



Council Meeting 18th July 2020 Agenda

On Zoom
18th July 2020 9.30 am to 11.30 am

Table of Contents:

Please note that AOB and Matters Arising have been omitted for this council meeting due to the trial nature and limited discussion time. This will be resumed in the following council meeting suggested.

Agenda item	Page	Agenda item summary
1	3	Apologies for absence
2	3	Council Appointments
3	3	Acceptance of Minutes from 11/01/2020 Council Meeting
4.1	3	Treasurer
4.2	4	Insurance Manager
5	5	Welsh Government JR Report and Discussion
6	8	Rostam Namhagi Proposals for Council
7	8	New Website
8	8	Reports
8.1	8	Voting Procedures Report
8.2	15	IT & The BCA: Moving Forward
8.3	21	Media Liaison Officer's Report
8.4	22	Newsletter Report
8.5	23	Training Officer Report
8.6	24	UIS Report
8.7	25	Draft Report FSE Bureau
8.8	27	Radon Working Group Report
8.9	28	Library Report

(1) Apologies for absence and verification of quorum.

(2) Council appointment of roles, elections and new Group Members:

Secretary: Russell Myers (acting), no other applicants

P&I Officer: Rostam Namaghi, no other applicants

Y&D Officer: Josh White, no other applicants

Group Representatives: Josh White, Rostam Namaghi

Individual Representatives: No candidates

IT Working Group Convenor: Ari Cooper Davies, no other applicants

(3) Acceptance of minutes from Saturday 11th January 2020 Council Meeting. The link is here:

[https://british-](https://british-caving.org.uk/wiki3/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=about:documents:council_meetings:bca_council_meeting_11th_january_2020_draft_minutes.pdf)

[caving.org.uk/wiki3/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=about:documents:council_meetings:bca_council_meeting_11th_january_2020_draft_minutes.pdf](https://british-caving.org.uk/wiki3/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=about:documents:council_meetings:bca_council_meeting_11th_january_2020_draft_minutes.pdf)

Please forward any amendments/comments to secretary@british-caving.org.uk ahead of the meeting.

(4.1) BCA Treasurer Report to BCA Council July 2020

Current bank balances: as at 22/6/2020 was £290,000. Of which £205,000 is in medium term interest bearing accounts and £10,000 is in a short term deposit account. I am holding more in the current account due to potential CRoW legal fees.

Abnormal Cash outflow since last Council meeting:

DCUC regional claim £60

AIG Insurance excess layer £9,000

Sompo (New £5m excess layer premium) £9,000.

BCRA cross charge (we collect membership for them and deduct costs, not been paid across for some years) £12,500

BCRA £6,000 first 2 quarters 2020 donations.

Ghar Parau Foundation £7,000.

Cavefest £500.

FES subscription £615

£12,000 legal fees in connection with CRoW

£1,400 consultant's fees in connection with Radon report.

Budget 2020:

October 2019 Council meeting approved a budget for 2020 which had a deficit of £10,000. In January we approved significant expenditure on extra PL cover (£9k) and Adventure Academy project (£5k) and radon (£1k). Since then we approved £12,000 on the first batch of CRoW legal fees. If Council approve the next batch of CRoW legal fees and we lose the case (worst case scenario), the deficit for 2020 is likely to be in the order of £75k currently.

BCA Accounts year ending 31/12/19.

These have been prepared and have been reviewed by Alasdair Gott. They show a surplus for the year of £8k (£19k 2018) and a cash balance at year end of £298k (£282k 2018) and net assets of £262k (£254k 2018). See separate more detailed report.

Regional accounts:

Devon region submitted a claim for 2018 of £60, which was approved by Fin Com and paid.

Tax return 2019:

As the AGM is delayed and hence won't approve the BCA Accounts for 2019 in time I have submitted the tax return for the same period. No tax is due. This action was approved by the BCA Executive.

Donations:

A donation of £500 was paid to Cavefest as approved by last Council meeting.

Library support:

Following October 2019 Council decision to increase support of r the national Library Katie Eavis has taken on this extra work load. I have had encouraging feedback about her efforts to date.

Ghar Parau Foundation:

As BCA Treasurer I attended their meeting on 22/3/2020 and reported back accordingly. I have paid the £7,000 donation for 2020.

Bank Interest cut March 2020

This is bad news for any entity with savings such as BCA. 2019 saw bank interest earned of £3,000. This will now drop going forward as banks reduce their savings offering. I estimate this will cost us £2,000 by 2021.

United Secure Bank

Is one of the banks BCA has a medium term savings account with. It recently decided to close all non-commercial accounts including ours. We are therefore in the process of claiming back our deposit and will move it to Redwood bank where there is headroom to invest and still be insured. This action has been stalled due to lock down.

HJJ July 2020

(4.2) BCA Insurance Managers report to BCA Council July 2020

Liability Renewal:

BCA Council in January 2020 agreed to increase the Public Liability cover member benefit from £5m to £10m due to recent claims above £5m that similar national bodies to BCA had experienced.

We approached a number of insurers for a quotation, unfortunately we received declined responses from AIG, Allianz and RSA and Zurich did not respond.

We received one firm quotation from Sompo, a Lloyd's syndicate. The premium is £8,500 + Insurance Premium Tax, a cost to BCA of £9,500. As excess layers go, they mirror the wording of the primary policy, i.e. the £2m policy underwritten by Hiscox. The only condition they have stipulated which differs from the Hiscox wording is they are excluding any and all claims as a result of activities in the USA/Canada.

Therefore the BCA members and others entitled to indemnity will have a Public Liability limit of £10m World-wide, limited to £5m in respect of claims as a result of activities in USA/Canada.

The FAQs on the BCA website have been updated accordingly.

Low claim rebates:

All past low claims rebates have been received. 2019 low claims rebate at £1400 has been received already in 2020 and will reduce this year's premium payable.

Instructor insurance: (not a BCA issue)

This is under discussion between Juliet and me, no progress since last meeting of Council.

Frankly in the current climate there is little possibility of BCA getting an acceptable outcome here.

Other National Bodies

I was invited to a meeting with the insurance managers of other outdoor national bodies in the wake of the recent BMC settlement. Interesting exchange of ideas. Useful future contacts. I was the only volunteer at the meeting. Our PL policy is the envy of most of the other organisations with no claims and much fewer exceptions on the policy.

Brexit

Despite leaving the EU last December there is little clarity on how this will affect us from an insurance perspective as yet.

HJJ July 2020

(5) Specific Agenda Item

Discussion on Welsh Government Judicial Review submitted by David Rose

I apologise to Council for my absence but I will be on a long-booked holiday (thanks to the opening of a so-called air bridge) on July 18.

