



Minutes of the Council Meeting Tuesday 9th May 2023

The meeting was held via Zoom starting at 7pm

Table of Contents:

| Agenda item | Page | Agenda item summary |
|--------------------|-------------|---|
| 1 | 1 | Apologies for absence |
| 2 | 3 | Acceptance of Minutes from 29/03/2023 Council Meeting |
| 3 | 1 | Important Agenda items |
| 4 | 3 | Matters Arising/Action List |
| 5 | 4 | Vacancies |
| 5 | 4 | Chair's Report |
| 6 | 5 | Secretary's Report |
| 7 | 5 | BCA Treasurer Report |
| 8 | 5 | BCA Insurance Managers Report |
| 9 | 6 | Membership |
| 10 | 7 | Other Reports |

| | | |
|-------------------|----|--|
| 11 | 9 | AOB |
| 12 | 9 | Date of Next Meeting |
| Appendices | | |
| 1 | 10 | Minutes of 29/03/23 Council Meeting |
| | | |
| | | |

Next Meeting Important Agenda Items

| BCA Council Diary 2023 | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| | Date |
| Council | Tuesday 9 th May 2023 |
| | |
| AGM deadline for receipt of reports: | 28 th May 2023 |
| AGM deadline for posting reports: | 4 th June 2023 |
| AGM | Sunday 11 th June 2023 at 1030 |
| AGM on-line voting until: | Midnight 25 th June 2023 |
| Council following the AGM | 27th June (Approve WG's and Convenors) |

Council Positions

| Voting Position | Name | Initials |
|---------------------------|------------------|----------|
| BCA Executive | | |
| Chair 21-24 (3 years) | Russell Myers | RM |
| Secretary 21-24 (3 years) | Allan Richardson | AR |

| | | |
|---|-------------------|-----|
| Treasurer 20-23 (3years) | Howard Jones | HJJ |
| Group/Club Reps | | |
| Position 1, 21-23 (2 years) | Josh White | JW |
| Position 2, 22-24 (2 years) | Jenny Potts | JP |
| Individual Member Reps | | |
| Position 1, 22-24 (2 years) | Nigel Atkins | NA |
| Position 2, 22-24 (2 years) | Andy Eavis | AE |
| Regional Council Reps | | |
| CCC | | |
| CNCC | Andrew Hinde | AH |
| CSCC | Linda Wilson | LW |
| DCA | Mike Higgins | MH |
| DCUC | David Jean | DJ |
| Constituent Body Reps | | |
| William Pengelly CST | Richard Vooght | RV |
| Assoc. Cave Instructors | Stephan Natynczuk | SN |
| National Caving Scout Active Support Unit | Tony Radmall | TR |
| BCRA | John Gunn | JG |
| NAMHO | Steve Holding | SH |
| CHECC | Jennifer Ryder | JR |
| CDG | Claire Cohen | CC |
| BCRC | Emma Porter | EP |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Non Voting Positions | Name | Initials |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------------|

| | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-----|
| Working Group Convenors | | |
| Training and Equipment | Steve Gray | SG |
| Conservation and Access | Richard Vooght | RV |
| Information Technology | Ari Cooper-Davis | ACD |
| Youth and Development | Josh White | JW |
| QMC | George Plant | GP |
| CoG | Andrew McLeod | AM |
| Radon | Vacant | |
| P & I | Vacant | |
| Additional BCA Appointments | | |
| Insurance Manager | Josh White | JW |
| Membership Administrator | Katie Eavis | KE |
| Safeguarding Officer | Chris Boardman | CB |
| Training Administrator | Mary Wild | MW |
| Library Representative | Jenny Potts | JP |
| Newsletter Editor | Vacant | |
| UIS Representative | Andy Eavis | AE |
| FSE Representative | Ged Campion | GC |
| Artificial Cave | Katie Eavis | KE |
| QMC Representative 1 (observer) | BCA Chair | RM |
| QMC Representative 2 (observer) | Chris Boardman | CB |

Present

Russell Myers, Chris Boardman, Howard Jones, Steve Holding, Josh White, Ged Campion, Andrew McLeod, Jenny Potts, David Jean, Richard Vooght, Mike Higgins.

