

**Minutes of BCA Council Meeting held on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2017  
at The Red Lion Inn, Alvechurch**

**1. Present**

Andy Eavis (AE):	BCA Chairman
Robin Weare (RW):	BCA Acting Treasurer
Simon Brooks (SJB):	BCA Secretary
Nick Williams (NW):	BCA Equip. & Tech. Officer
Les Williams (LW):	BCA Public & Information Officer
Robin Jones (RJ):	CCC Rep.
Martell Baines (MB):	CNCC Rep.
Alan Butcher (AB):	CSCC Rep.
Jenny Potts (JP):	DCA Rep.
David Jean (DJ):	DCUC Rep.
Richard Vooght (RV):	WPCST Rep.
Stephan Natynczuk (SN):	ACI Rep.
Tony Radmall (TR):	ASCT Rep.
Idris Williams (IW):	Club Rep. 3 (2016-18)
John Hine (JH):	Club Rep. 4 (2016-18)
Matt Wire (MW):	DIM / CIM Rep. 3 (2016-18)
Tim Allen (TA)	CRoW Liaison
David Cooke (DC):	BCA Registry & IT W. Party Convenor / Club Rep. 1 (2015-17)
Stuart France (SF):	Observer
Leanne Barrett (LB):	BCA Admin Assistant

The meeting commenced at 10:30am

**1a Chairman's Welcome**

AE welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. Apologies for absence**

Bob Mehew, John Gunn, Peter Hall, Graham Mollard, Steve Holding, Bernie Woodley, Allan Finch, Faye Litherland, Nigel Ball and Andrew Hinde

### 3. Minutes of last Council Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2017

It was confirmed that draft copies of the minutes had been circulated and placed on the BCA website.

TA raised a query to (A.O.B. Item a) his question seeking the BCA to confirm it has no desire to see ACB's restrict access to BCA members only as he felt the question posed had not been answered. The Secretary felt the question had in fact been answered as appropriately as possible. However, in order to move proceeding along it was agreed to revisit the question again under AOB. The minutes were thus agreed as a true and correct record.

Proposed: JP

Seconded: LW

### 4. Matters arising from last Minutes

**Action 36 (Manual of Operations [MO])** – SJB informed the meeting that work on this was ongoing work largely due to the fact that future constitutional amendments would invariably impact on the MO. BM and RW were thanked for their contributions. The issue of the Website version and the printed version being different was noted and this would be addressed. A copy of the latest version of the MO was circulated around the meeting and Council members present invited to write notes on this if they spotted errors or omissions

SJB and NW clarified how the MO fits into the BCA – essentially the MO covers how things are interpreted within the constitution, how BCA works and provides definitions and is a 'live' document that provides guidance for officers.

RW reminded the meeting that section 6.14 of the constitution refers specifically to the MO making it a constitutional requirement.

**ACTION: Ongoing work, Secretary to update/report back at future meetings**

**Action 151 (Investigate Social Media):** - SJB confirmed that he had discussed the matter with DC and they felt that BCA could consider developing an 'information only' Facebook (FB) page as a starter where reply's/comment on material would be received/dealt with by existing channels

TA offered a perspective having had a fair bit to do with caving and social media and although FB can be an essential part of any organisations function the only way works is if it is kept on top of to build a number of likes / followers etc. If does not happen then it can be waste of time. It was noted that the Descent Caving Group have around 2k followers and posts all time. There was general agreement that a Face Book Presence would need an editor and reasonable amount of work.

Council agreed that needed to be a paid position to service a FB presence with it being encompassed in the BCA Admin Assistant role with support of everyone. LW, MW, DC and TA identified as individuals who could to get the ball rolling.

**ACTION: BCA pilots a FB presence, above to meet and progress.**

Proposed: MB Seconded: RW

Meeting approved with 1 abstension and 1 vote

against.

**ACTION 175 (Crow and related matters advice to ACB's):** SJB confirmed this document had been circulated as widely as possible and to Council Members asking them to pass it on. A copy had also been placed on the website. **CLOSED**

**ACTION 176 (Training – Article on new training programme for publication in BCA area of Descent Magazine):** SJB stated that nothing had come forward for approval and despite the request he had not had anything in format descent could use.

**ACTION Ongoing – Secretary to follow up.**

**ACTION 179: (Circulation of updated council membership list).** *Still some problems with this item.* RW agreed to circulate the latest version that he had. Council members could then respond should they identify any errors or omissions. Noted that LB to keep list up-to-date.

**ACTION: RW to circulate, Council Members to feedback and LB to update.**

AE noted the issues with the electronic circulation list and MW confirmed it is still not working and will take a while to resolve.

**ACTION 184: (Constitutional Amendments)** Circulated and on agenda for today's meeting.  
**CLOSED**

**ACTION 186: (Additional BCA Information Leaflets):** See BM Report Ongoing.  
**ACTION: BM**

**ACTION 188: (Proposal for the RGS weekend to be under the BCA and probably BCRA banner)** AE had attended meeting, BCRA to support, Event going ahead. **CLOSED**

**ACTION 189: (Enhancing Interest Returns on BCA Funds).** RW/Executive moving funds as required. **CLOSED**

**ACTION 190: BCA Employees Pension Scheme.** RW had set up as agreed and auto enrolled staff. **CLOSED**

**ACTION 191: (Conservation Posters and allocated funds)** – RW had identified earmarked funding for AH, posters produced. **CLOSED**

**ACTION 192: (AH to write short item on conservation for BCA newsletter).** Done.  
**CLOSED**

**ACTION 193: (Handbook editor item on agenda).** Removed from future agendas.  
**CLOSED**

**ACTION 194: (Secretary and NW to liaise with Glenn regarding approval of Club/Group member and provide Council with more info)** Perspective Member Clubs/Groups requested to provide 100 word summary of aims/activities, contact information already gained and groups applications checked by GJ. Council requested info on address of secretary and area operate in. Council requested information on prospective Club/Groups to be sent out ASAP rather than in report prior to meeting. Secretary to liaise with GJ. Revised process to be encompassed in MOP. **ACTION: SJB/GJ to liaise/progress.**

**ACTION: 195: (Review of Child Protection Policy).** BM confirmed he had not received any comments from BCA Council members. The issue was therefore Ongoing **ACTION: Ongoing Council members to send comments/info to BM.**

## 5. QMC/Training – Proposed Training Database

AE confirmed that his report contains a substantial update on this matter. The Executive was charged with coming up with a decision and they couldn't come up with a unanimous decision although a lot of time was spent reviewing the matter. Comments/views of Training Admin were highlighted to Council who was of the opinion that a system such as Tahdah is worth going ahead with. Noted that other similar organisations (Eg BMC) use Tahdah and like it. Main concerns seemed to be around the perceived strength of the company and financial viability. AE had met with Tahdah and negotiated reduction of monthly cost by £100, believed most of the remainder can be recovered.

RW then presented the financial overview of Tahdah and its group of companies explaining his concerns of their financial stability.

Council then discussed Tahdah with MW also raising concerns about their financial stability in the market with AE confirming that if anything did happen the system would continue as it would revert to the parent company. SN raised the monthly fee and the upfront costs which AE confirmed would be £200 a month, then £300 for the next 3 years along with £2.5k up front and then another £2.5k when the system is up and running; a lot of the ongoing costs could be recovered from people being trained and savings on admin wages. IW brought the Sport England grant into the discussion and that expressed a view that BCA would not be able to find the money without putting fees up.

RW informed Council that in the first 4-5 years of BCA Professional Training was funded by Sports England grants, over the next few years it ran at break even with one year showing a decent surplus. In recent years it has run at a deficit.

NW expressed the view that there is a danger to the BCA not having a training scheme so should be willing to fund part of that; doesn't always have to break even. Council discussed the funding and AE expressed his view that the risk to the organisation is minimal and that BCA had been discussing issue for a long time and a professional training scheme is needed.

MW raised his concern that the issue isn't with the scheme but with the software. Council agreed that it can't be done in house. AB stated that he believes it needs to be joined with the budget from professional caving. AE confirmed that the financial models have been done but the benefits outweigh any concerns. SF asked if (Tahdah) they have the market for it as the number of programs seems disproportionate to what is needed and could end up not being compatible; don't know their turnover. TA asked if other companies had been looked at / if a comparison had been done. AE informed the meeting that others had been looked at and gone with Tahdah because it is a lower price point and it appears to work well for similar organisations. MW asked if a contract had been signed with Tahdah and AE confirmed that one was signed but not by an authorised signatory and it was not binding.

MW read his report giving a personal perspective on the proposed training database to Council. (See Appendix 1)

### Proposal

Council must do the right thing and insist that a proper process is followed, starting with a specification and evaluating suitable systems based upon that specification.