This is a summary of the current situation regarding the BCA's attempt to bring a Judicial Review of the Welsh Government's (WG) decision to withdraw its invitation to CCC access officer Stuart France to be a member of its access reform group (ARAG) on the grounds that caving is not covered by the CROW Act 2000. It repeats some material I have already circulated in previous communications.

I'm writing it on June 27. It's possible that the situation may change next week, before I leave for my holiday on July 6. We are waiting for one critical event: the decision by the court whether to grant "permission" (what used to be called "leave") for the case to proceed. This will shape our next steps. There is no certainty how long this may take. It could be Monday. It could be some time in September.

Our solicitor, Richard Buxton, filed our PAP (pre-action protocol) in April, and then issued proceedings, with a detailed claim and statement of facts and reasons. We have received a defence from the WG. We have filed a response to the defence, contesting some of its arguments.

Defra has added itself to the case as an "interested third party", in view of the fact that it has national applicability. It has not expressed a view itself. This underlines the point that if we win, the game is over: caving will be recognised by the law as being covered by CROW Act open access rules for mountain and moorland. One way or another, the issue will be settled.

Our counsel, Annabel Graham-Paul, did a superb job summarising our case in these documents, thanks to extremely detailed briefing from Stuart France, and further assistance and previous work by Bob Mehew, Tim Allen and others. In fact, she has already done a large part of the preparatory work she would need to do if the case goes further. So far, this has cost the BCA £12,000, including VAT. This sum has been paid.

The WG's defence contains no surprises. Essentially, it covers the same ground as previous communications going back at least eight years, since Tim Allen and Andy Eavis first started trying to explore the issue with Defra and Natural England. It maintains that caving is not an outdoors recreational activity. It does not engage with any of the arguments we make as to parliament's intentions, the many legal settings in which caving is described as such, the history of government efforts to get people into the outdoors, cavers included, and the failure to include caving in the schedule of activities not covered by the Act, such as quad biking. So the good news here is: they haven't come up with some unexpected, killer point that makes us think we've made an error. Our lawyers continue to believe that our chances of success are good, though as in any legal action, there is never going to be certainty. The law isn't totally clear, and the court's job will be to clarify it.

The court can do one of three things. It can grant permission without any need for an oral hearing. It can refuse permission initially, but state it is willing to entertain an oral argument on the point. Or it could refuse permission outright, and refuse permission for a hearing. This last course is considered unlikely.

Once we have a decision, then Council must decide whether to proceed quite swiftly. Richard Buxton says in that event, our total costs bill will not exceed £35,000 plus VAT, including the £12,000 already paid. Hence, our future, additional bill would be £25,000 plus VAT, ie a further £30,000. The other

side has accepted that our liability to pay their costs if we lose is capped at £5,000. If we win, they will have to reimburse all our costs except for a small amount (less than £2,000, I think) for early preparatory work.

If we don't get outright permission without a hearing but are allowed to go for an oral hearing to argue the point, the total bill (assuming that this hearing leads to us getting permission) would be a little higher – but not much, as it would involve pretty much the same preparation as the full trial. It would be at most a few thousand. I will get more information on this in due course.

Making a decision is a little difficult until we see what the court says. Permission without the need for a hearing would be an encouraging, though not decisive, sign. However, many JRs do succeed after an oral permission hearing, following an initial refusal.

I'm sorry I can't be more definite at this stage. It's also worth remembering that this case has several advantages. It's pegged to a government decision, and doesn't involve any particular cave system, so there are no landowner interests to complicate matters. It's about as good a chance to resolve this long-running issue as we are ever likely to get, so I (of course) fervently hope Council will continue to support it.

I do reiterate that once we know what the court thinks, we will need to make a decision swiftly, so it may be wise for Council to consider whether to grant an "in principle" extension to the legal budget at the forthcoming meeting. I will defer to the executive as to the best way of organising this aspect of things.

David Rose

BCA CROW Access Working Group Convenor

Affordability of David's proposal regarding a Crow Legal challenge

The numbers below are round numbers and are prudent

Today (27/5/2020) BCA has a cash balance of £290,000.

It has a burn rate of £6,000 a month on salaries, insurance premium and small incidentals.

Assuming no more income for the rest of 2020 we therefore need £42,000 to pay for our fixed costs.

On top of that another £30,000 is expected on regional expense claims and other budgeted costs including £9,000 to BCRA for library expenses.

Hence we would close out 2020 with cash in the bank of just over £200,000 before the 2021 subscription income starts coming in.

The quoted legal costs are £35,000 plus vat (£42k) and if we lose we could pick up other costs of £5,000. Allowing for a small over run in legal costs the total could be £55k of which £12k has been spent to date, so another £45k is being asked for by David and his team.

As can be seen above this is affordable, what Council needs to decide is whether it wants to spend this money on this project.

Of course if we win the cost will be lower and there are lower costs options even if we lose, having said that lawyers are notorious for over spend as we have seen already in this case. My suggestion therefore is Council is asked by David and his team to approve a maximum cost of £60k (including £12k already approved) and that gives him a working authority without hopefully having to come back to Council again.

Howard Jones BCA Treasurer 27/5/2020

(6) Specific Agenda Item

Rostam Namaghi Proposals for Council

- 1) Creation of the P & I Working Group (terms of reference in appendices), and the dissolution of the post of Media liaison (responsibilities to be absorbed into the group).
- 2) Changing Y&D back to a working group as changes to the manual of operations makes their terms of reference non-compliant with the workings of the BCA – it is easier and more beneficial to be a working group rather than a standing committee.
- 3) That the IT working group be updated to the terms of reference set out in the appendices, and that the posts of webmaster, web services and cave registry, in addition to the national cave registry working group all be absorbed into this group and thus no longer on council. Posts to be reappointed by the WG convenor.

(7) Specific Agenda Item

New Website (Poposal R. Myers Acting Secretary)

I recommend that a decision is made at this Council meeting about whether to accept the new BCA website. If BCA Council want to accept this, I recommend that they agree to commission the services of a professional website developer to look after it on behalf of the BCA. The new website is written in standard modern coding language, so any professional developer should be able to pick it up. If a decision is not made soon on this, the new website will become gradually more and more obsolete and will get forgotten about.

(8) Reports: All reports will be accepted as read so please read them before the meeting and address the author directly.

10 reports have been submitted and are put forward to the meeting for the record.

(8.1) Voting Procedures Report

BCA Voting Procedures Report submitted by Rostam Namhagi

Introduction

I have chosen to independently compile this report in order to facilitate the IT Working Group's implementation of a membership database and online voting setup to ensure that the group remain apolitical.

