



Council Meeting 4th April 2020 - Reports

Originally scheduled at Spanset, Telford Way, Middlewich, CW10 0HX

Due to current Government requirements on social distancing and avoiding non-essential travel, this meeting has been cancelled. However, reports for this meeting have still been collected and published here to help ensure BCA Council are kept up to date with progress.

Chair (Les Williams)

No report

Secretary (Matt Ewles)

Since the January Council meeting, as well as progressing the various actions from this, I have worked with David Rose and Gary to get Newsletter 37 published; an excellent issue, full of good news stories showing how the BCA is working to the benefit of caving nationally, and with some feature articles too for a little bit of added interest. Great work from David!

It is regrettable that this could not be emailed to members. Since the ballot in November, some members have specifically requested that they are not contacted by email any more. Due to the way the membership systems currently work (i.e. no single live database) there is an unacceptable risk that this could be missed and they might still end up getting emailed, which, given how annoyed some of these people already were, could lead to more issues. Furthermore, it has been questioned by some whether clubs are getting appropriate consent to provide email addresses of their members to BCA, in which case the right of the BCA to use those email addresses is questionable.

One way forward here is to scrap CIM membership altogether. The situation of most of our members having their BCA membership processed via a third-party organisation (i.e. a club) means it will continue to be difficult to interact with them. GDPR has seen to that. The interaction we have with our members should clearly be direct, and I am confident that if the BCA was being set up from scratch today, this is how things would work, and the organisation would be structured around this approach (i.e. everyone would join BCA directly). The prospect of having two classes of individual membership (CIM and DIM) would be considered madness in a new organisation today.

However, this would represent an entire restructuring of the BCA, not something that could happen overnight, and with our membership processes as they are, scrapping CIMs simply isn't feasible. This would generate significant amounts of work for both Wendy and Howard, and be most unwelcome from our CIM members too, many of whom appreciate clubs processing their BCA membership for them. Clubs might fear a loss of membership. Our current membership requirements mean that clubs must ensure all their members join the BCA. Verifying this would become even more difficult without CIM being an abundant category. Despite these challenges, I see a move towards a single class of individual membership (DIM only) as being a long-term goal for the BCA and would be interested to hear Vision Group thoughts on this over the coming year.

Another way forward, and one which seems the best solution in the short term under current BCA structure, is to transition towards a single live membership database, make it easier for members to add their email address to this (Gary is looking into both of these), and opt out of emails, as well as to provide more guidance to clubs to ensure appropriate consent is obtained from their members for BCA to be supplied with their contact details. Work is ongoing on this. These measures offer compromise and are deliverable under current BCA structure.

The recent Covid-19 situation has put the UK, and the world into an unprecedented situation, which of course has led to the cancellation of this April Council meeting, and most likely the AGM in June, although the final decision on the AGM will be made in the coming weeks to preserve the deadline for agenda items and applications. In the very likely event of AGM cancellation, BCA Executive will discuss ways forward, based partly on whatever proposals have been put forward and whatever applications for Council vacancies have been made.

During our time without face to face meetings, I will be working with Les and Howard to ensure BCA continues to function, and BCA Council are as engaged on as many matters as possible. This included the email poll on whether to progress to a PAP on the Welsh Government matter, which exceeded the 15 votes of support that I set out as being needed. I am happy to disclose that I supported this, because in 2014, our members voted for BCA to pursue a campaign to have caving recognised under CRoW, and to not take this opportunity would clearly be going against their wishes.

BCA Executive have also decided to purchase Newtocaving.com from Tim and Jane Allen following a proposal for us to do so. This website was set up after TryCaving, the original BCA equivalent set up probably over 10 years ago, became defunct. Tim and Jane used their own money to build this, and I'm sure we can all agree it is excellent... bright, modern, inspiring and exactly the resource those looking to get into caving need. They were able to recoup much of their cost from sponsorship, and so the cost for the BCA to purchase this was only £500, the amount they remain out of pocket, and Howard is, I believe, keen to continue the existing sponsorship to see this £500 recouped with the site under BCA ownership. The BCA officially endorsed Newtocaving.com in the last few years, and BCA Executive are in agreement that such an excellent resource should be something owned and provided by the National Body, and that no individuals should be out of pocket for this. I will be extremely proud to see this move into BCA ownership over coming months and would like to thank Tim and Jane for the work they put into building this website to where it is now.

I will be looking into better online platforms for meetings over the coming weeks. Thanks to those of you who have made suggestions (Zoom and GoToMeeting). I think most people agree that Webex is excessively complex, plus requires too much bandwidth making it not ideal. The BCRA have recently provided some feedback on a meeting they have had using Zoom, and it worked well.

I have been working a lot with Gary on the new website, which is coming along nicely and will hopefully be launched in the next few months for Council review. As well as a much more modern, intuitive and user-friendly front end, fully mobile compatible, the new website will have an excellent back-end interface for BCA Officers to update content, post meetings, diary events, documents and news articles and pictures. It is so simple that even a luddite such as me can use it! Much of my time over the coming months will be updating content (and nagging several of you to help with this).

I'm really pleased to see progress moving forwards on so many fronts... the library, radon monitoring, P&I, the CRoW campaign, increased PL Insurance, amongst many other things... and finally a deficit in our budget due to money being invested back into caving rather than hoarded! It remains an expectation of mine that anyone receiving BCA funding ensures this is recognised, and perhaps something contributed to the BCA newsletter in return; Jane will hopefully agree.

Finally would like to use this report to thank all our Officers and Council appointees for your continued hard work, and to remind everyone, particularly as we may be going without face-to-face meetings for a while, that I am here to provide support to you in performing your roles, so drop me an email if you have any questions or if I can help with anything.

