



Draft Minutes of the January 2020 Council Meeting

Held at Chaddesley Corbett Village Hall, DY10 4QA
Saturday 11th January 2020, 10:30am

Chair: Les Williams
Secretary: Matt Ewles
Treasurer: Howard Jones
Recorder: Matt Ewles

Meeting documents available in advance on BCA website:

Agenda
Officer Reports
Manual of Operations reform document
BCRA Proposal document
Proposed BCA funding procedures
Additional PL insurance proposal

Late-submitted reports included in Appendix 1 of these minutes

Attendance

Position	Name	Initials	Present?
BCA Executive (voting, except Chairman who has a casting vote only in event of tie)			
Chairman	Les Williams	LW	Yes
Treasurer (also Insurance Manager)	Howard Jones	HJ	Yes
Secretary	Matt Ewles	ME	Yes
Officers or Chairs of Standing Committees (Voting)			
Training Officer	Nigel Atkins	NA	Absent
Conservation and Access Officer (Elected at this meeting)	Claire Ross (Acting)	CR	Yes
Equipment and Techniques Officer	Mark Sims	MS	Absent
Youth and Development	Rostam Namaghi	RN	Yes
Publications and Information Officer	Jane Allen	JA	Yes
Regional Council Representatives (Voting, representative may change meeting to meeting)			
Cambrian Caving Council	Stuart France	SF	Yes
Council of Northern Caving Clubs	Andrew Hinde	AH	Yes
Council of Southern Caving Clubs	Alan Butcher	AB	Yes
Derbyshire Caving Association	Wayne Sheldon	WS	Yes
Devon and Cornwall Underground Council	David Jean	DJ	Yes
Constituent Body Representatives (Voting, representative may change meeting to meeting)			
William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust	Richard Vooght	RV	Yes
Association of Caving Instructors	Stephan Natynczuk	SN	Yes
National Caving Scout Active Support Unit	Tony Radmall	TR	Yes
British Cave Research Association	David Gough	DG	Yes
National Association of Mining History Organisations	Steve Holding	SH	Yes
Council of Higher Education Caving Clubs (and FSE vice rep)	David Botcherby	DB	Yes
Cave Diving Group			Absent
British Cave Rescue Council			Absent
Group/Club Representatives (Voting)			
Position 1 (2019-2021) (Also Vision Group Convenor)	Hellie Adams	HA	Yes
Position 2 (2019-2021) (also Webmaster)	Gary Douthwaite	GD	Yes
Position 3 (2018-2020)	Idris Williams	IW	Yes
Position 4 (2018-2020)	John Hine	JH	Absent
Individual Member Representatives (Voting)			
Position 1 (2019-2021) (and joint BCA rep to UIS)	Phil Rowsell	PR	Yes
Position 2 (2019-2021)	Will Burn	WB	Yes
Position 3 (2018-2020)	Andrew McLeod	AM	Yes (via Skype)
Position 4 (2018-2020) (Elected at this meeting)	Jenny Potts (Acting)	JP	Yes
Additional BCA positions or Observers (non-voting roles)			
Media Liaison and UIS representative	Andy Eavis	AE	Absent
European Speleological Federation (FSE) rep	Ged Campion	GC	Absent
QMC Chair	Juliet Parker Smith	JPS	Yes
Rope Testing	Bob Mehew	BM	Absent
Membership Administrator	Wendy Williams	WW	Absent
Training Administrator	Mary Wilde	MW	Absent
IT Working Group/Web Services/Cave Registry	David Cooke	DC	Yes
Newsletter Editor and CRoW Liaison	David Rose	DR	Absent
Radon Working Group	Gethin Thomas	GT	Yes
Safeguarding Officer	Chris Boardman	CB	Yes
Observer from CaveFestUK	Neil Jackson	NJ	Yes

The meeting opened at 10:38am with a welcome from the Chair.

1. Apologies

The following apologies were given in advance or on the day:

Tim Allen (usual CNCC rep), Wendy Williams (Membership), Ged Campion (FSE), John Hine (Group Rep), Andy Eavis (Media Liaison/UIS), Nigel Atkins (Training) David Rose (Newsletter/CRoW), Phil Rowsell (Individual rep; tried to connect via Skype but unsuccessful).

2. Declaration of items for Any Other Business

- JA declared an item to discuss comments made offline from the meeting.
- NJ declared that he would like to raise a few points on behalf of CaveFestUK.
- DC declared an accusation of cyberbullying.

3. Council appointment of two roles on 'acting' basis to serve until 2020 AGM

JP put herself forward for the vacant Individual Representative position. ME emphasised that although he prefers such applications to be on the agenda, there is nothing in the constitution or manual of operations to require this, so we can appoint JP from the floor today.

Proposal: Election of JP as Acting Individual Representative (position #4) until AGM:
Elected unanimously

JP confirmed she is stepping down as DCA representative, and WS will take this role from now on.

Secretary note; CR arrived during discussion of action items from previous meeting, but for the sake of clarity and continuity in this document, the minutes of the discussion are presented in this section.

JP said that the DCA are very unhappy about having a non-caver appointed to the C&A position and felt that we need someone who is up to date on Natural England issues and that CR wouldn't be able to talk confidently about C&A matters. ME said he totally disagreed with this and felt that CR would have the C&A Committee to draw experience from, would pick up the C&A matters quickly, and had a wealth of organisational experience and was very enthusiastic. JA agreed and extended CR an invite to the Yorkshire Dales for a caving trip with her.

JP clarified that the main concern was about CR being able to act as a spokesperson and not having the right knowledge to deal, for example, with Government bodies. JP suggested the administrative side of the role could be split from the negotiation side. CR replied that she deals with technical Government matters every day and doesn't feel this would present any issues for her.

RN commented on how few people are coming through to take these roles and felt that having an active Committee with a less experienced or knowledgeable Chairperson is better than having no Committee at all. HA agreed and felt that the convenor not having political baggage could be a good thing.

TR asked for AH's opinion as a former C&A convenor. AH felt that the C&A Officer is working at a national level, and if the national bodies we deal with knew as much as CR they would be going well. SN felt that having somebody with enthusiasm backed up by knowledgeable cavers was not an opportunity to be missed. IW felt that the C&A convenor doesn't themselves need to be an expert.

Proposal: Election of CR as Acting C&A Officer until AGM:

Votes in favour: 12

Votes against: 2

Abstentions: 4

4. Acceptance of minutes from the October Council meeting

DC commented that the minutes suggest he said that Council doesn't have to accept the AGM decisions. He clarified that this is correct, but if Council fails to follow AGM instruction then it will be answerable to the following AGM. DC felt the minutes were written in such a way as to make him look bad. ME disputed this and asserted that the minutes are a factual record of events and are not presented in a way to make anyone look bad. No changes to minutes requested.

Acceptance of October minutes (proposed by JP, seconded by TR):

Votes in favour: 15

Votes against: 0

Abstentions: 4

Action: ME to make corrections/changes above and publish October minutes as final.

5. Matters arising from the October Council Meeting

ME and LW (amongst several others) talked through the various action items presented in the agenda. These are shown below, with updates taken from the agenda in **black bold** and minuted comments on the resulting discussion at this meeting *shown in blue/italic text*.