The main issue was that it was unclear what the **voting system** for **contested elections** was. This is not a surprise as in the history of the BCA there has **never been a contested position** (following a review of every AGM election in the organisation's history). Given that more of our members are engaging in the democratic process, due to recent ballots and the Countryside Rights of Way campaign, it seems inevitable that our members will get to vote on their representatives.

It should be noted that it is very hard to find out:

- how to submit a nomination and when the deadlines are
- what positions are vacant
- who is currently running

These three things are fixable without changes to the manual of operations, all you would need is an elections tab on the website that is updated with all these things.

Fortunately, there is a line from the January 2020 changes to the Manual of Operations (MoO):

For contested positions or multi-choice option motions, the candidate or option with the most support will be appointed/accepted.

'Most support' requires interpretation. It doesn't detail how the vote is to be implemented. I have identified the two most common systems and listed their necessary changes to the MoO.

Voting Systems

Plurality voting

'First past the post' – Members have one vote which they can allocate to one candidate, and the candidate with the largest number of votes wins.

Advantages: Simple, familiar system that most of the British public is familiar with and delivers a clear result. Good for head to head races.

Disadvantages: In the event of many candidates the largest minority are represented. i.e. unlikely to be a consensus candidate.

MoO change:

*'For contested positions or multi-choice option motions, the candidate or option with the most support will be appointed/accepted. **For candidate elections each member can cast one vote for their preferred candidate.'***

There is another issue that must be pointed out: The 2 position vacancies would either have to be listed as separate positions i.e. candidates have to run for 'DIM rep 1' or DIM rep 2' – this could result in tactical voting so in order to avoid this a further line could be added:

'For multiple vacancies of the same position the candidates with the largest shares of the vote are elected.'

Or amend the whole thing to:

'For candidate elections with a single vacancy each member can cast one vote for their preferred candidate. For multiple vacancies, a system of ranked choice voting is implemented. The lowest ranked candidate has their votes redistributed until a candidate has an overall majority. The elected candidate/s is/are removed and the process repeated until the vacancies are filled.'

Majoritarian

'Ranked choice voting with instant run off' – Members rank the candidates available for the position/positions available. If no candidate reaches 50% in the first round then the lowest ranked candidate is eliminated and their votes redistributed, this continues until a candidate reaches a majority of votes.

Advantages: Favours general consensus candidates, good if many people run.

Disadvantages: The results are given by round and so can be confusing to people.

MoO change:

For contested positions or multi-choice option motions, the candidate or option with the most support will be appointed/accepted. For candidate elections members rank the available candidates they wish to vote for in order of preference. The lowest ranked candidate has their votes redistributed until a candidate has an overall majority. If there are multiple vacancies, the elected candidate/s is/are removed and the process repeated.

Other Issues

There are two other issues that should be highlighted:

- I) Uncontested Candidates
- II) Election Statements

Uncontested Candidates.

The constitution states that 'uncontested candidates' for Council position 'will be elected'. This wording was based on the pre-2019 status quo of appointing unopposed candidates without a vote. This should therefore be the default interpretation.

AGM's are the final arbiter of the constitution and at the 2019 AGM the will of the AGM was to require election of all candidates. Therefore, this is the last interpretation and action would be required to change it back to the 'status quo'. For the sake of procedural speed at meetings I propose that this be amended to:

'The constitution states that 'uncontested candidates' for Council position 'will be elected'. They will be elected by default unless an objection at an AGM requires a vote be held. The options will be For/Against/Abstain – if the candidate is not elected, the post is reopened for nominations and vote to occur at the next AGM.'

I would recommend voting on the 'uncontested candidates' proposal as it does not reflect the will of the last AGM and would require a motion at an AGM to implement. Therefore it is easier to modify it to the current position.

Election Statements

Candidates are afforded the opportunity to include a statement. I would suggest that these statements be on the website rather than the voting portal, and that the Secretary or Chair be responsible for moderating them. This is to be a very light touch affair as detailed in the proposed change to the MoO below (to be included immediately after the reference to the statement):

'Statements are to moderated by the Secretary/Chair (but not for their own position, or a position they are running for) and only on the grounds of public decency, defamation, relevance or falsehood.'

This is only included as currently there is nothing to stop someone contesting the position and using it as a free advert to our members, a platform to slander people or simply list every profanity in the dictionary.

Summary

We need to vote on the voting system, with 4 options so far identified:

- I. First Past the Post (multiple vacancies separate)
- II. First Past the Post (largest vote shares for multiple vacancies)
- III. First Past the Post (with Ranked Choice Voting for multiple posts)
- IV. Ranked Choice Voting

We also need to vote on the other issues:

- V. Uncontested Candidates
- VI. Election Statements

I have included all the relevant parts of the Manual of Operations and Constitution in the appendix – there should be no conflicts with the proposed changes.

Appendix

The current voting procedures

The BCA's voting procedures for meetings in the Manual of Operations is detailed as follows:

Voting is by simple majority of those present and eligible to vote with no minimum number necessary for the meeting to be quorate. The Chair shall hold the casting vote. The Council Members page gives a list of those eligible to vote. Although an individual is free to represent more than one Group, nobody is entitled to more than one vote.

Annual General Meetings have further stipulations:

Voting at General Meetings is done by a show of membership cards of individual members present at the meeting.

The following items of business will require voting:

1. Appointment of Honorary Members and an Honorary President (50% majority of all votes required with no subsequent online voting).
2. Accepting minutes, reports and other regular 'housekeeping' duties or matters arising that would not be considered 'motions' (50% majority of all votes required with no subsequent online voting).
3. Submitted motions. It is suggested that before any voting occurs, those attending the meeting should debate any presented motions and, if necessary (and with the permission of the proposer), refine or consolidate them. The final motions must then receive the support of $\geq 20\%$ of all individual members present and eligible to vote, or ≥ 10 individuals, whichever is lowest, to pass at the meeting. Motions passed at the meeting must then be progressed to an online vote of all individual members.

Motions are considered to be items put forward that would make any change to the constitution or involve taking a significant action or making a significant change to BCA operations, policy, procedure or position. They are expected to be submitted in advance on the agenda. In the event of uncertainty as to whether something should be a 'motion' or a 'housekeeping' matter, the Chair shall make the final decision, and the idea is that common sense should prevail here. The default position, in the event of indecision or dispute should be to consider the item a 'motion' and process accordingly.

The constitution states that 'uncontested candidates' for Council position 'will be elected'. This wording was based on the pre-2019 status quo of appointing unopposed candidates without a vote. This should therefore be the default interpretation.

It is very desirable for contested Council positions to be resolved at the meeting by mutual agreement between the candidates. The Chair is encouraged to try to facilitate discussions of this nature. However, if this is not possible, then the contested position and candidates will be progressed automatically to an online vote, in which it would be good practice to provide the candidates the opportunity to include a statement.

