



Council Meeting 12th October 2019 Reports

Spanset, Telford Way, Middlewich, CW10 0HX
Saturday 12th October 2019, 10:30am

Reports presented in order that they appear in the agenda

Chair (Les Williams)

Verbal communication received that there are no specific matters to report.

Secretary (Matt Ewles)

Firstly, to address the elephant in the room. It will come as no surprise to most people that I am personally disappointed by the concerns raised by the CSCC in the agenda about the constitutional compliance of some aspects at this years' AGM. As you will gather from the article I published in the last newsletter, I felt it was an extremely positive meeting, in fact, one of the most well-attended in recent history, with a considerable number of younger people, and an influx of new people into key roles. I feel it marked the start of a very much needed modernisation and revitalisation of the BCA. It is very saddening to me if this is not shared by all members of BCA Council.

Some of the assertions put forward by CSCC have serious consequences if accepted by BCA Council, hence why I feel the need to address them here in my report and suggest some ways forward.

Equally it is worth issuing a reminder that the CSCC are one of our five regional councils. They represent about 40+ southern caving clubs, including some of the UK's largest clubs. Therefore, we may be talking about as many as 1000-2000 cavers represented by the CSCC at BCA meetings. Their views and concerns must therefore be considered and acknowledged.

I sincerely hope an acceptable resolution can be reached that addresses most of CSCC's concerns but without undoing all the positivity that the AGM brought. The following suggestions may help.

Firstly, the CSCC express concern that the creation of a 5th Individual Representative position is against section 6.2 of the constitution. Had the four 'usual' vacancies been taken in addition to Will's additional position, then we would have five Individual Representatives, which would, as the CSCC rightly point out, be in breach of this section of the constitution. However, as two of the 'usual' positions are vacant, we only have three Individual Representatives, so we are fine from a constitutional perspective at the moment.

My suggestion is that Council transfer Will's 'additional' Council position, created bespoke at the AGM, to the 2019-2021 vacant 'usual' post. This would maintain Will in his position as an Individual Representative on a two-year term which was very clearly voted for at the AGM. Thus, no real-world outcomes of the AGM would be reversed, so our membership is unlikely to object, and this course of action would concurrently eliminate the problematic 5th position which would be constitutionally problematic if the two vacant 'usual' posts were filled while it were still in existence.

The second CSCC concern regards the Y&D exceeding its remit in respect to the Charterhouse Caving Company (CCC) matter. Clearly BCA Council need to discuss and decide on whether they agree with CSCC's concerns, so we can put this matter to bed. This can be dealt with at this meeting if Council feel they are adequately educated about the issue, or it can be deferred to January if Council feel both sides of the debate need to set forward further details.

The third CSCC concern is that some clubs were turning up to the AGM with unsuitable documentation to authorise their vote. It is fair to say that Robin was fastidious about ensuring procedure was followed and will only have given a voting card to a club rep who produced a suitable document. I agree that some had been hastily written, a few on loose bits of card. However, neither the constitution nor manual of operations specifies anything about the 'quality' of the authorisation

letter or how long it should take to write; or how far in advance of the meeting it should be written. We must be careful about inventing rules based on subjective personal standards.

Therefore, as far as I'm concerned there is no question to answer about the validity of the votes cast, and to deliver a verdict anything other than this is to bring our AGM into disrepute. I must stand firm on this and ask Council to dismiss all concerns about the validity of the AGM votes.

Clearly however there is a concern here about the standard that a letter of authorisation should achieve, and while I don't think we should question the meetings of the past, we should consider addressing this for the future via guidance in the Manual of Operations, which should be publicised with the AGM notification. Perhaps Council should consider prior to the next meeting what they feel would be an appropriate standard? My recommendation as Secretary would be to avoid creating any archaic requirements such as club letterheads and actual signatures. Instead, it should be set out that the letter should identify the person voting and the group they are voting for, and should be authored by the person giving this authorisation with details of their name and position within the group/club that enables them to grant that permission. I think these are the key details the BCA requires to verify the democratic process. I also think these details should be able to be supplied in advance if desired (by email) to the Secretary, thus avoiding bits of paper altogether.

I do not think we can go down the road of specifying anything about the physical appearance of the letter as this is just too subjective and creates formality that serves absolutely no purpose.

Finally, the CSCC expressed concern about precedent for voting, stating that in 2005 precedent was set that unopposed nominees are automatically appointed to a position. There was clear opposition to this at the AGM, which resulted in a decision being taken to proceed to elect every applicant, which resulted in some not being appointed, and posts being left open.

While precedent may have been that unopposed candidates are appointed by default, this is certainly not expressed in the constitution. In fact, the constitution states "Representatives from the classes of Individual and Group Membership shall be elected at an Annual General Meeting....". The use of the word 'elect' means an 'election' and thus a vote. Furthermore, if there was any doubt over this, our constitution goes on to say that this is achieved "by a show of hands of those present who are eligible to vote". Therefore, this AGM moved closer to constitutional compliance than any that have gone before, which I am sure we will all agree is a very good thing.

Nonetheless, I appreciate that prior precedent may have resulted in some people misunderstanding proceedings, which led to disappointment. I suggest that this is addressed by some clarification in the Manual of Operations to ensure this confusion is not repeated in future.

Summary of my suggested actions to deal with CSCC concerns

(1) Transfer Will's Individual Member position to the identical vacant position, thus abolishing the fifth 'additional' position that was created at the AGM, but maintaining the clear wishes of the AGM that Will has an Individual Member position on BCA Council.

(2) BCA Council discuss the second item regarding Y&D and Charterhouse Caving Company; either at this meeting or defer to the next to enable full information to be put forward on both sides.

(3) We aim to provide clarity in the Manual of Operations (which should be shared in the AGM notification) on what the expectations of a 'letter of authorisation' is. I have made my suggestions above. I recommend this is scheduled for discussion at the next Council meeting.

(4) Clarification in the Manual of Operations that electing someone always means to take a vote rather than automatic appointment (even if unopposed by another candidate). It is suggested that this clarification is made not to set out procedure (I think the constitution is fairly clear on that already) but to help avoid confusion associated to past precedent.

Moving on to the remainder of my report now...

It has been a productive four months since the AGM and June Council meeting. Much of this has been spent working through the various action items coming out of these meetings, which are all covered in the 'actions' list in the agenda and will therefore be covered in the meeting, so there is no need to go through everything in detail here in my report.

In summary however, the following have taken up the majority of my time:

- June Council and AGM minutes preparation.
- Working with David Rose on the newsletter regarding the new formatting; well done to David on delivering some great content showing off the best of the BCA.
- Working with Gary Douthwaite to see the existing website updated in several places and the MoO updated for the aspects that needed to be changed after previous meetings.
- Working with Nick Williams and Phil Rowsell to write a letter in support of GPF charity status (which as we heard at Hidden Earth has now been successful).
- Working with Jane Allen on materials for the Hidden Earth stall; My thanks to Jane for her excellent work in pulling this together and in doing so, improving our member engagement.
- Drafting numerous changes to the MoO as presented in the agenda of this meeting.
- Production of this meeting agenda and collating the reports (this takes ages).
- Working to provide draft text for the upcoming ballot (see agenda) and to promote the fact that this ballot is going to happen as widely as possible.
- General daily communications and enquiries.

