and EuroSpeleo Forums/Congresses supported by FSE between June 2016 to present.

New applications approved since August 2016	
Project name, date and location	Organizing country
ESP 2017-08: Myanmar 2018, Cave Together Date: 27 January - 18 February 2018, Mandalay, Shan, and Kayah States, Myanmar	DE
ESP 2017-09: Expedition to Sampov Lun, Cambodia Date: 20 January - 9 February 2018, Sampov Lun, Battambang province, Cambodia	DE
ESP 2017-10: Expedition to Krong No Volcanic Geopark, Vietnam Date: 21 March - 9 April 2018, Krong No district, Dak Nong province, Vietnam	DE
ESP 2017-11: International Expedition "Mt. Sedom" Date: 11 - 22 January 2018, Mount Sedom, Israel	BG
ESP 2017-12: Gouffre Berger (Deep Cleaning) Date: 29 July - 20 August 2018, Gouffre Berger, Vercors, France	FR
ESP 2018-01: German Youth Camp Date: 28 July - 11 August 2018, Blaubeuren, Swabian Alb, Germany	DE
ESP 2018-02: Expedition Sternes Date: 5 - 15 July 2018, South side of the Sternes peak of Lefka Ori, Crete	GR
ESP 2018-03 : Colloque Karst Date: 27 June - 1 July 2018, Chambéry, Savoie, France	FR

Timetable of Eurospeleo events & General Assembly Meetings over next 3 years that involve the FSE.

ES Forum 2019 will be in Dryanovo, Bulgaria September.

ES Forum 2020 will hopefully be hosted in Spain, but this is still to be confirmed

ES Forum 2021 will take place at the UIS Congress in Lyon, France.

Ged Campion, FSE Delegate for the BCA – June 2018

DISCUSSION:

Nothing further added

REPORT:

19. British Caving Library Rep - Jenny Potts

Enquiries

We continue to deal with enquiries, which have increased over the years but have now stabilised at around ±100 every year from 2013 to 2017. The proportion of enquiries requiring us to carry out research has increased; some 50% now involving several hours of research, as opposed to a request for a simple scan/copy of an item from our shelves.

Visitors

We welcome visitors coming to do their own research and the numbers have stabilised during the last two years at around 75 each year. If possible we organise the material before the visitor arrives to enable them to make best use of their time. We offer WiFi (for those bringing their own laptop), scanning, copying and use of a PC. We host meetings of BCRA Council, BCA Training Committee and Panel Meetings and QMC and can accommodate groups of up to about 10 people for meetings. The Librarian also maintains a Library Facebook page, which increases in popularity every year.

Cataloguing

The Librarian (who is paid to work 1 day per week), and I are still continuing to re-catalogue the items held in the original BCRA Library whilst at the same time having to keep up with the new acquisitions of books, surveys, journals, foreign exchange journals and an increasing amount of archive material. This is a mammoth task and we are victims of our own success in that more time is now spent in dealing with enquiries, leaving less for the basic cataloguing. Thanks go to Martin Laverty who created and maintains the Library On-line Catalogue and Bibliography, which relies on us emailing him our catalogue spreadsheets of both old and new material.

Donations and Bequests

There are on-going problems in cataloguing the Beck/Nash legacy, partly due to the sheer volume of the material (which includes hundreds of Peak District surveys), and partly due to the way that the periodicals have been bound; some bound volumes are partly duplicates, which overlap but do not coincide with our existing bound and catalogued material. We are continuing to integrate the Eldon Pothole Club Library, which has been donated to us. As always, duplicate copies of items are made available to other caving libraries wanting them, or else they go into our "Lucky Dip" at caving events in return for donations.

Problems

Our work is limited by the time the Librarian and I are able to spend and we are actively searching for volunteers to help with cataloguing, particularly with the surveys.

We are rapidly running out of space as the new acquisitions continue to pour in and have just been offered another room in the same building, which we would need to rent in addition to the main Library room - the cost of this is currently being negotiated.

We need a volunteer to take over and develop further the BCRA Archives website, created initially by John Gardner, who has now stood down after 10 years. This is an important resource, particularly with the increasing interest in the history of caving and more archive material now coming to light, so we need someone who can build on John's vision.

*Jenny Potts,
BCRA Library Co-ordinator*

DISCUSSION:

JP: Nothing further to add. AE enquired as to space issue at library & JP stated new room being hired would alleviate that issue. However more volunteers were needed, to help with cataloguing the surveys as it was too much work for herself and Mary to sensibly tackle.