Treasurer (Howard Jones)

Current bank balances:

As at was £316,000. Of which £254,000 is in medium-term interest-bearing accounts and £10,000 is in a short-term deposit account.

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

Ghar Parau Foundation: £7,000

Cavefest: £500

FES subscription: £615

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). Hence the deficit for 2020 is likely to be in the order of £25k currently.

BCA Accounts year ending 31/12/19:

These have been prepared and have been reviewed by Alastair 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 Finance Committee and paid.

Tax return 2019:

As soon as the AGM approves the BCA Accounts for 2019 I will submit the tax return for the same period. No tax is due.

Investment of cash surplus:

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

Donations:

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 the national Library, Katie Eavis has taken on this extra workload. I have had encouraging feedback about her efforts to date.

Ghar Parau Foundation:

As BCA Treasurer I shall attend their next meeting on 22/3/2020 and will report 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.

Howard Jones, 11th March 2020

BCA Accounts for 2019

NOTES
2019 accounts for the British Caving Association show the following:
Income for the year is similar to previous year
Interest is slightly higher as more was held on deposit
Employment costs increase due to pay award in January 2019 plus increased hours in last quarter in support of the library as agreed by Council.
There were no donations in the year
The overall training result was a small deficit, an improvement on previous year
Council agreed the following cost increases in the year:
Radon £4k, Library £2k, GPF £1k.
Support for the regions was £3k higher.
The end result was a surplus of £8k compared with £19k in 2018.
Cash balances were £16k higher at year end compared to previously year at £298k.
Accruals were at a similar value to prior year at £36k.
Net assets were £262k, compared to £254k prior year
They have been independently examined by Alasdair Gott (BCA member)
Howard Jones BCA Treasurer

BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION					
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019					
		2019			2018
		£			£
INCOME					
	Subscriptions	100,886			97,681
	Association	3,284			2,219
	Training Services	22,471			22,918
	Publications & Information	0			0
	Meetings & Conferences	0			0
	Web Services	732			1,389
	TOTAL INCOME	127,373			124,207
EXPENDITURE					
	Subscription	54,995			45,097
	Association	8,933			10,314
	Conservation & Access	0			1,868
	Training Services	22,318			22,101
	Caver Training	827			2,652
	Publications & Information	247			0
	Equipment & Techniques	0			1,453
	Youth Development	1,650			1,542
	Radon Expenditure	3,967			0
	Web Services	2,776			2,062
	Regional Caving Councils	5,582			2,682
	International	400			339
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	101,695			90,110
CHARITABLE DONATIONS					
	British Cave Research Association for British Caving Library	12,000			10,000
	Ghar Parau Foundation for Expedition Programme	6,000			5,000
	SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	7,678			19,097
TAX		0			0
	SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR AFTER TAX	7,678			19,097

BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION				
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2019				
		2019		2018
		£		£
CURRENT ASSETS				
	Debtors and Prepayments	388		6,942
	Balances at Bank and cash in hand	298,477		281,905
		<u>298,865</u>		<u>288,847</u>
LESS: CURRENT LIABILITIES				
	Creditors and Accruals payable within one year	36,851		34,511
NET ASSETS				
		<u>262,014</u>		<u>254,336</u>
REPRESENTED BY RESERVES :				
	General Reserve			
	Balance brought forward	174,336		155,239
	Surplus for year	7,678		19,097
		<u>182,014</u>		<u>174,336</u>
	less transfer to Insurance Reserve	0		0
		<u>182,014</u>		<u>174,336</u>
	Insurance Reserve	80,000		80,000
TOTAL RESERVES				
		<u>262,014</u>		<u>254,336</u>
Approved on behalf of the Executive Committee				
	L Williams, Chairman		Date	
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019				
1 Accounting Policies				
a) Basis of Accounting				
The accounts have been prepared under historical cost accounting rules				
b) Equipment				
Equipment is charged in the accounts in the year of purchase.				
2 Insurance Reserve				
The Insurance Reserve is held at a level which allows a minimum of two years premiums				
3 Insurance no claim rebates (2018)				
The low claims rebate income was received in 2019				
4 Result for the year				
There is a surplus for the year of £7,678 compared with a surplus in 2018 of £19,097				

Membership Administrator (Wendy Williams)

As of 22nd March 2020:

CIMs = 4830

Groups = 157

DIMs = 681

There are no new clubs for consideration at this meeting.

Insurance Manager (Howard Jones)

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.

Howard Jones, 11th March 2020

Conservation and Access Officer (Claire Ross)

No report. BCA Council are directed to the draft minutes of the 12th March 2020 C&A meeting. These draft minutes will be available on the website soon.

CRoW Working Party (David Rose)

No report

Publications and Information Officer (Jane Allen)

WWW.BCACAVINGCOVER.COM

Promotion currently on hold for obvious reasons.

THE PROMOTION OF BCA – in Descent



I found the feedback at the last meeting very useful. I spoke with Chris Howes who was more than happy to help increase BCA visibility in Descent. We came up with the above advert for the next issue which gives a positive message to cavers reading Descent on how the organisation is supporting the publication. Chris suggested moving the advert's position every issue so it doesn't become 'invisible' in the same position every time – I agreed and left it to his discretion.