The quorum for a General Meeting is 10 individual members eligible to vote.

Online voting should be available to all BCA Individual Members for a 30-day period commencing as soon as is possible after the General Meeting. It is good practice to ensure this is well communicated to all members by email (if possible) and through the BCA website and social media. Motions must receive 50% support of all votes cast (70% for changes to constitution) to be accepted. For contested positions or multi-choice option motions, the candidate or option with the most support will be appointed/accepted.

For the purposes of all voting, abstentions are not considered a 'vote'.

Constitutional Subsections Relevant to Voting

5.3. Applications for the class of Group Membership shall:

- a) be submitted on an application form and accompanied by the appropriate subscription for the class of membership and a copy of the constitution of the applicant, and
- b) be put before any National Council or General Meeting as the next item of business following apologies and establishment of quorum, and accepted or rejected by National Council or any General Meeting by a simple vote of those eligible to vote at that meeting.

5.4. Applications for the class of Associate Membership shall:

- a) be submitted on an application form and accompanied by the appropriate subscription for the class of membership, and
- b) be put before any National Council or General Meeting as the next item of business following apologies and establishment of quorum, and accepted or rejected by National Council or any General Meeting by a simple vote of those eligible to vote at that meeting.

5.6. Candidates for Honorary Membership may only be proposed by the National Council for election by simple majority vote at a General Meeting. Honorary membership may only be conferred on individuals and Honorary Membership will entitle the individual to the same benefits of the Association as those given to the class of Individual Membership.

6.1. The Association shall have the following officers: Council Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer together with Chairmen of the Standing Committees (Section 7) who shall be elected from the individual membership of the Association at an Annual General Meeting (AGM). Uncontested candidates will be elected. If there are multiple applicants, they will go forward to an online vote after the AGM. Each officer shall serve for a term of three years from the AGM. One third of Officers' posts in turn shall be eligible for election or re-election each year and those elected shall serve for a term of three years from the AGM.

6.2. The Association shall have a National Council comprised of the Officers of the Association, up to four representatives from the class of Group Members, up to four representatives from the class of Individual Members and one representative from each Regional Caving Council and National Body.

6.3. Representatives from the classes of Individual and Group Membership shall be elected at an AGM. Uncontested applicants will be elected. Applicants exceeding the number of positions will

go forward to an online vote after the AGM. Each representative shall serve for a term of two years from the AGM.

6.4. Representatives from Regional Caving Councils and National Bodies shall be appointed by that Council or that Body.

6.5. The National Council may co-opt persons to fill any vacancies in any posts of officers of the Association, or members of National Council for the remaining period of the post's vacancy.

6.6. The National Council may co-opt non-voting Assistant Officers to assist in its business.

6.7. At a meeting of the National Council, each Member shall have one vote except the Chairman who shall hold only a casting vote.

6.8. In the event of a vote being necessary at National Council, matters shall be resolved by means of a simple majority of those present and eligible to vote.

6.15. The Association may have an Honorary President. Candidates for the post of President shall be proposed by National Council and elected at an Annual General Meeting by a show of hands of those present who are eligible to vote. Here the two-house voting system outlined in sub section 8.9 will not apply. The President need not be a member of the Association, but on election, will become an honorary member of the Association for the period of tenure of the post. The post of President shall run for a period of one year from the Annual General Meeting. The President shall be an ex-officio a member of National Council, all Standing Committees and any Working Group set up by Council, but will have no vote at any meeting. The President may resign at any time by writing to the Secretary of the Association.

8.2. The National Council shall nominate a Chairman and Recorder for the General Meeting. The General Meeting may elect a Chairman or Recorder in their absence. Neither the Chairman nor the Recorder shall be entitled to vote.

8.6. The quorum for any General Meeting shall be 10 individual members who are eligible to vote.

8.7. Any General Meeting is open to all, though the Chairman shall have the right to exclude any person if the meeting so decides by simple show of hands of individual members eligible to vote.

8.8. Minutes shall be kept of all General Meetings of the Association and these shall be made available to members on request.

8.9. Any person may speak at a General Meeting, subject to the Chairman's agreement. All motions arising from a General Meeting must be first voted on by individual members present at the meeting and eligible to vote. All motions with support from at least 25% of those individuals who vote, or 10 individuals (whichever is lowest) must be taken forward to an online vote.

8.10. Online voting by individual members for motions and contested positions arising from General Meetings must be conducted over a period of approximately 30 days. Voting is by simple majority of individual voting members, except for changes to the constitution which require $\geq 70\%$ in favour. 8.6. The quorum for any General Meeting shall be 10 members, of which at least 5 persons eligible to vote in each House shall be present. No one person may represent more than one group member.

It should also be noted that the constitution listed in the MoO is the 2017 one and not the 2019 one, this should be updated.

Author : Rostam Namaghi

Rostam Namaghi – on prompting from the ITWG
Recommendations to be discussed at a later meeting

(8.2) IT & The BCA: Moving Forward

Author Ari Cooper-Davies

Outlining the existing responsibilities of ITWG volunteers, a vision for the future, and a roadmap by which to achieve it.

The situation now:

Based on and to be read in conjunction with Angus Sawyer's report "BCA IT".

The BCA Council delegates responsibility for a number of IT and administrative systems to the ITWG, which is staffed by volunteers from the membership. These responsibilities are numerous, and many take considerable effort from volunteers. The effort expended in maintaining these systems is not a proxy for their importance to the BCA.

Some of the most significant systems maintained by the ITWG are:

- **Web services (hosting)**
 - The BCA operates two servers that host a number of websites; those belonging to the BCA itself, the BCRA, the regional councils, a number of caving clubs, and some unaffiliated personal and business sites.
 - These web servers also maintain and operate **email hosting, mailing lists, website/wiki software, diary systems, video-conferencing software, content and source code management systems**, etc.
 - These servers are overstretched; they're failing under strain and the financial and volunteer investment required to save them are untenable.

- **Domain name management (registration)**

- The BCA handles domain registration and renewal for a number of member clubs and associated organisations, reducing their reliance on individuals.
- This service is volunteer time intensive.

- **Membership administration**
 - The BCA has a large membership base and administering this database requires systems that handle payment, registration, and renewal. This is tied in with membership of the BCRA, and of regional councils.

- **Electronic voting**
 - The recent vote, conducted both by postal ballot and by email, required infrastructure for sending out ballots, accepting votes, and counting them.
 - This system was mainly custom built, and as such is extremely opaque to auditing, is reasonably basic in it's features (e.g. no verification available to individual voters), and requires significant volunteer resources to operate.

