



**Minutes of BCA Council Meeting held on Saturday, 11th January 2014
at My Big Meeting Room, Pinvin, Worcestershire**

Present:

Andy Eavis (AE)	BCA Chairman
Paul Ibberson (PI)	BCA Treasurer
Damian Weare (DW)	BCA Secretary
Nigel Ball (NB)	BCA Training Officer
Andrew Hinde (AH)	Acting BCA Conservation & Access Officer
Nick Williams (NW)	BCA Equipment & Techniques Officer
David Judson (DJu)	BCA Legal & Insurance Officer
Les Williams (LW)	BCA Publications & Information Officer / Webmaster / 2016 Convenor
Robin Weare (RW)	Cambrian Rep.
Jenny Potts (JP)	DCA Rep.
David Jean (DJe)	DCUC Rep.
Stephan Nantynczuk (SN)	ACI Rep.
Idris Williams (IW)	ASCT Rep.
David Checkley (DCh)	BCRA Chairman
Emma Porter (EP)	BCRC Rep. / Club Rep. 2
Steve Holding (SH)	NAMHO Rep.
Helen Brooke (HB)	CHECC Rep. / BCA Youth & Development
Owen Clarke (OC)	Club Rep. 4
Bernie Woodley (BW)	Individual Member Rep. 1
Henry Rockliff (HR)	Individual Member Rep. 2
Matt Wire (MW)	Individual Member Rep. 3
David Cooke (DC)	BCA Cave-Registry / IT Working Group / Club Rep. 1
Mick Day (MD)	BCA President
Chris Jewell (CJ)	BCA Media-Liaison
Graham Mollard (GM)	observer
Cris Gibbs (CG)	observer

The meeting commenced at 10:35am.

1. Chairman's Welcome

AE welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Alan Finch, Glenn Jones, Matt Wire, Bob Mehew, Ged Campion, Boyd Potts and Ruth Allan.

3. Applications for Club Membership

Speleo Vacchus, Malvern Caving Club, Peak & Pennine Caving Club have all provided the correct paperwork and payment to become BCA Member Clubs.

Proposal: *to accept Speleo Vacchus, Malvern Caving Club and Peak & Pennine Caving Club as Member Clubs.*

Prop: LW, Sec: HB *agreed unanimously.*

4. Minutes of the last Council Meeting on 5th October 2013 (previously circulated)

Proposal: *to accept the Minutes from 5th October 2013 as a true record*

Prop: RW, Sec: DC *agreed unanimously*

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the last Council Meeting

DW: *(relating to an e-mail from Glenn Jones)* GJ notes that when originally devised, the CIM membership fee took into account a sum for postal ballots.

CJ: That simply means CIMs are being charged for something that technology has rendered unnecessary.

CNCC Request

DW: At the last meeting the CNCC report contained the following: “The CNCC committee requested reassurance from the BCA that it would discipline any award holder that was in breach of the negotiated [Leck & Casterton] access agreement.” This was not dealt with at the October meeting and, therefore, we need to deal with it today. *[The meeting agreed that such instances are dealt with by BCA’s Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures. These detail the procedures to be followed in such situations and make clear that disciplinary action should be taken against anyone found to be acting against BCA’s best interests. This would include breaking agreed access arrangements. It was also noted that there is precedent for this having happened in the recent past, with an Award Holder and also with non-Award Holding members.]*

Review of Action Log

Action 36 (Manual of Operations): Ongoing

Action 54 (Liaise with SUI): In progress.

Action 83 (Produce Asset Register): In progress - nearly complete, currently awaiting HE update.

Action 97 (T/As working as Individuals): Complete.

Action 104 (Ask at TC for Potential CP Officer): to be discussed at the next meeting.

Action 109 (Review of Subscription Structure): see Chairman’s Report

Action 113 (Adopt a Club Scheme) see Youth & Development Report

Action 115 (Summary of Landowner Insurance Benefits) Ongoing.

Officers’ Reports

6. Chairman (written report previously circulated)

I am a little bit disappointed with the delay in our magazine Speleology but I am pleased that it will now come out in the next couple of weeks. I know this very large issue is nearly complete and unfortunately the editors were rather optimistic as to the timescale it would take to produce it. Many thanks to Dave Gibson and his team for completing this long-awaited publication. I understand the next edition is nearly ready as well and should come out in a timely manner around about Easter.

There are obviously a number of major factors in discussion at the moment, particularly simplifying membership structure which we will talk about shortly and this really hinges around electronic mail and direct access. A draft document is being circulated (appendix 2) and we invite comments on this between now and the next Council Meeting in March when we will try and produce something that can be presented to the AGM in June.

Later in the meeting we will be discussing commercial caving and other access matters. Clearly there are some important things going on within British caving that we will need to consider.

I would very much like to have attended the next CNCC Meeting but unfortunately it is happening today at exactly the same time as the British Caving Association Meeting. I will however try and meet various regional officers in the next few weeks to discuss the role of BCA as a National Body interacting with the Regional Bodies over matters such as access.

Andy Eavis

AE: The new Mendip guidebook is a very impressive piece of work - well done to all concerned.

Membership Structure Document

AE: The document is included in Appendix 2.

DW: The document is designed to encourage comment, rather than to be something set in stone. There are a number of difficult issues still to be addressed and we are aware of a lot of these already. However, early indications suggest that there is nothing that is insurmountable. The key is that by making greater use of e-mail and our website, it is now possible to communicate with members at minimal cost and this means we should be able to remove the previous distinction between CIMs and DIMs, simplifying membership and generally improving communication.

DC: The key will be keeping the cost as close as possible to the current CIM fee structure.

NW: It was originally very hard to sell £16 versus £2, and there was considerable opposition for the first 6 months or so. However in time that settled down and the majority of members now seem fairly content. NW sees the greatest priority as reducing the hassle of joining as it is currently too great. Anything that does this will be welcome.

SH: At present most club members don’t realise they are BCA members, due largely to the failure of their Clubs to

communicate with them. It will be good to improve on this.

- IW: The document says that at the moment CIMs subsidise DIMs, and then goes on to propose that CIMs pay more.
- LW: A big issue will be finding a way to encourage Clubs to continue to provide their members' data.
- JP: We must always remember how hard it is for Clubs to get the data from their members. Club renewal dates are not all January-January and so some Clubs have to collect money and data twice in a year. This makes it even harder.
- MW: One club has e-mailed MW explaining that they do not wish to give us their e-mail addresses. MW replied that hopefully they will join up next year when they can see that there are benefits. The system MW is using for the e-mailing also has membership capabilities and it looks very good. By chance it is also the system used by the BEC for their membership.
- DCh: Are we still thinking of a print run for Speleology or is it intended to switch to print on demand? We have 60 library exchanges and they would definitely want paper copies. A disadvantage of publications being solely online is that they seem to end up being less good, both in terms of content and layout.
- AE: There are advantages to each method and everything is still up for discussion, but a print run is could well continue.
- JP: Some overseas libraries are starting to ask if they can send the British Caving Library electronic copies due to the costs of printing.
- DC: BCRA has trodden this path in front of us with publications. Is there anything we can learn from that?
- JP: We need to be careful to ensure we have an alternative paper option for those who do not have access to the internet or e-mail.
- LW: Hidden Earth stopped printing booking forms a while ago and everyone is now forced to register online, with an option to download a booking form and post it. At the moment this option is used by only 4 or 5 people.
- HR: Personally is happy for BCA to post individual stuff, but doesn't want it to be part of his payment, as he would favour online access. A sensible way to achieve this would be to add an additional cost for postage of paperwork if people so choose.
- DW: There are two ways of looking at the issue of communicating with non-e-mail users. One is that currently the majority of CIMs receive no communication from BCA because their Clubs do not pass it on, therefore if we do nothing this will continue. Instead we are proposing a way of communicating with many of them. If half elect to receive this, then that is an improvement and the rest can continue as they do at the moment and receive nothing. The other view is that we should make sure we communicate with all, and therefore need paper alternatives. Personally DW favours the former approach, as there is a considerable additional workload on volunteers to adapt electronic newsletters and also to envelope stuff. This will help ensure a really good e-mail service which will, in time, lead to more and more signing up to e-mail.
- DC: We should remember that CIMs get access to the Handbook and Newsletter online at the moment. What we don't have is any way to tell CIMs it is there. As we are now collecting e-mail addresses, we can now do this.
- CJ: E-mail should be the default option and this should be laid out differently from a paper newsletter with short summaries and links so it is easily readable on smart phones and tablets. This style does not lend itself well to being printed and posted. Under the proposed system we might manage to evolve to a system where people join BCA off their own back and feel as if they are members.
- MW: Could we use our membership system to also provide Clubs with a service for collecting their club fees at the same time?
- HR: There is a possibility that we might make caving more individual and less club-based under this new system. We should definitely try to avoid this.
- IW: There is potentially a difficulty for clubs to check their members are insured.
- AE: We would be grateful for further ideas and comments, which are best submitted by e-mail to DW.

The remainder of the Chairman's Report was accepted without discussion.