RW noted that the Library was an invaluable resource to BCA and information requests were filled quickly and very competently.

REPORT:

20. Child Protection Officer (Acting) – Chris Boardman

No report submitted, as position only very recently filled.

DISCUSSION:

CB apologised for lack of report but stated that he had held off publishing anything until he had been able to hear BCA thoughts and positions on issues.

He was currently working on a short Good Practise draft document, and clubs were very much invited to input to that.

In addition, there would be a more in-depth document on safeguarding all vulnerable adults.

The next issue would be to determine how proper governance took place. If parents come with children, or if In Loco Parentis was required, or if vetting needed to take place when working with U18's without parental presence or In Loco Parentis agreements. Whilst he felt that would only be a small number of cases, there was the possibility of setting up an online system for DBS checks for a small fee.

LesW stated that it should be published to the website once completed.

NA asked if it was possible to have someone DBS checked via BCA as part of the training scheme. CE stated it wasn't currently in place but it was not only possible but most likely would become necessary at some point.

NW stated that safeguarding was a major point of importance with regards to BCA insurance, as,

currently the issue had been devolved to individual clubs, but as the overall insurance holder BCA was beginning to be asked about it's policies and procedures. Although it had been deflected at present, he felt he did not want a lack of process being a barrier to young people entering the sport and that a web interface with the insurer could be a valuable addition.

21. Any Other Business

NW invited all constituent bodies to make a report verbally, if they wished to.

DB, reporting for CHECC

DB stated they have been actively working with Y&D to help the formation of new clubs, particularly Lancaster and alongside Mountaineers from Harper Adams. Requested help from cavers to assist with taking out trips, as leaders were needed. At the big CHECC meeting this year, panels went well, training was given by volunteers and money was raised.

They have been rewriting the BCA's guidance for University Clubs, due to be republished soon, along with an informal student Wiki.

Aiming to set up a kit grant scheme as University sports club funding is unreliable and would like to suggest this was a way BCA could assist CHECC.

HA/DB discussed adding a full copy of the CHECC manual to the student Wiki, with HA to supply a copy.

RW asked DB to discuss the grant scheme further with him.

AB for CSCC

CSCC keys are being maintained as usual, and old locks/keys being steadily replaced for new locks/keys as old style no longer available.

Longleat caves access – dialogue continues with iteration 4 of legal agreement proposed by Longleat being rejected as it put far too much liability on individual officers. It was agreed the only way to proceed was for a Limited Company to be formed, which should take place this autumn.

The visit from TA regarding the CRoW act had been appreciated, and AB finished with a reminder of 'act in haste, repent at leisure.'

Nothing further was forthcoming so AE closed this section.

AE then took a moment to note that the memorial of Trevor Ford occurred the day before, and to pay respects to his life within the caving community.

22. Election of Officers

Chair

AE stepped down from his post as Chair

One officer only proposed and accepted – LesW

Proposal: Election of LesW to position of Chair

Proposed by: AB

Seconded by: JP

NW noted no vote needed as no other candidate proposed.

Secretary

NW stated his term as Acting Secretary ended next year and he would be standing down at that point. Finding a replacement is a matter being addressed.

Treasurer

RW had agreed to remain in post and advised that there had been an expression of interest from another party who may be willing to assist with aspects of the role. RW stated that he had not yet met him but, on paper, the possible candidate seemed ideal.

Conservation & Access Officer

AH expressed that he would like to stand down from this role at the end of his term next year, as he has done two terms.

E&T Officer

MS continues in role.

Legal Officer

NW stated that the proposal – item 30 on Agenda – would have an impact on this role. If anyone wished to stand for it, it would be discussed alongside this item (nobody came forward at this point.)

Publication & Information Officer

LesW stepped down from role, pending uptake of Chair position. There had been no previous offers but Jane Allen stated she would be prepared to stand.

JA expressed her belief that the BCA should better promote itself, both to the caving community so they know what BCA does, but also to a wider audience to show how great caving is, thus the P&I involved a PR/marketing role. Given her background in these matters, JA had expressed that she would like to see the role expanded to include PR and marketing.

Proposal: Election of JA to position of Publication & Information Officer

Proposed by: DR

Seconded by: NA

No other candidate forwarded therefore no requirement for a vote.

A short discussion followed on when the term 'Acting' would be used for candidates elected mid term due to a step down by a previous incumbent. NW & AE stated this was to be discussed shortly as it was a constitutional change. As the situation currently stood, the term 'Acting' would need to be used until the natural end of the current term (2020).