Workload so far has averaged 5-6 hours/week which is manageable.

In general, I am very excited indeed by the enthusiasm of many members of our new Council, the Vision group, and many of our volunteers. My role as Secretary is very much as a facilitator and I am always available to provide any input or assistance as required.

At the time of writing, I believe a potential volunteer for the C&A role may be joining us at this meeting. Claire Ross is not a caver herself, but has a considerable interest in caving, and follows the BCA on Facebook hence her awareness of the role. It is clearly unconventional that someone from outside of BCA's periphery should come into such a role, however, I have had several emails and a phone discussion in which I have been honest about the potentially steep learning curve and the possible length of the meeting, and this has not deterred her. What Claire lacks in knowledge of caving and cave conservation and access I feel she may compensate for in professional skills. I have had no expression of interest from anyone already within the BCA 'periphery'. I hope that everyone will welcome Claire to the meeting as a spectator. There is no better way to see what she might be getting herself in for than coming along to the meeting in person. This is not in any way a done deal on either side; just a chance for an interested person to explore the role in more detail. Moreover, I am keen that anyone who shows willingness to give up their free time to work to the benefit of caving should be encouraged. That is not to say we do not welcome anyone else coming forward who might be interested; any appointment will be done by a vote.

Finally, it is with considerable regret that I must raise some issues to Council. As you are aware, at the AGM a proposal was put forward by me for Gary Douthwaite to be appointed BCA webmaster, with a remit set out in the agenda “to redevelop the BCA website, including internal and external communications systems, the public website, the behind-the-scenes systems, and BCA online”.

This was put forward because I know from experience in the CNCC that overhauling a Regional Council (let alone a national body) requires substantial rebuilding of back-end systems to enable better interaction with membership and ease of work for Officers involved, and to generally bring them up to modern standards and expectations. This is something I personally felt that Gary was best positioned to help deliver, and which I hoped he would be given the freedom to do, but with the full support and endorsement of those already involved in BCA Web Services, who know the current system well and could use their experience to support a transition to newer systems.

In order to fulfil this agenda, Gary set out some requirements that he would need, including various accesses to back-end databases and software (see AGM agenda for full details). This was done in the interests of transparency.

Since then, Gary has made requests for the accesses that he requires (these need to be granted by the Web Services team) but granting these accesses has not happened. During Hidden Earth, we had a face to face meeting (Gary, David Cooke and I), in the hope that any factors prohibiting provision of these accesses could be resolved, but this was non-productive.

Gary possess visions for BCA IT/web systems that are at odds with the current Web Services team and there is no way that these can be brought together in a productive collaboration.

There is nothing further to be gained by discussion on this matter between Gary and David, or to delve into advanced technical matters in front of Council. There is certainly nothing to be gained by allowing this situation to escalate into anything other than a professional disagreement either. The main purpose of this report to Council is to explain the issue and clarify that the remit I set out in my AGM proposal for Gary as the new webmaster can no longer be fulfilled.

Matt Ewles
30th September 2019

Treasurer (Howard Jones)

Current bank balances

As at 23/9/19 was £306,500. Of which £252,500 is in medium term interest bearing accounts and £40,000 is in a short term deposit account.

Low claim liability insurance rebates

2015 rebate received in January 2019, value £2,200

2016 rebate due, value £2,400 was received August 2019

2018 rebate has been deducted from the 2019 renewal premium.

Hence all have now been received. Total value £7,000.

Budget adherence

To date I have no knowledge of any item of expenditure that is going to be materially over budget.

Regional accounts

CNCC submitted their accounts for 2018 for review by the other members of Fin Com. Their accounts were thus scrutinised and accepted. A claim of £507.11 was paid for 2018. No other region has submitted a claim yet for 2018, despite AGMs having been held and accounts passed.

BCA 2018 accounts

These were accepted by the AGM and hence were posted on the BCA website.

Tax return 2018

Further to the AGM accepting the 2018 accounts I prepared and submitted our tax return for 2018.

No tax is due.

Investment of cash surplus

BCA accepted my proposal in April to invest some of our funds in slightly riskier assets to get a larger return. To date I have scrutinised a number of options but none fitted our criteria. Brexit may change this if it ever happens. Ongoing.

Donations

Have paid GPF £6,000 for their entire 2019 donation and BCRA £9,000 being three quarters of the library donation in for 2019.

How to spend a surplus should it occur

See separate paper.

Budget 2020

I have taken a simplistic approach of taking the last 3 years history of income and expenditure and using the average of those 3 values for each income or expenditure heading. Several have been adjusted where I have indicated in my notes to the budget. There are several proposals that Council will consider during the meeting and I will update the budget as we go along. It is notable that since 2004 BCA has had a surplus of income over expenditure each year and reserves have grown from £60k to over £250k.

Howard Jones

23rd September 2019

Membership Administrator (Wendy Williams)

No report received.

Insurance Manager (Howard Jones)

Liability Renewal

Child abuse policy forwarded to underwriters following acceptance at the June AGM.

We are exploring changing the values that Hiscox and AIG insure, whilst keeping the overall total value at £5m.

Low claim rebates

2016 rebate due, value £2,400 was to be received August 2019; hence all past low claims rebates have been received.

Expedition policy

Following approval by Council in April 2019 this has been launched on 1st June.

This has put extra demand on the BCA Insurance manager's role. Feedback from the underwriters is as follows: (To be received October second due to holidays so this report will be updated then).

Instructor insurance: (not a BCA issue)

This is a policy taken out by Caving instructors to cover themselves. Briggs the underwriter decided at no notice not to renew existing policies as they were too exposed to sport. In the meantime a cheaper alternative has been taken up by some. Following our continued failure to find an underwriter we have explored adding this to the BCA liability policy with Hiscox which has been agreed for 2020 renewal. However the value wanted by Hiscox is £750 per instructor which is significantly more than previous policy cost. As there is a cheaper (though not as comprehensive) alternative, there may be a low take up of this new policy.

Personal accident (Death and disability) insurance:

This is one of those policies which is very expensive to take out as an individual (especially as a caver) but much cheaper as a group. I asked Howdens to look at a policy for BCA members to go on top of the liability policy already in place as a member benefit. We went to market and 7 underwriters were approached. 5 declined to quote, RSA quoted, the other party quoted almost twice the cost of RSA. RSA have quoted 3 options with reducing benefits, the cost to BCA varying between £10k and £20k. If our members don't have such cover that would respond in the event of a caving incident this is a significant and cheap member benefit.

Proposal: to take out this policy as a member benefit, see separate proposal paper with details.

Since BCA consulted on this subject I have received mostly positive feedback so far from clubs and individuals that have discussed it.

Minera quarry access

Landlord requested £10m liability cover plus an endorsement to the BCA policy. We countered with our existing cover which has been accepted. We expect access to be open again shortly after some remedial work to be carried out by the local club.