7. Secretary (written report previously circulated)

Proposed Commercial Caving Statement: *At January's meeting Executive was asked to investigate the access difficulties facing commercial cavers. After widespread consultation we pulled together a draft document included in Appendix 1. This was circulated fairly widely in June with a view to interested parties feeding back to their various reps on Council before the October meeting. I also received two written submissions which are included here for Council's information. Unfortunately I was unable to attend the last meeting and it was decided to put off discussion until this meeting.*

I said last time that I think it would be wise to add a further paragraph expressing our general thanks to landowners, telling them how we are responsible, insured, take their interests into account and generally enjoy excellent relations with landowners as a result. It is, after all, quite possible that any leaflet we do produce may be the only direct communication between BCA and a landowner.

Other than this, despite re-reading all the original comments submitted during the consultation and the two written submissions below, I have not found anything to suggest we shouldn't try to help landowners by explaining different types of commercial caving and then asking that, where possible, they grant access as widely as possible, while also making clear that at the end of the day it is entirely in their gift to do as they wish and we will fully support them. That is, after all, a basic summary of what our Constitution expects us to do.

AGM / Party Weekend: *This will be at Dalesbridge in the Yorkshire Dales from 13th-15th June. Venue costs will be substantially higher than last year, but we expect to attract more people to buy beer and generally spread the costs around a bit more. I have put a message on UKCaving, designed to get the date in new diaries and in Meets Lists. Much more advertising will happen shortly.*

Anybody who is able to volunteer to do anything to help, either in the run-up to or during the event itself, will be much appreciated. As a certain large supermarket frequently tells us, "every little helps"!

AGM Notification: *We are constitutionally required to "publish" the date, time and place of the AGM at least 18 weeks in advance. For us this means by the end of the first week of February. The Secretary is then required to prepare and "circulate" an Agenda to all members not less than 6 weeks before the meeting. Traditionally we have dealt with both of these requirements by posting notification to members, either in the Newsletter or by a separate posting.*

To date I have not managed to make contact with the Newsletter Editor to establish whether we can rely on a newsletter to be timed to do either of these.

Several years ago we amended our Constitution so that under the "Interpretation" section we included the following definitions:

"publish" means placed in a publication produced by BCA, or placed on BCA's web site, or both.

"circulated" means circulated by post, or by email if the member has elected to receive communications from BCA in that manner, or by publishing the information, or by any combination of these methods.

I would like the meeting's guidance on whether we should continue to post a notification of the date, time and place to members, or whether we are happy that publication in Descent and our website is sufficient. Equally I should like to know whether we wish the Agenda to be posted out separately or whether, as allowable under the Constitution, we can just publish it on the website. If relevant, each mailing costs something in the region of £350 and takes me about 3 hours of envelope stuffing, label printing and stamp sticking.

Leck & Casterton Commercial Permits: *I have received communications from the BEC asking us to discuss the possible ramifications of the proposed access arrangements for commercial cavers on Leck and Casterton Fells. I understand this will be presented by Chris Jewell at the meeting.*

Paper Copies of Agendas etc: *Previously I was fortunate in having access to very reasonably-priced photocopying, but this is no longer the case. I have traditionally printed 15-20 copies of Agendas, Reports and last meeting's Minutes. This often runs to 500+ sides of copying and at commercial rates this is quite expensive. I am also now out at work from 6am-6pm so am unable to take or collect copying anywhere mid-week. This would not present a problem if reports arrived on time, but they do not. I will, therefore, be printing everything for this meeting on my printer at home. Should I continue to do this, or am I churning out unnecessary quantities of paper in the era of modern technology? Alternatively perhaps there is someone else with easy access to "cheap" photocopying who can help out?*

Damian Weare

Commercial Caving

LW: CSCC spent some time discussing the fact that BCA is described as the "Governing Body", rather than "representative body", as they would prefer.

MD: It is a fact that BCA is the Governing Body. It is a formal term used by the Government and we are recognised as the appropriate Body for caving. It is important that we hold this title officially or somebody else might try to take on the role, potentially against the best interests of British caving.

DC: Is concerned that the leaflet will be distributed to landowners.

DW: The real intention is that it is used as a tool by those who negotiate access. In all likelihood they also do not really understand the term "commercial caving" and it may help them negotiate for wider access than might otherwise be the case.

HB: In theory this is all good. Indeed, commercial caving is good, but we should ask ourselves what will happen if landowners - having seen this document - start to feel that qualifications are necessary for recreational caving too.

GM: If BCA does not go down the road of trying to improve access for professional cavers, then the result will

simply be that professional cavers will negotiate personally with landowners. There is no doubt that they will then pay for it and landowners will end up looking at their agreement with recreational cavers and will inevitably favour commercial caving.

- SN: GM is correct. Professional caving (which is not necessarily commercial caving) has to remain an integral part of BCA as together we are both much stronger. Negotiating our own professional-caver agreements is a very real possibility.
- HR: The leaflet seems to be too narrow in its purpose and needs to be part of a larger leaflet on negotiating access in general.
- DJe: In Devon & Cornwall the greatest problem in negotiations is always when it involves a public body, rather than individual private landowners.
- RW: It is important to remember that as far as Wales is concerned, Cambrian is the National Governing Body. In principle we are happy with the document, but there is one phrase we don't like, namely under Section 4 - "Types of Commercial Caving" under the heading "Guiding" is the following sentence: "This type of trip will be very similar to a non-professional trip but will be expertly led." This clearly implies recreational trips are not expertly led and should be removed.
- DW: Agreed - this is a horrible sentence and should definitely be removed.
- GM: Most of the problems that led to this document arose from the fact that BCA Trainer/Assessors, while working on BCA's behalf, have not had access to certain systems that would be beneficial for the scheme. This problem seems to have been largely sorted out in the Dales in the last few months, but difficulties still remain in S. Wales. GM objects to SWCC's negative comments about commercial cavers, as outlined in their letter (Appendix 1). All we are trying to do is get everyone within BCA treated the same.
- RW: Speaking personally where there is a problem, it is that the S. Wales Panel does not seem willing to consider any suggestion other than OFD as a suitable venue for its training. RW has made a number of suggestions for potentially suitable alternatives, but they do not seem to have even been considered to date.
- DW: We are in danger here of discussing specific current instances rather than the general principles. Rather than aiming to have every current access agreement renegotiated in light of the proposed document, it is aimed more at new agreements or when existing ones are being renewed.
- DC: In the most recent cases on Mendip access arrangements have become tighter as a result of extensions being made.
- HR: Is BCA not simply encouraging a divide between professional and recreational cavers? Professionals are not making money out of the cave itself, but rather out of their time, expertise and knowledge.
- LW: New finds are typically extensions of existing caves, rather than new caves in their own right. This draft document has already resulted in some very useful discussions at several Management Committee meetings.
- DW: Indeed. The new arrangements for Trainer-Assessors on Casterton Fell were negotiated by using the text explaining the six types of commercial caving. DW is also aware of another extensive system where changes appear likely as a direct result. Seemingly there have already been benefits from the draft, unapproved document.
- MD: We must remember that when working as a caver, you are subject to a range of legislation, such as the Health & Safety at Work Act. Whether we like it or not, there are differences between professional and recreational cavers.
- JP: A lot of the agreements that currently say "no commercial caving" began with "no novices" and evolved over time. It is clear that there is a difference between the two. Indeed certain caves are used by professionals where you would definitely not take novices. In addition it is definitely the case that some novice groups are badly led by unpaid members of the public and it may be this that landowners actually wish to prevent. It is worth noting that Derbyshire has never had any such problems because 20 years ago Dave Edwards set up PICA which works closely with DCA with representation at each other's meetings. The benefits of this are two-way with, for example, PICA providing manpower when work needs doing.
- CJ: It is not clear what the purpose of this leaflet is.
- AE: Some people have certainly suggested that the proposed title of the leaflet is a problem.
- LW: MD made a good point about the legal situation. However there is clear case law that the landowner does not have any greater liability when allowing commercial groups. In fact legally it is the most experienced - or qualified - person who will be found negligent in the event of an incident. It is very unlikely that this will be a non-caving landowner.
- MD: In the past the OFD Management Committee has refused access to a commercial caver on the basis that that

person would be at work.

[At this point EP arrived at the meeting]

HR: Could we explain why we train and assess in caves above the level they are going to be using their qualifications in?

GM: Because we train people to a level that is above the level they operate at.

HR: Also, why are some people given an entitlement to caves at LCMLA where they have no access commercially?

IW: Because not all LCMLA use is for paid work. For example OFD is used with Scouts and that isn't commercial.

CJ: The proposed document does not seem to have a definition of commercial caving.

BW: Is currently negotiating for access and is using the terms "professionally-led groups" and "recreational cavers". At the moment there are no issues. Sees the document as something that is best used by cavers if they need it when negotiating, rather than distributed to landowners.

HB: Would like to remove the divide between commercial and recreational by having one inclusive document.

LW: The basic problem is that people in the caving community don't want what they see as led groups with the guide making lots of money.

