



Council Meeting 11th January 2020 Agenda

Chaddesley Corbett Village Hall, DY104QA
Saturday 11th January 2020, 10:30am

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- (1) Apologies for absence.
- (2) Declaration of items to be covered under Any Other Business.
- (3) Council appointment of two roles on 'acting' basis, to serve until 2020 AGM:

Conservation and Access Officer: One applicant

Claire Ross application statement:

Hola everyone, my name is Claire Ross, I'm 40 and originally from Lincoln, now living in Hessle, East Yorkshire. I've asked the BCA and members if I can be considered for the position of Conservation and Access Officer. A strange request for a none caver I know!

I love all things cave related but sadly due to some issues I havent caved other than the tourist venues, instead I followed my passion by joining groups following social media and reading. I live my hobby through every caver, every photo, video and post. One of these posts was an advert seeking a C and A officer, I admit to feeling slightly ridiculous asking Matt to consider my application and I was over the moon when it wasnt immediately vetoed. Having attended a BCA meeting I can see the absolute passion and love you all have for the sport, something we share. I can see this sometimes lead to disagreements and difficult decisions but they come from the right place. Having worked in business management in the NHS for most of my career, I feel I am well experienced in balancing the many issues which face all companies today, I hope my business management skills may serve the BCA well, should I be successful. I'm hoping my lack of specific caving experience can be overcome with your help and support.

From what I have seen I feel the BCA needs a little more work on the business front, purposeful policies and governance are needed, members need to be heard and any issues dealt with quickly and effectively. Personal differences of opinion should not affect the association. There are no easy options but am sure the BCA will continue on its path of change with every success, if only passion was enough.

Every single person I have met through the BCA have been interesting, friendly and inclusive. What an amazing team.

So much really good work is done, access, conservation works, science, discovery and quality training delivery to name a few. A shout out to the many selfless volunteers both cavers, non cavers and BCA officers alike. There are some truly gifted people in the caving world and I'd love the chance to be a part of it.

Individual Member Representative: No applicants

One potentially interested applicant came forward and information was provided to him on the role; however, he declined to put forward an application in the end. Therefore no candidates before the agenda deadline. Do Council want this role to be readvertised for the April meeting?

- (4) Acceptance of minutes from the October Council Meeting (available on BCA website).
- (5) Matters arising from the October Council Meeting

Action items from June Council meeting (with update in red where status known):

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.
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.
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.
DC	Implement soft opt-in for newsletter receipt. Update required.
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.
JA	Create poster to advertise expedition insurance. See P&I report
IT Working Party	Discuss individual roles and report back to Council. Update required.
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.
TA	Work with membership team to review wording regarding year of birth data collection as part of membership. Update required.

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.
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. Update required.
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).
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.
HJ	Arrange funding for library and include in 2020 budget. Covered in HJ report

(6) Reports

Executive reports:

- 6.1 Chair (Les Williams)
- 6.2 Secretary (Matt Ewles)
- 6.3 Treasurer (Howard Jones)

Insurance and Membership:

- 6.4 Membership Administrator (Wendy Williams)
- 6.5 Insurance Manager (Howard Jones)

Conservation and Access:

- 6.6 Conservation and Access Officer (Not applicable; no serving Officer)
- 6.7 CRoW Working Party (David Rose)

Publications and Information:

- 6.8 Publications and Information Officer (Jane Allen)
- 6.9 Newsletter Editor (David Rose)
- 6.10 British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)
- 6.11 Media Liaison (Andy Eavis)
- 6.12 Cave Registry (David Cooke)

Information Technology:

- 6.13 Webmaster (Gary Douthwaite)
- 6.14 Web Services (David Cooke)
- 6.15 IT Working Party (David Cooke)

Training and Qualifications:

- 6.16 Training Officer (Nigel Atkins)
- 6.17 Qualifications Management Committee (Juliet Parker-Smith)

Equipment and Techniques:

- 6.18 Equipment and Techniques Officer (Mark Sims)
- 6.19 Rope Testing (Bob Mehew)

Youth Development and Vision:

- 6.20 Youth and Development Officer (Rostam Namaghi)
- 6.21 Vision Working Party (Hellie Adams)

Safeguarding and Safety:

- 6.22 Safeguarding (Chris Boardman)
- 6.23 Radon Working Party (Gethin Thomas)

Representatives to other bodies:

- 6.24 UIS Representative (Andy Eavis)
- 6.25 FSE Representative (Ged Campion)

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

At the AGM, members voted to appoint Gary Douthwaite as our Webmaster, with a mandate to: *“redevelop the website including, but not limited to BCA online and communications systems.”* and to receive specified accesses and permissions to the existing systems to enable him to do this. The intention was for Gary to lead the redevelopment, with input along the way from those already involved in BCA’s IT infrastructure (who I, naively, had hoped would be excited about this opportunity) to ensure a smooth but expedited transition to modern systems.