Training Officer

AE asked if NA would be continuing as Acting Training Officer. NA stated he would like to propose HA as Training Officer for the BCA.

NW pointed out HA would have to accept.

HA stated that she believed they were voting on the position exactly as it was written (Training Officer – Acting) and anything beyond this would constitute a change. She suggested that NA was voted in to his current position for now and review could take place later in the meeting.

Club Posts

Two club posts were expiring.

Proposal: Steve Holding & John Hine to be appointed as Club Representatives

Proposed by: JP

Seconded: AE

Individual Reps:

Two posts were expiring

Proposal: Louise Baddeley to be appointed as Individual Member Rep

Proposed by: WW

Seconded: DB

MW stated he would not be re-standing as he was out of the country a great deal, but would like to propose Andrew McLeod.

Proposal: Andrew McLeod to be appointed as Individual Member Rep

Proposed: MW

Seconded: TA

Election of Officers closed

No Constitutional Amendments received

23. Constitutional Amendments

None received.

24. Working Group to establish BCA future vision and strategy

BCA has struggled to attract new officers and particularly to inspire a new generation of cavers to get involved with the organisation. Some major reforms are needed if BCA is to thrive in the future.

BCA find it difficult to fill officer positions as they become vacant and officers are forced to sit in those positions longer than they would like or is good for the organisation. Attracting young or new blood into the roles has proven very difficult. There may be a number of reasons for this, disinterest, a dominance of the old guard, a distinct lack of vision and some criticism that the BCA is dysfunctional. Whatever it is there are few positive aspects of involvement with BCA and these all contribute to the BCA being seen in a very negative light by those who could get more involved.

BCA never appears to be leading, the tail always seems to be wagging the dog. Reacting to issues dominates business where a proactive agenda would be more attractive. There is no vision that cavers can identify with and get behind. Moving forward in a positive direction would encourage participation in the organisation by a new generation.

Setting a new simple mission statement and vision should be a first step. Developing a strategy of how to get there, reviewing the cumbersome BCA structure to see if it is fit for the future and finally rewriting parts of the constitution where needed should follow. Tinkering with the edges will not inspire new interest in BCA. Positive reform will. Therefore I propose the following motion:

“BCA to establish a ‘working group’ to determine a new mission and vision for the organisation. To outline a strategy to achieve this vision and make recommendations for any changes to the organisations structure and constitution. The group should be made up of a majority of younger covers from the constituent bodies, regions and membership under an established convener agreed by council. The group should aim to be established within six months (by the January council meeting) and should report on recommendations to the 2020 AGM.”

Proposed by Tim Allen
Seconded by Dave Rose

After discussion, which included the expansion of the concept to take in a review of the constitution and that the constitution required a working group to be created by Council the proposal was amended to:

“The AGM instructs council to establish a ‘working group’ to determine a new mission and vision for the organisation. To outline a strategy to achieve this vision and make recommendations for any changes to the organisations structure and constitution. The group should be made up of a majority of younger covers from the constituent bodies, regions and membership under an established convener agreed by council. The group should aim to be established within six months (by the January council meeting) and should report on recommendations to the 2020 AGM.”

Proposed by: TA
Seconded by: SN

Motion 24: Two House Vote

Clubs and Organisations in favour: 12
Clubs and Organisations against: 3
Clubs and Organisations abstaining: 4

Individuals in favour: 29
Individuals against: 2
Individuals abstaining: 1

CONCLUSION: CARRIED

25. Appointment of a technical advisor to set up remote access to meetings

Improving participation, engagement and fairness are key factors in motion (1) and the objective of this motion (2). Travelling for six hours in a car for a BCA council meeting does not encourage engagement with the organisation, especially as meetings can take all day and, let’s face it, be pretty dull. In the past choosing a fixed central location for a national meeting made the best of a bad job. This is fine for those who live relatively close but deters those who live further away. Travel from the Peak, Mendip, London, S Wales involves up to two hours travel each way. It is over three hours each way from Plymouth for the Devon & Cornwall representatives.

The country's largest caving region is underrepresented at BCA and yet it has a thriving regional council. It is over three hours each way to travel from Ingleton or York. Five to eight hours from the Scottish areas which CNCC also represent. Who would want to engage with BCA from Scotland?

The cumbersome structure of BCA has over forty representatives with a role on council. These should come from across the national area and it is important that everything is done to facilitate attendance of all representatives at meetings.