AE: Lots of people are also concerned about conservation.

HR: Perhaps we should suggest alternative restrictions which landowners may choose to put in place to deal with their concerns. This could include "no novices" or limited group sizes.

[The meeting finally concluded that the statement should be accepted, subject to some revisions by Executive. The leaflet should become part of a more wide-ranging, all-inclusive leaflet on negotiating access.]

AGM

HB: Last time was very successful, but we did not manage to attract that many extra to the AGM on the Sunday. CHECC is much more successful at this by running it while people are eating their breakfast.

DW: We took the decision that we did not want to put people off attending the event in general by making them feel obliged to spend their Sunday at the AGM. That was why, for example, it was actively located in a different room from breakfast so people had to actually opt in.

HB: We should maybe be a bit more pro-active than that. Perhaps it is worth pointing out in advertising that everyone has a vote at the AGM, as many CIMs do not realise.

AGM Notification

RW: Maybe sending it out enhances the view that CIMs don't have a vote.

NW: Perhaps we should change the wording on the membership cards to: "Your voting number is ...".

LW: Could we put on all advertising for the Party "Please register your e-mail address with BCA for e-mail news."

[It was agreed that we should no longer post paper notification or Agendas, but instead advertise as widely as possible on our website, in newsletters during the year and in Speleology.]

Leck & Casterton

CJ: BEC is concerned about the recently negotiated agreement for commercial cavers on Leck & Casterton Fells, as reported in the September 2013 CNCC Minutes. It says "Les [Sykes ... CNCC Access Officer] said that a fee would be payable to the landowner for each trip, possibly around £20 +vat per trip (landowners' decision), though Graham Mollard and Nigel Ball had suggested it should be substantial." Further up in the same Minutes it states that Graham Mollard and Nigel Ball, BCA's Training Officer, said that "We also feel that the Land owners/ Land agents should impose a fee payable upon booking a permit so much per head. We will not suggest a figure but it should be substantial." CJ wonders if this contradicts BCA's constitution which states that "access should be obtained and granted as freely as possible". CJ has spoken to Les Sykes, who says it is nothing to do with CNCC how much is charged. However the BEC feel it is the role of CNCC to have a view, and that their view should be that the fee should be as low as possible. In this respect CJ is surprised that the Minutes don't reflect that £20 is quite a lot.

JP: Actually £20 for a whole party is quite cheap. It is £3 per head in a number of caves.

CJ: Surely Access Controlling Bodies should be looking for access as widely as possible and as cheaply as possible.

GM: In this case, if you go in the opposite direction where access is left to be negotiated by individuals, then the outcome could be far worse for all cavers.

AH: That was the Minutes of a meeting, rather than an official statement.

DC: The bit that surprised me was that GM and NB were actually recommending a high fee. Could they explain why?

NB: It depends on your definition of “substantial”.

GM: Because it would ease access in another area.

LW: From a conservation point of view it is always preferable to charge per head, rather than per party as the latter encourages larger group sizes.

AH: Does not think CNCC has broken any clause in the BCA Constitution. The problem relates to a fee, rather than breadth of access. Secondly it is important to realise that the Landowners and their Agents follow the UKCaving forums and read the Minutes of meetings. Sometimes things are minuted in a particular way for that reason.

[The meeting concluded that it did not feel CNCC had been acting outside the BCA Constitution with respect to negotiations over access to Leck & Casterton Fells. It also concluded we should always seek opportunities to remind members that as a general rule when negotiating access with landowners, we should always seek to achieve access as widely as possible.]

Minutes & Meeting Paperwork

DW: Would very much like to thank JP, both for stepping in at the last minute last meeting and taking the Minutes, and also for volunteering to deal with the printing of meeting paperwork in the future. This is very helpful.

The remainder of the Secretary’s Report was accepted without discussion.

8. Treasurer (written report previously circulated)

Since the last Council meeting there have been no major issues from a finance point of view. Day to day matters have been kept ticking over and are mainly up to date. Cash flow has been adequate to cover expenditure without recourse to the main deposit funds, although this is likely to change as we have the main insurance premium to pay in early January. Regional Caving Council funding for 2012 was confirmed following the October discussions and the funds have been paid over; formal minutes have still to be finalised, but will be circulated early in 2014. The tax return was completed in good time, so our next statutory obligation will be the preparation of the annual Accounts – this will be taking place over the next 2-3 months and as usual I ask Council members to advise any outstanding expenditure pertaining to 2013 as soon as possible. Over the course of a couple of meetings, Executive have further considered, amongst other things, the issue of the current membership structure of BCA. A discussion document is provided with these reports for consideration by Council. Other than the above, I have very little to report. My main focus for the next couple of months will clearly be to prepare the 2013 Accounts as quickly and efficiently as possible and to keep other matters running smoothly in the meantime. After that it will be time to take stock and see what else can be done to move things forward.

Paul Ibberson

The Treasurer’s Report was accepted without discussion.

9. Acting Conservation & Access (written report previously circulated)

The “problem” of cave leaders requiring a level 1 bat license at a Devon cave has been resolved. After a few enquiries to Natural England advisers in the South West a statement from NE Wildlife and Licensing was forthcoming which has clarified the situation to everyone’s satisfaction. There are no implications for other regions. This was a site-specific local difficulty which is now resolved.

I have co-ordinated responses to the Government consultation on the possible introduction of Biodiversity Offsetting. The responses were restricted to sections relevant to Cave and Karst and did not cover species-specific sections. I would like to thank the Regional Caving Councils for submitting their response in such a short timescale.

The Government’s Tri-annual Review of Natural England, Forestry Commission and Environment Agency has led to the decision to keep all 3 bodies as independent institutions. The DEFRA Minister has called for all 3 bodies to work in partnership to deliver more efficient processes and better outcomes for the Natural Environment. Thanks again to the Regional Councils for submitting responses to the consultation.

I am proposing to hold a meeting of regional Cave Conservation Officers during the BCA AGM/Party weekend in June 2014 at Dalesbridge Centre. This is an opportunity for the regions to showcase some of their “best practice” in cave conservation and pass on successful strategies through short presentations in an open session. I would hope that Regional Councils or BCA could subsidise a Travel and Subsistence allowance for Conservation Officers attending and contributing. I have represented BCA at a teleconference with the Bat Conservation Trust on the latest developments in WNS in UK bat populations. The BCT are issuing updated guidance through Descent Magazine and will issue a statement for the BCA website.

The NCA publication The Cave Conservation Handbook was published in the 1990s. A lot of the information regarding statutory bodies is understandably out of date. However, the Handbook still contains a lot of relevant and useful information. Should this publication be updated? Would a pdf be acceptable? Would anyone volunteer to help the author/editor in reviewing?

Andrew Hinde

AH: Natural England (NE) is undergoing a strategic review and one of the positive things is that for the first time one of its functions is going to be landscape and geology. This will be the first time NE has had someone at Director level involved in SSSIs. BCA wears the hat of Governing Body and should be liaising with NE on this. Indeed this is a new opportunity to ensure that various bodies come directly to BCA or the Regional Councils for anything to do with caves or karst.

LW: How does that affect your position in NE and BCA? You were for example concerned about making a response on behalf of BCA a few months ago because of a conflict of interest. Who do you see as making representation to NE in general?

AH: As a general rule this is likely to be AH, but AH will always try to find the relevant people to make the appropriate representation and sometimes this may be somebody else.

AH: NE wants to designate more geological sites as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and we should help them in this.

LW: If recommending sites, please bear in mind the effect this had in the Mendips last time.

JP: Consultation beforehand is very important. If it is done badly, things can go horribly wrong.

AH: Being designated brings with it the protection of the law. There is also the opportunity for National Nature Reserve status on a cave, which also brings with it open access to the surface. NNR designation is a useful way of promoting the protection of caves.

LW: Does this affect the land on the surface too?

AH: No. It is also unlikely anything will be designated a NNR if it is not a SSSI?

Cave Conservation Meeting

DW: Conservation & Access is a BCA Committee and we encourage our Committees to meet and pay travel expenses when they do. In principle, therefore, we should be happy to support AH's proposal.

Cave Conservation Handbook

LW: It is perhaps worth mentioning that an electronic copy of the current Cave Conservation Handbook Policy is no longer available. However LW thinks he has OCR scans of the document.

NW: Definitely has an OCR copy of the Handbook and will pass it on.

AH: Is prepared to take on the task of revising it as a Committee, but if anyone else would like to be involved, they will be very welcome.

The remainder of the Acting Conservation & Access Report was accepted without discussion.

10. Equipment & Techniques

NW: My apologies for not having sent in a written report in advance of the meeting. Year end is always a particularly busy period.

The Committee held a productive meeting in November at which progress was made on policies on fixed aids other than SRT anchors and on the potential for the placement of resin-bonded anchors in substrates other than carboniferous limestone.