Responsibility	Action
ME	Investigate omitted changes to April minutes. After cross-checking these minutes against DC's previous comments, only one minor omission was found; a request to replace a sentence had been addressed by including the replacement text but accidentally not removing the original text. This has been corrected and the minutes reuploaded.
ME	Make corrections and issue June minutes as final. Done.
CSCC (c/o AB)	Organise AGM weekend 2020 (14 th June); report to ME on details. Ongoing; date reserved and location (Priddy) advertised. <i>AB commented that two full days of events were in hand.</i>
All	Check website content; either update or send GD amended content. Some updates to be made to Finance section thanks to HJ comments, but several sections of the website remain hideously out of date. <i>LW clarified that this is mainly aimed at Officers and Working Group convenors. In response to a question from JP, ME confirmed that the new constitution had just been uploaded to the website a few days ago.</i>
CB/ME	Grievance procedure and disciplinary policy to be reviewed (carried over). I (ME) have struggled for time since the last meeting due to actions from the October meeting, preparation for this meeting, the ballot, and many other housekeeping duties in between. This action is low priority and has remained at the bottom of my to-do list. Action ongoing. <i>CB agreed to take ownership of this task moving forwards.</i>

DC	Implement soft opt-in for newsletter receipt. Update required. <i>DC is updating privacy policies and forms and this is taking a bit of time. SF urged caution in wider distribution of the newsletter; He has received malicious emails purporting to come from the BCA; this is an increasing problem and vigilance to the email address of the sender is required.</i>
DC	Explore commercial options for ballot emailing and if no success fallback to in-house systems to ensure the ballot is sent out no later than 31 st October. The ballot launched on 8th November using a commercial mailing service.
DC	Provide the necessary accesses to GD (as outlined in ME's AGM proposal) immediately. Despite this being requested again, and now an AGM and Council mandate, DC is still refusing to provide these accesses. See related proposal.
HJ/JPS	Continue to investigate instructor insurance; report back. Update required. <i>HJ confirmed that this is ongoing; no longer needs to be standing item.</i>
JA	Create poster to advertise expedition insurance. See P&I report
IT Working Party	Discuss individual roles and report back to Council. Update required. <i>To be covered under discussion of later proposal.</i>
QMC	Proceed as planned with award in memory of Dave Elliot and Nigel Ball. See QMC report.
GT	Continue with radon work and report back to Council on progress and when a discussion is needed about data usage. See radon report.
PR/AE	Put UIS people in touch with JA for promotion of their efforts. Update required. <i>No information and PR/AE not present. Pursue offline.</i>
TA	Work with membership team to review wording regarding year of birth data collection as part of membership. Update required. <i>TA not present; assume ongoing.</i> <i>Retrospective note from BCA Secretary; In error I overlooked an update on this from TA, who informed that he was awaiting being contacted by a member of the membership team to take this forward; he remains happy to help. See report supplied to October meeting on BCA age demographic.</i> Action: WW contact TA to take this forward
Membership team/GD	Amend membership rates according to this meeting outcome: DIMs to £17, Couples DIMs to £34 and Associate Club membership to £25, non-UK resident BCA member rate = non cavers rate. New membership fees processed in system and launched/advertised early December. Lots of hard work from several people so thank you to everyone involved.
HJ	Arrange some clarification wording on what constitutes a non-UK resident and email to GD for inclusion on website and membership team. Wording agreed and included in membership news.
HJ	Action any necessary changes to funding documents/rules based on outcome of BCA surplus discussions and decisions. <i>Not applicable.</i>

HJ/C&A team	Action any necessary document changes associated to shift from C&A funding review from Finance Committee to C&A Committee. Revised funding document for Council approval at this meeting.
ME/GD	Remove WB's 5 th Individual Rep position and move to the vacant second position (2019-2021). Done
PR	Liaise with Charterhouse Caving Company over complaint and report back. <i>LW said that PR had circulated a report but only to certain people. ME confirmed he had not seen this. LW suggested this is dealt with later (but it never actually was). The report is included in Appendix 1 (late reports) for information purposes.</i>
ME	Action recommendations within Secretary report in Manual of Operations with respect to addressing CSCC concerns. Done, see proposed MoO and associated agenda item.
ME	Advertise the vacant (until 2020) Individual Representative position on Council for appointment on acting basis at start of January Council meeting (alongside C&A Officer if applicant in place). Done; but no applicant has come forward (however an applicant for C&A has; see agenda item). <i>Both positions now filled.</i>
HJ/BCRA	Discuss options for future BCRA financing and come back to BCA Council with suggestions or proposals. Update required from HJ on how this has gone. Note new proposal/request from BCRA. BCRA have requested that Council are made aware that their 2018 review is available here, in hope that this gives readers an idea what they do. http://bcra.org.uk/pub/review/covers.html Some 2004-2005 news articles were also provided to explain some history to the BCA/BCRA relationship. If any Council members want to review these ahead of the meeting please contact Secretary (ME) who can forward them. <i>Being addressed in proposal presented to this meeting.</i>
HJ	Arrange funding for library and include in 2020 budget. Covered in HJ report

Additional item not on agenda; Appointment of new members

An additional paper-version report from WW was circulated on the day in her absence at the meeting. **See Appendix 1 for this report.** This superseded parts of her report presented in advance and confirmed that the following clubs were now in a position to be voted upon as BCA members at this meeting:

- The Caving Crew (Group Membership)
- North Wales Mine Cave Explorers (Group Membership)
- Lancashire Climbing and Caving Club (Associate Membership); insured as a club via BMC.

It was assumed (in WW's absence) that Warminster Adventure Sports Club, presented in the advanced report, had not brought forward appropriate documents to be considered at this meeting.

It was agreed that Liverpool University Potholing Club (also presented in WW's original report) did not need to be voted in as they are lapsed members. There was some discussion on this, and it was suggested that this is addressed by the manual of operations.

Action: ME to review manual of operations and produce some suggested content to clarify whether lapsed members need to be voted upon for reappointment.

Vote on whether to accept the three new members above:

Accepted unanimously

6. Reports (available in separate document)

6.1 Chair (Les Williams)

No questions or comments.

6.2 Secretary (Matt Ewles)

AB commented that the ballot passing by only 7 group votes was not a strong majority in his opinion.

6.3 Treasurer (Howard Jones)

HA commented on the number of proposals asking for money, and queried whether, given we have already forecast a deficit for 2020, accepting these proposals would be sustainable? HJ confirmed yes.

6.4 Membership Administrator (Wendy Williams)

JP thanked WW for getting membership cards out so quickly.

6.5 Insurance Manager (Howard Jones)

An additional proposal from HJ had been circulated to BCA Council ahead of the meeting, too late to appear on the agenda. This can be found uploaded to the BCA website as a supplementary document.

HJ verbally introduced this proposal, commenting that £5m in public liability insurance simply isn't enough these days considering the recent settlement of a BMC claim at ~£9m to pay for the care of an injured young person for the rest of their life. He felt that all other similar organisations now provide £10m and this was becoming an expectation. The additional cost to BCA of this will be £7000-£10000 per year. He proposed that Council accept the increase, to enable him to go to the market to identify a policy, which the BCA Executive can then approve for his final deal.

RN commented that issues had been encountered in dealing with university bodies due to the BCA not providing £10m in cover.

DC felt that in the past, BCA's insurance had responded to a demand from our members, and he now favours this more proactive approach to identifying the insurance needed.

IW asked whether we are looking to increase for this year; HJ confirmed yes, by end of January.

CB said he works for a school with £30m in public liability insurance, and he fully supports this increase to the BCA policy value, and wonders how long it will be before it goes up again to £15m, given the BMC claim being £9m. HJ felt he currently wouldn't be able to get a policy at £15m.