In recent years the focus of the ITWG has been lost, and the balance has drifted from the *provision* of these services to the *control* of these services, leaving the BCA Council sidelined in the decision making process. Overstretched volunteers are unable to work to the best of their abilities; forced to keep putting out fires rather than working to move forwards, and forced to focus on “function over form”, leaving the BCA’s IT infrastructure to appear outdated and overly complicated.

Poor management of volunteers has exacerbated this issue; many ITWG members have been under-utilised whilst their colleagues are over-relied upon such that the resilience of the IT infrastructure becomes compromised. Many of these systems are almost completely undocumented, further increasing the reliance on individuals.

The end goal:

The BCA requires the operation of some IT infrastructure to achieve its organisational objectives, and there are a number of volunteers willing to provide this infrastructure. These volunteers will operate in an “IT Group” in order to provide this infrastructure and act as a source of expert advice for BCA Council.

This relationship is important: the IT Group will exist solely to provide for the IT needs of the BCA, having no significant control of the systems that they maintain and operate. This creates a healthy distance between the politics of decision making within the BCA Council and the operation of IT systems key to its objectives. The decision making required to operate such infrastructure will be constrained by its purpose; to meet the requirements and goals of the BCA Council.

The IT Group will be composed entirely of volunteers from the BCA membership, and will itself be run democratically; keeping menial decision making off the BCA Council's agenda, and otherwise "getting on with it".

The IT Group will operate a manageable selection of services, and will maintain these to the best of their abilities, to keep them modern, effective, and in line with the BCA's own operational objectives. The IT Group will be managed such that a number of the volunteers are able to operate each system, and can work to effectively document and maintain these systems, thereby reducing the reliance on any one member to operate effectively. That being said, the *responsibility* for the effective running of IT services will still fall to the IT Group convenor, who coordinates this management.

The end goal of this will be:

- **Web services and domain name management**
 - The BCA's servers will be used for hosting sites and services associated directly with the BCA, and select few other organisations such as the BCRA. The IT Group will only be responsible for maintaining domain names associated with these sites.
 - The IT Group will be available to support other groups in administering their own web services without being directly responsible for them.

- **Membership administration**
 - Membership databases will be stored online and synchronised automatically with those used by the Membership Secretary, who will be able to use the IT Group to support their role.
 - An individual will be able to view and update their details online without requiring administrator intervention.
 - Those working in/on behalf of the BCA will have easy access to varying levels of membership data to facilitate their roles. This will be done in a way that maintains compliance with data protection legislation, and member confidentiality.

- **Electronic voting**
 - Members will be able to cast their votes to ballots online. Their vote will be both private and verifiable. The IT Group will be entirely independent from the voting infrastructure, thereby maintaining their political distance.

How to achieve this:

Volunteer resources are currently overstretched, partly by projects that are not in direct alignment with the objectives of the BCA. The volunteer time required to run an effective IT Group needs to be

regained, and the scope of the systems managed by these volunteers needs to be realigned with the BCA's objectives.

This will be achieved by two means; reducing the burden on volunteers, and improving the management of volunteers.

Reducing the burden

The volunteer workload can be reduced via the outsourcing, overhauling, and dropping of some of the responsibilities currently maintained. Namely:

- **Web services**
 - Clubs, regional councils, businesses, and individuals will be given notice that they will need to transition away from the BCA for web hosting. The IT Group should consider advising these bodies on reliable, reputable, affordable, end environmentally friendly alternatives.
 - The IT Group may wish to offer reasonable guidance and assistance to facilitate this transition.

- **Domain name management**
 - Bodies that currently rely on the BCA for domain name management will be given notice that they will need to transition away from the BCA for this service.
 - Again, the IT Group should consider facilitating this.

- **Risk mitigation**
 - To account for the increased reliance on individuals that this will cause existing users, the IT Group should consider offering services that would mitigate the risks of bodies managing their own hosting and registration. This could comprise of:
 - Offering @british-caving.co.uk forwarding addresses that bodies can use for registration for new web services, but that can be redirected to other email addresses if necessary.
 - Developing a database to store the credentials that external bodies use to login to the web services that would replace those managed by the BCA, so that they can be retrieved those details if necessary.
 - Hosting a calendar of renewal dates so that external bodies could be automatically prompted of upcoming web services renewals.
 - These aren't foolproof solutions (e.g. two factor authentication would present a problem) but would go some way to mitigating the risks associated with individuals managing web services on behalf of larger organisations.

- **Membership administration**

- The IT Group will discuss outsourcing the design, hosting, and ongoing operation of the membership database. Open source solutions such as CiviCRM could be hosted on the existing servers, or commercial solutions could be sourced (which generally scale in price with the number of users).
 - Using an established, tested, and well supported existing membership database solution will drastically improve the efficiency, stability, and functionality of the membership database, whilst simultaneously reducing the complexity of managing the database for volunteers.
 - The IT Group will need to work closely with the Membership Secretary to ensure that this transition is smooth and effective.
 - This is long overdue; we shouldn't be using Excel spreadsheets as our primary membership database system.
 - A commercial solution will incur some additional expense
 - Volunteer hours otherwise spent administering the database can instead be used to improve the functionality and appearance of the other key IT systems such as BCA Online.

- To protect membership data the IT Group will establish levels of access to membership data based on the principle of *necessary access*.
 - This can be administered by the auto-generation of separate read-only documents derived from the master membership database whenever it is updated.
 - The process of auto-generating these derived documents will include the anonymisation, summarisation, etc required to ensure varying levels of member anonymity
 - The read-only nature of the derived documents protects these documents for other users without preventing use of the data.
 - It may be advisable to consult an expert in data protection legislation to ensure that this system is compliant.
 - It should be stressed that this system will be designed to *facilitate* access to up-to-date membership data for BCA Officers, in a safe and compliant way.

- **Electronic voting**
 - By outsourcing electronic voting infrastructure the IT Group will maintain its political distance. Free and open source services, such as Helios Voting, are well proven in commercial settings, are user friendly, and are completely independent.
 - The transition to a third-party service such as this should be inconsequential.
 - This matter, being a decision regarding how democratic votes will be conducted, must be put to Council to be signed off on, once the IT Group has established a service that would be fit for the task.

Improving volunteer management

To reduce the reliance on any one individual, a more structured approach will be taken to volunteer management. This will also improve the initiation of new volunteers to the IT Group, and increase the groups resilience to changing practices. This can be facilitated by:

- **Version control**
 - Exploiting version control software will create one location where all code and the associated documentation can be stored. All IT Group volunteers can have access to this code and documentation, and will be expected to update it when changes are made.
 - The infrastructure for this is [already in place](#), but current code is out of date (~8 months) and undocumented.
 - Where security or IP is a concern these can be private from the general public.