After the AGM, David Cooke repeatedly ignored my requests for these accesses to be granted and in a face-to-face meeting he refused them. BCA Council responded to this in October by reiterating the AGM’s instruction, which I hoped would be enough. Since then, requests to David for the accesses to be granted have once again been totally ignored. We remain no further forward.

Furthermore, David has since commenced discussions with the IT Working Group (ITWG), that have focussed on both discrediting Gary’s intentions, and trying to set out in writing who does what. To quote the last sentence of an email string sent to the ITWG on 10th December:

“If we are to go down this formal route... [referring to David’s proposed roles and responsibilities]... 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.”

The full email string is not private and can thus be supplied on request to any Council member who wishes to verify the context of this quotation.

In summary, David is now driving a proposal through the ITWG to prevent Gary working on anything other than the public website without specific ITWG permission (which most probably would not be granted). Be in no doubt that this is a deliberate agenda to overturn what has been agreed by our membership and Council, to prevent Gary fulfilling the remit he was appointed to at the AGM.

Let me be absolutely clear on the current situation. A member of the BCA team is ignoring the wishes of the AGM and of BCA Council, is holding key BCA systems hostage, refusing to relinquish access, and is using his own Working Group to drive an agenda to overturn AGM and Council decisions. **Does BCA Council consider this contempt of AGM and Council acceptable?**

I personally find this situation intolerable. The BCA’s systems, including BCA Online, and our membership infrastructure are extremely dated and disjointed. Yet nothing changes; just relentless talk and stubborn defence of the status quo. Years of eloquent and diplomatic talking at meetings have ‘covered-up’ the barricades behind the scenes to anyone wanting to create something new or better (Gary is not the first prospective IT moderniser to be driven away by this).

Let me clarify what I am seeking in terms of IT systems redevelopment:

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. 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, vote on ballots etc. 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. Furthermore, the infrastructure should be built using modern coding, which any decent web developer could pick up and work with, and a non-technical admin interface for BCA Officers to use. All systems (website, BCA Online, membership) should be on BCA owned webspace, consistently branded, and seamlessly integrated. None of this is difficult, but will never happen unless the incumbent make way for (and ideally support) those with the skills to deliver this. 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.

As far as I'm concerned, the buck stops at this meeting. There is little to be gained by Council reiterating its previous instruction, as this has been ignored and will continue to be ignored. Plus, it is futile instructing for offline resolutions or Working Group input; that has failed. All options for Gary and David to work together have been totally exhausted. A clear decision is needed at this meeting to close the situation, so the people involved know where they stand.

I deeply regret that this situation exists, and that I have had to bring it up in such strong and personal terms in a Council meeting agenda, but I am at the end of my tether on this. As someone who was appointed Secretary on a modernising and reforming agenda (to which getting the right IT systems in place is critical), I am not prepared to beat about the bush on this anymore.

Council can either decide that they accept David's decision to withhold accesses, and Gary will withdraw his offer to redevelop BCA's systems. You will hear no more about this from him or me. Alternatively, my recommendation is that Council instruct Gary to redevelop/replace the systems to which David is currently withholding access, including BCA Online, the membership database and membership systems. I suggest that such action is accompanied by suitable preventative measures to avoid further activity behind the scenes to frustrate this process.

Fundamentally the question is: Can any member of BCA Council ignore Council decisions just because they think they know better? The answer is no unless you want anarchy.

Matt Ewles (Secretary), supported by Howard Jones (Treasurer / Insurance Manager)

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

Carried over from October meeting, and now amended following the ballot result.

The BCA recently removed a category of group membership that enabled clubs to join without all of their members having to have individual membership. This category of membership was used mainly by clubs for who caving was not the main activity. Where these clubs still wish to be associated to the BCA, one alternative we can offer is Associate Membership. I feel we need clearer guidance on this class of membership and what it gives an organisation (and, importantly, what it doesn't when compared to full group membership). Please find below some proposed wording.

Why does the BCA offer associate membership?