SF enquired about our excess; HJ confirmed £2500/claim, and the BCA will pay for this excess on the first claim in a year (no obligation on a second). SF asked whether a larger excess would bring the premium down, but HJ felt this would make no difference.

Proposal: Increase of Public Liability Insurance policy value to £10m

Proposed: HJ

Seconded: ME

Accepted unanimously

On a separate insurance matter, DC commented that one of the distinguishing things between full members and associate members was that associate members don't get insurance as a membership benefit. They also did not get a vote. Now that the vote has been removed for all groups, does this leave insurance as the only difference between full and associate groups, and therefore are we back to the 'selling insurance' issue? ME clarified that there is an agenda item later that aims to better clarify the differences between full and associate membership and to emphasise that it is not just about the insurance benefits.

6.6 Conservation and Access Officer

No report as no serving C&A Officer prior to this meeting.

6.7 CRoW Working Party (David Rose)

AH asked C&A to consider whether we still need a CRoW Working Group, or whether this could not be brought under C&A direct remit. CR felt that if it is, it will need to be a standing item at meetings.

Action: C&A discuss the CRoW Working Group; Can it be scrapped and brought into C&A?

6.8 Publications and Information Officer (Jane Allen)

It was noted that agenda item 11 accompanies the P&I report and should be addressed now. JA said she would appreciate Council's thoughts and guidance on these items.

BCA Caving Cover:

JA felt that lots of work had been put in to promoting this already; how much more effort should be invested? AH suggested this is simply left for JA's discretion, with general agreement for this.

Advertising with Descent:

JA said she struggles with this situation. Having worked in marketing for years she feels that if this were a commercial transaction, we wouldn't pay £3000/year for the six half page adverts. However, as this is Descent, it is different, because the money is being used to support something good.

LW clarified that Descent will print anything worthy of printing. He felt we should be sending more to Descent for publication, but it has always been an uphill battle getting content. He felt that Descent values our contribution. Our advert however is in our control and Descent have no editorial input.

SF believed that advertising the BCA in Descent was only reaching existing BCA members, and that we would be better focusing on reaching new people. He questioned whether the £3000 is really to attract more people into caving or is it actually a hidden subsidy to Descent? JA believed that it is mainly to subsidise Descent, which she believed to be a reasonable cause.

WB suggested that focussing on the financial transaction wasn't the way forward, and that we could just give the money to Descent without an advertising transaction. DB agreed and said that everyone surely agrees that helping Descent is a good thing.

HA suggested asking Descent about the possibility of becoming an official sponsor. CR thought this was a sensible idea. DC commented that since the BCA doesn't publish our own magazine, Descent is essentially a surrogate.

Action; JA to follow up with Descent and update April Council meeting on decided or proposed way forward.

SF asked about the circulation figures for Descent; JA felt that this is confidential.

BCRA:

JA emphasised the importance of caving organisations working together, especially on social media (e.g. sharing/tagging posts).

Ghar Parau Foundation (GPF):

JA felt that most cavers are unaware that 90% of the money handed out by the GPF is provided by BCA (the Hidden Earth contribution goes into capital). HJ suggested a link between the GPF and BCA websites; speak to PR to arrange.

Action; JA speak to PR to link between BCA and GPF websites/social media.

Funding for UK events:

JA said that not all cavers go on expeditions and lots just cave in the UK so don't benefit from the GPF money. Can we therefore create a fund for UK based events, focussing on the community side of caving?

AH suggested that if this happens, we would need clear guidelines on what the money can and cannot be used for; i.e. no blank cheque. However, if done properly, there could be good support for this. RN added that the BCA already has a £500 fund which we can loan out to start an event, but to date this fund has never been used. ME questioned whether this is advertised anywhere?

ME/RN; Look into if/where this £500 fund is advertised and consider improving/promoting this.

NJ, present on behalf of CaveFestUK said he is here to ask for BCA support, both financially and otherwise. The focus of their events is on the social side of caving and bringing people together and they are currently hitting 10000 people/month via social media. They would like to advertise BCA's support in return for a £500 bursary. JA said she would like to grant this.

DB felt that BCA have supported CHECC this year, as well as new student clubs, gaining good publicity with younger cavers. There are parallels with sponsoring CaveFestUK. HA said she was inspired by the CaveFestUK events and seeing young kids caving; she felt this is definitely worth promoting.

BD urged some caution about the political correctness of future CaveFestUK events.

Proposal: Fund £500 to CaveFestUK and allow use of BCA logo to demonstrate BCA support.

Votes in favour: 18

Votes against: 0

Abstentions: 2

Action; HJ arrange payment to CaveFestUK; JA work with CaveFestUK to publicise support.

6.9 Newsletter Editor (David Rose)

DR not present; no report; no questions.

6.10 British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)

JP clarified, regarding the cataloguing of surveys on the DCA website, that all cavers will be able to view these, not just DCA members. She also highlighted use of the library by the Cave Surveying Group (a BCRA Special Interest Group) for three days for a course.

JA questioned whether there was more the library could be doing online to promote itself; JP said that the library has its own Facebook page, managed by Mary Wilde. JA suggested she may contact Mary, or Katie Eavis with a view to help improve this and better integrate with BCA social media.

Action: JA look into whether better social media integration is possible between BCA and library.

6.11 Media Liaison (Andy Eavis)

AE not present. No questions.

6.12 Cave Registry (David Cooke)

A late report was submitted the day before the meeting (**see Appendix 1**). No questions.

6.13 Webmaster (Gary Douthwaite)

No questions.

6.14 Web Services (David Cooke) and

6.15 IT Working Party (David Cooke)

A late report was submitted the day before the meeting (**see Appendix 1**).

DC has implemented a ticketing system for web services to help share tasks out.

ME asked about whether we should still be offering web services; he acknowledged the usefulness of this as a service 15 years ago, but is it still needed today now that web hosting is readily commercially available? DJ felt that the BCA Web Services provides an extremely useful service to them (DCUC) and values the support.

DC felt that ME had made a fair point and said that the situation has changed; he added however that we do receive some income from Web Services, but their continuation probably depended on him, as nobody else was likely to come forward to take ownership of this.

JA highlighted some possible continuity issues; but LW felt that while the BCA does have the volunteers and capacity, there was no harm in our continued support of Web Services.

DB asked how much work BCA Web Services are to administer; DC said a reasonable amount, but he has set up a team to try to spread the workload. DB asked about the income; DC confirmed <£1000/year.

JA asked whether we needed to have our own server; DC commented that having this gives us more control.

ME expressed concerns about the continuity for clubs using Web Services, should something happen to DC or should he stop providing support; LW felt there was sufficient continuity in the system, saying that he used to do it and could pick it back up if needed. DC agreed that others could pick Web Services up if needed. JP felt that having a group of people involved in important for future continuity.

SF said he understood the 'fun' in having our own servers but believed this was a 'multiple pile-up' waiting to happen, and that there are clubs and Regional Councils who would be affected. Spreading the risk is important, and he doesn't feel our current risk management strategy is sufficient.

Regarding the IT Working Party, DC commented that the online ballot went well, and that membership systems are currently functioning fine.

Break for lunch: 12:35pm

Reconvened: 13:55pm

6.16 Training Officer (Nigel Atkins)

A late report was submitted the day before the meeting (**see Appendix 1**). NA not present. No questions.

6.17 Qualifications Management Committee (Juliet Parker-Smith)

Re; Radon; JPS felt this is a massive issue for all BCA award-holders. Monitoring is ongoing, but now we need to appoint a radiation protection officer to interpret the data and its relevance to the law. This is to be covered in more detail in GT's report.