Agenda item 1: Apologies for absence

Allan Richardson, John Gunn, Andy Eavis, Tony Radmall, Linda Wilson

Agenda item 2: Acceptance of the 29th March 2023 Meeting Minutes

Proposer Jenny Potts

Second Chris Boardman

All in favour passed

Agenda item 4: Matters arising/Action Plan

| Issue | Who | By when | Signed off |
|-------|-----|---------|------------|
| | | | |

Agenda item 5: Vacancies

A Convener is still sought for the P&I working group.

The Radon group remains dormant.

Agenda item 6: Chair's Report

Chair's Report to Council Meeting 9th May 2023

Below in italics is my response to issues about BCA raised in posts on UK Caving Forum; it occurred to me having re-read it, that it would be useful to pass this on to Council as the essential plea I make, is for volunteers to step forward and help us run the Association, publicity being a key priority. In this respect, my appeal goes out to all Council members to cascade this request down through their respective membership for recruits and it is not just key positions to address, the Working Groups would, I have no doubt, appreciate help within their particular role. I hope you can help.

“Some concerns have been expressed lately about the lack of publicity from BCA, regarding key dates in the run-up to the 2023 AGM, which will be held via Zoom on Sunday 11th June, details to follow. The key date of recent concern was 9th March for the receipt of nominations, proposals etc. for consideration at the AGM. Information about key dates has in fact, been running in all the BCA Council meetings in the form of a timeline and recorded in the minutes of each meeting since the last AGM in 2022 and in deed, at meetings before that. All BCA documents including minutes, can be found on the website at this link [Official Documents - British Caving Association \(british-caving.org.uk\)](https://www.british-caving.org.uk)

Following the 2022 AGM, BCA Council adopted a timeline to identify key milestones leading up to the 2023 AGM, recorded in the minutes and rolling on from one meeting to another to ensure we met our obligations under the Constitution and simply did not “forget” to act at those key dates.

Currently, BCA is heavily reliant on its Constituent bodies and Council representatives to disseminate information from its work, largely due to the Publications and Information Officer (P&I) role being vacant who would ordinarily have undertaken this task. We have been unable to recruit a volunteer for the position since the last incumbent resigned which clearly increases the work load of those remaining; as someone once reminded me, “how much time do you think volunteers have?” Answers on the back of a fag packet please.

If there is anyone interested in volunteering for the position, do get in touch with either myself chair@british-caving.org.uk or secretary@british-caving.org.uk Whilst the role entails more than publicity, marketing would probably be a better description, any little help would be most appreciated.

There does appear to be a reluctance among the caving community, to step forward and volunteer to help run BCA, a legacy, in my opinion, of what I would describe as “the troubled years” which tarnished BCA’s image and understandably, may put people off getting involved. However, I can categorically state now, that BCA functions in a completely different atmosphere of co-operation, support and respect for those currently active within the Association which could not be more opposite to that of the troubled years. We are very much focussed on getting the business of the Association, done.

All meetings are now held on Zoom which has led to an efficient and business-like approach to achieving outcomes from the matters and issues arising from the Association’s activities. I can ensure our members, that BCA continues to function well but we are just not in a position to publicise it as well as we might, for lack of a P&I Officer to drive that function.

Other vacancies, within BCA, have largely been filled, the last key position being a convenor for the Conservation and Access Working Group. However, a key vacancy, which we will need filling at the AGM, is that of Treasurer, as the current incumbent, Howard Jones, has served two terms of office over the last 5 years and intends to stand down. Do get in touch if you are interested.

Finally, please rest assured that BCA is alive and kicking.

Russell Myers

Chair 30th April 2023

BCA Vacancies

Regarding vacancies, would anyone intending to stand down at the AGM please notify the Secretary or myself about their intention rather than us finding out after the event.

Finally, it is with considerable regret, that I recognise this meeting will be our Treasurer, Howard Jones' last Council meeting and I cannot thank him enough, for the work he has undertaken for BCA to the benefit of the membership and the caving community at large. On a personal level, I have found him to be a rock solid officer and mentor, dispensing sound advice to me when I needed reigning in. Howard will be missed and I'm sure Council will join me in thanking him for the work he has done and wish him well for whatever future ventures he engages in.