Chris agreed to use the BCA logo within the news pages and also was most helpful in agreeing to publish various news items. It was a little difficult for the next issue in that it coincides with the publication of the BCA newsletter – so we made that the news! I am looking forward to seeing the next edition 😊

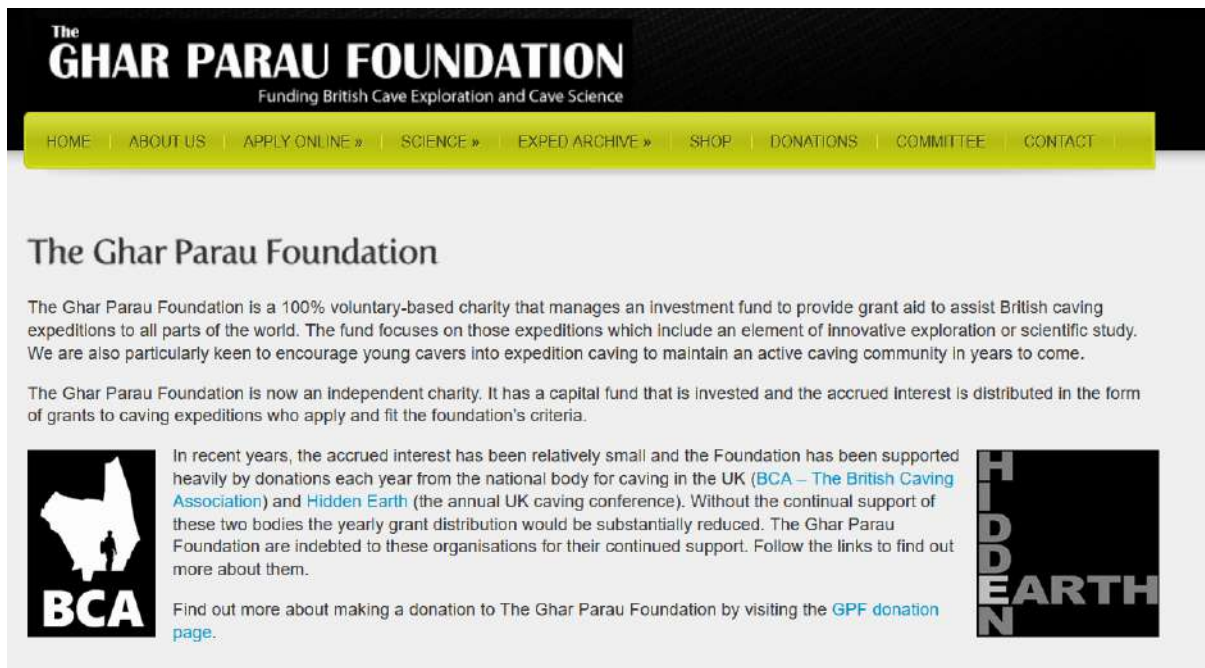
Ghar Parau:

Last report I wrote:

I also believe we should make far more of the money BCA give to Ghar Parau for expeditions. It's ironic that GP have such a positive image amongst cavers whereas BCA has some work to do – yet it's mainly BCA money that is handed out by GP each year.

Should BCA not be proud about this too??

Phil was most helpful and the Ghar Parau website now says:



I shared this round Facebook & UKC.

FACEBOOK

- The number of 'likes' is now over 1,453 (up from 1,233) and rising. I intend to promote the BCA Facebook page itself to increase the number of likes as it's a great way to reach many cavers cost effectively. Said this last report but have been manic, really will do it now, especially as cavers are online rather than underground due to current sad times.
- Repeated again - If other BCA groups 'tag' BCA in their Facebook posts, I will see them and know to share. It's too time consuming looking at lots of groups every day. Use @BritishCavingAssociation also use @ukcaving and I will share on there too.
No one does apart from DCA, thank you DCA 😊
- BCRA are active on Facebook but the two organisations aren't working together. Who would be best for me to contact at BCRA, anyone know? Thanks, Jane
- I need to speak with the Library to improve mutual marketing

The BCA Newsletter:

Another excellent edition – congratulations to David Rose and Matt & Gary and all those who contributed. I am hoping we will soon be able to e-mail the newsletter to all members.

Should have done this sooner, however put out a call for feedback:

<https://ukcaving.com/board/index.php?topic=26229.msg320106;topicseen#new>

The BCA Logo:

I'm hoping to have more time in Spring and plan to run a 'Logo Police' campaign – as many clubs, groups, etc still display the old BCA logo – we really do need to get the old one updated for the new one as soon as possible 😊

Newsletter Editor (David Rose)

No report: However, newsletter 37 published in February (great job by David in pulling together excellent content); next anticipated later in 2020. Don't be shy in submitting content!

British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)

Cataloguing Surveys:

Our two volunteers have completed work on the hundreds of Peak District surveys in the John Beck Legacy which were stored in tubes. All 133 tubes have now been dealt with and we have been able to supply DCA with a spreadsheet detailing the 426 surveys and maps identified and catalogued.

The volunteers are now just starting on John Beck's 8-drawer map chest, which contains hundreds more Peak District surveys, maps, aerial photos, etc. - again the spreadsheets will go to DCA.

There are many other surveys in our collection remaining to be catalogued but we have made the John Beck collection a priority in order for DCA to be able to include the most up-to-date survey scans on their website where they will be accessible to all cavers.

Duplicate copies go to help other caving libraries:

Thanks to the hard work done since last November by our Library Assistant, Katie Eavis, on cataloguing journals, we now have a considerable collection of duplicate copies of journals and books which have found their way into the collection over past years. These duplicates include some complete runs of important caving and cave science journals. Mostly these have come from donations by relatives of cavers now dead or from several caving clubs which have donated their entire library to BCRA in the past or more recently to BCL. We are now aware of a caving club on Mendip which suffered considerable losses from its library due to a fire and are looking to be able to supply a considerable number of the missing items to begin to re-stock their library.

In addition to the Hidden Earth Lucky Dip, we also pass on runs of duplicate periodicals to help to complete collections held by a number of clubs around the country. We want to encourage caving Libraries in general and ensure that they communicate with us and with each other - all cavers will benefit from this.