Proposed      MW

Seconded

MW: There is a large uncertainty on what the premium membership involves / who would pay it. A series of people would be involved in importing the data to go into Tahdah. Email from Mary yesterday and have made a few comments which are suitable to bring up:

Comments from Training Administrator (Mary Wild) regarding the training administration system were read. (See Appendix 2)

### Proposal

I implore you all (The Council) to make a positive decision with a time tied action plan.

Proposed \_\_\_\_\_ MW                      Seconded

MW: From that we should make a positive decision and come up with a time plan at this meeting. Tahdah doesn't fix the issue she speaks about with the addresses.

NW responded that this was not the fundamental issue. That is the management of the database and those records won't be part of Tahdah.

MW proposals are that all agree that need to replace database, the council will pay for the correct system, Council will instruct Mary to produce a specification of: what is needed, desired and nice to have and then also have a timeline as follows:

- specification by the end of April,
- a new working group to assess and put proposals before AGM and then have a preferred way forward.
- Then the essential requirements must be delivered by Christmas (but ideally the end of September).

AE went back to mention the Tahdah Premium Membership he said he had been told very few people in other organisations find it necessary to take it up. LW agreed with MW that the specification is fundamental and necessary to make sure meeting service levels.

IW asked if Council can come to solution. Are Tahdah stable? Is this true of any other firm in this business that starts off in similar way. Other objection is we have no specification / nothing in writing what they (Tahdah) can do for us. If we draw one up, present to Tahdah as part of agreement and set out what system can provide us and sets out at beginning of contract and prepared to take financial risk then put this in.

NW highlighted his perspective that BCA would have a problem of lack of volunteers to produce its own in-house system and that he believed the risk with Tahdah is acceptable.

JP drew council's attention from AGM minutes 2014 IT working party report that reads: 'thanks to Nigel and Mary having the training database requirements and once completed we will review and propose the way forward for committees' noting that council has heard nothing since. Mary is working with what she can at the minute and this is not sustainable.

MW raised a further issue in that he has requested information from meetings executive have had with Tahdah but not received it.

DC stated there have been other options on table and in IT working party report the aim with Tahdah is to make sure training committee do due diligence and make won't get asked for money in future. Critical that BCA have a specification and need to look at what Tahdah does and what BCA need it to do.

LW confirmed MW had raised most concerns but other issue is that members are amateur cavers who will be subsidising this and need to show it's a necessary expense.

JP expressed a view that one of things that happened when adventure activities licence was set up is that the problem was that NCA didn't have own training scheme and it would be imposed from above; it's crucial that BCA keep ownership of training scheme. Need to have a training scheme that is recognised by cavers and that the system BCA currently has actually does work and produces people who are competent and qualified with caving's best interests. BCA subsidises the library to tune of £10k a year and fact that subscription may fund training scheme see no problem with it.

AB agreed with JP and the need to keep schemes in hand. Need to know if BCA willing to sub QMC and have to factor that into our future: maybe with QMC need to take a step back and look at it again; how QMC will work with BCA. What would be better would be a few to look at best way to go forward / control budget.

NW expressed the view that even then we won't end up with meaningful budget.

AE proposed that a way forward to let MW have the next month to look at the specification with Mary and any alternatives. DC could also look at the figures. RW stated that training subsidised by members previously and not had any complaints. DC suggested there being a grant from the BCA so there isn't an open ended sum of money.

Proposal: Council agrees that training database is needed

MW proposed TR seconded All in favour One abstention (Acting Treasurer)

Proposal: Council accepts the principal to pay for the right system within an agreed budget.

MW proposed LW seconded All in favour one abstention (Acting Treasurer).

**ACTION 198 (Training Data Base):** Proposal: Council instructs Mary to work with MW to produce requirement spec what is: essential / desired / nice to have.

MW proposed TR seconded All in favour.

Proposal: timeline with fixed deadlines.

- ▯ **Specification by end of April (with Mary's agreement)**
- ▯ **An advisory group to be set up to assess requirements and puts proposals forward in time for June Council meeting and a decision to be made at that meeting.**
- ▯ **Essential requirements must be delivered by Christmas 2017 but ideally the end of Q3 2017.**

MW proposed LW seconded All in favour.

**ACTION: (As above) Mary to involve others as/lf necessary.**

## **6. QMC / Training – Proposed Disciplinary Process**

The draft QMC/Training Disciplinary process was presented to the meeting. AE confirmed that this draft policy is part of the QMC/BCA training manual and new training publications and wondered what do BCA/Council do with it? Working document? RW raised concern that he had only just seen it and understood set up in such a way didn't take account of constitutional requirement. He had checked appeals part and complies with law and constitution.

AE proposed that council accept it as a working document? SJB confirmed that any 'approved' training process/scheme needs a policy and procedures that corrects mistakes

and has a good disciplinary process; this document looks fine for training. TR confirmed that Graham had gone through it with a lawyer. SN raised concern that one problem with the disciplinary on the professional side is that could result in people having livelihood taken away that wouldn't get with an ordinary caver. He also noted that it was not a consultative document. Council discussed end users. SJB confirmed that it was not for them to buy it but it has to satisfy the needs of the assessment process and deal appropriately with leaders who do not come up to scratch.

SN then brought up concerns about the 'contract' that he believed should be a two way a two way thing. AE proposed that the disciplinary policy cannot be adopted until after AGM as the AGM needs to establish the status of QMC first.

Council noted it was a good working document and that it should wait for QMC to be approved and then discuss the disciplinary policy again.

**ACTION 199: Council to review QMC/Training Disciplinary Policy after the AGM when the role/status of the QMC vsv the Training Committee is established/defined.**

## **7. Constitutional Amendments (Proposals)**

Council discussed proposal 1 of the constitutional amendments first and TA asked why point c (his motion) hasn't been put forward in the wording he used. AE confirmed that happy to change it to wording required and that idea is to have a lot of information in the next newsletter and the document presented to council today is so can all look through it. TA stated that an issue on 4.6 flagged by DCA is that the sentence is incorrect with regards to Scotland. RW clarified that there are a number of proposals regarding 4.6 that have also been brought forward from last year. LW raised a concern that could be proposing one amendments and then another that one undoes the other so constitution remains unchanged. Council then discussed how could vote on such issues to ensure this doesn't happen where there is more than one proposal. AE suggested voting on a numerical basis which proposals are accepted and then taken to a postal ballot. However TA reminded Council that proposals have to go forward to AGM unless withdrawn or amended by the original proposer. AE confirmed that all proposals will be put forward in the newsletter and then to AGM.

MB made a suggestion as CNCC went through a substantial number of changes for their constitution and presented them to committee with track changes. One option / other options and validated comments were put on there as well and it was put in such a way that you could understand the changes that were happening across the document.

**ACTION 200:** MB will send an example of the process and LB to complete with NW's help for the BCA constitutional changes. **ACTION MB/NW**

Council discussed what motions would be taken through to AGM if the originators wasn't chosen by council as the preferred option. RW confirmed that executive came up with proposal b) for item 4.6

SF raised concern that B isn't compatible in Scotland. AE responded by saying that it states if there is a legal right, in Scotland there isn't so just doesn't apply. TA expressed his view that there aren't many people who are aware of all the issues. RW expressed the view that as far as he's was concerned one most likely to get 70% is the first one that was brought forward from last year. Bearing in mind that we (BCA) have a situation where there was a ballot and need to implement the will of the majority; most likely way to do so will be to carry

forward item 1 as is most likely to be voted in. If ballot undertaken BCA need to be able to incorporate other changes that needed to be made. The whole point was to avoid spending money to then get through the minor changes if neither of 2 main proposals go through (1 and 2 brought forward from last year). Current plan is proposals 3 onwards will be withdrawn if neither of two main ones is passed / gets 70% majority.

AE stated he didn't share this view as BCA will want a postal ballot.

MB expressed the view that from last AGM the sense was that council was going to go away and consider the rewording the original proposals and how to present them at next AGM; not a sense of getting the 70%.

AE responded that could have taken option a out and council could agree otherwise or on b (agreed with executive and other members of council) but kept the others in.

JP stated that upon reading through BM's wording an alternative in b) is that if you go through a) there are other people than tenants and owners and waste of time to refer to mineral rights as other rights that owners / tenants can use. Bob proposal is trying to cover all eventualities. She believed that If BCA try and vote on first one going to have to do a lot of amendments as too specific to mineral rights and will have to include any and all other rights.

Council again discussed how it would move forward as TA concerned that the whole membership could be in conflict if issue not resolved. Membership could vote in favour and then something is used to prevent it happening then its not going to sit well with the majority that voted in favour.

RW confirmed that BCA already has proposal on table from TA and BM. These will go forward to AGM as will the other proposal from DC and FL brought forward from last year. MB raised concern that she would have an issue voting on b) as it has not been presented to her regional council and they don't have another meeting until after AGM. AE expressed the view that they have 2 months to meet with them and LW suggested calling an EGM.

AE asked if council were happy to take forward b) as a rewrite of a). LW proposed that council responds to the last AGM by putting forward item b) as a response.