6.18 Equipment and Techniques Officer (Mark Sims)

No report, MS not present, no questions.

6.19 Rope Testing (Bob Mehew)

HJ suggested BCA fund the £700 requested in BM's report; no objections.

Action; BM contact HJ to provide details of who to make payment to and HJ to arrange payment.

6.20 Youth Development Officer (Rostam Namaghi)

No questions.

6.21 Vision Working Party (Hellie Adams)

HA commented that lots of the Vision group are currently away.

6.22 Safeguarding (Chris Boardman)

CB emphasised his desire to get people to take more young people caving; these people will need vetting and can use the existing awards system for this.

RN said that the Scouts have a slightly different system, which he prefers from a logistical approach, but CB felt that if we wanted such a system it would need to be set up from scratch and someone would need to take responsibility for it; RN felt his focus at the moment was just one getting a pool of volunteers.

CR asked whether we have any specific safeguarding training; CB said he has been on such training and has set up BCA's safeguarding policy off the back of this. CR felt that training was available quite cheaply and should we be making more use of this?

SF said that discussions with Sport Wales have been ongoing for several years and they (Sport Wales) believe the Cambrian Caving Council should be actively checking up on clubs regarding safeguarding; a strong feeling is that governance was needed here. The Cambrian Caving Council decided to walk away from Sport Wales, and instead pass on any enquiries about safeguarding to BCA.

CB said he has heard of other organisations who have required compliance with other safeguarding policies to get grant funding.

6.23 Radon Working Party (Gethin Thomas)

GT confirmed that the second round of sampling has started; provisionally, very different readings now compared to summer at some sites. They are asking for funding for a radiation protection officer. JPS said that if these costs become ongoing rather than just a one-off then they may have to increase the fee to award holders to cover the costs.

SH believed that this is an issue for all of us; not just QMC and instructors. Radon is not just linked to granite proximity but is also related to air circulation. He felt the data needs disseminating to the whole caving community. He believes the mines inspectorate are starting to take an interest in this.

SN commented that radon is only one measured product (other daughter products or radon decay are not measured).

RN felt that most evidence of radon exposure being an issue are related to quarrymen living on-site, and that there are no statistics on whether cavers are affected in the same way. LW agreed but still felt we have a duty to keep our members informed; RN agreed with this but urged against scaremongering.

GT felt that regardless of the above discussion, radon presents a risk we have to assess to determine the risk, and this meant gathering data from many sources to ensure a balanced risk assessment.

JP said that this had received a lot of publicity in Derbyshire 20-25 years ago and many instructors back then started to carry their own radon exposure detectors; Derbyshire County Council actually sent out radon detectors to houses. From this, we learned that the same site can give totally different readings between sampling times, and so questioned whether we can get an accurate picture without every individual measuring their exposure on every visit?

GT replied that people carrying their own personal devices wasn't realistic; we needed a balanced approach; we don't want to scaremonger but equally we have a duty of care to better understand the issues. CB added that some sites do have substantially higher radon exposure than others, and we do have a duty to inform people about these higher exposure sites; he would like to see some data released to highlight these caves. SN felt it would be illegal to ignore the risks that radon presents; CR agreed that we have to disclose if we are aware of any possible risks. LW also agreed and said that we have a duty to keep our members informed; SN believed it would be unethical not to.

Proposal: Funding of £1000 for a Radon protection expert to interpret the data (one-off cost):

Proposed GT, seconded WB:

Unanimous support

Action: GT provide details for payment and HJ arrange funding of £1000 to be paid.

6.24 UIS Representative (Andy Eavis)

AE not present; no comments.

6.25 FSE Representative (Ged Campion)

GC not present; no comments.

A vote was held to accept the reports: This was supported unanimously.

(7) Action over ongoing BCA IT situation – Request for Council intervention

ME said that everyone has had the chance to read his agenda item and called for input. DC added that he had circulated his perspective to the BCA Council mailing list the night before the meeting, and read parts of this out (the full document is uploaded as separate file on the BCA website).

DC said all BCA passwords are held in a password safe, accessible to several other people, and asked BCA Council to condemn ME for raising this matter on a public forum (UKCaving). He felt the real issue here is that the AGM set up a situation where we don't know who is in charge of BCA's IT infrastructure, and which conflicts with the terms of reference of the IT Working Group. He suggested that one option would be to change these terms of reference.

DC felt the issues were exaggerated by the webmaster (GD) not clearly communicating his intentions. ME said it was preposterous to say that GD had not communicated clearly, emphasising an unsuccessful face to face meeting at Hidden Earth, and the relentless barriers he felt DC kept putting up to every new idea that he and GD had presented to him.

HA said that at the last meeting, DC was instructed by BCA Council to provide GD with the information and access he requested, remarking that we are all answerable to Council. HA felt that DC should be given one week to comply with Council request, or relinquished of his position.

JP said she was fed up of discussing IT matters at Council and this needs to be taken out of Council and left to the IT Working Group to sort out. She has spoken to other members of the IT Working Group who feel that Council is interfering too much.

JP continued to say that the AGM put DC and GD into an impossible position, and the IT Working Group should be tasked with dealing with this. This is nothing to do with Council, caving, and must not be dealt with at Council level. HA said she understood JP's sentiments, but attempts to sort this within the IT Working Party have clearly failed and the key issue is the precedent we set if we say that people can disregard Council instruction.

RN felt that taking these things out of Council to keep them quiet isn't good; he believed that this needed Council discussion.

GD asked JP what she felt should happen if the IT Working Group cannot agree? JP said she has been in touch with members of the IT Working Group, who feel the way forward is to clarify who does what. She reiterated that this has to be dealt with via the IT Working Group, and that Council instructing people one way or another isn't the right way forward. She reiterated her belief that the AGM made a bad mistake in putting GD and DC in this situation. TR added to JP's comments with the suggestion that an arbitrator could be brought in to help deal with the situation. DC agreed that for the IT Working Group to sort this out would require appointment of an arbitrator.

RN emphasised that we've lost good people to a parallel situation to this in the past.

TR suggested that we are asking DC to do something illegal.

SF said that what we have here is insubordination by DC and this must be dealt with accordingly.

JA said she doesn't believe the IT Working Group will be able to sort this out and backed HA's suggestion of a way forward (i.e. one week for DC to comply or removed from post).

AH said that the AGM has given an instruction which has so far been ignored. Now Council instruction has been ignored. This makes DC's position untenable. DC said that if he was forced to hand over all the requested accesses to GD he would resign. AH commented that it was entirely DC who has put himself in this position.

SF expressed that BCA's IT infrastructure needs complete restructuring.

DB said he is so bored of listening to this argument; it is personal, unresolvable and wants it dealt with now, not pushed out to a Working Group, so that it doesn't come up at the next meeting.

DC said that he doesn't disagree with any of what ME has said he wants in his agenda item. However, GD expressed that he has encountered nothing but negativity from DC for all the ideas he has tried to put forward to enact these things, emphasising that he didn't get involved in BCA to deal with these kinds of politics, just to do what he is good at doing.

DC felt a decision on this matter was needed today.

HA asked whether DC was going to be willing to hand over passwords; DC said no, not until he knows who is going to be in charge of BCA IT after this meeting. HA felt DC has no choice in handing over the passwords, as he had been instructed to do so, and if he doesn't comply, he needs to be asked to stand down.