Howard Jones

23rd September 2019

Conservation and Access Officer (Louise Baddeley)

Report on meeting

We had a very successful C&A committee meeting on 16th July. Please see minutes and attached reports on the BCA website for information. I'd like to thank all those who attending for our very constructive discussion and helping me to get up to speed with national C&A matters in my first meeting in this post. Additional thanks to Jenny Potts for her invaluable support as minute taker for this meeting, and subsequently assembling the minutes and reports into an excellent format, and for keeping me on track with the administrative proceedings of the meeting.

Conferencing software

An action from this meeting was to explore alternative software for hosting video conference meetings, which I'd like to bring to the attention of the BCA webmaster/web services. We had some trouble with establishing connections with all attendees via Webex, which resulting in one potential attendee having to give up on joining the meeting, and several other odd arrangements such as having a video connection via a computer but an audio connection via telephone. I would like to suggest that the BCA considers exploring alternative video conferencing software, with one suggestion being Skype for Business. I believe the BCA pays a subscription fee to Webex but that this money may be better invested elsewhere as the current arrangements do not meet the needs of all meeting attendees.

Finance proposal

Please see the accompanying document which outlines proposed changes to C&A project funding, which has been submitted by the CNCC (thanks to Tim Allen for this). There is also a reply to this proposal from the CSCC which can be found in the reports of the 16th July C&A committee meeting (Item 5.b.ii.b: thank you to David Cooke for this). You can also find discussions on the funding proposal in the minutes of the 16th July meeting; both of these documents are available on the BCA website (or will be shortly).

At the 16th July meeting, the voting members of the committee voted in support of the draft funding proposal (in favour: 4; against: 0; abstentions: 2), at which point it became an action for me to bring this to council again. I therefore ask council to consider this proposal at the 12th October council meeting.

From my point of view as C&A officer, I believe that the proposed changes to funding are a positive step for national conservation and access projects. I think it is a reasonable duty to ask of the C&A officer along with the C&A committee to receive funding applications from regional councils and then scrutinise these applications, working with applicants to improve their proposals and taking advantage of the knowledge and expertise within the committee regarding such projects. An important part of this will be liaising with the F&C committee to ensure funds are allocated according to the interests of the BCA members. The final decision regarding spending could then be taken the C&A officer.

As outgoing C&A officer, I recommend to my successor that they discuss with the C&A committee the best practise for administering this process and produce a guidance document. My suggestion would be that an application form is developed. Regional councils would ensure this form was completed, either by themselves or by project leaders within their region seeking funding. This form would require applicants to provide information regarding their projects in a consistent format, for example giving aims and objectives of the project, an outlined schedule of planned works and a comprehensive budget. This could be developed with reference to similar funding application procedures of which I'm sure there is plenty of information online. I suggest that work on this should

be undertaken with support from the BCA treasurer and finance committee who will be informed in matters of funding requests.

There should also be a process established for the C&A officer to gain access to funds via the finance committee or the treasurer, such as another form to be completed by C&A officer once an application is successful. Therefore, I would recommend that the finance committee updates its guidance regarding sub-committee funding to reflect this system.

Resignation

As I'm sure you'll be aware due to the circulation of information to the council mailing list, I have handed in my resignation as C&A officer which will take effect as of the 12th October council meeting. This may come as a surprise as I'd hope it was obvious that I was really keen to get my teeth into this role and thought that the initial C&A committee meeting and the subsequent actions we've been taken was an excellent start to my time in post.

However, over the past few months I've been struggling with some personal issues which now have had to take precedence over my commitment to the role. I'd like to apologise to you all for this upheaval at a time in the BCA when I know we were all hoping to settle down and begin working towards common goals. However, I'd hope that you'll be able to understand that I'm in a position where putting my own well-being before all else is more important for me. My full support is with anyone coming forward to take up an acting position in this post, and I'd be happy to provide them with information to get up to speed with current proceedings.

I will continue with these duties until the council meeting on 12th October, so please continue directing queries to me in the meantime. I am also actively seeking a replacement to become acting C&A officer, so if you know anyone or are yourself interested in more information about the post, please get in touch.

Louise Baddeley
23rd September 2019

CRow Working Party (David Rose)

The government's Review of national parks and AONBs led by Julian Glover has just been published:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>

I met with Julian and his review team at the end of last year at Defra's HQ in London and made the case as strongly as I could that the current official position on CROW access and caves is perverse and wrong. I'm pleased to say the Review report appears to accept this. See page 21 for a super photo of Jane Allen, our P&I officer, and then some very supportive comments on page 81.

The full context (see the report) makes clear that Glover's view is strongly sympathetic to us.

Best of all is proposal 18, on page 98. This says the government should consider expanding access rights, and mentions cavers specifically: "It feels wrong that many parts of our most beautiful places are off-limits to horse riders, water users, cavers, wild campers and so on. We hope that as part of the government's commitment to connect more people with nature, it will look seriously at whether the levels of open access we have in our most special places are adequate."

I think this is a very useful step forward, which will make it harder for Defra and NE to ignore the BCA's representations that it is time to review the legal advice which has been used to deny cavers' CROW access since the Act was passed. It will also make it easier to drum up further political support.

For the time being, the ongoing Brexit meltdown means it is going to be difficult to capitalise on this. But this too must eventually pass, and when it does, we will be ready to take up the cudgels. Meanwhile Julian Glover has agreed to accompany some of us down Giant's Hole – he has a house nearby – and so we will introduce him to the delights of the underworld, and perhaps give him a Mars Bar in the Eating House.

David Rose

30th September 2019

Publications and Information Officer (Jane Allen)

www.bcacavingcover.com

A huge amount of work went into promoting the new Caving Expedition Insurance website. An advert was designed for Descent: (Thanks Gary)



BCA
British Caving Association

CAVING TRAVEL INSURANCE

Specialist caving travel insurance for BCA Groups and Individuals.

Travel insurance specialists, P J Hayman & Company have arranged an exclusive scheme for BCA members. It is a dedicated product which is only available to full BCA members resident in the UK.

- ▶ Group and Individual cover
- ▶ Expeditions covered as standard
- ▶ Single Trip & Annual Multi-trip
- ▶ Emergency Medical Expenses up to £10,000,000
- ▶ Includes standard travel insurance sections such as Baggage, Cancellation, Personal Accident etc.
- ▶ Cave Rescue Expenses up to £150,000 per person* including involving international rescue teams
- ▶ Wide range of additional activities covered as standard including skiing

Get a quote online for your next adventure...

www.bcacavingcover.co.uk

*A maximum of £300,000 applies for a single event

...and for use on other social media



https://british-caving.org.uk/wiki3/doku.php?id=expedition_insurance
<https://ukcaving.com/board/index.php?topic=25148.0>

I had difficulty persuading the insurers to produce some information cards for Hidden Earth. It took a phone call from Howard Jones before they leapt into action (thank you, Howard). 500 cards were sent to me and I ended up tracking the DPD driver down by following the van on their app into a farmyard to ensure I got the parcel before we set off for Hidden Earth!

THE PROMOTION OF BCA

As stated in my previous 2 reports:

'I believe the BCA needs to better promote itself as an organisation to the wider caving community. Ensure cavers know what it actually does and why BCA is relevant to them'.

Also:

'The BCA therefore needs (amongst other means of communication) a strong presence online, which includes a modern website and active social media pages'.

Hence....