TA stated that Bob put forward 13.5 as an additional clause because b) could still prevent council campaigning for other things with other rights. If going to use the original sentence of 4.6 for crow then could be acting against constitution. Agreed 13.5 put forward with b).

LW expressed the view that he did not think 13.5 needs to go in constitution; it's fine and gives movement needed.

Council discussed the options and which to put forward to AGM. MB stated that consequences of the way the vote goes following instructions from her council on how to vote.

MW suggested that council vote now on if preferred option is b, c or neither (or a – RW) and that marks as being endorsed by council at the AGM.

LW responded that there are 3 proposals on table. Council not endorsing any as all have their merits and leave to AGM with AE expressing the view that the idea at AGM is have a simple majority vote.

Council discussed which one would be going to a 70% vote with LW saying they all have to go forward unless withdrawn by the originator.



AE proposed that all should go into the newsletter, be discussed with members and then taken to AGM.

**Proxy Voting** - SF stated he doesn't understand the wording of proposal 2 and RW clarified that the wording in brackets should be removed. There isn't really much difference other than if the chairman can have as many proxy votes as wants or none.

Council then had a discussion about proxy voting with numerous council members saying they don't agree with proxy voting but it was generally agreed they are required.

TA asked if there would be a motion in like DC did last year after this council meeting late on regarding how will decide level of proxy voting? RW stated that will have already set agenda. Would have thought that council would be deciding on a standard situation. TA stated that one of both has to go forward by midnight. BCA/Council /Exec owe to whoever proposed and seconded that would be developed to words that would be acceptable.

JP stated that it has to be AGM that says want proxy votes and if there is a limit. Council discussed how proxy voting would be put forward to AGM and if they were expected to decide a limit on proxy voting at this meeting. SF suggested that it is limited to 2 per person with JP suggesting the chairman has none.

AE asked if council were allowing opportunity for email / internet voting; want someone to come up with a way for it to be as easy as possible. MW confirmed will look at it and it may be as simple as removing reference to postal.

MB stated that this issue was discussed at CNCC and a % of members who will still require postal voting so need a way to opt.

MW stated that this was why didn't want to specify a type of voting so council can discuss it

**ACTION 201:** All proposals and constitutional amendments will be presented to AGM unless they are withdrawn by proposer. **ACTION Secretary to prepare and circulate as required.**

## **8. Chairman**

*In my report to the last council meeting I commented on wondering whether 2017 would be an interesting year in British Caving politics, well, it would appear that it's certainly going to be.*

*There are many controversial issues at the moment and I would like to remind everybody that we should all be working constructively towards the good of the British Caving Association, British caving and caves in general.*

*I took this job as Chairman some 5 years ago, as I was impressed how constructive all the members of the British Caving Association Council were. I would like to get back to those days where everybody is working for exactly the right reasons.*

*In no particular order, I felt I should make a few Chairman's comments at this time:*

a. *There's been a great deal of discussion about the Training Committee proposed new organisation, and in particular its selected training database. It could be said that we have spent far too much time debating whether to go with Tahdah or not. I personally have visited their premises in Llandudno, North Wales on two occasions, have spent many hours discussing with many people the advantages and disadvantages of the database and have met with several members of the IT working group on a couple of occasions.*

*At the last BCA council meeting, the executives were charged to go away and reach a unanimous decision on whether to go with Tahdah or not. Unfortunately, that has not been possible. There is a majority of the executive in favour of the new proposed database, but still a minority who are concerned with the financial longevity of the company.*

*We have now secured approved terms on the arrangements with Tahdah which reduce our risk significantly and indeed they have secured other clients.*

*There is no doubt that people like British Mountaineering Training and Welsh Canoeing think it is an excellent system and have no problems with any aspect of the Tahdah proposals. I believe myself that the financial and longevity risks are minimal, although I must accept it is an unusual business situation. I am therefore strongly recommending we go ahead and commit ourselves to this training database.*

*b. The new suggested structure of the British Caving Association training I think is very good. Since I started in this job as Chairman I have worried about the requirements of the professional and amateur cavers as far as training is concerned.*

*Splitting them into two organisations under the British Caving Association banner seems to me a very positive way forward and the contribution from the Council of Southern Caving Clubs in this respect is very much appreciated and I think we can go ahead with the new structure.*

*c. As far as constitutional amendments are concerned, there is a great deal I could say but I think we want to accept all the motions to go forward to the AGM in June, vote on what amendments we put forward to a ballot and then look to get 70% of our members both as individual members and caving club members to support the proposals. There is a great deal of information floating around about the constitutional changes and the Secretary, will, I'm sure go through those in his report, but it would seem unnecessary to get too bogged down now, when that can be put forward to the AGM. A great deal of work has gone on by several members of Council, in respect to constitutional changes, particularly Bob Mehew and Robin Weare and I thank them for their efforts.*

*I look forward to the AGM weekend in June. BCRA have agreed to be involved in this weekend and also wholeheartedly endorsed the Royal Geographical Society weekend in London in December.*

*Finally, I should like to comment on a remark in Andrew Hinde's report where it would appear the number of active cavers has gone down, although the number of BCA members is staying somewhat static. We all have a duty to try and promote caves and caving and to share our most enjoyable activity with a wider group of people.*

*Andy Eavis – March 2017*

TA discussed that there was a mention regarding active caver numbers; the overall number of cavers hasn't gone down, just the average age of the members has risen. To investigate this this year's membership form asks members for their year of birth, but data not yet been analysed. TA will send in email request for data.

## 9. Secretary

*Since the last meeting a good portion of my time has been spent on moving forward Admin and Actions from the previous BCA Council meetings and preparing for forthcoming meetings. This has involved regular liaison with the other Executive members and other Officers and Representatives all of whom have proven very helpful and supportive. Hopefully Council members will have noticed a decline in "Secretarial fopas"*

*Specific work has focused on:*

*Action 36 Manual of Operations - The Manual exists as both an on line document and as a file document with some discrepancies between the two versions that need addressing. Via Bob Mehew I have acquired an off line copy which does not fully reflect the on line material and Bob has requested the BCA consider ensuring we hold an up to date off line version which with Bob's help I now think I have.*

*The Manual of Operations states "More substantive changes that affect how BCA runs, must gain approval of BCA Council, and subsequently the AGM, before being made." Likely changes in how the work of QMC is to be regularised is likely to require a substantial change to the Manual. That change MUST have the prior approval of Council. If no such proposals have been brought forward to the March Council meeting, then I would support Bob's suggestion that Council gives formal approval to the material being quickly submitted by email to Council members after the meeting and be subject to agreement by Email rather than by an extraordinary meeting of Council. The change can then be endorsed by the AGM.*

*Action 151 investigate Social Media – Discussions with David Cooke have come up with the idea that BCA Consider developing an "Information Only Facebook Presence that individuals subscribe to yet are unable to post comments. These being directed through existing channels. This avoids the need for a specific Social Media and CHECC may provide a vehicle through which promote this.*

*Action 175 – CRoW/Advice to ACB's – circulated as widely as possible using ACB and Council Contacts and BCA Website.*

*Action 179 – Council Membership List – Ongoing.*

*Action 184 – Constitutional amendments – involving a huge amount of work – potential nightmare yet progress being made. Particular thanks to Robin Weare and Bob Mehew for their considerable efforts and input on this, and for their 'Robust Critique's' to keep the process on line. Significant material related to this will be tabled at the March Council meeting.*

*Action 194 – 100 words describing Clubs and organisations applying to join BCA – process agreed with help and Co-operation from Glenn and Nick and now in place.*

*Simon Brooks – March 2017*

*SJB confirmed he had nothing further to add.*

## 10. Treasurer

*At this time of year the main task facing a Treasurer is the preparation of the annual accounts. At the time of writing all that is awaited are the claims from the regions and I hope to have that information in time to complete the accounts in draft and to at least inform Council of the financial outcome for 2016.*

*When the interest rate on the Barclays deposit account reduced to nil and most of our deposit funds were transferred to other banks it was provisionally decided to keep the Barclays account open but with a small balance. That balance has since been transferred to the HSBC account and Executive has decided to recommend that the Barclays account be closed.*

*Our pension scheme has been set up and will take effect from April. We have arranged a free of charge payroll licence with Brightpay which will also take effect from April.*

*Robin Weare – Acting Treasurer – March 2017*

RW had nothing to add save that he has managed to produce a first draft of 2016 account which shows a surplus of £10-11,000 - less than the previous year but a better outcome than expected. Subscription income was more than expected, there was a saving in travelling costs and training produced less of a deficit than expected.

RJ asked what the BCA funds in terms of printing by Regional Councils. RW confirmed there is a document on the website which sets out in detail the items which may and may not be reclaimed from BCA. As many of the Regional Council treasurers were new to the post he had sent a copy to each of them before the start of the reclaim process. The rules were approved by Council and have been in place for many years. They include a specific exclusion for the cost of producing Regional Council Newsletters unless they are distributed to all BCA members.