Enquiries and Assistance to Regions and BCA Committees

We are now fielding enquiries about documents and reports created by NCA, BCA and their constituent bodies or officers in the past. We try to maintain a complete printed set of BCA and NCA Council and Committee reports and documents (as well as past DCA regional documents). Although much of BCA's output is now on its website we are gradually building up printed copies as a backup. NCA documents now exist only as paper copies on our shelves and we are able to scan these to help with the requests now beginning to come in from BCA officers and other enquirers.

This is in addition to the general run of enquiries being dealt with by our Librarian, Mary Wilde: these come from all over the UK and also from abroad. Our help is being acknowledged in various publications around the world for which we have been able to supply information or photographs.

Coronavirus:

Following government rulings on travel to workplace by personal transport, etc., for the moment the British Caving Library has had to halt its operations on site. (We had hoped to be able to continue by staff working alone at the Library on different days but we can no longer do this.)

However, if we possibly can, we will still be dealing with queries received by email to the usual contacts. We will do our best to help using our own private resources and by links with other caving libraries.

Clearly there can be no visitors to the Library at present.

Please also check <http://facebook.com/BritishCavingLibrary/> for any further notices about the operation of the library.

Jenny Potts, BCRA Library Co-ordinator 24-Mar-2020

Media Liaison (Andy Eavis)

Late in 2019 I was approached by the BBC in connection with Steve Backshall wanting to make a caving film in Indonesia. I directed them to a number of people I know in Indonesia and they started up a dialogue. I believe when Coronavirus permits there will be some filming in Seram.

Radio Nottingham came up with a fairly ludicrous inquiry about a note somebody had found in a bottle in Norway referring to British caving. I put them onto David Gough who seems to have kept them quiet.

A Belgium film maker approached about "making a caving film", he is currently considering options.

Back2Back Productions, a film making company are doing something on lava caves and volcanoes, they want to feature lava caves on Mount Etna in Italy, so I put them onto contacts I have in Italy and they seem very happy with the results and are now working with them

I have had a number of other approaches covering such things as advertising outdoor film festivals etc, but all have now been shelved pending the outcome of Coronavirus. It would appear that is more or less the way of the world.

Andy Eavis 28th March 2020

Cave Registry (David Cooke)

Nothing to report.

Webmaster (Gary Douthwaite)

The existing website continues to work adequately, and a number of changes have been made to keep things as up to date as possible.

Work is underway to phase www.newtocaving.com into BCA ownership – something I didn't expect to have to take on but it hopefully won't be too much work to change over to BCA control. I expect this site to be moved to BCA servers in a couple of weeks and largely un-changed initially but probably with some re-branding to identify it better as a service provided by BCA.

An advert for the party weekend was posted (although this is likely to be cancelled soon and notification of that put in its place) and on instruction, Covid-19 advice put on the homepage too. Please feel free to email me if this needs updating (as it no doubt will in due course).

Lots of work has been ongoing on the new website, and more news will follow; it will be launched initially for Council review and then will phase in to replace the existing website. One of the biggest challenges has been how to structure the information in a logical way, ensuring menus are intuitive and the site is easy to keep updated.

During the Council review phase I would like to urge everyone to supply me with any content you want adding or changing; much of the content is based on the existing website, with amendments and additions made by Matt, who has been working as content editor. There is also a huge amount of extremely out of date stuff on there too which will be removed. In fact, some of the content on the existing website about membership was totally wrong, and this has been corrected. But it would be good to get more relevant content from all the BCA Standing Committees and Working Groups.

Due to the issues Matt points out in his Secretary report, BCA Online may be shut down to simplify the membership system and ensure that there is only one mechanism for details to be updated (i.e. via Wendy). This should help avoid inconsistencies developing in our membership databases for now, while a much better and longer-term solution is identified to bring in later this year.

As pointed out in David Cooke's report, BCA Online is now currently in my control. I was not expecting to take this on fully so soon and this was not the ideal outcome of the last meeting, however here we are. I have been working with Wendy Williams and David Gibson to decide the best way forward and will continue to do so to come up with a good solution. I would like to thank David Gibson for his extensive help in keeping things running and providing background information on the current structure.

Web Services (David Cooke)

Web Services future

Given that BCA Council, in their wisdom, sacked me as the ITWG Convenor at the last Council meeting, I have decided I will not stand again for the roll of Web Services Manager. I informed the Executive and Acting ITWG Convenor the day following the January Council meeting. I also asked the following questions:

- 1. Is anyone willing to carry on with web hosting for the fee paying users (Clubs and some individuals)?*
- 2. Is anyone willing to carry on with web hosting for the non-fee paying users (Regional Councils, Rescue Groups, Constituent Bodies, BCRA)?*
- 3. Is anyone willing to carry on with acting as a domain registrar for the fee paying users?*
- 4. Is anyone willing to carry on with acting as a domain registrar for the non-fee paying users?*

If Web Services is to be wound up then we need to give the users as much notice as possible.

To date, some two half months later, I regret to say, I have had no answers from the ITWG Chairman or the Executive. If Web Services is to be shutdown then there are some 50 websites that need moving. That is a lot of work. I have offered to help make the transition as smooth as possible. But to be clear, having given 5 months notice, my commitment expires at the AGM. Time is already short. Some clarity is urgently required.

BCA Online

I need to make it clear since the January Council meeting I am no longer responsible for BCA Online. The responsibility has passed to the new ITWG Convenor (acting). BCA Online was first and foremost written by me to provide BCA with a GDPR compliant mailing list for the Newsletter. It performed that task admirably up until the last issue. It is a great pity that BCA was unable to email out the last Newsletter because it lacked an up to date list. This is because BCA Online has not been updated since January. The ITWG Convenor has full admin access so there is nothing preventing it from being updated. He has not contacted me about it.