The BCA acknowledge that there are organisations who wish to associate with the BCA but for who full group membership is not appropriate. Examples include outdoor activity service providers for who caving may only be one of many facets of that organisation, and thus of relevance to only a very small number of their members/participants. It may not be appropriate for every member of these organisations to become a full BCA individual member, as is required for full group membership.

Associate membership provides as a means for these organisations for who full membership is not appropriate to still participate in the BCA, show commitment to underground exploration in the UK, to receive BCA news, and to support the BCA's aims and guiding principles.

How much does associate membership cost?

Associate membership has a one-off annual cost of £25

What are the benefits of associate membership?

The BCA will support and work on behalf of associate members wherever possible, in accordance with the aims and guiding principles of the constitution. Associate members may receive BCA news and communications, and may, if they wish, also join the BCRA. Associate members may request the use of an appropriate BCA logo to demonstrate their support.

What does the BCA expect of our associate members?

Associate members are expected to respect and support these aims and guiding principles of the BCA and to refrain from acting against the BCA's interests.

What are the limitations of associate membership?

Associate membership does not confer for that organisation any full member benefits including member insurance benefits. In addition, associate members should not expect to receive the same prioritisation of resources and funding as full members, and nor do they have any representation on BCA Council in the way full group members do. Associate members may not qualify for access to most access-facilitated UK caves in the way that full group members do, depending on the specific wording of individual access agreements (which are outside of BCA's control).

I belong to a BCA associate member but want full membership benefits

Individuals within associate member organisations may still take out full individual membership (CIM membership via a full member club, or DIM membership) if they wish to receive the benefits of full BCA individual membership (including a vote).

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

Carried over from October meeting:

Currently scheduled future dates:

4th April 2020 – Council

14th June 2020 – Council and AGM

10th October 2020 – Council

16th January 2021 – Council

3rd April 2021 – Council

13th June 2021 – Council and AGM (date not yet agreed; presumed)

The former Secretary recommended that the April dates are problematically close to the AGM and create unacceptably high workload. I concur that having two meetings two months apart (including the AGM, with very high preparatory workload) is going to be challenging, and I am not relishing this for 2020. He suggested moving the April date back to March which is when it used to be. However, this then puts two Council meetings only two months apart (January and March).

Do we really need this frequency of Council meetings?

I am concerned for the workload our current frequency of meetings creates. It means no sooner have minutes from one meeting been issued, that agenda items for the next are being requested. Spreading the meetings out with four-monthly intervals would be more sensible.

Proposal by Matt Ewles:

I propose the abolishment of the April meeting altogether, thus reducing to three Council meetings per year (two dedicated meetings and one after the AGM). This is constitutionally acceptable. This will reduce the burden on all Council members to attend meetings, reduce the Secretarial burden, and reflects the fact that more work than ever before is being done offline from physical meetings and using electronic communication (it would also save the BCA about £1000/year in travel expenses, not that this is a particular concern). In time, the new meeting dates should be adjusted: October, February, June (after AGM), thus each four months apart. If accepted, this would be implemented for 2021, cancelling the January/April meeting dates currently advertised and replacing with a date in February (suggest Saturday 13th).

(10) Amendments to Manual of Operations (by Matt Ewles)

Carried over from October meeting, but further amendments added since (mainly due to ballot result and actions to address CSCC concerns at October meeting). Note therefore that this revisions document has changed since being put to (and postponed from) the October meeting.

The Manual of Operations (MoO) is quite outdated in places, and lacking clarity on some points. This includes practice for submitting proposals/applications for BCA Council positions (which led to all the issues at the AGM regarding Will's application). Interestingly, neither the Constitution nor the MoO says anything about how the MoO should be updated; I therefore am reasonable in assuming that this can be updated with approval from BCA Council and does not have to go to an AGM.

A separate document uploaded alongside this agenda shows suggested amendments to the following sections of the MoO:

(1) Committees

(2) Council

(3) Executive

(4) General Meetings

Also; (5) Finances section to be removed (after discussion with Howard Jones).

It is recommended that BCA Council review these amended sections alongside the current MoO text which is available on our website (in the 'about' and 'documents and minutes' section). **I propose that these amendments are accepted subject to any corrections/amendments that this meeting wishes to implement.**

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

This agenda item may be best addressed under the P&I report, but is on the agenda for advanced clarity that Jane has asked for Council opinion on the following:

- Discussion on how much BCA would like to spend in 2020 on promoting BCACavingcover.com
- Advertising with Descent: Does BCA want to continue supporting Descent with £3000 a year? If so, is advertising the best way?
- BCRA – both BCRA and BCA are active online yet work in parallel – how can we work more closely together going forwards? Do we want to or are the organisations happy being seen as separate associations?
- Ghar Parau – how do we let our members know that the vast majority of grant money awarded by GP every year is actually from BCA?
- Initial discussion on a BCA fund for various UK based caving groups/organisations to apply to fund UK based caving events: CHECC, Cavefest etc.
- BCA support for Cavefest?