- **Explicit responsibility**
 - Regular meetings of the IT Group will allow volunteers to have explicit responsibility for key aspects of the IT Groups workload.
 - Assigning multiple volunteers to each system will provide redundancy in the event of any one volunteer being unavailable, and will offload the administrative burden for smaller decisions to small groups.
 - Explicit responsibility for documenting key systems will rapidly increase the proportion of the codebase that is adequately documented.
 - This will improve the CI/CD workflow necessary to manage systems on this scale.
 - Regular status-update meetings will allow progress to be shared with the IT Group; providing some motivation for changes to be made, group oversight for larger changes, and a forum in which to include other volunteers in the process.

- **Regular meetings**
 - Regular meetings on predictable forums at predictable times will facilitate engagement of IT Group volunteers.
 - These can be supplemented through a group working environment (such as Slack) for communication with the entire group in between meetings.
 - This would replace the existing email-chain communication system which is unwieldy and outdated.
 - The minutes of these meetings can be used to facilitate reporting at BCA Council meetings.
 - This will allow for more efficient tracking of goals

- **Volunteer induction**

- Establishing a new-volunteer induction document will improve the resilience of the IT Group by ensuring that all volunteers have at least some understanding of the systems managed by the IT Group, and who is currently working on them.
 - This will allow for volunteers to be placed in areas where they will be most valuable, better leveraging the expertise and time of available volunteers.

These changes are not without difficulty, and there will be knock on effects for some long-standing operational relationships that the BCA has formed with other organisations such as the BCRA. As such we will do our best to apprise BCA Council of the necessary changes and options available to the BCA, after engaging with the parties involved.

The long term consequences of these changes will be a more sustainable, modern, and effective volunteer-run IT service, that is completely separate from the politics of BCA Council.

(8.3) BCA Media Liaison Officer's Report For the year June 2019 - 2020

Clearly this is an interesting period for the country or indeed the worlds history.

As far as caving is concerned the year started with the aftermath of the Thailand cave rescue and finished with corona virus and lockdown.

I see the job of BCA Media Liaison Officer as receiving enquiries and passing them on to the appropriate people. There are only a small number where it is appropriate for me to handle personally. Many of the enquiries still come by telephone. The news media want very quick responses, they realise not everybody is watching the internet all of the time, and telephones give them an instant response, and indeed they keep searching for people to talk to until they get an instant response. This can be dangerous for caving as it is possible the enquires can get into the wrong hands. Certainly, as far as the Thai rescue was concerned media around the world got hold of many inappropriate people who talked nonsense about and hypothermia and decompression, not understanding warm and very shallow water.

Overall, the year has been quiet as far as media interest is concerned. Certainly, in this period Brexit was the major factor, then of course followed by corona virus totally dominating everything.

Books and film documentaries are still coming out in connection with the Thai rescue. There is also a proper documentary being produced in conjunction with the actual British cave divers which has been postponed.

A very good film produced by the Draining the Oceans team and featuring Roo Walters as the laser scanning guru came out mid period and I thought was a very good representation of the events, certainly from an inorganic point of view.

To name a few enquiries in detail; the BBC are looking for something for Steve Backshall, I steered them towards cavers in Indonesia.

Another BBC enquiry were looking for a huge cave like Deer Cave, I passed this onto Roo Walters who sent them a fly through of Deer Cave. We were invited to participate in the Elon Musk v Vernon Unsworth court case. I avoided getting involved with this.

Clearly since the pandemic hit the world, caving has almost ceased and no enquires have been received, certainly it has been the quietest period during my time as BCA Media Liaison Officer.

Going forward, I would be prepared to continue an involvement in media liaison. It has been suggested to connect it more closely with the publications and information area of BCA, I would certainly be prepared to work with anybody in this respect. Quite a few media enquiries come to me anyway from my involvement with the International Union of Speleology so having an involvement in a clearing house of media enquires is something I could continue to offer in the future.

Andy Eavis
29th June 2020

(8.4) BCA Newsletter Report

I apologise to Council for my absence but I will be on a long-booked holiday (thanks to the opening of a so-called air bridge) on July 18.

The last issue, which was published on February 26, was the biggest and (arguably) the best yet. It had new features, such as an article on classic trips in the Dent de Crolles by Andy Sparrow, and like its predecessor, it appeared on paper as well as online, with numerous photos. It was professionally laid out by our former secretary Matt Ewles and former IT specialist Gary Douthwaite.

It is therefore a matter of deep regret that they have now resigned their roles, although they have indicated to me that they would be prepared to help me with a future issue.

As cavers, like everyone else, continue to labour under the restrictions brought by the Covid-19 pandemic, I'm not certain when it will seem sensible to bring out another issue: I think we'll just have to see how things develop. When people have had enough freedom to make things happen again, and so enough has happened to justify a newsletter (maybe even an AGM?), I will circulate council members and others and appeal for articles.

One pressing issue is still the question of emailing the newsletter to all BCA members. It's very frustrating to put time editing it and know that only a minority of members is currently likely to see it, because many haven't "opted in" to being sent it by email. I hope the association can sort this problem out speedily.

David Rose
BCA Newsletter editor

(8.5) BCA Training Officer Report July 2020

BCA Training Officer

The BCA Training Officers terms of reference and duties have been looked at and were presented to the 2019 AGM in my report. These have not been looked at or dealt with by BCA yet and the TO position comes up for election in 2021. I have suggested to BCA exec that this is looked at so that these can be agreed and advertised ready for next year.

BCA Training Officers Role on the QMC

I confirmed to the convenor and the members at the February 2018 QMC meeting that I will support them and take on any duties that they wish me to do if I was elected as the new official training officer. At the moment some of the TO duties have been taken over due to the misunderstandings etc. A number of short meetings were set up by BCA to discuss the terms of reference for training committee and QMC which have now been completed and accepted by council. The Training Officers role has yet to be finalised and the terms of reference have suggestions on them following talks with the chair of QMC.

BCA Training Committee

The membership is getting stronger and we have a team of very experienced and dedicated volunteers. We also welcome the newly appointed CNCC training officer Ian Patrick who has already in the process of setting up training events in the Yorkshire Dales. We are also joined by Steve Gray representing BCRO and Steve Holding from NAMHO.

BCA Training Grants

All training grant applications are sent in by the regional training officers who look after training events in their regions. Any clubs and organisations falling outside regions with a training officer can apply directly to the BCA training officer. This system came into place on June 1st 2019.

BCA Training Events

Ratios are agreed at 1 to 4 for technical training and 1 to 6 for workshop type events. Other ratios will be agreed on new topics coming in.