Council should be aware that BCA Online contains numerous routines to cross check the membership database for errors. These creep in at an alarming rate because of the way BCA collects membership data. The effort needed to perform the same task manually would be huge if not impossible. Not having a completely reliable membership database obviously has implications for any future ballot.

IT Working Group (Gary Douthwaite)

After the last Council meeting, Matt sent an email to the IT Working Group to explain the change of convenor and asked for the participants to confirm if they wished to continue their involvement. Ari Cooper Davis (who did such an excellent job helping with the ballot) and David Gibson (who has also been extremely helpful) replied to offer continued support. The other participants did not, but I understand that they are more involved in Web Services support.

The IT Working Party is therefore a little down on numbers, but this is something I hope to rebuild and repopulate in future. Work is ongoing to research future solutions for membership management and I will report to Council in due course with a suggested way forward. In the meantime, I refer people to my Webmaster report for planned interim measures.

It is my assumption that the Web Services Officer is wishing to stand down in June (following an email suggesting this in January, although I have heard nothing since).

Web Services is a complex issue, mostly because of the number of 3rd parties involved. I think it can continue however it does need someone to take charge of it. I am happy to help/take on either the restructure or winding up of this service.

Personally, I don't think BCA should be responsible for being a web hosting company and the huge amount of associated work this carries with it. However, if Council think it is a service that needs to continue then I would do my best to handle any transition at least in the short term and if it cannot be managed in the longer term then winding up would be the next option. If it is not to continue, again I will help individuals get set up elsewhere. In this case it would be helpful to identify a "preferred" service provider (I have ideas for this) to pass current users over to.

To answer the four questions posed in David Cooke's Web Services report, I would be willing to say yes to them all at least in an administrative role to keep things running. I did send this in an email to him in early February however I have not received a response.

Training Officer (Nigel Atkins)

No report

Qualifications Management Committee (Juliet Parker-Smith)

A brief report to update on QMC developments, accompanied by my apologies for absence:

Stats:

Registrations and workshop attendee numbers were looking healthy for the beginning of 2020, but the recent outbreak of Covid 19, will undoubtedly have financial consequences for this year. I have issued the statement below, to alleviate time pressure on award holders to update their qualification and empower them to make sensible decisions based on governmental advice.

COVID 19

In the light of recent government advice to reduce non-essential travel around the UK, all BCA LCMLA and CIC workshops will be postponed until further notice. BCA award holders who are due to attend an update workshop between now and 30th September 2020, will have a 6-month extension to their award expiry date. This also applies to trainer/assessor workshops.

Those already booked onto a workshop will be contacted in due course by the workshop director, to arrange a suitable future date.

This advice will be reviewed as more information becomes available.

Go Membership:

Gethin Thomas and Mary Wilde have had several on-line meetings with the Go membership team to discuss progress with implementation of the Data Management System. Work continues.

Radon:

QMC continue to work alongside the Radon Working Group to produce guidance notes and procedure for those working in underground venues, the aim being compliance with the Ionising Radiation Regulations (IRR17). Sampling is near completion, a Radon Protection Adviser has been consulted and a draft document has been produced which is currently being considered by those who have been involved in the process. On completion, we are hoping to be able to offer award holders advice on how to calculate their radon exposure whilst at work and thus comply with current legislation.

Resources:

Resources for award holders reported at the last meeting (Level 2 rope-work and Life-lining systems) have now been completed and appear as downloads in the training section of the BCA website.

Equipment and Techniques Officer (Mark Sims)

No report

Rope Testing (Bob Mehew)

Some work has been undertaken following a request from Training Committee to look at the differences between Alpine and Cavers Butterfly Knots on the Bradford Pothole Club's Rope Test Rig. A report has been drafted (see overleaf), which concludes that *"It is considered that the observed weakness of the Cavers Butterfly knot makes it a knot to avoid"*. I propose that the document be put up on the BCA web site in due course and intend to both produce a simpler version for Descent and consult with Ged Champion about getting it into the FSE publication. The Bradford Pothole Club have made plans to start the demolition of the garage and hence rig in Spring this year but the Coronavirus pandemic may well change them.

Comparison of Alpine and Cavers Butterfly Knots (supplement to Rope Test report)

Training Committee sought advice on the differences of Alpine versus Cavers Butterfly knots. A small set of tests were conducted using the Bradford Pothole Club's dynamic Rope Test Rig to determine what difference was immediately apparent when both knots were subjected to dynamic testing by arresting a falling test mass.

It is noted that Marbach and Tourte as translated by Alspaugh in the book *Alpine Caving Techniques* (ACT) states that whilst the Alpine Butterfly knot "*is really only useful as a mid line knot*", the false Butterfly knot (as they call the Cavers Butterfly knot) "*will slip much easier and it is recommended for different use: it is ideal as a shock absorbing knot*". Ashley's Book of Knots recognises the Alpine Butterfly knot as ABoK 331 & 1053 (though it calls it a Linesman Knot) but not the Cavers Butterfly knot.

A batch of test samples were made up from new but washed 9mm SRT rope with either an Alpine Butterfly or a Cavers Butterfly knot tied at each end, see figure 1. The set up was designed to simulate the normal usage of these knots in a traverse situation. Three out of three Alpine Butterfly knot samples broke whilst four out of five Cavers Butterfly knot samples survived. Although the Cavers Butterfly knot samples which survived the tests saw higher peak forces, they also absorbed some 15% more energy without breaking when compared to the energy absorbed in breaking the Alpine Butterfly knot samples. This is in line with the observation by ACT of the Cavers Butterfly knot being a good shock absorbing knot. The breakage point was where the active rope end (between the knots) entered into the knot. In all cases, the loops extended in length.