(12) New Finance Committee funding document – Howard Jones

See separate PDF document showing proposed changes to the BCA Finance Committee funding roles, in light of the proposals accepted at the last meeting to (A) Remove disallowed expenditure categories to allow all regional council activity types to be funded, and (B) for Conservation and Access related projects funding to be reviewed and approved by the C&A Committee (previously reviewed by the Finance Committee).

This new version has been reviewed by BCA Executive and the Finance Committee (which includes the Treasurer of each Regional Council), and their suggestions have been captured in the document. Changes from the current version are clearly shown, and include some housekeeping changes too which are unrelated to (A)/(B) above (e.g. amending terminology for anchors).

Proposal by Howard Jones; Accept this revised document.

(13) Funding request from BCRA – John Gunn

See separate PDF funding request from John Gunn on behalf of the BCRA. The amount of money being requested is considerable, so please review and consider carefully.

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

You may have previously been made aware of this project and a request to match fund £7k of grant money 2 weeks before a deadline. Understandably this raised some alarm bells and fears that due process was being bypassed. No funding was allocated from the BCA and after having discussed the application with Steph Dwyer, I asked Matt Ewles to write to Stories in Stone explaining a need for delay so that we could consider the proposal at this meeting.

A quick summary of the project:

A Youth Caving & Cave Conservation Program

This will be targeted at young people between the ages of 12 – 21, who live within a commutable distance of the Ingleborough Dales. It will provide educational sessions, training and trips. These would occur on a weekly basis (one mid-week evening 3 times a month and 1-2 full weekend day trips a month) between the months of March to November with optional extra dates during school holidays. The youth caving program would be delivered by Yorkshire Dales Guides (YDG) who will provide a regular social meeting place, training facility, cave safety equipment, training and instruction to the participants and recruit assistance by volunteers and visiting parties i.e. cave rescue personnel, experienced cavers, cave explorers etc.

The website and brochure for the adventure academy can be found here:

<https://www.yorkshiredalesguides.co.uk/adventure-academy>

Analysis from BCA Youth and Development (Rostam Namaghi)

The project is 56.2% funded (of £12.7k). So they've already got £7k from Stories in Stone. This means the match funding is asking for the remaining 43.8%. So we are talking funding in the region of

£5.6k. £3.8k is for equipment. Provided that this procured by Youth and Development directly, our estimate of the potential saving would be £1000. The other £1.8k is for training, day trip instruction and marketing. Given BCA already commits a significant outlay to Descent for advertising, this could be costed into our contribution. We may also be able to procure materials for less than the advertised cost.

The training grant (provided by the Training Committee) will cover LCMLA's undertaken for voluntary work. I should point out that BCA already does this so it is not an extra outlay and shouldn't really be considered as part of the funding application as they are already entitled to it. We also have free DBS's via the BCA that we have yet to take advantage of. Both of these could be factored in to meet the percentage match funding. It's unclear how much that will be as it isn't itemized in the initial funding application.

A rough estimate of extra BCA financial outlay in the fiscal year would be £4k - with no ongoing commitment as the project will be sustained by a trip fee.

I cannot verify the financial viability of Yorkshire Dales Guides as a business, little information was available on Companies House and I also do not have any expertise in that field. A stipulation should be made on any gear provided by BCA as to its use and ownership in the event of the scheme folding. I would recommend that it be used for the Adventure Academy for a period of 2 years and should the business fold it be returned to BCA.

In setting up the 'Adventure Academy', Yorkshire Dales Guides are seeking to grow their business and understandably BCA money being used to pay CICs to take children on trips requires serious justification to our membership. I think this proposal merits funding because:

- It demonstrates sustainability and there is no ongoing cost to BCA.
- The Youth Caving Teams initiative we hope to set up through our member clubs is still some way from being realised - this is a ready to go project that will bridge the gap between the commercial sector that takes thousands of children caving every year and the rest of the caving world.
- There is £7k of external funding coming into the caving world if we plug the gap - no other organisation has the will or means to take this opportunity

(15) Any other business?