Council will be aware that the road to the replacement has been strewn with hazards, the latest of which was that the batch of anchors received from our chosen source in Germany, which were supposed to be 316 stainless steel in fact turned out to be made from 304, which has a lower chloride resistance. I would like to thank Bob Mehew for a significant piece of work to quantify the risks resultant from using the 'lower' grade of material. The risks turn out to be minor but nevertheless every Region has determined that they want only 316 anchors and not 304. I am pleased to report that the supplier had admitted their error and have agreed to replace the anchors on a no-cost basis.

The anchor puller, extensively used for testing the replacement anchors, has now made it to Devon where it will be used for tests associated with rock other than limestone. We have also acquired a tensile test rig which will provide interesting insights into equipment strengths which cannot be gleaned from the dynamic (drop) test rig.

DW: What is the likely timescale for receipt of the replacement 316 anchors?

NW: Two batches have already arrived, but we do not have specific dates from our supplier.

Rope-Testing

Nothing to report.

The remainder of the Equipment & Techniques Report was accepted without discussion.

11. Training (written report previously circulated)

Local Cave and Mine Leader Award details since from October 2013 to December 2013.

Registrations (59), Level 1 assessments (7), Level 2 assessments (16), Level 1 revalidations (23), Level 2 revalidations (10)

Cave Instructor details since October 2013 to December 2013.

Registrations (5), Assessments (0), Revalidations (8)

We currently have 482 LCML Level 1 holders, 232 LCML Level 2 holders and 80 CIC holders.

Notification & Moderation: *As part of a process to guarantee quality and general consistency of courses offered by approved providers throughout the U.K., Training Committee has made some changes to the Trainer / Assessor agreement from 1st January 2014. They are as follows:*

- All courses to be offered, either training or assessment, are notifiable to Training Committee before their delivery.*
- All Trainer/Assessors agree to the process of moderation as from 1st January 2014*

Once a course is notified, the process of moderation can take place. It will also enable probationary Trainer / Assessors to attend course for the purpose of observation as required to attain their full status.

SUI Parity: *The Training Officer has attended the AGM of SUI to discuss the parity of BCA awards with SUI awards. This was a very successful meeting and will be discussed at the next Training Committee meeting.*

CIC T/A Coaching Training: *All Trainer/Assessors for the Cave Instructor Award scheme are to be invited to attend a day's training on the assessment of Module 3 – Vertical Coaching. This will be delivered by the Training Officer, one day based in the south and one day in the north.*

CHECC Training: *As part of the roll-out process of offering courses for club trainers, the Training Committee will contact all member clubs of CHECC who are registered with BCA and offer their Training Officer a training weekend. This is intended to be delivered towards the end of March 2014.*

Leck & Casterton Access: *Access to the Leck and Casterton Fells cave systems is now available to approved Trainer / Assessors, via permits, to deliver Local Cave Leader Level 2 training and assessment courses and also Cave Instructor Certificate training and assessment courses. The following statement has been made by the CNCC Access Officer:*

The CNCC has negotiated access for BCA training/assessment of potential award holders for Leck and Casterton Fells. There is NO charge for these permits and they are issued to BCA training Committee on application for a permit from the Training Officer. These permits are only for the training and assessment of award holders. They CANNOT be used for commercial caving groups. The new category of CNCC membership 'Commercial member' does not apply to BCA Training Committee permits or award holders acting on behalf of the Training committee on legitimate BCA training/assessment.

Nigel Ball

SUI Parity

NB: The meeting was very successful and holders of LCMLA Awards will simply need to demonstrate knowledge of the Irish systems they wish to use, to receive equivalent Irish qualifications. Regarding parity the other way, there are some differences between the SUI and our Schemes and these are to be discussed at Training Committee.

CHECC Training

NB: A Coaching module has been written and Training Committee would like to roll it out to Member Clubs. It was felt that this might be best started with CHECC, as they represent a comparatively smaller number of Clubs and train large numbers of novices each year. To date CHECC has not responded to the offer, but they will doubtless do so soon.

HB: CHECC likes to be involved and appreciates the offer. Unfortunately we are not sure we are the ideal market. CHECC is the governing body of university caving but each club has its own University to answer to and this makes things very difficult. We are very careful to avoid a situation where a University finds out about some training that has taken place and then makes this mandatory for all leaders in future years. The background to this is that many university clubs have faced real problems with their Universities threatening to, or indeed, actually throwing them out in the past. The problem is political, rather than practical. We need to protect University caving and strangely this sometimes means we need to be cautious about accepting offers of training.

IW: It might be worthwhile mentioning the training to the Scout cavers next weekend.

NB: Mary Wilde, as Training Administrator, has an increasing workload and we are looking at ways of reducing this. Mary has suggested that she would like to be released from setting Agendas and taking Minutes at NCP and Training Committee. NB's wife has agreed to do this instead, but NB is unsure of how to progress with this.

NW: There is no reason why we should not have another employee. The important bit, particularly when it involves a relative of a Council Member, is that we are fair and transparent in the appointments process. As there is an immediate need, we could maybe appoint her for a fixed term of 12 months with a view to advertising and making a full-time appointment at the end of that period.

HR: Would any of the existing BCA employees wish to do this instead?

NW: Almost certainly not.

RW: We should note that this is the only Committee that has a paid Minute-taker. Why?

GM: The workload of Training Officer is huge. If the responsibility fell on NB's shoulders, he would probably not be willing to continue as Training Officer.

Proposal: That we appoint Gill Jordan to set Agendas, collate reports and take the Minutes of Training and NCP meetings for a 12-month period. A full-time appointment will be advertised in the meantime to begin at the end of that period.

Prop: NW Sec: EP agreed unanimously

Action 131: NW and NB to liaise over the temporary appointment of Gill Jordan.

The remainder of the Training Report was accepted without discussion.

12. Publications & Information

Very little to say other than what is in the sub sections below

Les Williams

a. Webmaster

Dave Cooke has been progressing with the new website. Damian and Mary continue to keep it up to date. Many thanks to them all.

Les Williams

At the last meeting I reported I had installed the software ready to run the website and after a bit of bespoke programming was happy with it. I spent much of the Christmas break cutting and pasting the old website into the new. It is now all done bar the Training section which I hope will complete by the council meeting. The next step is for the officers to review their respective section before releasing the finished website to the public. The new website is at www.british-caving.org.uk/wiki3. The new website builds on the far sighted concept of the original website to allow the officers to directly edit their own pages. It is a more modern implementation of the system that Peter Wilton-Jones wrote to Les William's specification. It is now impossible to lose a page since all changes are tracked. So please don't be afraid to get stuck in. If there is interest and time I intend to run a training seminar at the BCA party weekend.

I hope the new website is visually more appealing with a relatively uncluttered screen. There is scope to add more images. The new menu structure should be easier to follow. Behind the scenes the technicalities of managing and maintaining the site will be easier. However, ultimately the content is the most important and it has to be said much of that is in need of review.

David Cooke

LW: When we talk of direct communication to our members, we should remember that the website is the main means of communication.

DW: Bob Mehew has been in e-mail communication and asked that the following be drawn to the meeting's attention:

The original set up is odd in having major division where words on the page provided links to a few sub pages but not others. This was offset by having links to other sub pages showing in left hand column. [The new] presentational style hides these links until you hover over them. Either we have new material to reflect [this] approach or [the] presentational style is changed. I suspect this may affect other parts of the site, so it is not solely an Equipment decision.

DC: This relates to the sub menus on the old website which remained open once they had been entered into. However on the new site they are only visible when you hover over them. BM e-mailed this earlier in the week and DC has now changed the new site to show a permanent "Trace" across the top. The problem should now be solved.

b. Web Services

The webserver continues to run reliably. There were two distributed denial of service attacks, one for ½ hour in late October and one for 2 hours in mid December. These attacks are a sad reality of the Internet. Memset, our provider acted swiftly to mitigate them.

Now that the Fasthosts server has been switched off our costs have been dramatically reduced. As a consequence we can afford to improve our offering to the clubs, etc. I intend to increase the disk space included in the basic package from 200MB to 500MB. The number of databases in the basic package will increase from 1 to 5. The number of mailboxes and bandwidth will remain unlimited. The price for additional disk space will be reduced from £15/Gb to £4/Gb. On the flip side, the domains which we sell at cost will increase in price. The .uk domains will increase from £3.50/yr to £4/yr. The .org & .com domains will increase from £11/yr to £13/yr. This is a very competitive offering that continues BCA Web Service's mission to provide cheap, reliable, fully featured web hosting for our members.

The task for the next quarter is to upgrade the versions of php, mysql and apache on the server so that they remain current. This can cause compatibility issues with the hosted websites and therefore needs to be carefully managed to reduce any

possible pain.

David Cooke

DC: The new pricing structure should be of benefit to some of those clubs with larger sites.

Newsletter

No report received.

d. Handbook (written report previously circulated)

There are a few amendments needed to keep the online version up-to-date. I am aware of this, but haven't yet quite got around to actually making the changes and uploading the new document. I will hope to do so before the next meeting. Sorry!

Damian Weare

e. Speleology

There has been a delay, and Speleology 19 will probably now go to press on 13 January. The reason for the delay is a bit silly really - I estimated how many hours it would take me (and I think I'm on target for that) but I seem to have made an arithmetical error on the number of hours in a week and so I couldn't fit everything in: I didn't start early enough.