Figure 2 Alpine & Cavers between sewn loops

A second test was conducted with a single sample each of the butterfly knot tied midway within a lanyard made with sewn loop ends, see Figure 2, so the majority of the energy measured would have been absorbed by the butterfly knot. (Previous work has shown that sewn loops absorb a small fraction of the total energy absorbed by a rope sample when compared to knotted loops.)

This set up was designed to simulate using the butterfly knot to tie out a damaged section of rope when in use. The Alpine Butterfly knot sample broke in the knot with a peak force of 11.5kN with the sample consuming some 2000J of energy. In significant contrast, the Cavers Butterfly knot completely undid by 'pulling out' with a peak force of 7.5kN with the sample consuming some 1000J of energy. For a typical caver of 100kg mass, that is equivalent to a fall of around 1m. This scenario would lead to the damaged section of the rope having to cope with the remaining energy of the fall arising from the additional distance that the caver was to fall. There is also a contrast between the undoing of the Cavers Butterfly knot in this test set up compared to the first test set up where the loops lengthened. Presumably this is down to the force being applied across the knot via both active ends as opposed to in the first test set up where the force is applied across one active end through the knot to the loop.

There is a slight benefit in using a Cavers Butterfly knot in a traverse line in terms of better energy absorption capacity to an Alpine Butterfly knot. But there is a substantial weakness with a Cavers Butterfly knot compared to an Alpine Butterfly knot if used in tying out a damaged section of rope. It is considered that the observed weakness of the Cavers Butterfly knot makes it a knot to avoid.

Bob Mehew, BCA Rope Test Officer



Figure 1 Set Up

Youth and Development Officer (Rostam Namaghi)

Youth and Development Quarterly report March 2020

In the interests of making this report brief, we recently (27/03/2020) held a meeting and the draft minutes are available on the website.

Bangor University

We have identified a viable group trying to start up a caving club at Bangor University, and have been offering assistance in the same manner as both Swansea and Lancaster. Equipment has been purchased and a loan agreement is being drawn up and agreed for the sum of £1925.34 to be repaid over 3 years. Contact with local clubs, access controlling bodies and former cavers has been very successful and despite the Corona Virus, this project has a very optimistic outlook.

Corona Virus and the potential impact

Trying to analyse the potential long-term impacts of Corona Virus is a difficult process. We are happy that Scout Caving Teams are robust enough to weather the coming storm, owing to healthier finances and a large leadership pool. The same cannot be said for student clubs and the prospect of a prolonged crisis could leave many clubs without an intake and significantly deplete the experience pool in those clubs. This is on top of the loss of experience suffered by the washout of the expedition season.

Fortunately, CHECC is a strong network and Y&D will be doing everything we can to support it. An emergency plan is being formulated and will be put forward if necessary – this is primarily increasing our fuel budget and securing grants for training/venues. We will be proactively looking for weak points and contacting clubs to find out what state they are in and what help is needed over the coming months.

Documentation Review

One significant area of weakness that has been identified is the lack of clear documentation in one place that outlines the various schemes and budgets associated with Y&D. We will hope to clear up everything over the next quarter in order to increase transparency and make the functioning of the group smoother. As always we are planning for the future and part of that is reviewing our structure within the organisation following changes to the manual of operations and the conflicts with our terms of reference.

We will hopefully finish the handbook for BCA caving clubs in this enforced 'break'.

To end on a pleasant note: I would like to congratulate the newly formed scout caving team for Snowdonia and Anglesey, CHECC and two scout caving teams in the dales who all received a generous grant following the passing of a Dales caver.

Vision Working Party (Hellie Adams)

No report

Safeguarding (Chris Boardman)

No report

Radon Working Party (Gethin Thomas)

Several people have been working hard on re-writing Radon Underground, updating the content to reflect the revised regulations as well as including the results from the current sampling supported by BCA, the MoD and AHOEC (Association of Heads of Outdoor Education). Sampling continued over the Winter, and despite the flooding the majority of dosimeters have now been recovered, with the results starting to arrive.

The final round of sampling planned for April 2020 has been postponed due to the Corona Virus, **we would like to complete this round of sampling should BCA be in agreement, in April 2021.** Although frustrating the lack of sampling should not delay the completion of Radon Underground, although the document will need updating when the final round of sampling is completed.

Last month Bob Mehew and I, Bob having put a mammoth amount of effort into re-drafting Radon Underground, met with BCAs appointed Radon Protection Adviser (RPA) to review the document and the proposed methods for those leading cave or mine exploration trips in a professional capacity. This was a very successful meeting, with the document largely accepted and the management approaches agreed. This represents a significant step forward in addressing the Radon problem for professional users.

Our next stage is to address some of the comments made by BCAs RPA and approach HSE to confirm if they are satisfied with the document and approaches. We're hoping to achieve this by Easter.

QMC will no doubt need to absorb the document and address the recommendations within it appropriately for the LCMLA & CIC scheme. An on-line meeting with members of QMC is being arranged by the end of March. The management systems proposed are essentially split into 4 stages depending on the levels of radon for the caves/mines instructors are likely to use:

- 1) Use sites with an annual average below 300Bqm-3 only and so avoid the regulations
- 2) Limit the number of hours working underground so as not to exceed a specific dose, based on the annual average of the cave/mine with the highest level of radon of all those used or likely to be used by a particular instructor
- 3) Use a personalized "Radon Estimator" spreadsheet to calculate exposure during the year to ensure a leader stays within a pre-determined limit
- 4) If wanting to use caves/mines with high levels of radon then the instructor should employ the services of an RPA independently and declare themselves a "classified worker"

Part of the management approach is to annotate surveys with the sampling sites and the radon levels recorded at these sites, an example is attached. LCMLA award holders will need this information for use in the Radon Estimator spread sheet. These surveys may be of benefit to the broader caving community, although there may be copyright issues if made publicly available.