SF stated that this rule needs to be reviewed as there is a mixed message with conservation and other items; not a valid position that newsletters are unfundable under conservation and access budget. RW pointed out that this was not a matter for Council and that the proper process was for the Cambrian treasurer to bring it up with the finance committee. SF stated that there are lots of organisations producing environmentally friendly and conservation friendly publications and it makes the message attractive; there are great printed materials out there, publications are important and should be able to use conservation & access budget. DC reminded council there is a process to deal with these issues and if finance committee can't resolve then it should be brought to council. RW repeated that it was a matter for the Finance Committee. This query had arisen only 2 days ago when the Cambrian Treasurer provided details of the larger than expected Sundry item in their accounts. It is currently under review.

**ACTION 202:** Finance Committee to review restrictions on BCA funding of Regional Council newsletters. **ACTION RW and Finance Committee.**

## 11. Conservation & Access

*Since the last meeting I have delivered two illustrated talks on Cave Conservation to Wildlife Trust Groups in the North of England.*

*After much internal communications the C&A Committee have concluded that the Bat Conservation Trust advice on our BCA website can remain without any accompanying remarks. Any perceived conflict between cavers and bats/ local bat groups/ statutory advisers etc is best dealt with locally and where possible by early intervention and cooperation.*

*An investigation has taken place into the uptake of the new 6 point Conservation Code and the Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines on RCC and Caving Club websites. The results were very disappointing. In light of this the documents were distributed again to RCC secretaries on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017 asking that they pass these codes on to club secretaries and webmasters requesting that they be given a prominent and permanent position on club websites. At present the number of club websites with any conservation information can be counted on the fingers of one hand. I would like to thank Jenny Potts and Chris Binding for assistance with research at regional level. I hope to be able to announce some improvement when this task is repeated after 6 months.*

*The number of permits issued for many of the Dales finest cave systems have dropped by as much as 60% in the last few years.eg Birks Fell Cavern. It would be interesting to see if this level of decline is replicated in other regions. It may be useful to have recorded evidence collected. Are we seeing a growth of BCA membership alongside a decline in caving activity?*

*Andrew Hinde – March 2017*

TA requested that in future agendas the CRoW report would be a subsection of conservation & access. LB and SJB agreed to do so going forward.

**ACTION 203:** CRoW Report to become sub-section of conservation and Access and not a report item in its own right. **ACTION Secretary**

## 12. Equipment & Techniques

*Anchors*

*Following on from some work done by Richard Vooght of DCUC on sea water corrosion resistant anchors, it was recognised that the conservation concerns over the existing Bolt Products 8mm diameter rod twisted shaft anchor might be answered by moving to the 6mm diameter rod version. (The concern relates to whether the anchor can be removed whilst preserving the location for subsequent use.) Work to date indicates that the 6mm version may not address these concerns. As a consequence, we have been looking for alternative anchors.*

*CNCC have recently agreed to fund the purchase of a batch of IC anchors for use in CNCC area caves. These anchors are expected to cost significantly more than the 8mm BP anchor which is the current 'standard' for use outside the CNCC patch. E+T have said we will refund CNCC to the same cost per anchor as we currently pay for the BP anchors, with the possibility of paying the balance if a way can be found to make the IC anchors available to other regions. It is understood that CNCC have ample funds with which to pay the*

*extra. Expenditure for the purchase of resin and expenses for training will be met in full by BCA.*

### *Loose Anchors*

*Following revelation that some 20 anchors in the Dales were loose, a short reminder was issued via Descent and Regional Caving Councils to cavers undertaking SRT to carry out the pre use inspection. (The 20 anchors amount to around 10% of the anchor placed in the identified caves.)*

*E&T did discuss changing the advice on this pre use inspection process. The most significant change was to remove the allowance of a small amount of movement or anchor with respect to resin or rock. The new advice is awaiting agreement on several other points.*

*A request was made to regions for placement records. We are grateful to DCA for promptly responding to this request. Their data has permitted a statistical analysis of replaced anchors within the Derbyshire region. The analysis is still ongoing but the preliminary indications are that there is no clear evidence to support one expressed concern that anchors placed using the original resin pre 1996 are becoming loose due to aging of the resin. Failures have occurred in anchors placed in all types of resin over their early years of life.*

*Nick Williams – March 2017*

NW confirmed nothing more to add to report.

#### **a. Rope Test**

*A few submitted samples have been tested but one set remains outstanding.*

*Other work on rope testing has been subject to a significant problem in that the calibration of the rope test rig and also the anchor puller load cells has come into question. Work is in hand to resolve this.*

*Bob Mehew – March 2017*

AE confirmed there was nothing more to add.

### **13. Training Officer**

*The following data for the BCA professional qualifications is from December 2016 to February 2017.*

*Local Cave Leader registrations:*

42

<i>Local Cave Leader Level 1 assessments:</i>	7
<i>Local Cave Leader Level 2 assessments:</i>	2
<i>Local Cave Leader Level 1 revalidations:</i>	22
<i>Local Cave Leader Level 2 revalidations:</i>	5
<i>Local Cave and Mine Leader Core Skill Reassessments Level 1:</i>	0
<i>Local Cave and Mine Leader Core Skill Reassessments Level 2:</i>	0
<i>Cave Instructor Certificate registrations:</i>	2
<i>Cave Instructor Certificate assessments:</i>	0
<i>Cave Instructor Certificate revalidations:</i>	11
<i>Current Local Cave Leader Award holders: Level 1</i>	475
<i>Level 2</i>	269
<i>Cave Instructor Certificate holders:</i>	79

AE confirmed Nigel had given the numbers and there is nothing further to add.

#### **14. QMC (Qualifications Management Committee)**

*Please accept my apologies for not presenting this report in person but I have an International Show in London this weekend.*

*Considerable developments have taken place since my last report however even with these developments the period has been one of the most frustrating with QMC unable to move forward in many areas due to the lack of a data base which is fit for purpose in the 21st century.*

- The initial draft on the construction of Tyrolean traverses is all but complete, Gethin is the main author but has drawn upon Bob Mayhew. Nick William and other linked to canyoning.*
- The draft Disciplinary procedure for TAs plus other award holder in serious incidents is complete and just needs ratifying by Council. I would like to thank Bob Mayhew for checking and advising throughout the process.*
- At council 5/6/16 which I could not attend my request was put forward for finance to produce "A code of conduct for TA's". This was wrongly presented as Nick William pointed out as what was actually being produced was a contract for Technical Advisors to use to cover their back when working for Corporate clients ( this follows the BG incident ). I have now completed my work with BM's help and have found a solicitors in Barnsley who will produce a Consultation Contract which will be legally binding. This is at a cost of £1250 plus Vat. I am now asking for Councils permission to instruct the solicitors to proceed.*

*The content we have asked for is attached to this report*

- *The Access and Conservation document is complete however we are waiting for TA and AH to report back on their thoughts which we will consider for inclusion.*
- *The Level one rope work document is complete just needing a few good quality photos.*
- *I have responded to Alan Butchers comment on QMC and I am broadly in favour with a few amendments which I have sent to Andy Eavis.*
- *We have produced an incident reporting form which will allow QMC to monitor near misses and learn from the experiences.*
- *We have lost two TAs through relocation and I have had to suspend one TA for non-payment of fees, this went to QMC who voted against the twelve month suspension asking that he be re-instated if he paid his fees. This has now happened.*
- *I would like to record and thank the QMC for their continued support and the time and effort they put in to supporting BCA's qualifications.*

*Graham Mollard – March 2017*

IW expressed the view that all members of BCA have to report incidents and can't see any of the mainstream clubs reporting incidents to QMC; if meant to be award holders have to fill something else in and wouldn't want to be filling that in too. Already have to do a long report to sponsoring body as an award holder.

RW had same point to raise; assuming that it was intended for award holders but not what it says.

AE stated it should say BCA members with TR saying it has to go to relevant bodies that represent. IW confirmed it would be good if voluntary but says has to be done within 48 hours which isn't long enough really.

AE expressed the view that would be beneficial to have Graham present to talk about it. Council discussed if approval was being sought and consensus is that it was but more discussion is needed. IW asked if it was a contract of employment as it should then say clearly who it is between. AE confirmed that this is what money (£1,250) is being requested for; so it can go to a solicitor to be properly drafted as a terms of engagement letter.

AB asked why BCA is paying for this with SN also asking the same as there is an understanding and acceptance that the activity is dangerous and the participation statement has been used in legal cases. NW stated that it forms a relationship between everyone and it would be useful in setting up a better situation. But paying for a solicitor to rewrite it is the wrong approach with AE adding we have two in house solicitors that can be used as a start; Graham is wanting something that would be binding between a film crew and the caver for example.

NW explained that it establishes principle that professional can walk away and gives them guidance on when they should. They can say 'this was against my advice' with SF adding that can always take decision not to work with certain people because of their T&Cs.