GD emphasised that he wants to build something totally new for membership information, databases and other systems and put it forward for testing and discussion. But he cannot do this unless he can access existing systems. He said he was no longer willing to put up with having his hands tied like this.

Proposal: Unappoint DC as IT Working Party convenor effective immediately.

Proposed by HA, Seconded by AH

Votes in favour: 10

Votes against: 3

Abstentions: 7

HA emphasised that this is the last thing she wanted to have to happen but there was no choice.

DC handed GD the password to the BCA members cPanel and then left the meeting.

HJ suggested that GD brings to the next meeting his thoughts on how we should proceed. LW emphasised that BCA Online need to be kept updated, and there are several aspects of DC's role relating to ongoing membership which GD will need to pick up immediately. He proposed that GD is temporarily put into the IT Working Party convenor position.

GD to be appointed IT Working Party Convenor on acting basis

No objections

Action: GD to put together suggestions for way forward with BCA IT systems for April meeting.

(8) Clarification on Associate Membership; Proposal by Matt Ewles

ME explained that this agenda item is particularly important now due to the ballot result, as it provides some text to clarify what Associate Membership is, and how it differs from full group membership. He felt that this should be on the website to help better explain Associate Membership and what it is for and who it is aimed at.

ME asked IW if this addressed some concerns raised by email; Yes.

LW asked whether associate members can get access to caves; ME said that this would depend on the wording of individual access agreements and was beyond BCA's control.

ME asked if Council are happy with this wording; general agreement with no objections

Action; Make wording live on BCA website.

(9) Amendment of April meeting dates – Proposal by Matt Ewles

LW expressed concern that meetings already go on for too long, so this would be worse if we remove one of those meetings meaning less time available.

AB felt that the point of the April meeting is to discuss AGM business, and that by moving this to February would prevent us getting anything done. ME said that this was a very astute point, and he was aware of this; the constitution says the Council meeting before the AGM as the deadline for agenda items, and February is too early for this. Hence, ME plans to put forward a constitutional amendment to a fixed number of weeks before the AGM, rather than having it hinge on a BCA Council meeting. General agreement to proceed with this.

Action: ME present constitutional changes to April meeting to amend deadline for agenda items and nominations for posts. Currently this is the Council meeting before the AGM, but should be amended to a fixed time period beforehand.

AH understood the wish to have three equally spaced meetings, and felt that if we didn't keep repeating the same business, they could be over a lot quicker. HJ emphasised LW's wish for more work to be in Committees and for Council to serve more to rubber stamp Committee decisions.

Proposal: As presented in agenda (reduce to three Council meetings/year; Feb/June/Oct):

Proposed by ME, seconded by JA

Votes in favour: 13

Votes against: 2

Abstentions: 4

Action: ME to remove January 2021 diary date and replace with February 13th date instead.

(10) Amendments to Manual of Operations – Matt Ewles

ME summarised that these changes were presented to the last Council meeting, but further

changes have since been made and additions made due to the ballot result, and also to address the CSCC concerns raised at the last meeting. There were no questions or comments.

Proposal: Acceptance of amendments as presented.

Proposed by ME, seconded by WB
Unanimously accepted

Action: ME Update manual of operations online.

(11) Discussion on P&I matters and ideas – Jane Allen

Already covered under P&I report discussion.

(12) New Finance Committee funding document – Howard Jones

HJ confirmed that he had circulated a draft document to the Finance Committee, and received replies, including several comments from CNCC, all of which had been captured in the final document presented for approval at this meeting. There were no questions.

Proposal: Adoption of these new funding rules for Regional Councils as presented.

Proposed by HJ, seconded by WB
Accepted unanimously

Action: ME format document in new BCA branding, GD upload to website.

(13) Funding request from BCRA – John Gunn

JA asked what HJ, as BCA Treasurer, thinks about this proposal. HJ said that he was tasked at the last Council meeting with liaising with BCRA. He has since tried to do this but was told they would only deal with him in writing. He did so and found the responses very defensive. He feels there is still room for discussion, and he will be voting against accepting this current funding request.

DG said he was of the understanding the BCA had an annual surplus of £20k; HJ clarified that in 2019 we broke even, and for 2020 we are running a budget with a substantial deficit.

DG emphasised that the Cave Monitoring Centre is there to support students who aren't themselves able to go underground.

WB felt there isn't enough information here to support this proposal; LW felt there needs to be a greater dialogue between the BCA and BCRA. HA concurs, saying that we cannot come to a conclusion today and suggests we task HJ with continuing discussions with BCRA.

HJ emphasised that he wants BCA to fund more science and work more closely with BCRA.

JA thanked DG for coming to the meeting, but reminded him that BCRA has £150k in capital; people may feel it is unusual for us to grant so much money to an already cash-rich organisation.

LW suggested that HJ attends the next BCRA meeting to discuss in person.

HJ confirmed that John Gunn has already seen a proposal from him that would see more science being funded; he is awaiting feedback on this.

Proposal: Defer decision on BCRA funding until next meeting. Task HJ to continue discussions

Unanimous support

Action: HJ continue discussions with BCRA regarding funding and report to April Council meeting.

AH commented that as a member of BCRA he is very supportive of the organisation, but was very disappointed by their lack of democracy in the recent BCA ballot. BCRA took a stance that they did not need to engage with their membership in such decisions and urged the development of a greater democracy in the BCRA in the future.

(14) Proposal to fund the Adventure Academy – Rostam Namaghi

RN asked if anyone had any questions about this initiative.

HA commented that they (Adventure Academy) are proposing needing 14 participants per event. She feels the idea is great but is torn about the commercial nature of this. It is essentially a fledgling business and it is not clear whether the BCA should fund this.

RN said that a grant for this has been given but it was not known at the time that this would be conditional on match-funding. The total anticipated additional expenditure for BCA would be around £4500 on top of what we would already grant in other means via Y&D budget.

JA said she knows Steph (Yorkshire Dales Guides) well and feels they have worked hard and are passionate. She (JA) knows this is a risk but feels we need to be bold with this because, if the initiative is successful it would be a great thing for getting young people interested.

AH felt that Stories in Stone wouldn't be backing this if they didn't have confidence and believed this was an excellent way to release some BCA cash and develop this kind of project.

TR asked whether the young people involved would pay; RN confirmed yes, but just cost price.

CB queried the expenditure on equipment and what happens if the venture folds. RN said he would want a clause to say that in the event this happens, the equipment comes to BCA.

CB asked why, if this is a business, BCA is considering funding it?

CR asked if we would be listed as a supporter; RN confirmed yes, as a supporter for Adventure Academy.

LW asked what would happen in future when other commercial enterprises ask for money? Are we at risk of setting precedent? WB clarified that this is different because it is essentially a 'ready to go' scheme which has presented itself, and takes advantage of Stories in Stone funding, which can only be released if the match funding is made. Therefore, this is quite different to most commercial enterprises that might present themselves to the BCA. AH felt that the association with Stories in

Stone differentiates this from a private venture.

AB expressed concern that it would not look good for BCA if we fund this fledgling business and it doesn't go well. JPS said that at least 50% of the time she puts in are volunteer hours and finds it difficult to imagine the organisers would make any money out of this scheme.

Proposal; Support this proposal and initiative to the sum of £5600 subject to criteria to be discussed offline (for example, return of equipment if initiative folds, and publicity).

Votes in favour: 13

Votes against: 0

Abstentions: 5

Action: RN/BCA Executive discuss criteria offline, RN to provide payment details to HJ, and HJ to arrange payment subject to criteria being agreed.