We are currently working through the survey's we've accessed with a view to seeking permission to use them. **A question for BCA Council is do you want to make these surveys available to the broader caving community?**

Radon Underground is likely to be a challenging read for many cavers, although the information within it clearly useful. The document includes a range of summarised information, interpretations

of the most relevant parts of the new regulations and a significant amount of detail justifying the approaches it recommends. I would suggest when it's completed as well as making the document available, a leaflet type document summarising the key points and directing cavers to Radon Underground should also be produced.

Clearly it would be useful to direct cavers to data which they can use to help assess the radon risk and make informed decisions with regards their caving activity. **To achieve this the data would need to be available in some format, such as through BCA's website. Again, another question for BCA Council.**

What has been clearly evident from the sampling and research to date is that radon levels fluctuate significantly from cave to cave and vary seasonally. The sampling conducted is very limited, and so begs the question as to how BCA would like to (if at all) support sampling of caves/mines used by recreational explorers in the future.

Gethin Thomas, Radon Working Group, 20th March 2020

Sample plan



UIS Representative (Andy Eavis)

Clearly, at this time not so much is going on within the UIS management. The 2021 Year of Caves and Karst is gently progressing and maybe when we all get more comfortable with working from home and virtual meetings this will progress.

The same applies to the International Congress in Lyon next July 2020.

Now that I am back from abroad, I will be contacting the relevant people within both of these organisations and coordinate more of an effort in Britain.

For more information please review their website at: www.uis-speleo.org

FSE Representative (Ged Campion)

FSE Membership

The FSE currently comprises a membership of 31 countries.

Information & Publicity

The FSE Facebook page (www.facebook.com/eurospeleo). WikiCaves organisation keep the FSE website updated on a regular basis. The FSE newsletter is published on a regular basis and available here: www.eurospeleo.eu

Last General Assembly Meeting of the FSE(GAM) 2019

The GAM at the Eurospeleo Forum 2019 in Dolni Lozen, Bulgaria, 26-29th September. Full details of the meeting and decisions can be found in the GAM minutes on the FSE web site.

Eurospeleo Projects

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

Covid 19 Virus

The FSE has sent out this month to all member countries advice concerning the virus. Depending on the outcome of the Covid 19 outbreak, the next FSE General assembly meeting will be held in 2020 in Burgos, northern Spain, July/August.

Next Year's GAM

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

Additional report: Youth and Development (Y&D) and Charterhouse Caving Company (CCC) Ltd Mediation: Final Report & Recommendations

Phil Rowsell, 25th March 2020

This is the 2nd report to council on the mediation between the Y&D and CCC Ltd.

I was very dismayed to find out that my first report given to council for the last meeting, on the point of being read out, Y&D requested to see the report beforehand which the Chairman agreed. As a result, because the meeting was quite busy, this report was subsequently forgotten and not read out at the council meeting. I have to say I think this decision by the chairman was poor and that parties have to accept/reject the mediators views, and NOT be allowed potentially block or interfere with its finding prior to it being made aware to council. The mediator is there to mediate on agreement of both parties and they have to respect the finding and hopefully the solution of the mediator. I hope this will not happen again. I include my first report as I am not sure whether this has been read by all concerned.

BCA Secretary note: I would like to respond to the above for the record. The report mentioned above for the January Council meeting was supplied the day before the meeting itself (as Phil has intended to deliver it verbally in person but was unable to join last minute). It is regrettable that the chance to read out and discuss this report was overlooked; this clearly should have happened in an ideal world, but it was a very busy meeting with a packed agenda, and thus it is easy for things, especially those that come through last minute, to get overlooked. We apologise to Phil for this, especially given the amount of work put in to help BCA deal with this situation, and I can confirm there is no intention by BCA Executive to block or interfere with his findings as mediator in this case. The January report was included in an appendix to the minutes, which were circulated to Council.

January 2020 - Initial report

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

Youth Development Group (YDG)

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

Charterhouse Cave Company (CCC)

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

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

CCC Complaint

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

Summary

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

March 2020 - Report

Since the last January meeting, I have been predominantly in the UK and I have tried to move this forward to a closure.

Despite a number of promises, I have not received any email from CCC Ltd to elaborate on the concerns that CCC Ltd have about reducing the age limit further that other cavers may not be aware of. This would be extremely useful information so that other cavers might appreciate the complex problems CCC Ltd are experiencing. On the 14th March 2020, I met with the chairman, Pete Hann (PH) and had further discussions. CCC Ltd felt that the issues they raise hadn't properly been dealt with by BCA and that communications has been extremely slow. I suggested that the timing had been particularly bad as when the complaint was first raised, the BCA Secretary had change twice, some communications had been mis-understood and that things had possibly not been documented as well as they should have been. PH further explained what CCC Ltd's complaint wanted to achieve and what outcome they would like to see. We discussed this and developed a possible outcome that hopefully would be acceptable to both CCC Ltd and Y&D. I also indicated that BCA would need some more evidence to substantiate the complaint if it was to be brought before council. PH said he would provide this, by first send me an email for suggestions which could subsequently be passed on passed on to BCA Council.

We also further discussed the possibility of how we could move forward with reducing the age limit in CCC Ltd managed caves and how that the BCA might actually be beneficial to CCC Ltd, both seen as the National Body and possibly financially. He was responsive to this, but re-iterated it might not be as quick a process as Y&D would like. He also re-iterated again that CCC Ltd would like to also put this matter behind them and move on.