LW asked what the benefit is to the BCA and NW responded that it is something people who are members of award schemes seem to think would be beneficial / attractive and training schemes are of benefit to the BCA.



AE stated that the BCA should look in house to produce some kind of document even if not in this format. The BCA could introduce Graham to the two solicitors BCA have in house and leave it to QMC to decide what they are going to do. SN added that should offer guidelines as to what should happen in certain situations.

JP commented that if were employed by the film company could walk away and if expert has a document that says 'this is what I was working to and what you were proposing to do was unsafe' and walked away then they would feel that was their protection. NW responded that walking away doesn't absolve responsibility but there are situations where have to.

Council discussed best way forward and it was decided that council will recommend QMC talk to in house solicitors and sort the document add, possibly also speaking to Tim Fogg who deals with television crews.

AE raised the issue of the status of QMC. They need an official status ;he suggested it became a standing committee and would therefore have a direct link to BCA.

AB stated that take step back and look at how administer it; if going to split training committee and deal with commercial caver representing regional body it would be inappropriate for QMC to have an amateur from regional councils. Council discussed the status of QMC and NW put forward appointment them as a working party and in revisit in 23 months-time with a working solution where could then become a standing committee.

AB commented that doesn't want to tweak the constitution to fit in with QMC with QMC but need to make a change and negotiation. Working party with QMC and bring in training officer and see how can all work together to be formally recognised at 2018 AGM. Need to take the training committee and QMC together to find a way forward.

## **15. Publications & Information**

*Publications and Information - I have nothing extra to report that is not covered in the separate headings below in this section.*

*I do however have a request from Maurice Hewins which is copied below:*

*"Dear Les,*

*I believe you are aware that Mendip Cave Registry and Archive has set up a YouTube channel to make the collection of of historically important early caving films in the Wells and Mendip Museum/UBSS/Cave Cine Archive easily available to interested cavers.*

*Up to now these are largely films made by amateurs, however, a lot more professional films made by the likes of Sid Perou are now to be seen on line.*

*Among the VHS cassettes at Wells and Mendip Museum is a film made by NCA in 1981. Although it is now 36 years old, its message is still relevant.*

*I think the MCRA channel would be a good place to make "Lost Caves of Britain" easy to see. Would the BCA be prepared to grant permission?*

*With best wishes*

*Maurice Hewins (Wessex Cave Club, Geriatric Wing)"*

*For your information, the MCRA YouTube channel can be found here:*

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0q7vtrmMkD3xr3akBW0YGg>

or accessed by following the relevant link from the MCRA website - [mcra.org.uk](http://mcra.org.uk)

*I believe that the copyright of "Lost Caves of Britain" is with NCA and that NCA commissioned and paid for its production.*

*I also believe that all assets of NCA were passed to BCA and as such I believe the copyright of this film will have been transferred to BCA.*

*Therefore it is for BCA to make any decisions on how this film may be used/distributed/licensed etc.*

*Personally I see no reason not to allow this, but we should ensure that it is understood that the copyright remains with BCA and that we are only licensing its use by MCRA for the purpose requested.*

*Les Williams - BCA P & I Officer – March 2017*

*Action 186 Leaflets - No progress has been made on the digging leaflet or the new member's pack. No comment has been received on any of the proposals I have made. A reprint of the 'So you want to go caving' leaflet has been put in hand.*

*Bob Mehew – March 2017*

LW requested (as in report) that Mendip Cave Registry and Archive can show 'Lost Caves of Britain' video on YouTube. Copyright was with NCA so will have transferred to BCA. NW asked for BCA to be credited and a confirmation of copyright to be on the video.

Proposal: For Mendip Cave Registry and Archive to have the right to show 'Lost Caves of Britain' on YouTube, giving credit and copyright to BCA.

Proposed: LW

Seconded: NW

#### **a. Webmaster**

##### **Website**

*I have successfully tested a new theme for the main website. It looks cleaner, more professional. It will support mobile users which is a key requirement these days. I aim to have it installed before the next meeting, however what I am missing is a supply of good pictures or better still someone who can take on the role of picture editor.*

*I would like to remind Officers that they can update virtually any part of the website themselves. If you see something that can be improved whether in your section or not, please do so.*

*David Cooke  
March 2017*

##### **Web Services**

*In the last quarter there were no unscheduled outages.*

*A video conference meeting of the Web Services team was held to discuss and agree the migration of the remaining accounts on the old server to the new server. This is becoming urgent as the old server cannot be upgraded to the latest releases of software. The new server has several benefits including a choice of PHP version and free SSL security certificates.*

*David Cooke  
March 2017*

### **Cave Registry**

*The Cambrian Cave registry have developed a simple interface (API) that allows cave lists and details to be available to other computers. This allows other websites to provide mash-up and interesting applications using the data. Martyn Lavery describes it in the Jan 2017 issue of the Cambrian Newsletter. This forms a good basis to provide a standard API across the other online cave registries. The CSCC and MCRA have indicated they intend to develop a similar API.*

*David Cooke  
March 2017*

DC commented that BCA is looking for a picture editor and will post something on UK Caving to see if someone willing to volunteer.

**ACTION 204; DC to post request on UK Caving**

TA then discussed the BCA forum as most people haven't seen it: Me and Jane waited for people new to caving so commissioned a new website professionally designed and supported; about where to go and what caving is. If BCA want to put in resources safe in knowledge that will be private avenue outside of BCA then that will do the job. Website called 'new to caving' and it will be publicised on various outlets. Not specifically linked to UK Caving but will have contacts page to use as a resource. It is run on the same server. AE asked what the BCA should or could do.

TA responded that want to promote caving to people who are interested to it. UK Caving run by BCA wouldn't work and it is better if individuals drive it. If BCA want something to do with it then could link to the new to caving website.

DC commented that BCA is voluntary organisation and worried that try to move away and do stuff away from umbrella of it. What made the try caving site special had all people sign up to caving clubs. Way going to do it with new one would be dealt with under renewal process would feed through to try caving website. If can manage something similar then that is fine.

TA stated that will be contacting clubs and instructors to put details on, as well as commercially. Not for profit but will charge a small amount to advertise.

### **b. Newsletter**

*Newsletter Editor - Everyone I expected to hear from hit the content deadlines and the last newsletter was distributed at the end of January as an e-mail attachment to those registered to receive it. It appeared on the BCA website at the same time.*

*I'm hoping to finalise the next newsletter during the third week of April and would ask for contributions to reach me by Tuesday 18th April.*

*I have received a request for permission to post our newsletters on the Karst Information Portal ([www.karstportal.org](http://www.karstportal.org)). I am told that it is a project of the UIS and other partners and serves as a free, international, on-line open access library of all things caves and karst.*

RW expected that the next newsletter would be delayed as both AE & DC, who were critical to the finalisation and distribution, would be in Mulu. He had received a request from president of US Cave & Karst Institute for our newsletters to be made available on the Karst Information Portal, which is a UIS supported project. AE commented they are a well set up organisation that are hosted in Florida. Council discussed the issue with LW stating that no problem with it being circulated as long as credited and DC saying it is a good website. LW expressed the view that it deserves to be circulated. As long as credited. **ACTION 205:** Council agreed it can be published. **ACTION RW**

## 16. Legal & Insurance Officer

### *Proposed changes to the Constitution*

*The Executive's proposal for changing the constitution contained a total failure to understand probably the most contentious topic that BCA has ever had to deal with. Whilst two members of the Executive may have had a partial excuse, in my opinion the Chair has none. As a consequence, I have been forced to write two extensive documents and hold a number of meetings to try to retrieve the situation. This unnecessary increase in work load demand has caused me to forgo much other work both for BCA and also for home. I will give serious consideration to resignation if a similar failure arises again.*

*Because I have a well known position on CRow, I have not 'signed off' my consideration and advice as BCA's Legal & Insurance Officer. I decline to do so to avoid the post being accused of being biased.*

### *Enquires by Clubs into to Medical Conditions*

*I received an enquiry from one club who asked for advice on a question on their membership form about declaring medical conditions. It is clear that a positive answer of significance would contain information deemed by the Information Commissioner as "sensitive personal data" and thus be required to be treated much more carefully than just personal data.*

*My response included the advice to stop asking the question and create a condition of membership that any member declare any 'appropriate' medical conditions to trip leaders. By 'appropriate', I was thinking of potentially life threatening conditions which require prompt assistance, such as epilepsy or asthma.*

### *Risk Assessments for Access Controlling Bodies*

*A redraft of a question set for Access Controlling Bodies was, with the Insurance Manger's permission, given to another ACB representative. The response indicates there is much work to be done of a more fundamental nature. It seems likely that cavers do not appreciate what the requirement in the insurance policy of 'taking reasonable steps' means and its implications across the whole caving world. The topic is back with the Insurance Manager. I suggest Council needs to give this some serious thought.*

*CRoW*

*At the request of the CCC C&A Officer and following consultation with BCA's CRoW Liaison Officer, I attended a meeting of the National Resources Wales (NRW) National Access Forum for Wales on 7 March as BCA's Legal & Insurance Officer. A (very) short statement was read out at the meeting affirming that it was BCA's policy "to campaign for The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) to apply to going underground". (I remind Council that they are the precise words used in the ballot.) One consequence is that we have been invited to attend a meeting with NRW to discuss how NRW might help us on cave access. The intent is to not only put some detailed aspects of the case that CRoW does apply to caving but also cover other ways NRW can help us and CCC to cope with land owners concerns and problems arising from potential liabilities.*

AE confirmed that Bob has sent the report in. LW mentioned that the last line of the report was a request for council to give thought to it; discussion amongst council members and agreed that it can be discussed at a later point in time as more information is required.