I intend to design a new advert, improving on that below for Descent – suggestions most welcome. The next deadline is end of Oct. I would like a new advert in place as BCA shouldn't just be promoting the expedition insurance website which the current Descent advert does.

Previous advert:



The British Caving Association is your national body for underground exploration in the UK

The BCA

- Funds the regional councils in conservation, access and other important work.
- Provides training workshops and a training & certification scheme for cavers.
- Funds the anchor programme – safe SRT thanks to BCA.
- Funds expeditions through the Ghar Parau foundation.
- Works to improve cave access.
- Has an active Youth and Development team.
- Publishes advice on matters that affect caving.
- Funds the excellent British Caving Library.
- Maintains links with international caving federations.

..and of course, provides public liability insurance as a benefit to all its members.

To keep up to date with its invaluable work, sign up for the BCA newsletter today!
tinyurl.com/BCAemail

BCA

british-caving.org.uk

Repeated from my last report, however still relevant and should I believe be discussed further at council:

The advert in the next edition of Descent will cost £500. Looking at it purely from a cost effectiveness point of view, the expenditure of £3000 a year on BCA advertising in Descent is poor value for money. BCA is reaching (I believe) an older demographic of caver with the Descent adverts – I base this on the CHECC questionnaire where not a single respondent mentioned Descent. Although I am not suggesting, BCA advertise itself as an association in the Duke of Edinburgh magazine, I have experience advertising in this publication and know a quarter page advert, which reaches 30,000 people, would cost £350 before any negotiated discount. I do not wish to give Descent's readership here, however it is below 30,000. My point is, BCA could reach many more cavers (especially younger ones) with adverts and other positive messages on social media for £3,000 than it does via Descent and it could promote caving to a wider audience (i.e. DofE) more cost effectively.

I am given to understand, BCA advertising in Descent is as much financial support of the magazine as it is to promote BCA itself. I have no problem with this, Descent is the last of its kind in the UK and has certainly been a part of my caving life for over 30 years. **However, if BCA is to support Descent to the tune of £3000 annually, should BCA not be upfront and proud about this with its members?** For too long, many cavers see BCA as just a 'provider of insurance' etc, the message in the new advert is a start in addressing this and BCA's generous support of Descent would be another positive message from BCA.

I also believe we should make far more of the money BCA give to Ghar Parau for expeditions. It's ironic that GP have such a positive image amongst cavers whereas BCA has some work to do – yet it's mainly BCA money that is handed out by GP each year. **Should BCA not be proud about this too??**

FACEBOOK

- The number of 'likes' is now over 1147 (up from 930) and rising. I intend to promote the BCA facebook page itself to increase the number of likes as it's a great way to reach many cavers cost effectively.
- Repeated again - If other BCA groups 'tag' BCA in their facebook posts, I will see them and know to share. It's too time consuming looking at lots of groups every day. Use @BritishCavingAssociation also use @ukcaving and I will share on there too.
- BCRA are active on facebook but the two organisations aren't working together, it would be good to improve this. As of 22/9/2019 there was no mention of Hidden Earth on the BCRA facebook page for example (apart from a post from July). I have tried to share some BCRA posts onto the BCA page and will see what I can do to improve this co operation going forward.
- BCA, CNCC, Hidden Earth & UKC work well together online – it would be good to see more integration from others as well.

The BCA Newsletter

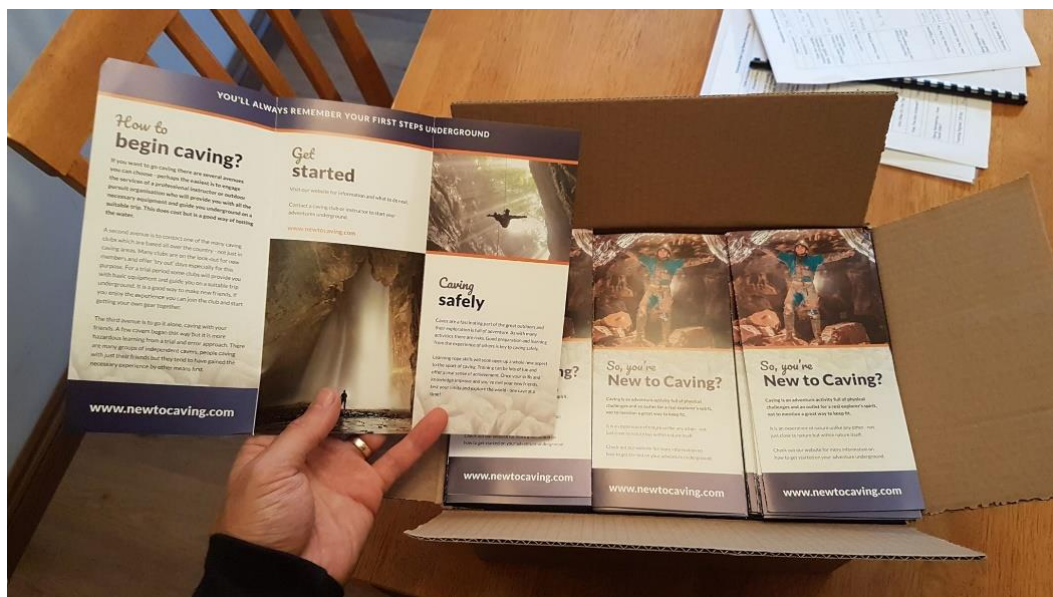
I intend to conduct a social media campaign when the next newsletter is published at the end of the year to a) promote the latest edition and b) encourage people to sign up to receive it.

BCA Publications, Advice Notices and Information

Some of the notices listed on the current BCA website are outdated – no doubt this will be addressed during the new website design. If my help is required, please do let me know.

THE PROMOTION OF CAVING – NEW TO CAVING LEAFLETS

With thanks to Gary & Matt, the leaflets are now ready for distribution – please contact me for your supply and help us spread the word about caving. If you have contacts at Showcaves, Scout Groups, Climbing Walls indeed anywhere where potential new cavers may be, please help BCA display our New To Caving leaflets there, thank you. I will bring copies to the Council meeting + some Perspex holders we have purchased.



Kendal Mountain Festival 2019

Planning for The Underground Session at Kendal is well underway. New to Caving leaflets will be readily available at the event and hopefully we'll encourage folks into and under the mountains as well as up them 😊

Hidden Earth 2019.

With thanks to Gary for designing a great banner and logo cloth – BCA had a stand at Hidden Earth this year. There was lots of information on various aspects of BCA and a suggestion box. It was good that the BCRA/Library stands were close by. We could have done with more representatives from BCA on the stand – Hellie did an amazing job, thank you Hellie. I struggled to spend enough time on the BCA stand as the UKC stand was busy – I need to address this somehow next year.