BCA Training Continuity

Complaints of techniques shown on training events (not BCA TC workshops) have come to me directly from cavers who attended. It looks like there are things said and shown that are not agreed practice by all. It is very difficult to manage this with cavers working remotely and teaching their preference rather than BCA agreed practice. This has always been top of my list as TO and together with TC and the E&T committee we hope to roll out some advice to cavers on 'not so good' practice rather than what we think is best.

BCA Coaching Guidelines

I have shared the DCA scheme with caving clubs in other areas with a view of moving this forward nationally. It is a coaching scheme for cavers and concentrates on training the trainers as well as club members through workshops and training courses run by club members themselves assisted and mentored by a BCA trainer and assessors involved with the DCA scheme. What we do in TC is support BCA members and up date them on current training practices. Any developments in this scheme are direct results from feedback by BCA members using it. We will run workshops after lockdown to start opening the doors nationally to cavers who wish to train other cavers.

Nigel Atkins. BCA Training Officer 14/07/20

(8.6) BCA UIS Report for the year June 2019 to June 2020

The main factors being considered by the UIS currently are the ongoing importance of caves and karst protection, considering such things as sympathetic development of show caves and the most environmentally friendly way of mining limestone. This is undoubtedly the most important aspect of the International Union of Speleology.

Other matters within the UIS are the forthcoming International Year of Caves and Karst which will start in January next year 2021, at an opening ceremony in Paris at UNESCO on 26th January. In conjunction with that, a booklet has been produced, cavers from Britain helped with script and photographs for this booklet. I will be attending the opening ceremony. This is in advance of the

International Congress of Speleology which will be held near Lyon, at Le Bourget-du-Lac, southern France from July 23rd to 30th 2021.

For people who do not know, the international congress takes place every four years. They started in Postojna in 1965 and the one next year will be the 18th, maybe Britain should hold the 20th in 2029? The international congress will certainly be a fantastic affair for anybody interested in caves, caving, and karst. The limestone region of southern France is spectacular with wonderful caves. There will be unique opportunities to visit many caves which are not generally easily accessible, including archaeological sites and very sporting, technical caves. The 23rd to 30th July 2021 should be in all caver's diaries.

The UIS continues to produce a bulletin twice a year. The last one was December 2019, and their magazine The International Journal of Speleology continues with all the cave and karst coverage and an amazing set of editors from many speleological countries.

I have had several virtual UIS meetings during the past year and attended the bureau meeting which coincided with the UIS Asian meeting on 10th and 11th September 2019 in Bohol, Philippines. Phil Rowsell also attended this meeting which as ever was well attended by UIS bureau members including, Tim Moulds from Australia winding up the reports from the last international congress in Australia and Bernard Chirol talking about the organisation for the next international congress. Obviously, discussion on caves and karst protection were the main topic and there is clearly much more to do on this on an international basis.

The next UIS meeting was planned for 9th and 10th May in Slovakia, this has been cancelled/postponed although there have been many virtual meetings over the year.

The UIS website goes from strength to strength, it is easy to view and kept reasonably up to date. It can be found at <http://www.uis-speleo.org>

I recommend anybody interested in caves and karst anywhere around the world to visit this site.

Final plug for the International Congress for next year southern France, 23rd to 30th July 2021.

Andy Eavis
29th June 2020

(8.7) Draft Report FSE Bureau August 2019 – July 2020

Since the last General Assembly Meeting in Bulgaria the FSE Bureau has been busy with e-mailing exchanges on a daily basis. Skype meetings have increasingly become an important part of our work enabling discussion to take place when it is not possible to meet face to face.

Work continues to maintain the system of sponsoring European projects; the EuroSpeleo Projects (ESP), the EuroSpeleo Forums (ESF), as well as the EuroSpeleo Protection Label (ESPL). As new Vice secretary, Joerg Dreybrodt took over the processing of ESP projects last year following Michael Laummans retirement from the Bureau. Despite being new to the role, the transition has been smooth, and Joerg's knowledge of expedition work has helped considerably. However, the COVID – 19 pandemic has had a major impact upon our caving activities. Therefore, ESP applications have decreased significantly. The GAM scheduled for this year to be held in Burgos Spain had to be cancelled due to social distancing and travel restrictions. Our general secretary Alena Gessert has been busy working on a process to deliver the GAM on a virtual basis. The Bureau has also welcomed Michel Isnard from France as Vice President following Mladen Garasic from Croatia. We thank both Michael and Mladen for the excellent work they have done in the Bureau.

The EuroSpeleo Forum (ESF) for 2022 will now take place in Burgos, Spain and once confirmed, the ESF for 2023 will be held in Sicily, Italy.

Behind the scenes, the Internet Cloud archive for FSE material has proved invaluable as a information store. It has provided a sustainable filing system as personnel changes in the FSE Bureau are inevitable.

The FSE Facebook page, updated regularly by Henk Goutier, is visited by thousands of cavers and non-cavers thus representing an excellent outreach for European speleology. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/eurospeleo> . Also, with the help of our partners of the WikiCaves organization the FSE website is updated on a regular basis. Antoniya Vlaykova, president of the Cave Rescue Commission but also a web-technology wizard, is advising on a template and structure for a new improved FSE website.

Despite Michael Laummans departure from the Bureau he has continued to publish the EuroSpeleo Newsletter on behalf of the FSE. The newsletter provides information on FSE projects and updates on FSE developments and activities. The Bureau has encouraged where appropriate to outsource work like the newsletter to volunteers like Michael, allowing bureau members more time to concentrate on their official roles.

Jean Claude Thies, President of the European Cave Protection Commission ECPC continues to with colleagues on conservation and protection matters. The FSE membership of the European Environmental Board (EEB) has enabled regular input into important conservation issues at a policy making level. Meetings are held throughout the year and a General Assembly held in Berlin. More on this will be detailed in the EEB report. The official postponed Euro Speleo Protection Symposium 2020 in Germany will be held in October 2021 at the same place supported by the German Agency for Nature Protection. However, more on this will be provided in the ECPC report.

Henk Goutier has played a major part in liaising with the organisers of the UIS congress 2021 to be held in France and the International Year of Cave and Karst. It is only proper that the FSE will have a strong presence at this event not just because it will be held in Europe but because we are one of strongest regional groups of cavers in the world. Clearly, it would not be appropriate to hold a separate EuroSpeleo Forum in 2021 which might only detract from the importance of the UIS Congress.

On this note, regular liaison continues with the UIS, their General secretary Fadi Nader is now occasionally working in Utrecht in the Netherlands making it convenient for FSE treasurer to meet with him on shared challenges facing the FSE/UIS.