**17. Youth & Development Officer**

No report and nothing discussed.

**18. Membership Administrator's Report**

*2017 Membership Renewal Processes: As of today (17th March 2017) the following have been processed and posted;*

*DIMs: 533, Groups: 151, CIMs: 4513*

*Action 194: I have agreed (with Simon) an updated process to reflect the requirements of this action. The new Group application (below) reflects this change.*

*New Groups: The following Groups have supplied the correct paperwork and payment in order to become BCA members:*

*Endeavour; Endeavour is a small national charity working at grass roots level with some of England's most disadvantaged, disaffected and forgotten young people. For over 60 years we have been challenging young people in these circumstances of poor opportunity to overcome their obstacles, inspiring them to achieve and fulfil their true potential. Endeavour offers programmes of personal development using platforms of experiential learning and challenging activities, which from experience we know are particularly effective for young people who are struggling currently or have previously been unable to cope with mainstream support or education methods.*

*Caving offers another tool to provide these experiences. Under the guidance of our Caving technical advisor, we have been looking into basic caving journeys in the Peak district area. Our most preferred venue of choice would be Ashford Black Marble mine.*

*Administrative Note: Counting out the required number of Weil's Disease cards for each club has slowed the renewal process by around half a day per week.*

*Glenn Jones - Membership Administrator – March 2017*

Proposal: accept endeavour as a group.

NW proposed    RW seconded

Agreed by council.

SJB then raised a concern that that the Weils disease card may have a typo and says and BACs instead of BCAs. Noted by council and on reprint will be corrected.

**ACTION 206:** Secretary to raise concern with BM. **ACTION SJB and BM to liaise.**

### **19. Insurance Manager**

NW confirmed there was nothing to report.

### **20. Cave Registry Co-Ordinator**

No report and no discussion took place.

### **21. British Caving Library**

#### ***Use of the Library***

*The number of email enquiries has fallen from 106 in 2015 to 87 in 2016; however approximately half of these are now research requests, as opposed to requests for a copy/scan of a given item. The number of visitors has increased from 45 in 2015 to 75 in 2016, a 70% rise, and most of our visitors are now coming to conduct their own research with the help of the Librarian.*

#### ***The Library Online Presence***

*The Library now has almost 900 Facebook followers and the number is steadily increasing.*

*Our UK Caving Collections Registry has expanded and is now divided into 5 categories: Club and Personal Log Books; Photographic Collections; Film & Audio Files; Archive Material; Miscellaneous collections. Altogether there are currently links to, or information on, 57 different collections. There are also links to a large number of caving libraries in the UK and abroad. The Audio Archive now contains over 220 interviews covering more than 34 hours of recordings and is constantly being added to.*

*The digitised version of the C.R.O. Archive, dating back to 1934, has been added to the BCRA Online Archive while the original is now kept at the British Geological Survey (BGS) in Keyworth, Nottingham. In addition, the BSA/Simpson Archive, held at BGS Keyworth, is now being digitised with the help of BGS in Scotland and Edinburgh-based volunteers; the first part is already available online from the BGS website.*

JP confirmed no further comments.

## **22. Child Protection**

*Action 195 re Child Protection*

*I have not made the progress I had hoped to do so. I have had no response to the comments I have made in both the BCA Newsletter and Descent. Given the lack of response, I don't see a need to rush any change through.*

Report sent in from RM and no further comments

## **23. CRoW-Liason**

*The Crow officer report always used to be listed as a sub section to the C&A report. As it is a major access and conservation issue this would seem to be most appropriate. Why has it been changed and can it be moved back?*

*Again, I have very little to report on the CRoW campaign. There has been no effective campaign since the exec bowed to minority pressure and made it subject to appropriate revision of a single sentence of our constitution. This was against the interpretation made by the previous exec and this council throughout the preceding year. The time I put into the CRoW campaign during that year I have directed elsewhere much, I am sure, to the disappointment of the majority who voted for a campaign.*

*I have quietly attended to matters as instructed by the exec. As far as CRoW related conservation issues are concerned I have already done much and I am grateful to council for the vote of thanks at the last meeting. On the associated matter of landowner relations I received no reply to the question I posed in my last report. Namely,*

*“I am unable to do much to improve landowner relations in the regions due to BCA restraints, especially on Mendip where many of the problems with CRoW has been reported. Could CSCC report on what progress they have made in allaying the landowner fears they were so concerned about?”*

*The proposed constitutional amendments to section 4.6 is not something that I wished to become involved with. I had confidence that the exec or council itself could come up with appropriate wording to satisfy the need. The chairman assured me on several occasions that this was the case. However, nothing appeared on the October meeting agenda and, as I understand it, a mix up ensured nothing appeared for the January meeting either. When the exec proposals were made available (post last meeting) it was immediately obvious that there was little understanding of the problems involved. The Legal Officer immediately made this very clear in a number of detailed reports. I find it incomprehensible that he was not consulted on this matter before it became so late. What is the explanation for this?*

*As a result, on the 25<sup>th</sup> January, I put forward my own modest solution to this problem by submitting two simple motions to the June 2017 BCA AGM. I received confirmation from the secretary that they are correctly proposed and will go forward – can he confirm?*

I have looked into the origin of the first sentence of section 4.6 of the BCA constitution. It has been impossible to discover the exact reason it is there, other than the fact it was transferred across from the constitution of the NCA. I'm sure the spirit of that sentence is clear though – that cavers should respect the law and be courteous to tenants and landowners. Left alone I'm sure it could have sat quite harmlessly in the constitution as a reminder of that spirit.

However, it has been factually incorrect for over a decade. The BCA covers caving in the Isles which includes Scotland. The Land Reform Act (Scotland) gives access to caves for the public. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act may also give those rights to England and Wales. Therefore, it is simply not true to say that the owners and tenants of property have the rights to grant or withhold access.

Unfortunately this expensive and time consuming reform has been forced on the BCA for the wrong reasons by the minority who are unwilling to accept the democratic vote of the membership on CRoW. It should be made clear to the landowning community that this change shows no disrespect to them. It merely deals with an issue that must now be dealt with, correcting an inaccuracy and most importantly allowing the BCA to pursue policy which it has a mandate to follow.

We do not need to be reminded in our constitution that we must obey the law. We should respect landowners rights, but we should also respect the speed limit, parking by-laws, decency laws, laws on drinking, drugs and public behaviour, SSSI's and the environment, etc, etc, etc. Are we to include these in our constitution too? No, let's just remove it and be done.

I appreciate that the exec is under pressure and other issues are pressing at the moment but I remind them that the CRoW issue is very much live and just as important as others.

Tim Allen

March 2017

TA raised the question asked in report. Minutes of AGM the way crow was left is that we should throttle back in conservation and concentrate on land owner relations. Understood council didn't want me to contact land owners in Mendip. Also made fairly clear that one of problems with open access with land owners was in Mendip; considering not allowed to contact them to allay fears over crow so want to see if councils made any progress.

AB stated that as far as know all of areas affected are on land owned by certain organisations / councils. No individual land owners that are effected. AB stated that that not aware of any concern in Mendip.

TA asked if crow should apply to caving. Council then discussed different regions and councils and their concerns / thoughts about crow. TA stated that it is clear Southern council members aren't happy with BCA running the campaign and crow should concentrate on land owner relations.

DC raised the concern that if speak to land owners about being worried about it and they're not then they may become worried about it.

AE came back to crow and what was happening as suggestions were that was a lot for TA to do. However TA responded that was under the impression was to concentrate on conservation and not do anything 'loud'. Council discussed this further with SF mentioned the Law of Property Act 1925 and if that would cover caving under a form of air and exercise.



AE – AGM agreed that BCA should continue with CRoW with the emphasis on Cons and Access and until amendment on 4.6 is presented then progress items in hand but not be too proactive. Approach DEFRA. Weren't saying not to do things.

AE stated that ultimately will probably be proved that crow applies to caves so probably need to tell land owners. TA stated wanted to go back to the email received from executive (AE gave copy to TA) as since AGM curtailed work was doing on a crow campaign because believed was asked to step it back.