Here are the quotes from the suggestion box:

- The BCA should get on with representing the majority view of its membership. Specifically – after the BCA vote on whether to actively campaign for inclusion within CROW – it spent many years being prevented from doing so by a couple of members invoking obscure points of the constitution to stop the campaign. Therefore I hold BCA in very low esteem.
- Online voting for everyone
- Good if BCA arranged insurance for the over 75s. Loads of us.
- More caves should have online access arrangements (such as those for Gaping Gill in the Dales)
- Please can BCA mediate in the ongoing dispute re Ogof Draenan?
- More simplicity with access
- Could offer training to members
- Push for open access. More user friendly website.
- Streamline access into one access body for each region rather than clubs/committees/companies for each cave/system
- Good: National access policy. Insurance. Events. Better: Higher profile. Youth involvement/encouragement (know they have given money to uni cavers and kit for them.
- More advertisement to non-cavers to get more young people in
- Expedition funding. Less infighting
- Lots of emphasis on access. Also proper training for leaders/instructors
- New initiatives all seem very positive directions. More bribery with chocolate cake preferable.
- Going in right direction. Spend money on entrances/fixed aids/***?
- Good work on sorting out the travel insurance. Not sure how well the newsletter is circulated?
- Definitely needs to be an organisation like BCA. Keep talking to people, but remember you can't please everyone!
- BCA provides an essential role, however the small minority present an image of caving that is very off-putting. This small minority needs to be sorted as the north and wales have been.
- Push for greater consistency between regions (i.e. access)
- Develop a summer youth caving camp. Run by centres and trainee kids and LCLA
- Less picking on constitutional minutiae to win arguments based on own opinion.
- Online voting
- When sending out proforma for insurance please send out in Nov to give more time as Dec is a very busy time for anyone.
- No Face (except Hellie). Good work but bit invisible. Getting much better.
- Doing fine
- Appreciate the increased direct communication from the online/email BCA news. Much easier to keep track current activities/issues
- Could offer training to members
- Not enough of a profile inc. vision, objectives. What's in it for membership.
- Toby for BCA chairman

Most cavers took the feedback forms seriously. If BCA are already doing some of the matters mentioned BCA need to ask ourselves how we can better communicate this to cavers?

I purchased a variety of Perspex holders for the BCA stand – today I visited Inglesport, Bernies Café & White Scar showcave who all agreed to take various BCA leaflets and holders.

I have posted on social media asking cavers to help display the Minimal Impact caving guidelines – response has been good and I'll be sending leaflets out next week. This work, promoting our various leaflets will continue – New to Caving, BCA Insurance, Minimal Impact etc.

I'm planning various posts on the BCA facebook page & on UKC to keep cavers informed on various aspects of our work – the excellent information sheets various folks sent me – Y&D, C&A, E&T, Vision etc will be used. If you have any information you would like to share about BCA and its work, please let me know. If I have it, I can share it, thank you.

Jane Allen
30th September 2019

Newsletter Editor (David Rose)

The last issue of the newsletter broke new ground with a superb, professional layout and, for the first time, a print edition, distributed to clubs, shops and other suitable outlets. I can't claim any credit for this: it was down to BCA secretary Matt Ewles and Gary Douthwaite, but they did a great job and the response from the caving world has been very positive. Thank you guys.

After consultation with Matt and P&I officer Jane Allen, it's been decided we will go for two issues per year of equivalent quality and length. I'm already gathering material for the next one, which we hope to get out around the end of the year. Please send me your contributions. We will continue to try new things: the next one, for example, will include an article by Andy Sparrow on classic trips in the Dent de Crolles. Overall, I think people want a newsletter they are likely to read and enjoy, rather than a more frequent offering which might be more boring. I am open to any ideas!

David Rose
30th September 2019

British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)

No report received.

Media Liaison (Andy Eavis)

Since the AGM in June this has been a quiet period for media liaison.

The Thai rescue is now quietening down and the films are beginning to come out and books published.

There are already 2 books in general distribution with at least 2 more in preparation; one being Dave Rose's definitive account which should be the most complete and accurate of any of them. Similarly, a number of documentary films have already been produced. The first re-enactment drama is being released early October in London, that will be followed by a proper documentary produced by the staff behind "Touching the void", and a full Hollywood drama which the British divers are cooperating on will be out after all the rest.

The BBC have been making enquires in connection with a Planet Earth type series and a British Caves documentary. Nothing has been finalised and I have passed enquires onto others.

Although I am spending quite a lot of time away at the moment, I will have my smart phone and laptop with me most of the time so will be monitoring enquires to BCA media.

Andy Eavis
20th September 2019

Cave Registry (David Cooke)

No report received.

Webmaster (Gary Douthwaite)

Following my appointment as webmaster in June I have actioned several tweaks and updates to the current BCA website pending a more major update in due course. A summary of the updates is as follows...

- Updated home page news and performed general housekeeping.
- Added the official New to Caving banner to replace the existing text.
- Added Travel Insurance page, menu item and link from home page.
- Updated contacts.
- Updated member clubs.
- Replaced the logo and browser icon.
- Removed background images as requested.
- Changed the site to always redirect to the secure (https) version.
- Removed the secretary@ email address from the external server (run by Nick Williams).
- Set up the secretary@ email address to run on Microsoft Exchange and restored historic email.
- Created a logo download page.
- Added council list page at request of Louise.
- Updated the layout of the newsletter page and added the latest one for download.
- Re-arranged some of the menu item.
- Updated the diary page to a simpler to read format and have since been adding diary items as they come up.
- Updated and tidied several pages which had not been updated since 2016. There are quite a few more to deal with however they will be updated following implementation of a new website.
- Added a BCA Safeguarding page with information provided by Chris Boardman.

New logo:

I have created a set of various formats in high resolution of the new logo and added them to the press area of the website along with usage guidelines. The logo has been updated on social media and in various places online. Clearly a complete change-over will take some time and I would like to stress that anyone to uses the logo to please update it to the new one as soon as possible. The

“Mini” format is very similar in aspect to the old logo so in most cases will just drop in place. There are also two additional logos for member clubs and approved providers.

New website:

Alongside the above housekeeping, work has been on-going on the revamped website and I am hoping that a beta version of this will be available within the next couple of months. I will make it available to officers etc first to get some basic feedback before making it optional to use (via a switch on the current website) for everyone allowing for further feedback.

BCA ballot:

I have completed work on a website for the upcoming ballot which will allow members to vote online. I have been leasing with David Cooke on this who has been organising the ballot list from the members database.

Newsletter:

Working with David Rose and Matt Ewles for the most recent newsletter, I offered to provide the design and layout of it and arrange for physical copies to be printed. This seems to have been well received and something I am happy to continue to do for future newsletters.

Gary Douthwaite
9th September 2019

Web Services (David Cooke)

No report received.

IT Working Party (David Cooke)

No report received.

Training Officer (Nigel Atkins)

Apology received that due to workload Nigel was unable to put a report together for this meeting.

Qualifications Management Committee (Juliet Parker-Smith)

- Thanks to Phil Rowsell and Chris Boardman, our Council representatives, for their valuable contribution to the recent QMC meeting.
- 2019 has proved to be a sad year for caver training, with the passing of Dave Elliot, closely followed by Nigel Ball. Both had given decades of their lives to the advancement of the BCA awards, and our knowledge base would not be where it is now, without them.

In recognition of their outstanding commitment to the caving world and to the development and success of the BCA award scheme, we feel that it would be appropriate to have some form of dedication to their memory.