This issue is 54 pages, which is somewhat larger than a standard issue, and it will contain additional colour pages (as agreed with Paul Ibberson). There will also be an "online supplement" of perhaps 17 pages, available in February, which will allow us to complete most of the "catching-up" we need to do. (The online material is too old to justify its place in a 2014 paper edition).

I don't see why the April issue shouldn't be on time, provided I and my team all remember to start in plenty of time. To be on time, issue 20 needs to go to press in the last week of March. So all contributions will be needed by the last week of February.

The current issue contains a fair amount (possibly rather too much) of what might loosely be called "BCRA-orientated" articles, and very little (if anything) that is obviously "BCA-sourced". Some material lies comfortably in the middle - which is as it should be - but, given previous feedback to me, that (and I quote) "BCA should have more control over the content" I was a bit surprised at the extent to which I have been left to my own devices.

I have been assisted in the production of issue 19 by Hugh Penney, Jerry Wooldridge, Erin Lynch, Nigel Ball and Chris Howes. Hugh Penney has co-ordinated input from the Regional Correspondents and David St Pierre has co-ordinated input from BCRA's Foreign Correspondents.

This may be an issue more for BCRA than BCA, but I need someone to do more than merely "co-ordinate" overseas contributions - I need a sub-editor who will assemble the entire overseas section (including: writing the entire section to "house style" and checking all foreign spelling). This is a significantly time-consuming job, as the material is complicated to deal with. It is a job that, personally, I have little interest in doing. Also, I suspect it does not fit in with the requirement for a BCA in-house magazine for its readers. If an overseas sub-editor does not materialise I will have to cut down the amount of overseas material we publish. This will disappoint the enthusiastic team of contributors around the world but I suspect that most members will not notice.

A wider issue is that, personally, I am not convinced that Speleology is, in fact, needed - either by BCA or BCRA; and a better option might be to develop the BCA newsletter into a more substantial publication, and for Cave & Karst Science to broaden its remit. However, the decision on this is - unfortunately - not one that BCA or BCRA Councils can make, as it is in the hands of the volunteers, and what they want (or are able) to do. Thus, we're probably going to continue as we are for a while.

BCA Council probably does need to discuss the question of funding, since the magazine may well end up costing you more than you have envisaged. When my editorial team has submitted its various claims for #19, no doubt some debate will need to take place.

David Gibson

AE: Funding for this issue is flexible. Let's get these two issues out and consider it properly then.

The remainder of the Publications & Information Reports were accepted without discussion.

13. Legal & Insurance (written report previously circulated)

Possible Risks Arising From Fracking Exploration/Development: *Widely based research, both in the USA and elsewhere, are all tending to suggest that there is likely to be little or no detriment to our areas of interest, but this is ongoing and we still need to keep our eye on the ball.*

Acute Shortage Of Housing Across The UK: *Chatter in the 'Westminster Village' indicates that awareness of the need to attend to this problem in the foreseeable future is most certainly on the increase. With the more regular occurrence of Public Inquiries following housing development refusals, and their increasing cost and timescales, the concept of "The New Town" is getting back into vogue and beckoning more attractive to politicians of all flavours.*

Whilst a third generation of New Town development would properly require primary legislation as its starting point, the thinking at this stage could well morph into the concept of new and/or extended or expanded villages (what does Prince Charles think?) and we should thus be both cautious and listening to all of this! Whilst I am not suggesting that there might be proposals to build houses within the Three Peaks area of The Dales, there could well be ideas for such places as Priddy,

or some key locations in the Peak District!

Our main caving/limestone areas that are underwritten by the National Parks legislation, e.g. The Yorkshire Dales, are likely to be much less at risk here, but almost anything can change when primary legislation is being considered!

David Judson

DJu: It is worth noting that only this morning there was news of two proposed new towns.

a. Insurance Manager

NW: I am pleased to report that 2013 was another year without Public Liability (PL) claims and the PL policy has been renewed with the current broker and underwriters without any problem. There was some confusion about the end of the long-term agreement which fixes the policy cost for a three year period - the insurer's paperwork had indicated that 2014 was the last year of the agreement whereas in fact the three year term ended at the end of 2013. On the basis of the error in their paperwork, I was able to persuade the insurer to maintain the policy cost for 2014 since I have announced that I intend to relinquish the post of PL Manager before the next renewal and I do not wish to tie my successor's hands in any way.

My view is that several things need to happen over the next 11 months or so in order to implement an effective handover of the scheme to a new Manager. These include a consultation with the Regions and other BCA Constituent Bodies to determine whether the cover is actually best suited and adequate for all of the Association's members' needs. Once the policy specification has been agreed, we then need to test the market to identify whether there are better options than our existing policy. I therefore propose to call a meeting, to be held in April or May, at which Regions can put forward their views on the policy so we can use this information to develop an updated Insurance Requirements Specification, with a view to testing the market in September/October, ready for a renewal decision managed by my successor in December.

Alongside my role as PL Manager, I am also formally responsible as the line manager for all BCA employees for the purposes of employment law and PAYE etc. This role is essentially separate from the work I do as PL Scheme Manager. Currently, in the absence of any better ideas, I propose to retain the employment role.

NW: GM has indicated he is willing to take on the role of Insurance Manager. How should we best handle this?

DW: This is an annual appointment in the hands of Council, based on the recommendation of the Legal & Insurance Committee. It is traditionally made at the June Council Meeting following the AGM. NW could resign now and Council appoint GM or, probably better, NW and GM could work together until June and GM be elected from there.

The remainder of the Legal & Insurance Reports were accepted without discussion.

Other Reports

14. Youth & Development (written report previously circulated)

Apology: *I think there is a large chance I won't be at this meeting... as I'm currently in Glasgow and trying to move. I apologise for my bad attendance this year and hope that with my move back to Wales things will be less crazy.*

Adopt a Club: *I have written an article about the "Adopt a Club" scheme which should be printed in the next Descent. I also have several clubs that are interested, both student and grown-up.*

Leaflet / Poster: *The leaflet is coming along. Gonzo is currently making me a mock up and I was hoping for them to be ready for this meeting but it doesn't look likely. Robbie Shone has also donated a photo to make the poster but the leaflets are currently the priority and Gonzo seems quite busy.*

Try Caving Website: *Thanks to Cookie and Chris for moving my website ... I hope people will give me some new content which is the big thing that it needs at the moment.*

CHECC Grant: *I would like to ask BCA for a grant to get a Rep from each of the student clubs in the UK together for a meeting this year. We would like to put together some guidelines on what is excellence in caving and also writing a student caving handbook. We have been trying to do it by e-mail but it just not working and we think this will help us to get more grants out of the Universities as the budget are getting so small. CHECC can't afford to fund the whole thing and a grant of £400-500 as a contribution would be really helpful. It's something we really want and the student clubs want to try and improve things with these guidelines in the future.*

Hellie Brooke

Adopt a Club

HB: It would be nice to distribute the Adopt a Club information by e-mail. Had a Try Caving website meeting yesterday and there is progress. Some new content from people, such as videos and photos, would be nice.

CHECC Grant

HB: As caving clubs we are not competitive in any way, we struggle for funding from our Universities. Some clubs are starting to be asked by their universities to define "excellence" in caving is, as they may be able to access more funding if they show they are excellent in their sport. In an ideal world this would be approved by BCA because it would carry more weight.

AE: Can't you hold your meeting at the annual CHECC gathering?

HB: That is not really practical, as the key players will be very busy organising it.

DW: How is CHECC funded?

HB: It is funded by the profit from the big annual event, which comes to about £400 pa.

HR: Could you have a smaller sub-group to produce a draft version? That is likely to be more efficient.

AE: The feeling seems to be that we are not going to be able to give you the grant. There is too much precedent.

The remainder of the Youth & Development Report was accepted without discussion.

15. Membership Administrator (written report previously circulated)

Membership to 31st December 2013

DIMs 442 (caving), 54 (non-caving), 7 (CIM Plus), 7 (BCRA Honorary), 1 (BCA Honorary) (including 266 BCRA members and 24 student members) (Total DIMs = 511)

CIMs 3974 (caving), 999 (non-caving), 610 student / U18) (Total CIMs = 5583)

Clubs: 168

Associates: 13

Access Bodies: 9

815 new membership numbers were issued in 2013 (13102 – 13917)

***New Clubs:** The following clubs have supplied the correct paperwork and payment in order to become BCA member clubs: Speleo Vacchus; Malvern Caving Club; Peak and Pennine Caving Club.*

***Admin:** In response to the following query presented at the January meeting - DC: Could we please have the BCA logo on the membership card? During the later part of 2013 NW and myself have investigated various options to enable the inclusion of the BCA logo on all membership cards. It was quickly realised that replacing the current (and ageing) printer with a new printer that enabled double sided printing would pay for itself in less than two years (due to the cost saving of not purchasing cards pre-printed on one side). A number of suppliers were contacted to supply quotes and BCA's current card supplier provided the best quote. The implementation of the new card printer was less than smooth as it would not work with the version of XP running on the BCA PC. A quick test with my personal (Windows 7) PC proved that it would work OK with Windows 7, so the BCA PC was taken away to be upgraded. On return, the new printer worked perfectly, but some further time was spent getting the HP (paper) printer to work with Windows 7.*

By mid-December the BCA Admin office environment was stable once more and all 2014 cards (caving and non-caving DIM and CIM) are now printed both sides with the BCA logo on the address side.