Members of the Bureau regularly attend national and international caving events (on own costs). Unfortunately lockdown restrictions have meant cancellation of many events. However, Henk Goutier managed to attend the Scientific Speleological Days on 16-17 November 2019 in Han-sur-Lesse, Belgium and meet with UIS Secretary Fadi Nader on 5th February 2020.

Ged Champion

FSE President

(8.8) Radon Working Group Report 9th July 2020

Radon Underground version 3 has now been completed. The document has been reviewed by the Radon Protection Adviser commissioned by the BCA and updated accordingly. It has also been scrutinised by HSE.

COVID-19 has frustratingly suspended our ability to conduct the final round of sampling which will now take place during Spring 2021. Once this round of sampling has been completed the data within the document will need to be updated, however there is sufficient data to be guided by its findings.

Both the document and supporting data is now available to be published and will be published in due course on the BCA website.

Further work to make the findings available in a more accessible manner will soon be underway. We also propose to write a short article for Descent magazine to bring the findings of this work to the caving community.

The working group would like to thank the authors of the previous additions, Bob Mehew & Jen Barns of Jacobs (previously Woods) Plc for writing and reviewing the document. Dave Linton & Pam Cope for a comprehensive edit.

Stephan Natynczuk, Graham Derbyshire, Dave Hollingham and Chris Jackson and many others for their assistance in conducting the environmental sampling. In addition, the BCA, Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres, Defence Safety Labs, the Ministry of Defence, Graham Derbyshire and North Wales Mines Inspection group for supporting and sharing sampling data.

See previously circulated which are too large to reproduce in this agenda:

Radon Underground 2020

Environmental Sampling Results for BCA

Gethin Thomas

Radon Working Group

(8.9) Library Report to BCA Council 18 July 2020

This report is for information and reflects the situation at the time it is being written - if anyone has any queries please contact me direct.

Initially with the Coronavirus lockdown in March we felt we had to close the Library altogether. However, following consultation with the owner of the premises at Glutton Bridge (whose family also work there) and with the occupant of the other office in the same building, it became possible to evolve a way of working which complies with all risk assessments and enables us to continue to provide a service. The three of us who work in the Library at Glutton Bridge now travel in separately, on different days, working alone but communicating regularly by email; we have equipped all close contact areas with hand sanitisers and disinfectant sprays. We agreed as part of the process that, for the time being, we could not allow visitors to the Library.

Katie, who has three small children at home, has travelled in regularly to collect a box full of UK journals to continue with her detailed cataloguing by working from home. The catalogued and labelled items are returned to the shelves and the duplicates are boxed and listed separately. This has enabled us for the first time to sort out systematically all the duplicate copies acquired due to donations and legacies since the 1980's. We will soon be in a position to list online sets of journals available to other caving libraries who might want them and, once "caver post" is operating again, we can send these on their way.

Mary has continued to deal with newly acquired foreign journals and also with books. I continue to deal with newly acquired UK journals and surveys. We also buy any relevant newly published books, etc. which are brought to our attention and are very grateful to those authors and editors who provide us with "a free copy for the Library".

Mary and I have continued to deal with incoming enquiries involving items held in the Library, passing the enquiries between us so that there is minimum delay in responding, usually by emailing out scans; there seems to be no drop in the number of enquiries we are processing compared to more normal times.

Mary has been working with the youngest member of 3 generations of cavers who has lent us a large collection of caving photographs taken by members of his family and dating back to the 1940's. These photos are being identified and incorporated by John Gardner into the online BCRA Archives section of the Library website.

Our volunteers dealing with late John Beck's legacy of Peak District surveys, having finished with the hundreds of items in the 133 tubes, are now progressing well with John's 8-drawer map chest containing yet more hundreds of surveys and maps. We have evolved a protocol for collection/delivery of work done by volunteers: swapping boxed items between car boots outside the Library with incoming boxes labelled and placed on a "quarantine shelf" to be dealt with after 72 hours have elapsed.

With the relaxation of the Coronavirus lockdown rules we are now looking at the possibility of allowing visitors to the Library once more but will need to agree, after due consultation as before, on how this is to be done. It seems likely that at first it will have to be one visitor at a time and we may have to wait some time before we can open the Library for meetings.

*Jenny Potts, (j.potts@bcra.org.uk)
BCRA Library Co-ordinator
26 July 2020*

(7.10) QMC report to Council – July 2020

QMC developments:

Covid 19:

The outbreak of the pandemic drew to a close work for all award holders, and with differing government guidance coming from each of the home nations, QMC have published several bulletins over the past three months, offering advice to award holders – in particular drawing their attention to government, BCA, BCRC and regional caving council statements. This has been backed up by answering the many emails which have been directed to me during the past few months.

With lockdown gradually easing, although the majority of award holders still find themselves in a position where a safe return to work is not viable, there are pockets of the award system where social distancing is possible and small groups are able to function.

Stats:

Registrations and workshop attendee numbers were looking healthy at the beginning of 2020, but the outbreak of Covid 19, has inevitably had severe financial consequences for this year. However, as trainer/assessors for the LCMLA find that they are able to run small courses again, Mary Wilde, our training administrator, has had a trickling of new registrations coming through.

Go Membership:

An enormous amount of work has been done on 'Go Membership', the online data management system which will host the LCMLA and CIC schemes. Huge thanks go to Gethin Thomas and Mary Wilde, in particular, for their contributions which have made progress with this project possible. Mary started to use the system at the start of July, but is running the old data bases in parallel until we have fully set up and trialled all aspects of the new system. A small QMC working party is currently transferring and updating information from the exiting handbook.

We hope to roll the system out to award holders in September and Gethin is aiming to put together some training videos to help with the transition.

Radon:

QMC has continued to work alongside the Radon Working Group to produce guidance notes and procedures for those working in underground venues; the aim being compliance with the Ionising Radiation Regulations (IRR17). The Radon Underground document is now complete and has been reviewed by an RPA. Managing Radon will form an integral part of future award update workshops.

Mines:

In the Spring, many providers who use abandoned mines as an adventure activity were contacted by HSE Mines Inspectorate, requesting details of their operating procedures. This led to much confusion, as traditionally HSE matters concerning adventure groups has been overseen by AALS, another branch of HSE.

A QMC working party has since made contact with the principal inspectors involved, which has involved a video conference. Our aim is to find a collective interpretation of the mines regulations.

Juliet Parker-Smith - Chair

(8) Proposal for follow up Meeting:

Acting Secretary (Russell Myers)

I would like to propose a more conventional meeting to take place on the 8th of August at 9:30a.m. via Zoom

Reminder that the Council Meeting is scheduled for Saturday 18th July 2020 at 9.30 a.m. on Zoom