## **24. International UIS**

*Not a lot to report at the moment, although there is a great deal of work being done by a lot of people towards the International Congress in Sydney, Australia this July 22nd – 29th.*

*The other major thing the International Union of Speleology is working on is persuading UNESCO to have an International Year of Caves and Karst, this is projected to be 2021 when the international congress should be in France.*

*Andy Eavis - March 2017*

AE nothing further to add.

### **a. FSE**

Report of the UK FSE delegate to the BCA council Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

*Only a short report this time. Please see January report for more information since August.  
The next General Assembly Meeting will take place at the ES Forum 16<sup>th</sup> September 2017 Ferrieres  
Belgium*

***Eurospeleo Projects*** - Work continues developing the improved guidelines for the Eurospeleo grants for projects. We have a new promotion for attracting more grants which I've attached in the e-mail.

***The work of the ECPC commission*** - The FSE, through the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) is now a member of the Board of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) in Brussels and thus directly involved in the EEB decision-making. Bärbel Vogel occupies this job for the FSE. ECPC is active in the EEB workgroups "Water" and "Biodiversity". The "Nature Alert" campaign of EEB, is striving to maintain the strong European nature protection standards. ECPC was present at the EEB General Assembly in Vienna in September 2016 with a representative and an FSE/ECPC poster presentation.

***Timetable of Eurospeleo events & General Assembly Meetings in 2018 onwards that involve the FSE.***

*ES Forum 2018 will be in Sazkammergut, Upper-Austria.*

***Ged Campion UK delegate to the FSE.***

## **25. AOB**

### **1) BCA Email**

NW asked if anything could be done about the email situation as has 2 employees who can't communicate with who they work for. MW said that something needs to happen to sort it out, there has been an improvement and there are issues that will be resolved: it is all tied into various things.

DC commented that it would be helpful to see if there is a problem: several things happening with mail at same time. All BCA employees have had issues that have been created by the cure that was put in place. MW has implemented antispam measures but could have monitored the issues and had less impact. A lot going on and it should have been handled better. MW will wheel measures back and for employees it should get better. Could turn that issue off instantly.

MW disagreed and said that was not true. He further commented that the problem is that nobody has been maintaining security side of our services and things change so quickly in IT. Sent email to everyone on council that showed why BT and Gmail are often not receiving emails as domain has poor reputation with certain providers. Have to fix it. People expressed at January meeting not receiving emails. Seeing what has happened and put fix in place but has then created problems. No-one knows what services we are providing and in what method; there are other ways of providing it with more secure reputation for domain. Web address needs a solid reputation and could have done in staged process but still would have broken employees emails.

DC stated again that could have let users know that intending to do so to which MW replied he doesn't believe can maintain IT services.

TR stated that the discussion was not going to be resolved at the meeting and should be taken away and done elsewhere; talking about problems a lot of members don't know about. AE asked for a timescale and after further discussion for the IT party to sort it out between themselves.

## **2) TR: Active Scouts**

The Association of Scout Caving Teams (ASCT) has never been recognised by the Scout Association. Scouting has had an update and is now in a position where we can form a national caving team which would be recognised by scout headquarters and would fit in on BCA council and so seek approval from council that subject to AGM it is reformed as a national active support caving team.

RW stated that it sounds like a constitutional national body.

TR responded that they would have to adapt the constitution a bit but should fit in with BCA. He had done some work with Damian and he felt it would fit within the BCA constitution and would also be recognised by scout association. TR stated that it is wished to close ASCT constitutionally and open the NSasu National Support Unit which would replace ASCT in BCA.

Council discussed if it could be as simple as a name change rather than dissolution of the previous body and opening / approval of the other but concluded that when ASCT has been closed and a new body formed it should apply to be accepted by BCA as a replacement constitutionally established national body, probably subject to confirmation at the next following AGM.

### 3) Future of BCA IT

MW read the following report to council.

#### *Report on the Future of BCA IT*

*BCA currently has a loosely formed group of volunteers who look after some of the BCA IT services. There are no central records of what those services are, or what they do.*

*IT services have moved from being a useful addition to an essential part of BCA's business, without which it would struggle to function. The expectation that IT services will continue to function and will not break is reasonable for an organisation like the BCA but not reasonable to expect that level of service to be maintained by volunteers.*

#### *Core BCA IT services:*

*Website, databases, email etc.*

*These services currently share hosting with all of BCA's webservices customers which means that any issues with a webservices account or a BCA core service can impact on each other, and configuration changes also impact on each other.*

*Currently a mixture of services hosted on british-caving.org.uk and caves.org.uk. Bespoke software development by Cookie and David Gibson to manage different parts of our membership and other functions. If David Gibson, Cookie or myself are unavailable we have no-one who is prepared to support those systems and no-one we can call on commercially.*

#### *WebServices:*

*Providing web hosting and support for customers (mostly caving organisations).*

*I do not believe that BCA should continue to offer this for the following reasons:*

- 1. **Support requirements:** We are not in a position to offer support in a timely manner. If Cookie and myself go away for a month and an issue arises requiring more than a server reboot there is no one who can resolve it.*
- 2. **Security / Liabilities:** Maintaining the security and keeping software up to date is something that needs continuous validation and regular checking. We do not have those kind of resources available.*
- 3. What benefit is it to BCA and their hosting customers when very similar commercial packages are available for very little extra cost? (Packages with more features, including support are available for £29 per year from reliable UK based providers, the basic package from BCA is £25 per year).*
- 4. Do BCA actually make anything out of the service for the hundreds of hours spent by volunteers running it? No, we actually make a loss. In the 2015 accounts a loss of £396 was recorded, in 2014 a profit of £28 was recorded.*
- 5. BCA should concentrate on caving matters not be running a hosting company.*
- 6. Software versions: Outdated software that we do not have the volunteer resources to update. One server is still running PHP software that went end of life 6 years ago. There are many other software packages which have not had necessary security updates, some dating back to 2009.*

*Some of the issues that have taken a significant amount of my time:*

- **December 2016:** One of our hosted accounts had a password compromised and was being used to relay spam for at least six weeks.
- **January 2017 BCA Meeting:** A number of people on committee report they are not receiving council-list emails.
- **February/March 2017:** british-caving.org.uk (and other hosted domains). Lot's of email going into black holes, being rejected by providers (not unique to BCA, this has affected many many email services and mailing lists). This was the cause of council-list emails going astray. Resolution causes necessary breakage to some mailing lists and no longer allows sending email via non-BCA servers.

#### *Proposals for BCA:*

1. *BCA accepts in principal that we need to pay for our core IT services and for support thereof. - The IT working party will then develop a plan as to how this might work in practise.*
  - 1.1. *BCA agrees an initial budget of £20-£40 per month to host BCA's core IT services, independently of BCA WebServices. - Allowing the IT working party to separate the two so they are not reliant on each other.*
2. *BCA agrees that we should no longer be offering Web Hosting as we cannot support it and there are now suitable commercial alternatives. - The IT Working party will then develop an exit strategy.*

DC stated he has a different perspective. He doesn't have a long list of unhappy users until MW looks after server. MW did an upgrade in December that DC didn't without consulting users.

MW responded that impossible to consult users as don't have contact details or respond to emails if don't like something.

DC added that this creates extra work, even responding to emails takes a long time. Both do work voluntarily.

AE asked council what they thought; if should let IT working party attempt to sort it again or worth wading into. MW explained that had tried to do this but hadn't got a sufficient response.

AE commented that majority of council members don't know enough about IT to make a decision without the IT working party and would be preferable for a proposal to come from them which NW agreed with.

MW informed council that at the moment BCA It services has 2 servers and 1 needs replacing. Hardware cost is £20-40 per month to which DC responded that this is already paid for. MW mentioned an additional budget for the IT working party; a migration is needed and don't want to do it twice. Could move BCA core services onto its own server so it doesn't impact customers but to do that need the spend mentioned and best to do so now so can migrate everything at once.

TA commented that there would still be an awful lot of IT management to do even if outsource servers, get systems and also have 24 hour back up should anything go wrong. Seems to be a sensible way forward that needs managing by IT.

DC mentioned that there was always cover but MW responded that as a volunteer wouldn't commit to that.

AE asked IT what needs doing about problem that server needs replacing.

DC responded that they don't need decisions from council but an agreement to sort it. Have 2 servers. Old one and new one and just need to migrate people across.

MW responded that this doesn't solve problem that commercial customers expect a level of services and if make a change that impacts them.

AE asked if there are advantages (like keeping close to our customers) and RW added that organisations involved have a good feeling that use BCA services. DC added that still host other sites; Regional councils, clubs, safety, organisations that get free hosting.

SF commented that he is the webmaster of Chelsea [caving club] and their website is done commercially by outside server and wouldn't go to BCA as server. Get notices from outside server that have to update things and will have to do so on a commercial service but don't have to worry about it crashing and running in a professionally managed environment. SF supported what MW was saying.

DC responded that this is what BCA offers. Professionally run server and updates itself.