As the BCA already has a system for financially supporting those in the voluntary sector who are working through their instructing/leading awards, a suggestion was made at the last QMC meeting that it might be possible to name this grant in honour of these inspirational characters, who believed so passionately in delivering training for all. We would appreciate advice as to the 'way forward', to progress this idea.

- Hidden Earth:
Mary Wilde had leaflets and a small banner produced to add to the BCA stand at Hidden Earth.
- Resources:
Gethin Thomas is still working with 'Go Membership' to set up the Data management system that will hopefully simplify the running of BCA awards, for administrator, trainer/assessors and candidates. Gethin brought the first 'showing' of how this may work to our recent meeting.

Mel Sugden and Phil Baker are nearing completion of their geology resource. Similarly, Rich Hill is at just adding photos and diagrams to his work on 'level 2' rope-work.

Purpose and procedure for peer to peer observations, which assist in the moderation of training and assessment, have been discussed and agreed.

- Radon:
The first round of radon testing in caves used regularly by led groups in all UK caving regions, was completed this summer. We have many of the results back from Public Health England, but are awaiting the final few. Summer should be the time of year when radon is most prevalent and so we now need to continue with our monitoring in an attempt to bring average radon levels down, as maximum working levels are cumulative over a year. PHE have advised us to measure each venue which may breach safe working levels at least four times over the year. This has been a complex and time consuming exercise, and we are grateful to the many trainer/assessors who have been involved in placing monitors and to BCA, the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres and the Military – all of whom have contributed to the purchase of monitors. We now seek further funding to complete this piece of research and thus be able to fulfil the requirements of the legislation that was passed in January 2018.

Juliet Parker-Smith
30th September 2019

Equipment and Techniques Officer (Mark Sims)

There is little to report on the E&T front since the AGM. The DCA have placed a significant number of new anchors in Longcliffe Mine, and there are also plans to replace the (non-resin) anchors in the Ventilator Shafts in Peak Cavern.

After the AGM I realised an omission to my report for the meeting. Simon Wilson unfortunately had to step down from his role in the E&T group as the CNCC representative earlier in the year, and I would like to say how grateful I am for the huge amount of work he put into testing and developing resin anchors, as well as his thorough record-keeping. He has left some big shoes to fill, and his contributions will be sorely missed.

Mark Sims
30th September 2019

Rope Testing (Bob Mehew)

I am outstanding testing 3 submitted samples due to various factors.

A proposal has been received from Alexander Ried of the Bradford Pothole Club to investigate the potential for use underground of rope based items developed for the sailing market (a soft shackle and a whoopie sling) using the Bradford Pothole Club's Rope Test Rig and BCA's tensile testing machine located there. An initial program of work is being developed to see if the items have promise. The potential benefits would be to replace metal maillons with cheaper, corrosion resistant rope based shackles and provide slings with a simple means of adjusting the loop size. If the initial results are positive, then the next step will be to write a fuller program of work which will require some expenditure (probably a few hundred pounds).

Bob Mehew
27th September 2019

Youth and Development Officer (Rostam Namaghi)

No report received; apologies received for this meeting.

Vision Working Party (Hellie Adams)

No report received.

Safeguarding (Chris Boardman)

The safeguarding policy and guidelines were adopted at the 2019 AGM. Two BCA members have now gone through the vetting process, which consists of proving identity and address, two short references and a BCA-issued DBS certificate. Since members are volunteering to take youngsters underground, rather than being paid to do so, the DBS certificate is very low cost: just £7.80. BCA is paying this cost rather than asking clubs or individual members to pay.

The next step is to promote the safeguarding guidelines to clubs: safeguarding is more than just a DBS certificate. A club committee member needs to agree that the leader of the trip is appropriately experienced, that the proposed venue is appropriate for the age and experience of the participants, they have appropriate clothing, etc.

Most especially, we need to encourage clubs to take youngsters underground. I know that Rostam is equally keen on this.

Chris Boardman
15th September 2019

Radon Working Party (Gethin Thomas)

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas found to varying levels underground as well as in our homes and places of work. Excessive exposure to radon can be harmful to human health and so HSE have issued guidance on those working with ionising radiation. In 2017 this guidance was updated coming into effect on the 1st of January 2018 (the Ionising Radiation Regulations 2017).

Radon is measured in Becquerels per meter cube (Bq m^{-3}) normally by placing a monitoring device in the cave/mine over a month to measure the concentration of radon in the air. If levels are high in a place of work, then various actions must be taken. The IRR 2017 regulations apply to those working underground, so instructors being paid to lead groups for example.

In addition to IRR 2017, in 2018 the International Commission on Radiological Protections (ICRP) issued a paper (publication 137) in which they advised a change in the formula which is used to calculate an individual's exposure to radon. The suggested revisions would significantly increase the expected annual dose someone working underground may be exposed to by (in the region of) a factor of 5. This advice has yet to be adopted in the UK although it is likely to happen at some point in the future. When adopted this will significantly impact those leading groups underground in an instructional capacity. These proposals also signify a heightened level of concern regarding people's exposure to radon potentially leading to lung cancer. It is our suggestion that the implications should be highlighted to all cavers so that they can make an informed choice on their activities by updating the Radon Underground document published by the BCA in 1996 and updated in 2012.

The IRR 2017 outlined a number of key changes including a change in the trigger threshold and a more robust system for an employer to notify HSE directly if their workforce is being exposed to high levels of radon. This has resulted in HSE becoming more aware of those instructing groups undergrounds exposure to radon.

Prior to the change in regulations the threshold for action was 400Bq m^{-3} measured over a 24hr period. That was changed to 300Bq m^{-3} over a 12-month period.

Over the Summer 63 monitors were purchased through Radon UK funded in part by the Association of Heads of Outdoor Educations Centres (AHOEC) to the sum of £1,200 and the BCA (an additional £349.80). These monitors were placed by a small number of volunteers around a range of caves and mines in Yorkshire, North Wales, Derbyshire and Mendip. Sites were selected for their popularity with both recreational explorers and those used for instructed/guided groups. This was no small task and our thanks go out to all those involved.

In addition, the MoD supported a further 44 monitors all of which were placed in a number of caves in South Wales.

Attempts were made to conduct this national sampling around the same period.

The data from this initial sampling has started to come in and a number of sites have shown to exceed the 300Bqm⁻³ level.

Radon is known to be highest during the Summer months, and so for those sites that have indicated levels above 300Bqm⁻³ further sampling should be taken so that an annual picture can be obtained. It is likely that this sampling may further reduce the number of venues which exceed the 300Bqm⁻³ annual concentration. **With this in mind we've asked the BCA to support funding to continue this sampling so that we can obtain reliable annual data for the caves and mines surveyed.** This data will enable us to update the Radon Underground document.

Gethin Thomas
30th September 2019

Carbon Dioxide Group (Allan Richardson)

No report received; action list item to supply update on any progress.

UIS Representative (Andy Eavis)

There has recently been the annual bureau meeting of the UIS which was in conjunction with the Asian meeting of the UIS which was in Bohol Philippines September 10th and 11th, I attended in conjunction with (mad) Phil Rowsell who sat in on the various bureau meetings.

The main discussion points of the meeting were the International Year of Caves and Karst which is due to start in January 2021, to be held in conjunction with the International Congress which will be held in Lyon France - July 23rd to 30th 2021.