I subsequently talked to Y&D (both Will and Rostam) to see whether they would accept the proposal by CCC Ltd. Both seem willing to move the situation forward and were not against the recommendation I was making. During the conversation several things were highlighted. Will seemed to think that the thrust of the CCC Ltd complaint i.e. that he had contravened the BCA constitution section 11.1 by ringing up Somerset Wildlife Trust (directly) had already been dealt with and minuted, but was happy to have it reiterated it again if it would finally bring a closer to this dispute. In checking previous minutes (Council minutes 14th April 2018, pages 7 & 13), this issue had been raised and discussed, but the minutes are not clear on the outcome and (it is believed) no official correspondence was sent or communicated to CCC Ltd. Rostam had some comments that I will draw on in my conclusions, regarding clause 11.1 and 11.2.

Since the meeting (a week ago) and in spite of a few email and text message prompts, I have received neither the further documentation about the complaint or information about the problems about reducing the age of entry further or any action plan to move forward.

Conclusions

1) It has been difficult to establish all the ins and outs of the wranglings between Y&D and CCC Ltd, and would require significant amount of time to sift through documents and personal views etc to establish so, and furthermore, the true benefit of proving who is right or wrong is probably of little value other than self-satisfaction. However the general understanding of the situation is known.

Talking to individuals and looking at minutes (particularly Council minutes 14th April 2018, pages 7 & 13) etc, it is generally accepted that Will contacting Somerset Wildlife Trust directly and caused CCC Ltd both possible embarrassment and a number of problems as people different from those that CCC Ltd liaise with were contacted. Will has already acknowledged that this was probably not the best cause of action and has apologised for it. Again, Will has also accepted that the better course of action was to bring this to the attention of BCA Council and ask them to mediate with CCC Ltd in accordance with constitution point 11.1, again this is documented in the referred to minutes. The fact that this did not seem to be officially communicated back to CCC Ltd by the BCA is possibly an oversight by BCA as this could have possibly helped this situation diffuse.

(2) It has to be said that the timing of this (these?) complaints was at a time when there were a number of changes in officers (particularly the BCA secretary) and possibly procedures and timing was not followed as well as it should have been. Hopefully, the BCA seems to be in a more stable situation now, and if a new complaint should arise in the foreseeable future, hopefully the process and timing will result in a more satisfactory procedural result. It also must be noted that there must be dialogue between the BCA and the complainant to ensure one party is not waiting for information from the other, as I believe further happened in this complaint.

3) In dealing with this complaint, I have found the Y&D group (particularly Will) willing to listen to my suggestions and endeavour to help the situation, by writing a further apology etc.

This is not to say that the CCC Ltd has not responded and been willing to partake in discussions. However, when dealing with the CCC Ltd Chairman both on the phone and in a face to face meeting, the meeting seemed to have made great progress etc. However after this, (and with further prompting) no further correspondence has been received. I have been waiting for nearly 6 months for CCC Ltd to send an email to me that explains the difficulties in reducing or eliminating the age restriction to access CCC Ltd managed caves. Since my last face to face meeting I have again had no correspondence despite prompting.

This (as hinted in my first report to council show above), I think is unacceptable and while in this electric age everyone is expecting an immediate response, BCA members should respond in a reasonable timely manner. It was also ironic how critical PH was of the slow response by BCA. (Kettle Black??).

While the disagreement with Y&D may have not resulted in an atmosphere to have good communication between each other on this matter, as a mediator, CCC Ltd has not done this and I still have not received any information bar an email I received (early January) which was a holding statement from CCC Ltd saying that they had been very busy recently and would probably not be able to reply until the end of January, but again nothing more. I have to say that when dealing with CCC Ltd, I feel the same frustration that Y&D might have felt. While I do not condone their actions in any way, I can understand in the heat of the moment why this might have occurred and understand the statement of "kicking the can down the road until people lose interest" which was levelled against CCC Ltd when I began this mediation.

As pointed out by a number of people and by clause 11.1, the BCA itself, (and its associated members) is also not permitted to interfere with another members affairs unless requested by its member, thus BCA has no power to instruct a member to reply in a timely manner etc. This I feel a gross failing of the constitution.

I feel that if parties (and this applies to all parties) want to be a member of the British Caving Association, they should abide by the rules but also respond to fellow association members in a prompt and above all courteous manner (this doesn't mean immediate, but waiting months for a reply is frankly unacceptable) and leaves me with the sense of having your cake and eating it.

Not to do so in my opinion is close to the breaching of regulation 11.2 which by not responding to emails etc (particularly a mediator) is not particularly acting in the interest of the association. I am not suggesting this has actually occurred, but members have to play the game and respond to other members queries if they want to be part of the association.

Until such time that CCC Ltd furnish me with the problems of reducing the access age to the caves they manage, I can make no further progress. Once received, I might be able to discuss how we could possibly move this forward, and how possibly BCA might be able to help them to achieved this.

Recommendation:

- 1) At the next council meeting, to close off this CCC Ltd complaint, as shown and already accepted by Will his action did not follow clause 11.1 for which he has already apologised. While partially minuted in the April 2018 Council minutes, this should be properly minuted and a letter sent to CCC Ltd to indicate so.
- 2) Included in this minuted statement, a reminder should be made to all members that clause 11.1 should be followed, and in times of dispute if a way forward cannot be found then the BCA should be asked to find a suitable mediator to try and resolve the situation at an early stage rather than letting the problem fester and intensity increase.
- 3) A statement should also be included to remind all members that they are expected to respond to direct enquires /emails etc. with a timely curious response.

Phil Rowsell 25/03/2020