MB asked if council could request from the IT committee that they discuss this and come forward with a proposal, which AE agreed with.

LW added that BCA should be funding its' own server. RJ commented that need to look at getting rid of the commercial side of the operation. LW further commented that issues are BCAs own resilience and lack of security. Separating two out strikes me as practical and financial aspect is that council accepts there is a cost to BCA running its own IT, which at the minute is hidden. It would be helpful to see the cost separate. Need to deal with upgrading the server shortly and ideal opportunity to put BCA on own server with own IP address. If BCA should run web services or not is a discussion for another day.

MW looking for a budget but already have it and what actually want is BCA to accept the real cost of the service they're getting and accept that is what it is rather than seeing it hidden in web services account.

AE asked for clarification if we need to do we have to do something now? MW confirmed yes.

SF, MW and DC further discussed having it hosted somewhere but DC raised concerns of the cost. Council further discussed a way to move forward.

IT working party to involve NW, LW and Dave Gibson and draw up a specification for what is needed. AE asked them to get together within the next month and come up with a consensus.

**ACTION 207:** IT Working Party to meet and report back to Council on way forward/what is needed. **ACTION IT Working Party**

Council also discussed the BCA website with SF expressing the opinion that he does not feel its not welcoming and puts out the wrong message. DC responded with having things like graphic designers would be too costly and it needs to be about the content.

4) CRow – Clarification on BCA Position on promoting access for just members of BCA or members of BCA and others/third parties.

The meeting agreed there was insufficient time to do this item justice so it would be considered under matters arising at the next meeting.

**ACTION 208: Secretary to table 'Clarification on BCA Position on promoting access for just BCA members or for BCA members and others' as discussion under matters arising at next meeting.**

Meeting closed 18:45

## Appendix 1

### *Report on proposed Training Database purchase by Matt Wire*

*It came to my attention at the beginning of October that BCA Training Committee / QMC? had signed a contract agreeing to spend £5000 up front + £300 per month on a training database to replace the existing databases used by BCA Training.*

*Once I became aware I have provided input and advice to executive who have been dealing with this. I have made it clear that there are a number of solutions available and that we should be investigating them. Others have also provided their input.*

*There seems to be broad agreement that there is a need to replace the existing training databases with something that better meets the current needs of the Training Committee / QMC.*

*To evaluate a suitable solution Training Committee / QMC need to provide a specification, but despite repeated requests they have refused to do so.*

*One such system that may, or may not be suitable is the "Tahdah" service which has been identified by Graham Mollard. However, it is not possible for BCA to validate if it is a suitable solution or not without having a basic requirements specification written by BCA / Training Committee / QMC. I am willing to support the development of this specification, which has already been partially written by Mary Wilde in 2014 but now needs updating to support current requirements.*

### *Reasons given for not investigating other solutions*

- ***A new system is needed immediately:*** Training have ***already managed for six months since that argument was raised*** when this was discussed in October, as soon as possible is probably a more appropriate argument. That six months could have been used to investigate options and potentially select and configure a suitable system which potentially could have been in place by now.
- ***Not going to write a specification because "we have found one that works for Professional caving":*** It is impossible to evaluate a supplier without a specification,

*and it is impossible to hold a supplier to account without a specification. Mary has already done most of the work...*

- **"Detailed research" into suitable systems has been carried out:** Despite repeated requests, no evidence of this can be provided, no names of systems evaluated. The only answer I've had is "John Cousins" loves it – but that could easily have been obtained straight from the front page of the tahdah website where he is apparently quoted: <http://www.tahdah.me/what-is-it>.
- **Being used by British Canoe Union:** - It was stated at the Jan17 council meeting that it was being used by the BCU (british canoe union). This is factually incorrect - it is being used by a different, much smaller organisation named "Canoe Wales".
- **It's only £5000:** Not worth worrying about. Our membership will certainly worry about it!
- **We've signed the contract – we'd look silly if we changed out mind:** Note that there is no exit clause in the contract so there is no problem BCA if we do decide not to go ahead. Also, the person signing the contract was not authorised by BCA Council to do so, making it null and void.

### **Other Concerns**

- **Financial Stability and viability of Tahdah:** A quick look at companies house shows a very young, single director company (2 years old), linked to another company with the same owner. Company accounts consistently filed late and showing large debts. Robin Weare has spent a significant amount of time investigating the financial viability of the company.
- **Users of the system may have to pay Tahdah for a premium membership:** It is unclear what functions users will need to purchase a premium membership in order to complete. This is potential additional cost. An agreed specification would mitigate this...
- **Obstructive and bullying behaviour by QMC:** Email 7<sup>th</sup> Feb:  
"Mary has a boss who is the point of contact if you wish her to do something, you must go through him. The IT working party were given the chance in 2011 and 2014 to help Professional caving with the Data base it has done nothing but gets its knicker in a twist when we go to someone who can help us with a proven system. Mary will not be instructed to produce another spec. we have found one that works for Professional caving. Regards Graham Mollard Chair QMC"

### **Additional Costs not accounted for**

- If BCA require any customisation this will be charged at £100 per hour. Without a specification this is an open cheque for Tahdah.
- BCA are expected to do all the work to get the data into a suitable format for import into Tahdah's systems. This has not been costed and is likely to be a minimum of £1000 in addition to the purchase cost.
- Premium membership for users: Users may be forced to purchase premium memberships directly with Tahdah, this cost (but not the fee) may get passed to BCA if it is an essential part of training workflow.

### **Timeline**

*This is how BCA have got to this point:*



1. *QMC refer to a "decision" in 2010 by BCA council to purchase a training database was apparently made but no record of this can be found in the minutes.*
2. *QMC state that a "consultation" was held with the IT working party in 2011 and 2014. But it appears that it only reached one person and was never followed up by Training Committee.*
3. *A contract is signed in September(?) 2016 by training committee / QMC without the prior knowledge of BCA Council. BCA only become aware when the BCA treasurer is asked to approve the expenditure.*
4. *Confusion at the January 2017 Council meeting as it is the first time most of the BCA Council have heard anything about the intended purchase.*

### *Summary*

*There is no due diligence in this process:*

- *No multiple quotes to show the price of the proposed product is comparable with other systems.*
- *No specification from us (A prerequisite if you are trying to compare quotes).*
- *Without a specification, how can we decide they have met our needs.*
- *No service level agreement.*
- *No support level agreement.*
- *No agreement on stage payments at suitable milestones.*
- *In fact nothing more than "BCA give you £5k up front, and you can do some undefined stuff for us"...*
- *A national body (i.e. us) should be careful with our members money and show professionalism when awarding valuable contracts.*
- *National Council is being bullied/threatened into going along with this.*

*IT purchasing is important, but so is careful use of our members money, when our members find out that they are effectively subsidising the finances of the commercial sector they will be very unhappy, it already runs at a loss at present and throwing more money at it won't fix that...*

### *Appendix 2*

*Comments from Training Administrator regarding the training administration system.*

*I started flagging up in 2009 that using three databases that are not fully integrated was time consuming and led to errors. Extracting data was not straight forward and I had little confidence in its accuracy.*

*Over the years various actions took place to try and improve the situation - including the documentation of a 'spec'. As Cookie quite rightly pointed out this spec was simply based on the administration tasks and output requirements. This is because at the time the possibility a customer facing system was not even on the radar.*

*Costs were rising and in 2015-2016 I looked into what I could do to save time, money and to present a forward looking face to the clients. One huge area was postage and log books. The topic of electronic log books had been discussed but in no concrete way. Just out of interest I googled electronic log books and hit on Tahdah. This looked to be a very interesting system and with Graham and Nigel's agreement we arranged a demo which took place at Great Hucklow.*



*I invited David Cooke to this but got no reply.*

*From that point onward it was really out of my hands.*

*As an ex IT professional I can understand all the points raised subsequently and those put forward to the Council Meeting. This note is not intended to answer those. All I want to say is that having pointed out in 2009 the weaknesses with the system I was using we are now in 2017 and nothing has changed for me.*

*Yes. I can do the job. But there have been so many changes it is getting harder and harder to do that job in a professional manner with the tools I have. I spend time answering queries and fixing errors that should not happen. I spend time wearing my customer first hat, apologising to clients for things that make the BCA appear unprofessional. (One small example is where someone complains that they told us their address had changed but my letters were still going to the old address). The training and membership systems do not talk to each other. With such complaints I never blame the tools. I apologise and try to put it right. Where possible I raise the issue internally and in this particular instance I did so but nothing happened. Glenn and I work around this as much as we can).*

*I in no way place 'blame' for the current situation on anyone. The problem really lays with the BCA machine. I have had great support from many people including of course Graham Mollard and Nigel Ball.*

***I implore you all to make a positive decision with a time tied action plan.***

*The alternative is simply that I plough on delivering an increasingly fragmented service where the management of change is a nightmare and the delivery of which is stressful and disheartening.*