(15) Any other business

- CaveFestUK matter already discussed.
- DC left meeting early so item of AOB disregarded.
- JA item of AOB no longer needing discussion.

Meeting closed 16:28pm.

Reminder of future meeting dates as currently agreed:

Council meeting:

Saturday 4th April 2020 – Spanset, Middlewich (CW10 0HX), 10:30am

AGM and Council meeting:

Sunday 14th June 2020 – Priddy, Somerset, 10:30am
(13-14th Party weekend)

Council meeting:

Saturday 10th October 2020 – Chaddesley Corbett Village Hall (DY10 4QA), 10:30am

Council meeting:

Saturday 13th February 2021 – Spanset, Middlewich (CW10 0HX), 10:30am

Note above new date due to proposal accepted at this meeting to cancel the January and April meetings for 2021 onwards in favour of a meeting in February instead.

Actions from this meeting:

Responsibility	Action
ME	Review manual of operations and produce some suggested content to clarify whether lapsed members need to be voted upon for reappointment.
CR (and C&A)	Discuss the CRoW Working Group; Can it be scrapped and brought into C&A?
JA	Follow up with Descent and update April Council meeting on decided or proposed way forward regarding current advertising.
JA	Speak to PR to link between BCA and GPF websites/social media.
CB	Grievance procedure and disciplinary policy to be reviewed (carried over).
ME/RN	Look into if/where the £500 events fund is advertised and consider improving/promoting this.
HJ/JA	Arrange payment to CaveFestUK; JA work with CaveFestUK to publicise support.
JA	Look into whether better social media integration is possible between BCA and library.
WW	Contact TA to discuss BCA age demographics and to take forward action item from October BCA Council meeting.
BM/HJ	BM contact HJ to provide details of who to make payment to and HJ to arrange payment for rope test equipment.
GT/HJ	GT provide details for payment and HJ arrange funding of £1000 for radiation protection expect to interpret data.
GD	Put together suggestions for way forward with BCA IT systems for April Council meeting.
ME/GD	Make Associate Membership wording live on BCA website.
ME	Present constitutional changes to April meeting to amend deadline for agenda items and nominations for posts. Currently this is the Council meeting before the AGM but should be amended to a fixed time period beforehand now that meeting beforehand is February.
ME	Remove current Council meeting date for January 2021 and replace with February 13 th date instead.
ME	Update manual of operations online with changes accepted at January meeting.
ME/GD	Format Regional Council funding document accepted at January meeting in new BCA branding and GD upload to website.
HJ	Continue discussions with BCRA regarding funding and report to April Council meeting.
RN/Exec	RN/BCA Executive discuss criteria offline, RN to provide payment details to HJ, and HJ to arrange payment subject to criteria being agreed.

Appendix 1: Late reports

On-the-day report submitted by membership administrator Wendy Williams

BCA Council Meeting

11th January 2020

The Caving Crew and North Wales Mine Cave Explorers are requesting to become BCA Member Clubs

Lancashire Climbing & Caving Club are requesting to become Associate Members

All 3 Clubs have supplied the correct information
Please find their 100 Word Statements enclosed

The Caving Crew

Born from adult former-MUSC members and non-cavers, The Caving Crew aims to create opportunities for non-cavers to try caving, to support new adult cavers and to create an open, inclusive and accepting atmosphere for all members, whatever their ability or ambition.

We know from the BCA vision that it's important to increase engagement with young adults outside of the university caving system - and over the past 3 months we've been successfully piloted and brought 10 new people (7 of whom are women, and 4 of which are mums) into caving.

It's now time for us now to formalise our structure to better support our members - hence our humble application for BCA club membership and associated support.

North Wales Mine Cave Explorers

Since before joining a caving club in North Wales my friends and I interests has developed into a serious passion. We have learned so many new skills over the years, the most important being Team Work, Communication and Safety, which are paramount regarding underground exploration.

Becoming part of the British Caving Association and the creation of my own club, can only enhance the growth and interest in caving in North Wales.

I have a healthy social media following, myself and many others have a fascination in the history of mining in North Wales.

I wish to enhance the profile of local caving in and around North Wales and that of the British Caving Association.

Lancashire Climbing & Caving Club

The Lancashire Climbing and Caving club (formally the Lancashire Caving and Climbing club) was founded in 1936, and has a long and proud history in both caving and climbing. In recent years the caving side has sadly declined, and in for this reason 2018 the club withdrew from membership of CNCC. However it is now felt

that we have both a small core of experienced cavers and an opportunity to bring some of the climbing membership back into the caving side, possibly on a seasonal basis.

We would therefore like to apply both to join the BCA as an Associate member club, and to rejoin CNCC. We understand we will be supported in this by RRPC and SUSS. Whilst this will give the club access to BCA controlled caving areas, it is felt that equally importantly it will lend our support and voice to caving in general.

Appendix 1: Late reports

Charterhouse Cave Company Mediation; Phil Rowsell

Firstly I must apologise for not being at the meeting but my passport is currently at the Chinese Public Security Bureau who will issue me with a new work visa, I therefore have no passport and I am unable to leave the country. Hopefully I will get my passport back on the 20th of January.

At the last council meeting, I was asked to try mediate and bring some closer to a "dispute" between the Youth Development Committee and the Charterhouse Cave Company. This is a short statement to be read out at the meeting if I am unable to attend the meeting by Skype.

I have had initial discussions with both the Youth Development Group and the CCC, regarding this dispute shortly after the last council meeting in October. As a result of the discussions several actions have been achieved.

Youth Development Group (YDG)

After talking to the group, an apology by one of the YDG was sent via myself to CCC for the possible non conducive behaviour at the last Annual General Meeting, the other member is considering whether to do this, I would really like to encourage this member to do so. The inaccuracies in the AGM report filed by the YDG were dealt with at the last council meeting. The YDG has also sent me a list of recommendations to potentially move this situation forward which I am currently sitting on until I have received a reply from CCC (see below).

Charterhouse Cave Company (CCC)

I had brief positive discussions with the Chairman of CCC, and he explained that CCC had achieved reducing the age limit of cavers to CCC from 18 years of age to 16 years of age. He also indicated that there were a number of other concerns that CCC have about reducing the age limit further that other cavers may not be aware of. I asked that these might be explained in an email, for me to help understand these and CCC position.

This was further requested by an email mid to CCC late October. Two further reminders about this explanation were also sent. Just recently (early January) I received a holding statement from CCC saying that they had been very busy recently and would probably not be able to reply until the end of January. While I understand people sometime are very busy, this I find quite frustrating as 3 months is quite a long time to wait for an acknowledgment of the initial email, and I am not further along in understanding the CCC situation. It is very much hoped that CCC will soon respond to this request so I can move forward with mediation of this dispute. With CCC being a member of BCA Council, one would hope they see this as important, both to resolve this dispute as well as be given any assistance by BCA in helping CCC in reducing the age limit for access to CCC caves.

CCC Complaint

Regarding this complaint, the BCA Secretary has replied to CCC, acknowledging their complaint and indicating that it is CCC responsibility to put the case forward to BCA council. I discussed this with the Chairman of CCC and while unwilling to currently drop the complaint, I did request that they delay actioning this, to try and resolve this issue.

Summary

Both parties have been willing to communicate with me which is very encouraging. I feel some positive steps have been made, but I am waiting for CCC to respond so that I can fully understand the issues they have about reducing the age restriction to CCC caves further, and thus try and move this situation into a successful outcome.