The meeting was well attended with most of the bureau members there, including Tim Mould the representative from Australia who organised the last international congress and Bernard Chirol from France, one of the organisers of the next International Congress.

Budgets were set and progress made. Discussions on promoting international caving and cave protection were the main topic and various paperwork is being produced in this connection. Promotional material for the UIS will also become available which in turn will also be promoting caves and karst protection.

The final meeting before the International Congress will be held next year. At the moment the provisional venue is Slovakia, May 12th & 13th 2020.

Andy Eavis
20th September 2019

FSE Representative (Ged Campion)

FSE Membership

The FSE comprises a membership of 31 countries. Georgia & Armenia have recently joined.

Information & Publicity

The FSE Facebook page URL: <https://www.facebook.com/eurospeleo>. WikiCaves organisation keep the FSE website updated on a regular basis. The FSE newsletter is published on a regular basis. The September edition is attached (***Secretary note; uploaded as separate PDF***). The FSE has also published a Privacy Policy.

Last General Assembly Meeting of the FSE(GAM) 2018

The GAM for last year was held on 25th August. The Speleological Society of Ebensee together with the Austrian Speleological Association and their partners hosted the GAM in Salzkammergut, Upper Austria. This was the 12th Eurospeleo Forum organised in Europe. The meeting was attended by 20 countries which represents a good turnout. Full details of the meeting and decisions can be found in the GAM minutes on the FSE web site.

French National Congress

The French national Federation (FFS) held their national congress in La Ciotat, Southern France in June. The FSE has felt it necessary to try and engage with the FFS more robustly to get a representative from France to join the bureau given that they are the largest community of cavers in Europe. It is likely a French delegate will be elected to the bureau at the GAM this weekend.

The work of the ECPC commission

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

The European Cave Rescue Commission

The post of chairperson for the ECRC is now held by Ms. Antonia Vlaykova from the Bulgarian Federation of Speleology (BFS). UK cavers are actively involved in this commission and the Thailand rescue work has helped consolidate work of the ECRC.

BCA FSE Vice delegate

David Botcherby was elected to this role at the June BCA AGM.

Eurospeleo Projects

Considerable work is invested in maintaining the system of sponsoring European projects, such as the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESP), the EuroSpeleo Forums (ESF), as well as the EuroSpeleo Protection Label (ESPL). Sacid-Korda's from Barcelona are now the FSE's official rope sponsor. Also, Aventure Verticale (AV) have reduced their contract which has resulted in substantial changes to FSE guidelines and the applications for ESPs, ESFs and the ESPLs. The new guidelines can be found on the FSE website.

Work continues to encourage more applications from the UK. Please see attached ESP projects report (***Secretary note; uploaded as separate PDF***)

The next FSE General assembly meeting will be held this w/e at the ES Forum 2019 in Dryanovo, Bulgaria, 26-29th September.

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

ES Forum 2020 will be in Burgos, northern Spain, August.

ES Forum 2021 will take place at the UIS Congress in Lyon, France. This will celebrate 'The international year of the cave.'

Ged Campion

25th September 2019

Additional reports provided but which are not included on agenda: BCA age demographic report for 2018 & 2019, submitted by Tim Allen

Background:

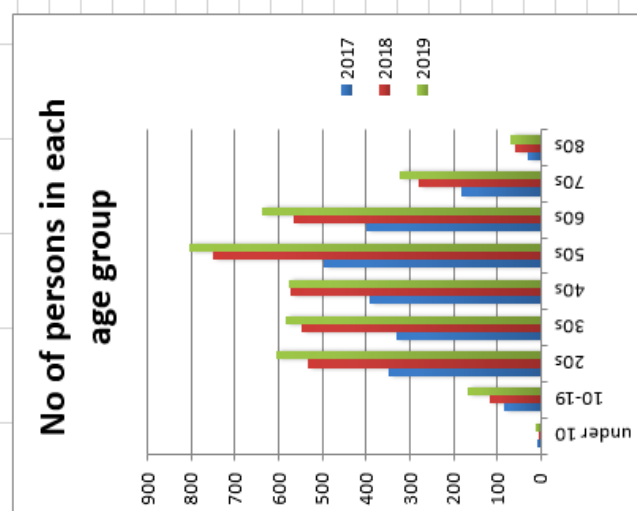
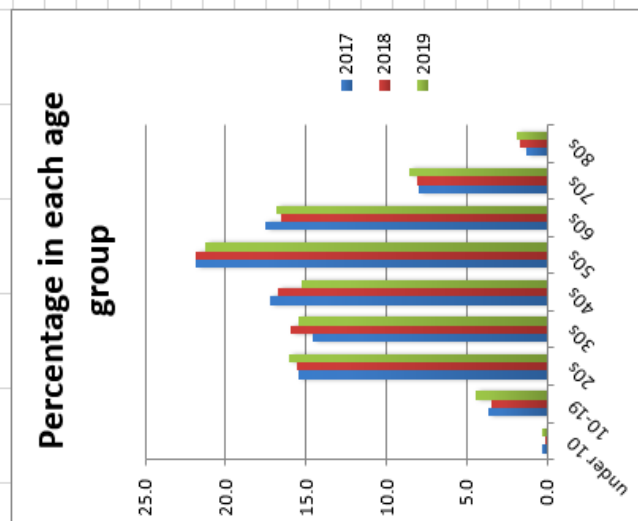
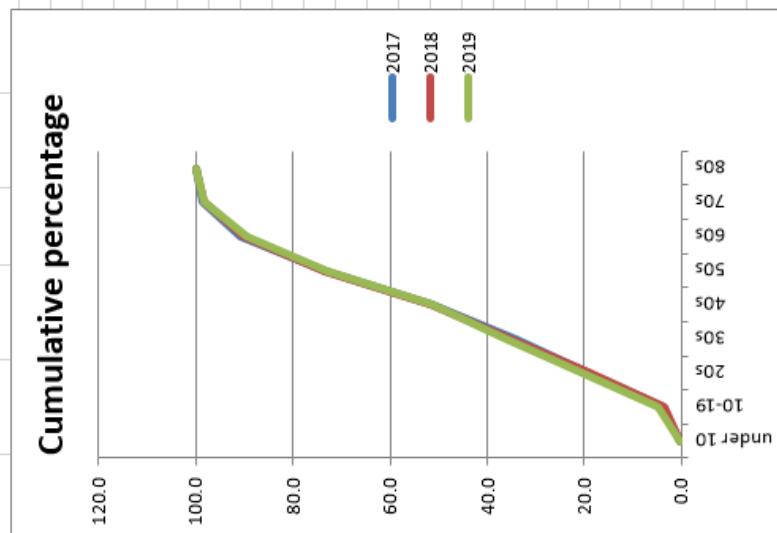
Back in 2016 I encouraged BCA to collect age data from the membership. There was anecdotal evidence in the caving regions that numbers of active cavers were declining, but this was at odds with total BCA membership numbers which remained buoyant. Collecting age data over a period of time would allow analysis to take place to determine any trends in members' age and whether action needed to be taken. I suggested that the membership had an aging population and that this could cause future problems if not enough younger cavers were attracted to the sport to take their place. A separate discussion might be made on whether the BCA membership reflects those participating in our sport.