***2014 Membership Renewal Processes:** As of today (3rd January 2014) the following have been processed and posted;*

DIMs: 240, Groups: 24, CIMs: 160

There are a further 14 groups representing 173 CIMs processed waiting for cards to be printed next week.

Glenn Jones

CJ: How do the membership figures compare with previous years?

DW: Looking at the report to the AGM, there is a small increase on 2012 in the numbers of CIMs, DIMs and Clubs.

The Membership Administrator's Report was accepted without discussion.

16. Radon Information

No report provided.

17. 2016 Working Party (written report previously circulated)

We have been to look at venues, and have also had meetings with licensing authorities. It seems as though we have a suitable venue, but we will be having a meeting following the BCA meeting for the 2016 team, to agree the way forward and to formally agree and book the venue. This means we can move forward with confirmed dates and start the planning in earnest.

Les Williams, October 2013

The 2016 Report was accepted without further discussion.

18. Cave Registry (written report previously circulated)

This has been a quiet quarter whilst I've focused on the new BCA website. Notwithstanding there have been some early discussions about creating on-line registries for Devon and for Scotland. I've offered my help and access to the existing software. There have even been rumours of similar in Derbyshire and Yorkshire.

David Cooke, October 2013

The Cave Registry Report was accepted without further discussion.

19. IT Working Party (written report previously circulated)

The main work has been the new BCA website. For details see the separate report.

I have moved the Try Caving website to the BCA webserver where it will be easier to perform the necessary upgrades. I await the approval of my tester before turning the old site off.

David Cooke

The IT Report was accepted without further discussion.

20. CRoW Working Party (written report previously circulated)

Work on producing the necessary database continues slowly since we are dependent on volunteers to complete the time-consuming work already begun in the North and the Peak District. (The CSCC Conservation & Access Officer has been kept informed of progress.)

A preliminary analysis by the Northern cavers, based on their work carried out with a view to replacing the out-of-print "Northern Caves" series, has already been published in DESCENT. I would urge people to read this as it raises some interesting and important issues which should inform the more general discussion at a later date.

Jenny Potts

The CRoW Report was accepted without further discussion.

21. International Representative

The major thing to report is the sad death of Professor Hubert Trimmel. He was mentioned in my last Report as being one of the only Honorary Members of the UIS and unfortunately he has recently died. Although he was in his late eighties, and his death could not be considered to be unexpected, we will badly miss him. He was very much in evidence at the recent International Congress Meeting and indeed had been to all but one of the International Congresses since they originally started. I personally will miss him and have used and valued his advice a great deal over many years. My condolences go out to his friends and family in Austria.

There a number of International events coming up, of particular mention is the Karst School in Postonjna this summer. It is always a good event and details of this and other similar events can be found on the UIS website.

Andy Eavis

a. FSE

Since the last report in October, the Bureau Meeting and General Assembly Meeting of the FSE took place in Casola Italy on 2nd November. Over 2,000 cavers attended the Casola event. A number of officers presented for re-election and the incumbent President, Juan Carlos Lopez from Spain, stood down. I was persuaded to stand for president and had not anticipated competition from my Bulgarian colleague Alexey Zhalov. However, I was elected with a comfortable margin. There were quite a few proxy votes from Eastern European countries supporting Alexey. Micheal Laumans (Germany) was elected as Vice President, Olivier Vidal (France) was re-elected Secretary General, Henk Goutier (Netherlands) Treasurer, Ernst Geyer (Austria) Vice Treasurer. Alexey Zhalov remains Vice Secretary.

Two new countries, Albania and Turkey, were voted into the FSE. The FSE now has a membership of 27 countries.

Article 12 of the constitution was hotly debated. This allows non delegates to stand for positions on the FSE Bureau. This article was adopted by the FSE following the UIS's decision to include this approach in their internal regulations. At the moment Olivier Vidal and Alexey Zhalov are not supported by their national organisations. The FFS (the French Federation) is unhappy with this situation. However, countries voted overwhelmingly to keep article 12. Only France was against and Greece abstained.

The FSE has now launched a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/eurospeleo to facilitate communication of news, events etc.

The website www.eurospeleo.eu has had a complete upgrade after the previous web master's departure. Grotto Centre, a European cave registry group have contributed significantly to this facelift.

The next Euro Speleo magazine will be published in March this year. The Editor Mihaela Micula (Romania) is doing an excellent job.

There have been some very good awards for Speleo Projects. British cavers have been involved more actively , for example,

the publishing of Cave Pearls of Meghalaya and Speleological days.

Organisation of EuroSpeleo events over next 3 years.

The 9th ES Forum 2014 will be in Herculane, Romania from 22nd-24th August. Details attached.

ES Forum 2015 Applications will be invited. Bulgaria has expressed an interest.

European Congress 2016 will be in the UK.

The next UIS Congress will be in Sydney in 2017.

Ged Campion

DCh: GC has asked if there might be a volunteer to proof-read the English translations of the EuroSpeleo Magazine.

The remainder of the International Reports was accepted without discussion.

22. Media-Liaison

Another quiet period for me in terms of the BCA role. I certainly get fewer phone calls since we made the main BCA number more prominent on the website. The only telephone call I fielded recently was from Ashford Price (of Dan yr Ogof) who wanted the email contacts for some other BCA officers. Keeping an eye on press and media coverage of caving it seems increasingly that articles about caving originate from individual cavers promoting expeditions and selling their photos. More cavers seem capable of doing this and have worked out routes to get themselves noticed. Interestingly my own experience in this area is that if you try to simply give your story to a newspaper or magazine (via a press release to their news desk) they are not interested. Instead journalists prefer to buy their stories from news agencies. As a member of the public you can find any number of these eager to hear from you simply by searching for 'sell my story' on the internet!

Chris Jewell

The remainder of the Media-Liaison Report was accepted without discussion.

23. British Caving Library Report

A detailed report of the current situation and progress was given to BCA Council in October 2013. Suffice it to say that work continues with the emphasis on completing the re-cataloguing of the entire Library in order to enable the increasing number of enquirers to make the best use of what we have.

Cataloguing of books is complete and is updated as we receive new items. The Librarian and I are concentrating our efforts on the backlog of foreign and UK periodicals with new items catalogued as they arrive, in particular increasing numbers of foreign journals received in exchange for BCRA publications. Cataloguing of surveys is progressing slowly as we now have a couple of volunteers to help. We are also keeping track of an increasing collection of DVD versions of films and of photographic material. In addition we are looking into the best way of cataloguing and storing an increasing amount of digital information, mainly so far electronic copies of periodicals, as some of our foreign exchanges are now arriving in this format.

We should also record our thanks to the many cavers who donate material to the Library, both new books and periodicals and also older and out-of-print items.

Jenny Potts

CJ: How is usage?

JP: Usage is going up. Sometimes a query is quick and easy and other times it takes a long time. Figures were given in a report last year.

CJ: Could we have figures in every report?

The remainder of the Library Report was accepted without discussion.

24. Date, Time & Place of next meeting

The next Council Meeting will take place on Saturday, 29th March 2014 at My Big Meeting Room, Pinvin, Worcestershire.

25. Any Other Business

AE: We have had an unfortunate meeting clash with the CNCC meeting this time. Is it possible for us to set our meeting dates further in advance to avoid meeting clashes?

Action 132: DW to circulate a list of proposed dates for the next 18 months prior to the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 15.00pm.

Action Log (as at January 2014)

No.	Action by ...	Details of Action
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36	DW	Put together a Manual of Operations
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54	NW & DJu	Liaise with SUI with a view to helping them streamline their insurance situation.
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October 2011

83	PI	Produce an Asset Register and liaise with NW/EP over the total replacement value of our insured equipment.
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June 2012

104	NB	NB to ask TC for potential Child-Protection Officer.
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October 2012

115	DJu	Put together a summary for landowners of the insurance benefits relating to BCA access agreements.
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January 2014

131	NW & NB	Liaise over the temporary appointment of Gill Jordan.
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132	DW	Circulate a list of proposed dates for the next 18 months prior to the next meeting.
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Appendix 1a: Access & Commercial Caving - Response by Executive to Council

Background

Concerns have recently been expressed about the limited access available to commercial caving groups in some of our more extensive cave systems. Although the extent of the problem varies from Region to Region, the Training Committee has now become concerned about its ability to effectively train and assess future cave leaders and instructors under BCA's Award Schemes.

Consequently BCA Council asked BCA Executive to investigate the issue to see whether there is anything BCA can usefully do to support its Award Schemes. An e-mail consultation was carried out and replies totaling more than 12,000 words were received.