Actually, this may not be the last we see of him as we have a looming problem with no one coming forward to take on the Treasurer's position. Howard has made a suggestion to the Secretary and I, to split the Treasurer function into a paid role of book keeping i.e. the day to day financial matters, leaving the actual Treasurer's role to deal with strategy, managing the paid staff, being a member of the Executive and reporting to Council etc. The Secretary and I are both in favour of his suggestion but need to discuss it further in Council as a contingency plan in the event of no one standing for the full position.

Russell Myers

Chair

6th May 2023

JP thought that the suggestion of a book keeper was entirely sensible.

SH supported the idea, but had no idea how big the job was. He suggested that a paid Admin Officer might be a better way to go. HJ agreed with SH's suggestion, as the book keeping role was only busy for about two months of the year, the existing paid members of staff have no time to carry out the task.

JW asked about agencies to do the work, HJ said it would not be attractive to them.

JP said she would ask someone she knew if they were interested.

Proposal that Council investigate that the Treasurers role is split into Treasurer and a paid book keeper.

Proposer SH

Secunder JP

Abstention JW

Rest in favour motion passed

AGM Management

Since the AGM moved to the Zoom platform in 2020 and to ensure the smooth running of the meeting, a precedent has been established to deal with amendments/motions from the "floor" resulting in a decision by Council, not to take any amendments/motions from the floor and all voting will be undertaken electronically.

Additionally, Council agreed that the Chair had discretion to accept or reject any of the issues arising at the AGM including motions as points of procedure. Ordinarily, proposals and amendments submitted under current rules would be considered at the AGM, but this year none have been received.

There will be a number of vacant positions by the time of the AGM and in recognition of custom and practice, I shall ask for any nominations from the floor. In the event there are nominations, I will ask those attending the meeting, to vote for acceptance of the nominations and if successful, forward them to the electronic voting system to be voted on by the membership at large. (In line with the precedent established at the 2019 AGM to vote to accept or not, a nomination, regardless of a person being the only candidate.

- For clarity, I seek Council's approval to repeat the procedures etc. outlined above.
- We are now in a situation where the business for the AGM is as minimal as possible with no nominations, proposals or other matters to discuss; in effect, it is likely to be a "non-event". Bearing in mind the concerns I highlighted in my Chair's Report above, the Executive Committee are in favour of delaying the AGM in order to better publicise the event and allow more time for nominations etc. but seek discussion and agreement within Council about doing this. If we stick to the timescales outlined in the Constitution the earliest date to hold a reconvened AGM would be 17th September although this would need checking against conflict *with other events*.

Russell Myers

Chair

6th May 2023

JP queried the possible date change of the AGM, she also pointed out that a number of clubs refuse to supply members emails, so that it is very difficult to contact our members directly. JP further suggested that we make every effort to contact our members with AGM details and details of electable vacancies.

JW pointed out that we have the bulk of the members email addresses.

AM suggested that the Secretary sends out an email to all members with the AGM details and details of vacancies. RM had spoken with ACD re the problems of bulk email, HJ said that we have that facility. RM said that in the absence of the Secretary, he would undertake the creation and sending out of the email to members.

AM pointed out that we need to withdraw the proposal to move the date of the AGM.

Proposal to accept the AGM management as outlined in RM's report above, and withdraw the date change of the AGM.

Proposer HJ

Seconded JW

All in favour passed

Agenda item 7: BCA Secretaries Report

Yet again I have to ask people not to send reports as a PDF, this means I have to spend time rewriting them as I do not have the relevant software, not that I think BCA should be spending money on providing the relevant software.

Reports are meant to be factual, not an exercise in Desktop Publishing.

Agenda item 8: BCA Treasurers Report

Current bank balances: as at 05/05/2023 was £233,000. Of which £88,000 is in medium term interest bearing accounts and £77,000 is in short term deposit accounts and £60,000 on overnight deposit.

Unusual spend since last Council:

£2,500 donation to Bendrigg Trust, £3,000 donation to Ghar Parau Foundation, £1,000 settlement of 2022 BCA/BCRA account, £440 artificial cave storage, £1,100 Y&D costs,

BCA Financial year end

The BCA accounts for the year ending 31/12/2022 were approved at the March 2023 BCA Council meeting. I subsequently thanked the independent reviewer and submitted the BCA tax return to HMRC. No tax was payable as I utilised losses brought forward plus charitable donations in the year

Forecast 2023

BCA Council March 2023 approved a budget for the year showing a deficit of £10k. They decided not to raise fees for 2024 to address this deficit. They then approved non budgeted expenditure of £2,500, hence the deficit will be higher than budget, all else being equal.