Appendix 1: Late reports

IT Working Party, Web Services and Cave Registry (David Cooke)

IT Working Group

Online Ballot. The online ballot was implemented largely to my specification based on my experience of running the previous ballot. I thank all those who made it a success. Ari Cooper-Davis as Ballot Sending Officer and Katie Eavis and Gary Douthwaite as Ballot Receiving Officers. I did not take part in the running of the ballot to avoid any potential conflict of interest. The system was carefully designed so that neither the voting token nor actual votes were stored on the BCA webserver, a separate server just for voting was used. MailerLite was ultimately used as the mailshot provider to send out the electronic ballot papers. As with the previous provider I initially had problems with too many bounces. Their support staff were very good but it was left to me to eventually spot that their server time was wrong by seven minutes which meant Google and others rejected the time travelling email which according to the timestamp arrived before it had left. I was expecting them to offer me a free subscription because this must have affected many of their customers. They didn't, mores the pity.

Membership Renewal. The membership renewal forms were updated to reflect that members now have to opt-out of receiving the Newsletter and other similar item by email. The Privacy Notice on the website has also been updated accordingly.

Webmaster's Role. See my reply to Agenda item 7.

David Cooke
Jan 2020

Web Services

Support Ticket System. A ticketing system ([WHMCS](#)) to manage BCA support issues has been implemented. This will make it much easier to keep track of issues and their status. It was all too easy for them to get lost. Being hosted online the tickets are available for any ITWG member to pick up and deal with, thus sharing the workload. The system has been in test for a while and was in fact ready for the last meeting but the agenda seemed too full to mention it. To raise a ticket simply email [it.support \[at\] british-caving.org.uk](mailto:it.support@british-caving.org.uk).

David Cooke
Jan 2020

Cave Registry

Behind the scenes work is progressing on producing a national cave index. This will be an online resource allowing the caves of the country to be searched. The results will provide links through to the regional registries which hold more detailed information on each cave.

David Cooke
Jan 2020

Appendix 1: Late reports

Training Officer Report: Nigel Atkins

My apologies for not being able to make the meeting but I have been very active in setting up training events all over the UK and I have also helped with recruiting new regional training officers.

There is little to concern BCA council at the moment as we are all working very hard in TC and things are moving well.

BCA Training Events & Grants

Training committee is concentrating on BCA training events being set up by regional training officers with grants to support these. Now BCA members get access to the workshops in all regions and will help promote the good work that BCA does in training. The Surveying workshops are also now under the national workshops supported by Training committee.

A big thank you goes to Bob Mehw who is still active and looking at knot and equipment tests for Training committee.

BCA Coaching Guidelines

Work in progress and all good so far.

Standards in Training

There are differences out there and TC is looking into trying to get the message out to all clubs etc so that we don't have anyone running BCA training with conflicting messages/techniques. The workshops are helping and we will run workshops for club coaches.

BCA Training Officer touring the UK

I am looking at a series of evening session at climbing walls, clubs etc. I have already run about a dozen of these and I am looking into doing more if I can. I have also been invited to Scotland and Northern Ireland. As I can only do events as BCA TO for expenses only, I have in the past managed to combine this with the odd day working as a trainer & assessor for the BCA schemes. Without this, I could have never gone down to Cornwall and help set the scheme up there.

In view of this, 2 members of TC are applying to the QMC to become 'Floating Trainers/Assessors' next Monday at the QMC meeting, myself and Dave Baines who both set up the North Wales scheme and I set up the mines scheme in Sussex. The success in Cornwall has meant that underground venues are now becoming available for group use and I wish to continue this in other new areas. Dave is up there as a CIC mines assessor and I am just completing my apprenticeship for the same status.

Best wishes

Nigel Atkins
BCA Training Officer
10/01/20

Appendix 1: Late reports

Agenda Item 7. BCA-Online Database Passwords - David Cooke

There has been a plot over the past few years to marginalise me and this would seem to be the culmination of it. I don't know why, it is probably because I did my job as a Representative to promote the views of my region which in some cases run contrary to the prevailing view on Council.

At all times I have acted in the best interests of BCA and continue to do so. This is not an easy path to tread but I have a responsibility to carry out the duties of my elected role.

It is true I have withheld the password in the specific case of the BCA-Online database. I don't apologise for that. I will explain the reasons below.

All BCA passwords have been and are held in a password safe that is accessible to several people, including a member of the executive. Therefore the Secretary was deliberately lying when he posted on well know public Forum that I have "held key BCA systems hostage from members and Council". It is impossible for a single individual to do that.

When the new Webmaster was elected I immediately gave him all the passwords he needed to do his job. That includes the master passwords for the cPanel hosting, FTP, website and more.

Prior to his election I gave him all the information about BCA-Online including the source code, database schemas and development documentation. It resides on GitHub at <https://github.com/BritishCavingAssoc/BCAonline> where it can be viewed by anyone.

I am the elected chairman of the IT Working Group (ITWG). I have been elected to deliver its Terms of Reference, which are:

- to manage and coordinate BCA's IT infrastructure.
- to commission and implement IT projects as deemed desirable for BCA.
- to provide a resource of expertise available to BCA.

It follows from the Terms of Reference that ITWG provides the services or platforms that others then use and operate. Services include email, mailing lists, DNS, BCA-Online and database, website wiki software, diary software, domains, website hosting, source code management systems, content management systems and video conferencing.

Everyone agrees that the content of the public website(s) is a Publications and Information function and outside of the scope of the ITWG. However, according to the Terms of Reference, the software that delivers the website is an ITWG function. It is legitimate for the ITWG to ask questions that protect BCA's interests. Can the software do the job? Is it compatible with the existing systems or will it break them? Are there training implications? Does BCA own the copyright? What are the licensing terms? How will the software be supported if the developer moves on? Is it possible for BCA to maintain and enhance the software if the developer moves on? How well documented is it? Is it sensible to spend time re-writing software that already in use and available for free? Etc.

The Webmaster is a member of the ITWG and has an equal vote along with the other members. In the ordinary course of events responsibility for the website software would be delegated to the Webmaster but that has not been possible in this case because the **Webmaster will not engage with the ITWG**. That is the nub of the problem. The

Webmaster has not come to the ITWG with his proposals but has instead set about implementing them independently. The Webmaster has not initiated any conversation on the topic, I've had to make all the running. He has as much of a responsibility to resolve this as I have but he's made no effort. As such the ITWG has been unable to do its job. The only lever to bring the Webmaster to the table is to withhold the BCA-Online database password. It's not much of a lever because he doesn't need it to do his job. The database schema is documented and available at GitHub as mentioned above. No professional software developer would develop against a live database but would use a test database to prevent accidental damage to the data. This is the reason I have withheld the password. I am doing my job in the best way I know how.

I respect the role of Webmaster and have given him all the help and assistance necessary to do the job. He needs to respect the role of the ITWG and give it all the help and assistance necessary for it to do its job.

This has come about because there is a structural problem created by the AGM. As interpreted, the mandate the AGM gave to the Webmaster is in conflict with the ITWG's Terms of Reference. Council could resolve this by amending the ITWG's Terms of Reference or the AGM mandate. There are now two entities (ITWG and Webmaster) in charge of the IT Infrastructure. Ultimately there can only be one. **Council needs to decide which one, ITWG or Webmaster.**

I stood for Chairman of the ITWG based on its Terms of Reference, if they are altered or interpreted beyond recognition I will resign because it would no longer be the role I stood for.