Technology is obviously the answer here offering a wide variety of possible solutions. Many cavers, probably in their working lives, will have come across these systems in action. Attendance from home or local hubs via an audio or video link would solve the problem and lead to improved participation and better representation in BCA council meetings. When technology allows council members to attend meetings remotely then the physical location of that meeting is less important and it can move from a central location. Once established the council meetings could rotate around the regions and be better synchronised with regional meetings. This could create improvements in the relationship between the national body and regional councils. Therefore I propose the following motion:

"BCA to appoint or employ a technical advisor with a specific mandate to introduce an audio/visual technological solution which allows council members remote access to meetings. This access should allow members to participate at a similar level to those attending in person. A working system should be in place within one year."

Proposed by TA

Seconded by JP

After discussion, during which TA agreed to be project manager if the proposal was carried

Motion amended to 'a trial of a working system should be held within one year'.

Motion 25: Two House Vote

Clubs and Organisations in favour: 13

Clubs and Organisations against: 2

Clubs and Organisations abstaining: 3

Individuals in favour: 22

Individuals against: 1

Individuals abstaining: 0

CONCLUSION: CARRIED

26. Electronic Voting

The BCA AGM is an important part of the governance of the organisation. In line with motion (1&2) improving engagement and participation of the membership is key to a healthy organisation.

In the past the BCA AGM was held in the same central location as council meetings. Unfortunately the only people who attended were the council members. Six years ago it was decided to move the AGM around the regions which hosted a 'party weekend' in the hope that it would encourage a wider attendance. On some occasions this has worked but numbers are still very limited. Usually you get the same 20-25 council members who normally attend meetings and then perhaps another 20-25 cavers

mostly from the local region. These small numbers mean that out of a membership approaching 6000 an unhealthy influence can be had on policy from just a few, perhaps regionally biased, covers. This is not good for the organisation's democracy especially when the AGM has only been to the north once in six years!

The tedium of a meeting and the distance of travel are not conducive to encouraging engagement. However the proposed technological solutions for council meetings are not suitable to encourage several hundred members to engage with the AGM. The key business of the AGM is electing officers and voting on motions and it is voting which needs to be made more accessible for all the members.

Last year a motion on proxy voting failed. That motion had little support from council and the exec and no attempt was made to improve the motion to better suit the organisation. It was, at least, an attempt to address this issue and should be applauded. A better solution is electronic voting similar to that already used in the 2017 ballot. If motions and nominations were received by the council meeting prior to the AGM then there is a minimum of six weeks to run an electronic vote and count. This would make AGMs far more efficient and as this becomes a formal annual process preparations can be made well in advance. Therefore I propose the following motion:

"The BCA to investigate a process of electronic voting on motions and nominations properly presented to the Annual General Meetings. This process to be founded upon that used for the 2017 ballot but with greater use of professional help. The process, and any constitutional changes required to implement it, to be presented to the 2019 AGM with a view to full implementation at the 2020 AGM."

Proposed by TA

Seconded by WW

After discussion during which it was agreed that the project was to be headed up by someone other than a member of the Executive if carried:

Motion 26: Two House Vote

Clubs and Organisations in favour: 17

Clubs and Organisations against: 1

Clubs and Organisations abstaining: 1

Individuals in favour: 27

Individuals against: 0

Individuals abstaining: 3

CONCLUSION: CARRIED

27. That Training Committee is re-named as 'Recreational Training Committee' and the officer post is re-named to 'Recreational Training Officer'.

Proposed by National Council

After lengthy discussion the meeting was **adjourned at 13.15 for a break and to change rooms**

Meeting recommenced 14. 14

Following further discussion it was decided to withdraw Item 27 totally, with the feelings of the meeting noted. Item 28 was decided to be the more important issue and covered a great deal of Item 27.

CONCLUSION: WITHDRAWN

28. Training Committee terms of reference

That the Training Committee be responsible for:

- *All matters relating to recreational caver training including the administration of recreational caver training grants.*
- *The provision of non-mandatory training guidelines for use by caving clubs, recreational cavers and groups.*
- *All other training related matters excluding those associated with the BCA award schemes and the QMC.*
- *An overview of BCA training policy, in conjunction with the QMC and the BCA National Council.*

The detail of responsibilities and operations shall be confirmed by BCA National Council.