Howard Jones

JW thanked Howard on behalf of the Council for all his work.

JW asked had we decided not to raise the fees to cover the deficit? HJ said that this was agreed at the last council meeting, but could be discussed again by any future council meeting during 2023

Youth and Development report May 2023

CHECC

Northern and Southern CHECC events were a great success, with approximately 100 students at each making new contacts between clubs, gaining and developing skills through training sessions on leadership, surveying, SRT and Rescue, and actual caving.

Thanks to SWCC and RRCPC for hosting and to Steve Gray and CRO for the assistance on the Saturday night of NCHECC. Certain areas of further training required have been identified and plans are being put in place to provide this.

Diversity and Inclusion

The convener of this group put forwards a proposal to Council, in his professional role as an employee of the Bendrigg Trust at the last meeting for funding for the UK's first caving festival aimed at inclusivity in caving. He, and the group are delighted that this was unanimously approved (with the exception of the convener who abstained due to the conflict of interest).

Both parts of the festival are currently being advertised and each have their first few participants signing up at the time of writing.

The posters for this event are available at

<https://british-caving.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-May-report-1.pdf>

If you have a place to display this that you feel would contribute towards the success of this event, please contact youth@british-caving.org.uk

North Yorkshire Sport/The Outdoor Partnership

The convener of this group recently met with Sam Allum of The Outdoor Partnership to discuss how the two organisations could work closely together to meet the common goal of getting more young people into the outdoors, particularly caving.

Convener Standing down

As advised previously the convener of the youth and development working group is standing down with effect from the 2023 AGM. As of yet the existing convener is not aware of anybody lined up to take on this role, but will ensure that everything is uploaded to BCA cloud ready to be picked up by someone in the hopefully near future.

RM noted his thanks on behalf of BCA to JW on his standing down from Youth and Development, for the work he has carried out.

Library Report

The Library is now back to working as normal and this year we have already, or will soon, host meetings of BCA Trainer Assessor groups, BCRA and DCA Council Meetings and a Conservation & Access Event run by a local club with visiting speakers. We also hosted a BCRA Field Meeting last summer. We are able to manage these meetings face-to-face and online as well, allowing people to participate via our online systems. Visitors wanting to do their own research are once again a regular feature, though much of our work in dealing with enquiries is dealt with online and by sending scans of material.

The BSA/Simpson archive material, currently on permanent loan from the Library to the British Geological Survey at Keyworth, is not yet accessible to enquirers online via BCRA - the Memorandum of Understanding between BCRA and BGS is having to be re-written before this can happen. Other archive surveys and maps from this era are now being catalogued by our two volunteers and will be stored at Glutton Bridge for the time being.

A recent check discovered that altogether we had catalogued 20,780 items (Books and Journals) since our online catalogue was set up in 2009. More recently we have begun to catalogue modern surveys and maps, thanks to our Library Assistant and volunteers, and these will gradually be incorporated into the online bibliography/catalogue. We have dealt with over 2,170 of these so far (including the complete collection of John Beck's 800 Peak District Surveys) and have now worked our way through a further 480+ archive surveys, with many hundreds, if not thousands, still to deal with.

We are also now receiving a steady stream of archive material of all kinds and are looking into the best way to store the more fragile items.

Our online presence is due to two volunteers who have worked with us since 2009: the Online Bibliography/catalogue, the BCRA Online Archives (photographic material) and the Audio Archive. All this information can be accessed via the Library website: caving-library.org.uk.

We now have a large collection of duplicate material, the result of donations to the Library, and we continue to seek a good home for these with other caving Libraries or individual caver collectors.

Jenny Potts,

8-5-23

FSE Report

Very little change to this report since the council meeting in March.

The FSE has 30 member countries in Europe and beyond.