In the end BCA decided to collect year of birth (YOB) data but only on a voluntary basis. With the help of the BCA administrator and a retired statistician I produced a report for council in 2017. This follow up report includes data from both 2018 and 2019.

2018 & 2019 report:

As with 2017 the sample sizes are adequate. In fact the number offering voluntary YOB data at membership renewal has increased slightly each year. The question is whether it is representative of the membership as there may be age bias in whether members chose to respond to the request for YOB or not. I would recommend that this field is made mandatory going forward to better analyse the age profile of the membership.

NB: The age data in 2017 was supplied differently to 2018/19. YoB numbers are clear, but the percentage and number of those who did not provide data would require more work to calculate. Therefore increases year by year are an unknown mix of new members and an increase in those willing to provide year of birth data.



The left hand graph shows the distribution of the number of members in each age group for each of the three years (those who volunteered their year of birth data). It does not necessarily show an increase in membership but more likely an increase in willingness to offer the data. However it does show an increase across all age groups. The middle graph is more helpful as it shows the percentage within each year that falls into each age group. The distribution of numbers across the age classes is broadly the same across the three years, with any differences within any age group not giving evidence of a consistent shift in age distribution. This is shown more clearly in the third graph, which shows total percentage under 10, total percentage under 20, etc - the lines for all three years are superimposed, showing that the underlying distributions are the same.

As with 2017 the median age remains unchanged at just under 50. For 2019 this is the year group 1970 which means half the BCA membership was born before 1970. The other figure given in the 2017 report was that 18% of the membership was over 65 and this remains the same.

There are significantly more members over 60 than there are under 30. 27% are over 60 – more than a quarter. The proportion under 30 varies over the three years, between 19, 21 & 20%, small fluctuations that you might expect but a low percentage never the less. There is value in studying any changes over a longer period. At present there is no evidence that the age structure has changed over the three years.

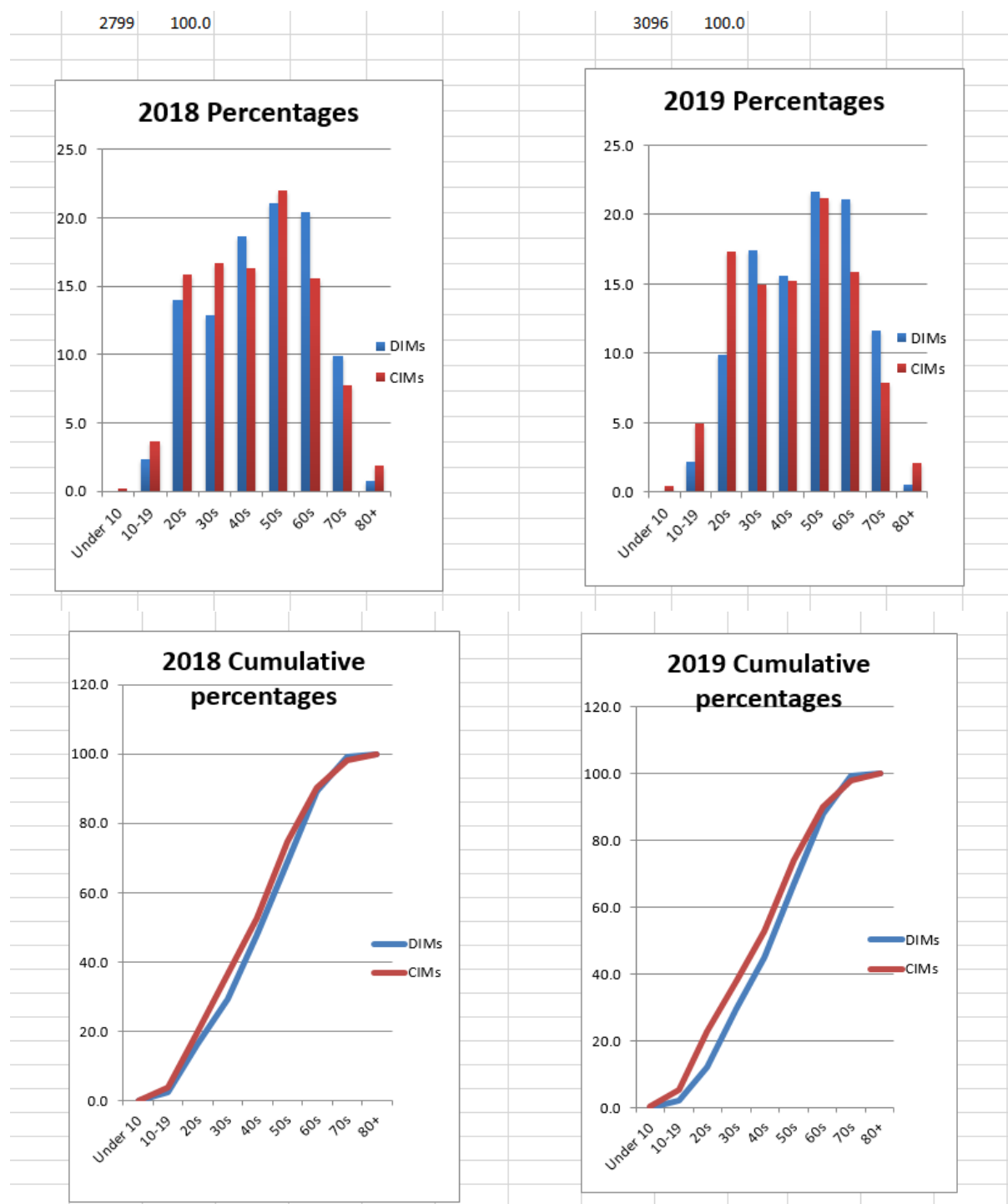
The graphs below reveals a separate analysis of DIMs and CIMs for 2018 & 2019 only. This shows that CIMs are slightly younger than DIMs. This effect is more marked in 2019 suggesting DIMs are getting older relative to CIMs shown more clearly on the cumulative graphs. However, analysis over a longer period is needed to confirm any trend.

Conclusion:

The age demographic of the BCA membership has remained much the same over the three years. This shows an old membership but not necessarily an aging membership. Data collection could be improved by making age mandatory on application. Analysing the age data over a longer period will be able to identify any worrying or significant trends. However, there are hints of trends, such as a decrease in the percentage of members in their 40s and 50s and an increase in those under 20 and over 70, which may be of interest. It is not yet possible to conclude whether there is enough input at the younger end of the age demographic to offset those who depart from the upper end, nor is it possible to conclude, one way or the other, that membership input is healthy across the age spectrum.

Recommendations:

BCA should continue to collect annual membership data and analyse the results. Consider making age data collection compulsory rather than voluntary. Criteria should be set on the process of how and when data is supplied to the statistician. I would be pleased to step aside from my role and place the statistician directly in contact with the administrator. The longer term analysis of trends should inform council how to direct future efforts and budgeting towards the promotion of caving and recruitment into the sport going forward.



Compilation:

Data supply: Wendy Williams

Data analysis: Kay Easton

Report compilation: Tim Allen

24th September 2019