Proposed by AB

Seconded by NW

After lengthy discussion which included several suggestions for alternative wording the proposal was withdrawn

CONCLUSION: WITHDRAWN

29. Establishment of Youth and Development Standing Committee

That the BCA form a standing committee, known as the 'Youth and Development' committee, or abbreviated to Y&D Committee. This shall replace the existing co-opted position of Youth and Development officer, and take on the role and members of the Youth and Development working party. The new committee will be headed by the Youth and Development Officer (abbrv. Y&D Officer). The budget of the Y&D Committee shall be rolled over from the existing youth and development budget.

This committee shall work to represent the interests of all young cavers, including both student cavers, and those under the age of 18 (such as those in scout teams). Aims of the committee will include (but are not limited to): assisting the formation of new university clubs and scout caving teams; improving access for under 18s; liaising with university unions and guilds; and generally improving the lot of younger cavers.

Proposed: David Botcherby, seconded: Les Williams

Replacing the Y&D working party with a standing committee gives a more permanent nature to the work being done by its members, and gives a voting position on the national council to the Y&D Officer. As a standing committee, the Y&D Committee will be open to representatives from each Regional Caving Council and National Body of the BCA. The Y&D Committee will also have the ability to co-opt experts at their discretion, their business being their own to conduct. Forming a Y&D Committee would reaffirm the

BCA's commitment to their younger members, recognising their specific needs, which differ from those of the general membership. Working to represent younger cavers is an imperative of the BCA, and continuing the good work of the youth and development working group into the future will ensure this.

Proposed by DB

Seconded by LesW

DB: The changes are largely cosmetic - they would allow regional bodies to have a seat on the committee, if they so wanted, and transform the Y&D officer into an officers role with a seat on Council. I'd like to go straight to a vote.

RN: Point of order is that you would need to elect me.

NW: Correct, the creation of a standing committee would need ratification at an AGM – not “acting” as you are starting afresh.

Proposal: Election of RN to Officer

Proposed by: LesW

Seconded by: TR

Standing as convener

Position accepted by RN

Motion 29: Two House Vote

Clubs and Organisations in favour: Unanimous

Clubs and Organisations against: 0

Clubs and Organisations abstaining: 0

Individuals in favour: Unanimous

Individuals against: 0

Individuals abstaining: 0

CONCLUSION: CARRIED

30. Disbanding of the Legal and Insurance standing committee

The L&I standing committee is a throwback to the days of the NCA. There has never been a formal meeting of the L&I Committee since the creation of BCA. Insurance matters have been dealt with almost exclusively by myself acting in the Council appointed role of PL Scheme Manager and legal matters have been dealt with by an individual officer with little reference to Council or the Executive.

The October Council meeting agreed a motion “To delete the post of ‘Legal & Insurance Officer’ & split the role into two posts” and the January 2018 Council meeting agreed “As required, the Executive seek the opinion of one, or more, currently practising legal professional for legal matters, as they arise”. However, as a standing committee, it is not in the gift of Council to appoint (or remove) the L&I Officer who heads the L&I Committee, this is a matter for the AGM.

Disbanding the L&I Committee will simply regularise the situation agreed by Council and reduce the bureaucracy surrounding the appointment of officers to deal with insurance and legal matters. Council can then deal with these matters as and when they need to.

I therefore propose that:

The Legal and Insurance Standing Committee be disbanded and Council be empowered to appoint officers to deal with legal and insurance matters as they arise.

NB: the status and operation of standing committees is defined in the constitution but the actual creation of standing committees is a matter for the AGM, and hence this is not a proposal to amend the constitution.

Proposed by NW

Seconded by RW

NW: I've laid out my reasoning in the submitted item. Basically it is to simplify things and remove redundant committees.

Motion 30: Two House Vote

Clubs and Organisations in favour: 17

Clubs and Organisations against: 0

Clubs and Organisations abstaining: 1

Individuals in favour: 28

Individuals against: 0

Individuals abstaining: 1

CONCLUSION: CARRIED

31. Any other business

RW: Paul Ibberson has not agreed to act as Scrutineer next year but has not refused. I ask that appointment of scrutineer be deferred to Council.

Agreed

32. Date of next meeting

AE: Date of next AGM - I have offered in my report to try to organise an AGM in the Dales, with a bus on from Priddy or Wells, in conjunction with CNCC – provisional date could be 10th June.

TA: We will help you Andy. AE: Thank you.

33. No other business was tabled.

AE was heartily thanked for his tenure as Chair and his continued work with the BCA in other roles was much anticipated.

Annual General Meeting closed at 14.52