Taking all the views into account, BCA Executive suggest Council considers adopting the following statement:

Statement on Negotiating Access to Caves

It is enshrined in BCA's Constitution (Section 4.6) that:

[...] the owners and tenants of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access. Where caving bodies have control of access delegated to them by the owners, such access should be obtained and granted as freely as possible for all responsible cavers, within the terms of those agreements. When obliged to make new agreements, the appropriate body should endeavour to ensure that this freedom is maintained or improved.

Clearly the most important principle in any access discussions is that the landowner and tenants must have the ultimate say. However, it is also clear that bodies negotiating access should always aim for the greatest freedom possible for responsible cavers. Currently commercial cavers seem to suffer disproportionately and this is now having an impact on BCA's Award Schemes.

BCA believes that there may be situations where landowners choose a blanket ban on all commercial caving, when in fact with careful negotiation it may be possible to secure access for some aspects. There is, after all, a huge difference between multiple visits per day by novice groups and an occasional one-on-one assessment of the Cave Instructor Award.

However part of the difficulty is that - understandably - even cavers find the different types of commercial caving hard to fathom. It stands to reason, therefore, that without assistance landowners are also going to be confused and may automatically opt for the default "no commercial caving".

For this reason BCA has produced a leaflet entitled "Landowner Guidance on Commercial Caving". It is hoped that anyone entering into access negotiations may be able to use this to prevent blanket bans on all "commercial caving". Ideally, of course, this will result in access for all, but realistically even a few concessions will benefit our Award Schemes.

For further guidance or support in negotiating access, in the first instance contact should be made with the appropriate Regional Access Officer or, if they are not available, BCA's Conservation & Access Officer. Queries relating specifically to commercial caving are best addressed to BCA's Training Officer.

Proposed content (but not layout) of leaflet:

Commercial Caving - Guidance for Landowners

The British Caving Association (BCA) is the Governing Body for underground exploration in the United Kingdom.

BCA recognise that, as the landowner, you have the absolute right to grant or deny access as you see fit. Sometimes in the past this has led to a blanket ban on all “commercial caving”. Such bans are now making it very difficult for our own training schemes to operate, as we need a variety of caves to be available to ensure effective training and assessment of future leaders and instructors.

In many cases allowing some types of commercial caving will result in very little additional footfall (maybe one trip per year), but will bring significant benefits to BCA and British Caving in general. For this reason we have compiled a guide to the different types of “commercial caving” in the hope that you feel better able to decide what you do and do not want on your land. At the very least we would ask that you give serious consideration to allowing type 6 in your cave.

Types of Commercial Caving

1. **Novice Taster Trips:** The vast majority of commercial trips fall under this heading, often involving groups of young people from a wide range of Outdoor Centres and uniformed groups. These trips tend to take place in a fairly small number of caves which are often monitored by the Centres involved and with remedial works undertaken by the leaders in conjunction with landowners. Although in a very small number of the most suitable caves, there can be as many as 10 (or maybe more) of this sort of trip daily, in the vast majority there are none. Any experienced caver will be able to advise on whether your cave is likely to be of interest for commercial novice trips.
2. **More Advanced Group Instruction:** This will generally involve greater duration or technical difficulty and will be led almost exclusively by more advanced BCA Award Holders*. Skills will be developed as an integral part of the instructional input, including hazard awareness, conservation, cave genesis and practical skills, such as safe and effective rigging. There are far fewer of this sort of trip taking place than type 1.
3. **Individual Skills Instruction:** Such sessions will be led by our highest Award Holders* and usually involve recreational cavers wanting to develop an aspect of their technique to make them safer underground. There is probably an average of one of these sessions taking place every month across the whole of the UK.
4. **Guiding:** This is a traditional non-professional caving trip, but the cavers concerned may wish to extend their skills to a wider range of caves and/or techniques. This type of trip will be very similar to a non-professional trip but will be expertly led. There is probably an average of one of these sessions taking place every month across the whole of the UK.
5. **Workshops for Club Cavers:** BCA has a fund to promote the training of club cavers. Much of this takes place above ground, but some necessarily takes place underground. This sort of trip will generally involve experienced club cavers plus a CIC* holder. There are probably fewer than half a dozen taking place across the UK each year.
6. **BCA Award Scheme training courses, revalidations and assessments:** BCA’s Awards Holders are assessed against strict criteria. As part of this, all potential Award Holders attend a Training Course where they learn about important topics such as effective cave conservation, group management and modern rope work. They then progress to assessment. This is an extremely important part of ensuring we have suitably experienced and qualified instructors in the future. Nationally there are around 40 assessments at Level 1* each year, 20 at Level 2* and 2 at CIC* level.

* There are 3 main categories of BCA Award Holder

1) Level 1 Local Cave (or Mine) Leader Award: Basic, non-vertical trips may be led by Level 1 qualified leaders. These leaders will have demonstrated more than adequate knowledge and experience to lead groups

competently in their chosen caves. This qualification is cave specific in that it qualifies the holder to operate only in the caves listed on their form.

2) Level 2 Local Cave (or Mine) Leader Award: This allows the holder to lead groups in more involved caves with vertical sections of up to 18m in depth. Again leaders will have demonstrated more than adequate knowledge and experience to do so. Generally Award Holders at this level will have an on-going and lasting interest in caving and the cave environment.

3) Cave Instructor Certificate: This is the highest award and demands a high degree of competence in all areas. A CIC holder is qualified to instruct all aspects of caving at any level.

Plus

a) Local Cave (or Mine) Leader Award Trainer-Assessors: Some of the more experienced CIC holders are allowed to train and assess candidates for the Local Cave (or Mine) Leader Award.

b) Cave Instructor Certificate Trainer-Assessors: A small number of the most experienced CIC holders are allowed to train and assess candidates for the Cave Instructor Certificate.

Appendix 1b: Response from South Wales CC



SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

CLWB OGOFYDD DEHEUDIR CYMRU



1-10, POWELL STREET, PENWYLLT, PEN-Y-CAE, SWANSEA, SA9 1GQ
TEL: 01639 730613

F.A.O. Damian Weare
Hon Secretary BCA

20th September 2013

Rosemary Cottage
419 Wimborne Road East,
Ferndown
Dorset BH22 9LZ
Tel 01865 762546

Dear Damian

RE: Commercial Caving – Guidance for Landowners

Thank you for providing a draft copy of the document entitled 'Commercial Caving – Guidance for Landowners'. I appreciate that you would sooner we pass our views on to our local representative but in view of the seriousness of this matter the club believes that it is better that the views expressed below are tendered formally on letter headed paper.

The following views and opinions are the collective views of The South Wales Caving Club as decided by resolution of the club committee at its September meeting.

1. The South Wales Caving Club was unaware of a UK wide problem with commercial caving access. The club is of course aware of the issues with respect to the caves of the Swansea valley and wonder if this document had been specifically targeted at a particular area of the country as opposed to a UK wide problem.
2. With respect to the title of the document, The South Wales Caving Club is of the opinion that the subject matter is too narrow and does not cater for the vast majority of British cavers. It is the view of the Club that the interests of British caving could be better served by producing a document dealing with cave access in general rather than focusing on a minority component of the sport. Concerns have also been expressed that a Landowner may find the title patronising.
3. The South Wales Caving Club is uncomfortable with the thrust of the document. Rightly or wrongly the document seems to suggest that commercially minded cavers serving on the BCA training committee have taken advantage of their positions to promote a self-serving document which would influence or direct BCA policy to their advantage.
4. The Club also considers the thrust of the document to be skewed towards or hinting at a future British caving culture strongly influenced or underpinned by the award system. Currently British caving is free of such encumbrance save for the commercial sector. This document does not differentiate between the two cultures. The document may suggest to the reader that the culture of British caving is underpinned by the award system.

5. Finally, The South Wales Caving Club believes that the document is detrimental to root and branch cavers across the UK as it suggests or hints that the award system is the national system of caver regulation. Such a document in the hands of a landowner could well influence the stipulation of a level of award as a condition of access. The Club believes that such a result would be extremely detrimental to the sport and would create a division within the ranks of British cavers. This could ultimately lead to the division of club caving away from the BCA.

I'm sorry to burden you with the above but I believe the views of The South Wales Caving Club warrant due consideration by any interested parties. If there are any points of clarification that I can help you with please do not hesitate to contact me via secretary@swcc.org.uk or via my postal address at the head of this letter

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gary Vaughan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gary Vaughan
Hon Secretary
The South Wales Caving Club

Appendix 1c: Response from Charterhouse CC Ltd.

We are grateful for the opportunity to respond to this document while it is still in draft as it, sadly, seems to us to be very one-sided, not really addressing the concerns that many landowners and access bodies have with commercial caving at all.