The FSE last General Assembly Meeting (GAM) was held at the **International Congress of Speleology (ICS between 24th and 31st July this year in Bourget Du Lac, Savoie, France.**

The FSE EuroSpelo Forum was held in Burgos Spain in September and despite concerns about its proximity on the calendar to the ICS in France, the Spanish event was extremely well organised and attended by speleo's from many nationalities. The legacy of the International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK) is showing positive signs of continuing for some years to come. Over 1,600 events from the IYCK have so far been recorded, including, online webinars, photo exhibitions, videos and competitions with a significant number hosted in Europe.

The work of the bureau continues to be conducted by exchange of emails, regular update meetings held online which since November have included commission leads and the newsletter editor.

EuroSpeleo Projects (ESPs) sponsoring and supporting caving expeditions, events, and projects from member countries. As countries slowly recover from the effects of the pandemic a healthy number of applications are filtering through for projects. In addition to this considerable work continues to be invested in maintaining the system of equipment sponsorship of European projects. Although there were no applications from the UK last year we have received one application very recently from a team venturing to the Middle East.

The next GAM of the FSE will be held in Breitscheid, Germany 20th May 2023.

Ged Campion.

BCA delegate to FSE

GC reported to the meeting that he will be attending the GAM in Germany.

The application as reported above, was for a Euro Speleo Grant by Emma Porter for a project on the Lebanon Syria border, this was in response to block emails sent out by Howard advertising that there were grants available.

UIS

Ged reported that Andy Eavis has said that there will be a meeting in Brazil to check that everything is on track for the Congress in 2025, there will be a representative from the UK there at the meeting.

Russell asked about Rescue and the UIS Rescue Commission, it was a question of representation, BCRC were happy to attend the European Cave Rescue Commission, but were less enthusiastic on attending the International one. Russell to look into it.

Agenda Item 12: Any Other Business

1)BCA Plastic Card Replacement

I propose a motion that from 2024, BCA fully investigates doing away with the use of plastic membership cards and brings a detailed proposal for a change to a system of evidencing membership by an emailed PDF to Council for a decision at the next meeting.

Linda Wilson CSCC Representative

Rationale

There is a feeling that most cards are simply a waste of plastic. Most members rarely need to show them. My experience in UBSS is the same.

The outcome of discussions with the IT WG Convenor Ari Cooper Davis and the Membership Administrator Katie Eavis indicates there doesn't seem to be any barrier to a change being made for next year. Katie is able to deal with membership certificates by means of a mail merge to PDF rather than to the card printer. The savings to BCA would be as follows:

£1000 on postage of membership cards £1385 on plastic cards and ink for the card printer, and £75 per year on envelopes and packaging.

Total £2460

Katie also said that there are other costs which could be factored in:

1. BCA pays to have a franking machine. Without plastic cards we wouldn't need a franking machine, but would then spend some money on stamps.
2. In addition to the direct savings, there's the environmental benefit of cutting down on single use plastics.

In terms of distribution of the replacements, Katie said she would be able to email them direct in cases where clubs pass membership contact details to her. In other cases, she could send them direct to the club contact.

Members could then print their own evidence of membership if needed or save as a pdf to their phones.

If any people want to cling to plastic cards, as I imagine BCA still has some stock of plastic, for a transitional period, some cards could be printed and posted on request by individuals if needed.

Steve Holding pointed out in the meeting that they had been used more in access to mines, it was important to involve NAMHO in the discussions, before any final decision was made.

RM said that it would be possible to have a digital proof on a mobile phone.

SH asked that we hold over on a decision until next meeting, he also pointed out that BCRA also had plastic cards.

Andrew said we could have a poll in the AGM vote re plastic cards, NAMHO to be a large part of the discussions.

Proposal that we investigate getting rid of the plastic cards

Proposer LW

Seconder JW

All in favour passed.