David Cooke
Jan 2020

Comments on the Secretary's Agenda Item 7

- aka The Secretary has created this problem.

- aka It doesn't have to be like this.

The AGM motion demanding the BCA-Online password was proposed by the Secretary (Matt Ewles). It is far too technical a question for the AGM to decide, as I said at the time. I'm sure it was deliberately placed in order to create the current conflict.

Below (Appendix 1) is the full text of the email Matt quoted from, make of it what you will.

The ITWG is a committee made up of seven voting members, all appointed because of their technical expertise. If the ITWG was to turn down a proposal then it would be because it is a bad idea rather than any personal bias.

The only agenda is to do what is best for BCA.

As explained above it is impossible for me to hold the BCA systems hostage. This is emotive hogwash designed to damage my reputation.

The "first prospective IT moderniser" was totally unprofessional and reckless in his approach to the web server causing multiple issues including crashing several websites that members' relied upon.

Matt Ewles says “all options for Gary and David to work together have been totally exhausted” This is untrue. Gary’s policy is to not to talk to me. Matt’s policy is to not talk to me. All the attempts at communication have been initiated by me. There have been many emails, several meetings and one phone call. Most of which end in Gary failing to tell me what he wants to do and Matt demanding an unnecessary password. There have been no attempts at compromise on their side or looking for other solutions or even seeking understanding. Matt’s approach in particular has been rigid and inflexible.

The paragraph starting “*I want a simple, electronic way to renew membership ...*” from Matt is extraordinary. It is the answer Gary has been unable to provide. It is the first time I’ve had sensible and detailed reply to the question. Why produce it at this late stage in the Agenda for this meeting?

I agree with everything in it. If Matt/Gary had discussed it with me I would have been able to tell them 80% of it exists already. If we had had this paragraph on the table as an objective six months ago then great progress could have been made, albeit the online vote would have diverted some resource.

To dissect the paragraph in more detail:

“I want a simple, electronic way to renew membership for all categories; one that automatically populates a professional, ideally custom, database, and that links directly to options for electronic payment (including with direct debit or equivalent); or at least has the capacity to do this at a later date.” This David Gibson’s territory. It does this already for the important categories. It used to pre-populate but David turned it off when Matt complained the method of pre-population wasn’t GDPR compliant. I felt it was compliant enough.

“I want a BCA Online that works directly off that database and that allows individual members to log in, change/update their contact details and email preferences.” It does this for emails already. For the rest I’d like it to do it as well but there are procedural issues that need to be fixed first. Primarily that the BCA Online database is a copy and not the live membership database.

“, vote on ballots etc.” This has been implemented but not via a BCA-online login.

“I want a back-end to the new BCA website that incorporates an email system with different email ‘groups’ (e.g. Council, Groups, DIMs, CIMs, those who have not opted out of the newsletter, etc) all running from the live database.” It does this already for the mailing lists that have been required so far. More can be added.

“Furthermore, the infrastructure should be built using modern coding, which any decent web developer could pick up and work with” It is, more so than Gary’s method of implementation. It is using a php framework that standardises coding practice with the aim of enhancing team development. The source code is all available on GitHub with a permissive open source license.

“and a non-technical admin interface for BCA Officers to use” It has this.

“All systems (website, BCA Online, membership) should be on BCA owned webspace,” They are.

“consistently branded, and seamlessly integrated.” This is work in progress. I prioritise function over aesthetics.

“None of this is difficult” It’s more difficult and time consuming than you realise.

“but will never happen unless the incumbent make way for (and ideally support) those with the skills to deliver this.” Is Matt suggesting I don’t have the skills? How about we work together rather than alienating each other?

“Such systems are common place in other membership organisations and would stop the current practice of stressful activity for volunteers and staff alike leading up to each annual renewal.” I’m not sure what Matt is referring to here but I suspect it has something to do with Council changing the membership structure in mid Oct. (removal of joint members) when the renewal process starts 2 weeks later at beginning of Nov.

The reason progress is slower than some would like is because of a lack of programmers rather than some bizarre desire to hold back progress

And just to show it can work. I happened across Matt and Gary in the pub after the AGM. Face to face we discussed and agreed the implementation of the online voting system. We then went on to implement that plan. I did the ballot sending side, Gary the receiving side. It was successfully install and used to run the recent ballot. Why we can do the same again for other projects is beyond me.

David Cooke
Jan 2020

Appendix 1

From: David Cooke
Sent: 10 December 2019 17:43
To: Les Williams; Gary Douthwaite; David Gibson; Angus Sawyer; Matt Voysey; Ari Cooper-Davis
Subject: The Webmaster's Role with respect to the ITWG

Dear ITWG members,

I've been avoiding writing this email for some time now. I was hoping the situation would sort itself out but it hasn't. It is sad that that this email has become necessary.

So the situation is this. I've asked Gary on numerous occasions what his plans are and what he would like to achieve. I've had no answers to those questions. BCA Council don't know either because I asked Gary in the last Council meeting and no answers were forthcoming. All I know for sure is what was written in the AGM proposal to appoint Gary as the webmaster. That is "to redevelop the BCA website, including internal and external communications systems, the public website, the behind-the-scenes systems, and BCA online."

I had hoped there would be a dialogue with the ITWG to come up with agreed aims and objects then decided who was going to do what and how. It shouldn't be difficult to come to an agreement. I'd expect there to be a lot of consensus since we are all trying to do what is best for BCA and caving.

In the absence of that dialogue I think we need to be more formal and prescriptive how things are to be done. It comes down to areas of

responsibility and who reports to who. This is how I see it, as established by practice and formal decisions over the years.

As set out in ITWG [terms of reference](#), it responsible for:

- to manage and coordinate BCA's IT infrastructure.
- to commission and implement IT projects as deemed desirable for BCA.
- to provide a resource of expertise available to BCA.

The P&I Officer's terms of reference (the P&I Committee has been abolished) are currently being decided but the [MOO](#) provisionally lists them as:

- Website
- Social media
- Publicity
- Promotion and marketing
- Publications
- Media liaison
- News

Both the ITWG and P&I Officer report to Council.

The Webmaster does not report directly to Council but reports to either the ITWG or the P&I Officer depending upon the areas of responsibility. That implies the Webmaster should have their respective agreement for any work.

P&I is about publishing and distributing information. The P&I aspects of the Webmasters works would encompass the public facing content of the website and Facebook, distributing the Newsletter and other such electronic communication. Note, publishing makes use of the IT Infrastructure but does not change or alter that infrastructure. The content of a website page comes under the remit of P&I but the wiki software that delivers it doesn't.

The ITWG is about the infrastructure that delivers various services. That includes the web servers and software that runs on them, incorporating the wiki's, BCA-Online, email services, mailman, phpLists, ballot software, hosting accounts, dns, etc.

The ITWG has a role in new IT projects either for advice or implementation. The ITWG should be consulted in order to be avoid the pitfalls of IT and to ensure compatibility with existing IT infrastructure. An example of this is the purchase of the Training Software (GoMembership).

If we are to go down this formal route then it would be a requirement for the Webmaster to gain the approval of the ITWG before commencing work that comes under the ITWG's remit.

Members of the ITWG can you give me your thoughts please? I intend to produce a document based on the above that has the agreement of the ITWG that I'll present to Council. NB I did ask Council to define the Webmasters roll vis a vis the ITWG but, quite rightly, they chucked it back to us.

Gary, a list of what you want to do so we can start a discussion would be really helpful.

Regards

Cookie