We should like to address the issue under a number of headings:

Breaching of access agreements:

We are disappointed that the concerns that this Company has with ‘qualified’ leaders and the breaching of access agreements in the recent past have not even been touched on by this document. There is no assurance in here that the wishes of landowners will be any more than briefly acknowledged by BCA and that such incidents will be treated with any degree of seriousness by BCA. In particular it saddens us that one name on the covering email of someone who is shown as assisting in compiling returns to this draft is already under a ban from the caves under our administration following a flagrant and knowing breach. This incident was witnessed by a representative of the landowner and could have led to serious problems for us. We wish to see a serious statement in this document that acknowledges that such incidents will, in the future, be subject to firm discipline. If BCA cannot demonstrate that it can apply policy to its members then it cannot expect outside bodies to treat its requests with respect.

Paying clients and novices:

The document sensibly divides up the various types of paid trips that can occur, however, the distinctions that it draws are not in line with those drawn elsewhere and this should be noted. Category one, ‘taster trips’ is the only category that makes any mention of novices as such. However, Category 4, ‘guiding’ is also of relevance here. As is well-known, many British caves do require leaders, but this is almost always owing to the need to protect the cave rather than for the benefit of the visitors and these people – who give their time and experience without charge – are better described as Wardens rather than leaders, this is explicitly the case at Dan yr Ogof, for example. In the case of CCC Ltd, such wardens are provided – without any charge – for Charterhouse Cave. With respect with the remainder of the caves that we administer, this topic has been discussed by the Company many times and the conclusion is that cavers who require such a leader are axiomatically lacking in confidence in their own abilities and are thus regarded by us as novices. Therefore this category of trip, as with the first, fails to meet two of our access criteria, not just that of commerciality.

It is worth noting, in this regard, that we are not aware of any BCA training schemes or awards specifically for ‘guides’ so it is difficult to see quite why this category has even been included here.

Underground Workshops:

In passing I should wish to point out that the Company has regularly allowed the use of G.B. Cavern for rescue training. However, this has been strictly monitored to ensure that no breach of access conditions takes place and it is worth noting that it has been agreed between us and the MCR that this cave is not suitable for certain training exercises. The use of the cave for any commercially run scheme is not allowed as it will breach our access conditions.

Award assessment and revalidation:

The document asks for special consideration to be given to this type of trip. This seems to us to be somewhat nonsensical as, if access to a cave is not to be permitted for any of the other types of trip then specific knowledge of that cave cannot, surely, be necessary and such trips would thus be pointless.

Negotiation and renegotiation of access agreements:

We are concerned by the tone of this document. As it can be read to imply that the inclusion of ‘commercial caving’ within access negotiations is becoming a priority within BCA, we are concerned as to whether it will be followed up by a concerted push to both penalise in some way those who do not succeed in pushing this through in any new negotiations and to attempt to require the renegotiation of current agreements. This would, of itself, be wholly unacceptable and a breach of the spirit of the BCA Constitution. In this regard please note that the lease for G.B. is not due to be revised for another 120 years; though informal discussions with the landowner have, in the recent past, clearly shown that they have no intention of relaxing the prohibition against any type of commercial use.

Insurance

The BCA's PI insurance scheme has a specific provision for indemnifying landowners against the actions of BCA members and this has proven of great use in negotiating caving access. We feel, therefore, that it is misleading in the extreme that this document for landowners makes no mention of this scheme at all, given that the scheme itself specifically excludes 'professional caving'.

In conclusion, CCC Ltd urgently requests confirmation that the BCA fully respects its stance on this matter as both a landowner and an access/conservation body and that it will continue to receive the full support of BCA in seeking compliance with the terms of our existing lease and licence.

Graham Mullan

On behalf of CCC Ltd.

Appendix 2: Membership ... a possible way forward

Towards an improved Membership Structure

The fact that the structures and procedures put in place when BCA was set up in 2004 have generally stood the test of time, is due in no small part to the incredible hard work and foresight of a small number of people back then. Some ten years later the UK's Governing Body for Underground Exploration is now financially secure for the future with a strong membership and active, committed volunteers working hard in the background.

However, it was probably inevitable that in the fullness of time some aspects of BCA's membership structure would need to be tweaked. Over the last 18 months or so, considerable thought has been given to this and this paper seeks to outline a possible way forward.

Before going any further, it is probably worth sharing the following:

- BCA membership has increased in all categories virtually year on year since BCA's inception.
- BCA generally returns a surplus year on year and has healthy reserves.
- 90% of BCA's individual membership (or roughly 5,500 people) are Club Individual Members (CIMs) meaning they join us through their Club and, therefore, pay a reduced contribution. Approximately 20% of these are "non-cavers" and 10% are students or under 18s. Only around 500 people are Direct Individual Members (DIMs), who pay the additional contribution of £15 per annum to cover publications and additional costs associated with processing their membership.
- The principle of discounts for "non-cavers" and "students/under 18s" seems fair and is generally accepted by the caving world.
- In principle CIMs pay for everything except BCA's publications and the admin cost of processing their membership. DIMs pay an additional £15 for these services.
- Currently we believe few CIMs receive any information on BCA, and many do not properly understand what their annual subscription covers. Indeed, many seem to believe they are just paying for "insurance" (and many of these do not really know what sort of "insurance" this is).
- Averaged over the last 3 years, the net cost of BCA's publications is £7,130 while the average additional contribution from DIMs - who in theory pay for publications - has been £6,625, meaning a shortfall of around £500 per annum. This means that despite not publishing anywhere near what we promise, CIMs are already subsidising publications. With the likelihood of large increases in spending on Speleology in the coming years, the subsidy will almost certainly increase.
- In 2013, in return for their additional £15 subscription, DIMs received a Handbook, a newsletter, an AGM notification, an AGM agenda and the service of the Membership Administrator. That was two newsletters and three copies of Speleology less than they were promised.
- As it stands at the moment, if we publish all the editions of Speleology and the newsletter that we promise, BCA will run at an annual deficit. CIMs will also be subsidising DIMs to the tune of around £10k per annum (and this is before factoring in a probable increase in Speleology editorial costs).

In summary BCA's current structure has many strengths, not least of which is that a substantial proportion of cavers in the UK are members and, therefore, make a contribution to the costs of, among others, maintaining access

to our caves and mines, conservation, bolting, insurance and training. However, there are a few areas that do not seem to be working as well as they should, including:

- the apparent “complexity” of membership.
- ineffective communication with members - publications are few and far between with the result that we are not effectively communicating with members. CIMs often receive little information from their Clubs (which is not actually our fault, but ends up reflecting badly on us) and DIMs are not getting anything like what we promise (i.e. 3 newsletters and 3 copies of Speleology per year).
- an unfair financial burden on CIMs - CIMs are currently subsidising the cost of the publications they do not receive. This problem is likely to grow in the coming months, as Newsletters and Speleology resume publication.

Possible Road Map

Please note: throughout what follows, we have been careful to ensure that there will be no change to membership categories or prices until the additional benefits are already in place for members. Thus, if we can't provide it, we don't charge for it!

Stage 1: Preparations for implementing universal Individual Membership

a: Improving communication with all (i.e. 6,000) members at limited cost

In practice this means:

- e-mailing newsletters (or link) to all members - this will ideally be a simple news document, rather than something with a fancy layout, thus saving volunteer time and avoiding time delay ensuring the news is current;
- replacing the current Handbook with a much smaller document posted to all members annually along with their membership card and merging the remainder of the content with the new website;
- making Speleology available online.

b: Altering the in-house membership processes

Details need to be worked out in conjunction with David Gibson and Glenn Jones, but it is expected that it will involve a revamp of all membership forms and information to reflect the above.

Stage 2: Implementing universal Individual Membership (and calling everyone a “Member”)

In effect, since CIMs will receive all publications (by e-mail), they receive virtually the same services as DIMs. Henceforth they can all, therefore, be referred to as “Individual Members” and the existing categories of DIM and CIM be removed. A percentage discount will continue for “non-cavers” and “students / under 18s”. Paper copies of Speleology will continue to be available and can be ordered via website. All Individual Members receive their own online access (and a discount on ordering a paper copy).

Financial Note: There will be a revenue loss here relating to the £15 upgrade paid by DIMs. However this will be partly balanced by a reduction in our costs because we no longer print and post a Handbook, newsletters, AGM notifications or Agendas. Instead we will be paying to e-mail 6,000 people 6 times a year. Initially this will be funded by using some of BCA's reserves.

Admin Note: We need to carefully consider the current requirements on Clubs to provide their members' data on a spreadsheet.

Stage 3: Financial Rebalancing (following Stage 2)

Alter the basic Membership fee to reflect the new cost structure. *[Note: it is anticipated that this will result in a small increase for those currently CIMs and a decrease for current DIMs].*

The Result

Membership will be either “Club” or “Individual”.

Individual members will receive %age reductions for being “non-cavers” or “Students/under 18s”. Clubs may well

receive a discount for inputting their members' details online.

Communication will be via 6 bi-monthly e-mails to all members with quick summaries and links to the website for further information. The Handbook will be replaced by a small leaflet for all members posted out at renewal, plus a revamped website.

Speleology will be produced online for all members and paper copies posted to subscribers (with a discount for Members to reflect the fact that they already pay for the content through their membership).

produced by BCA Executive for discussion at BCA Council on 28 March 2014