2) Josh White resignation post on UK Caving 5/5/2023

It is with great sadness that I am standing down from my role as Youth and Development representative and convenor of the Y&D working group with effect from the upcoming AGM. Over my 5 years in this working group, and 2 and a half years in this role, I am incredibly proud of the work that we as a team have done to make strides towards making caving a more accessible sport. Some particular highlights have been assisting CHECC with managing university clubs through a pandemic, helping with training, funding and paperwork as required, setting up multiple kit stores around the UK for university groups to borrow kit from and most recently providing funding to the Bendrigg Trust for the UK's first caving festival aimed at improving inclusivity in caving. I would like to say thank you to Howard Jones who has been a constant source of support during my time in this role, and Rostam Namaghi who brought me into this working group which has opened up so many opportunities for me to develop my skills as a negotiator, trainer and strategist. During my time in role I tried to take steps to reconnect cavers with our National Body, by improving communication and transparency, but have become disillusioned with the course we have taken. This has culminated in some very important roles being vacant and not advertised at all. This organisation has a huge amount of potential to achieve great things, however I struggle to see this potential being achieved with the current structure and personnel on council. I will happily consider stepping back into an active role on council if and when I see these changing. In the meantime I remain in place as insurance manager, and will be looking for more local opportunities to further develop caving, such as with CNCC, or my caving clubs.

3) Questions from Josh White

In the interest of fairness, I intend on raising a few points under AOB if they're not covered elsewhere in the meeting.

- request an update on recruitment for the multiple vacant roles from this AGM

This was discussed in the meeting, see above.

- request an update on the YDG update that was provided to the exec several months ago after me being hassled to chase.

The reason it has not been made public is that it was classed by the YDG as being commercially sensitive, a cleaned up report though requested, has not received from the YDG.

- request an update from Russell on my question from a meeting towards the end of last year regarding a BCA strategy and where he intends to drive the organisation.

RM said that after a period of stability, we are now in a position to start looking forward, he also pointed out that we are meeting the BCA's core requirements, and that a lot of what happens in BCA is devolved to individuals and the regions and supplying the necessary finance.

CB asked JW what exactly was he proposing, he said he wasn't looking for change but was looking for direction. CB suggested that Josh should put a proposal to AGM that a group should be set up to look into direction and blue sky thinking.

JP pointed out that BCA was not a top down organisation but is a federation as set up in 1968, a lot of the solid work is carried out by specialist groups or in the regions, as such they cannot be directed.

AM suggested that in the Chairs report to the AGM, we should emphasise what we do well, but also saying what we don't do well.

RM said the main requirement was someone to push the publicity side of BCA.

4)Application for BCA / BCRA funding for digitisation of Horner Collection.

The Horner Photographic Collection of Settle includes some of the earliest known caving photographs. The ownership of the collection is now with the Museum of North Craven Life at the Folly in Settle. They would like to digitise the collection to make it more widely available. They have asked if the BCA/ BCRA could co fund some of the cost of digitisation of the caving photos. Some of these photos of GG and Alum Pot date to no later than 1893. (pre Martel) There are a few prints on show at the Folly. The quality of the negatives must be incredible as the prints look remarkable.

The North Craven Heritage Trust has received a Reimagine grant from the [Art Fund](#) to set up the [Through A New Lens project](#) to research, describe, digitise and display the Horner Collection in a permanent exhibition at The Folly. This involves a dedicated team of volunteers working alongside a consultant photographic historian to catalogue the photographs, scan them, and identify any conservation issues. Ultimately, the Trust plans to create an online catalogue of every photograph in the collection for use by researchers, family historians and members of the public alike.

[The Horner Collection - The Folly](#)

The collection has turned up around 75 images relating to caving so far and many are of national importance. These include images of GG, Alum Pot and the original excavations of Victoria Cave. Many more are emerging as cataloguing progresses.

As the proposer (Andrew Hinde) for financial support from BCA was not present to flesh out the details of what was being requested, there was a feeling amongst Council that the matter be deferred.

HJ proposed that the item is held over to the next meeting as there was insufficient detail in the request for it to be considered properly.

JP said that it has also been mentioned at a BCRA Council meeting. The BCA Library has already said it will financially support the proposal. BCA making a donation would allow the Library to access the collection and download materials.

RM proposed that we carry this over to the next meeting.

5)BCA Artificial Cave

Query from GC after the recent death in another artificial cave, RM said we are looking into it to see if there were any lessons for BCA. CB asked who was looking into it, RM said it was the executive who were aware of the problem but we were not planning on commenting unless asked.

HJ pointed out that the BCA cave was very different in that it was horizontal in nature and assembled by those who use it, it was also very easy to take apart using the supplied spanners.

6)RM thanked those who were standing down for all their work on Council.

Agenda Item 13: Date of next Council meeting

Next meeting Tues 27th June 2023 (tbc)