



## **Minutes for the Council Meeting Tuesday 5th March 2024**

The meeting was held via Zoom starting at 7.00 pm

### **Table of Contents:**

<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Agenda item summary</b>
1	1	Apologies for absence
2	3	Acceptance of Minutes from 12/12/2023 Council Meeting
3	1	Important Agenda items
4	3	Matters Arising/Action List
5	4	Vacancies
6	4	Chair's Report
7	5	Secretary's Report
8	5	BCA Treasurer Report
9	5	BCA Insurance Managers Report
10	6	Membership
11	7	Other Reports
12	9	AOB
13	9	Date of Next Meeting

### **Next Meeting Important Agenda Items**

#### **BCA Council Diary 2023/2024**

AGM 3/6/24

Nominations, proposals etc to the Secretary by midnight 10/3/24

Agenda posted by 22/4/24

Deadline for reports 20/5/24

Deadline for posting reports 27/5/24  
 AGM 7pm 3/6/24  
 Voting for 14 days, if starting 4/6/24 then voting closes midnight 18/6/24  
 Minutes posted by 13/8/24

Next Council meeting

May 14<sup>th</sup> 2024

#### Council Positions

Voting Position	Name	Initials
<b>BCA Executive</b>		
Chair 21-24 (3 years)	Russell Myers	RM
Secretary 21-24 (3 years)	Allan Richardson	AR
Treasurer	Chris Bolton	CJB
<b>Group/Club Reps</b>		
Position 1, 22-24 (2 years)	Jenny Potts	JP
Position 2		
<b>Individual Member Reps</b>		
Position 1, 22-24 (2 years)	Andy Eavis	AE
Position 2, 24-25 (co-opt)	Zac Woodford	ZW
<b>Regional Council Reps</b>		
CCC	Allan Richardson	AR
CNCC	Andrew Hinde	AH
CSCC	Linda Wilson	LJW
DCA	Mike Higgins	MH
DCUC	David Jean	DJ
<b>Constituent Body Reps</b>		
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
<b>Working Group Convenors</b>		
Training and Equipment	Steve Gray	SG
Conservation and Access	Richard Vooght	RV
Information Technology	Ari Cooper-Davis	ACD
Youth and Development	Jonathan Lester	JL
QMC	George Plant	GP
CoG	Andrew McLeod	AM
Radon	Vacant	
P & I	Vacant	
<b>Additional BCA Appointments</b>		
Insurance Manager	Josh White	JW
Membership Administrator	Katie Eavis	KE
Safeguarding Officer	Chris Boardman	CDB
Training Administrator	Mary Wilde	MW
Library Representative	Jenny Potts	JP
Newsletter Editor	Vacant	
UIS Representative	Ged Campion	GC
FSE Representative		
Artificial Cave	Katie Eavis	KE
QMC Representative 1 (observer)	BCA Chair	RM
QMC Representative 2 (observer)	Chris Boardman	CB
Book Keeper	Karen Lydon	KL

## **Present**

Russell Myers, Allan Richardson, Linda Wilson (LJW), Zac Woodford (ZW), Chris Bolton (CJB), Steve Holding, Andrew Hinde, Richard Vooght, Chris Boardman (CDB), David Jean, Tony Radmall, Jenny Potts, Mike Higgins, John Gunn.

## **Agenda item 1: Apologies for absence**

Ged Campion, George Plant, Andy Eavis,

## **Agenda item 2: Acceptance of the 12th December 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Proposer Jenny Potts

Second Steve Holding

All in favour passed nem con

### **Agenda item 3: Important Agenda items**

Coooption of Treasurer.

Proposer	Russell Myers
Second	Allan Richardson

All in favour passed nem con

#### **Election Statement – Chris Bolton standing for BCA Treasurer**

I am standing for Treasurer because the role is vacant and somebody needs to do it. It's important for caving in the UK that BCA works effectively to fund the regional councils, manage insurance and co-ordinate qualifications, technical aspects and other cross regional topics. The present Council have overcome the toxic reputation that BCA had in some quarters, but volunteers have been unwilling to come forward. BCA remains under resourced and this affects what it can do and cavers' perception of it.

The BCA needs to communicate with cavers and demonstrate that it is working in their interests. I have no ambition to change what BCA does, but the way it does it needs to be sharpened up. As Treasurer, I will maintain a view of the organisation's budget and risks so that Council can make informed decisions. Finance underpins all activities, so needs to be well understood.

A trend among all national sporting bodies, to which BCA is vulnerable, is the increasing need to employ staff to do things which used to be done by volunteers. There are two ways to address this. Firstly, BCA must maximise volunteer effort by making it clear that volunteers are welcomed and respected. Second, the only source of funds to pay staff is the BCA membership, and cavers need to be convinced that BCA is doing a good job for them.

Why do I think I can do a good job as Treasurer for the BCA? I'm a caver, a logical thinker with an eye for detail, and I have considerable experience as a committee member and volunteer Treasurer in more than one type of organisation.

My first caves were with Scouts in the 1970s, then a short revival in 2006 curtailed by other pressures and eventually a more committed return, now that I'm retired from work, in 2022. I'm a member of Derbyshire CC and Craven PC.

I have no financial qualifications but am numerate and understand both the benefits and pitfalls of spreadsheets. My background is in design engineering, which I define as the analysis of problems and development of solutions.

I was Treasurer for the North West Region of British Canoeing from 1988-1990, and Chair for 3 years after that, with a seat on the national Council. In 1999 I was Chair of the Earthquake Engineering Field Investigation Team. That brought me to the attention of my own professional body, The Institution of Structural Engineers, following which I had 8 years on their Council and 5 years on their Trustee Board, including two as Honorary Treasurer. This was a strategic role, providing advice on financial matters to the other Trustees and maintaining an oversight; the Institution had an annual turnover of £5-6million and employed professional accountants. As BCA

Treasurer I will address both the strategic and (in co-operation with the bookkeeper) the ‘hands-on’ aspects.

I look forward to being part of a team to take BCA forward and ensure that it can deliver the needs of UK cavers.

Chris Bolton, 4th March 2024

BCA council have met and co-opted Chris Bolton as Treasurer.

BCA Council note the retirement from Office of Matthew Ewles from the BCA Executive.

Action Howard Jones to alter banking arrangements accordingly.

Cooption of Zac Woodford as Individual Member rep

Proposed      Linda Wilson  
Second        Jenny Potts

All in favour passed nem con

#### **Agenda item 4: Matters arising/Action Plan**

Increase in 2025 membership fees. Discussion proposed by Tony Radmall

##### 2025 BCA membership fees

As the membership administrator I am in a good position to gauge feelings about membership fees. My feeling is that membership could cope with an increase.

I think a lot of our members were expecting an increase in fees for 2024, as the price of everything else has gone up.

A couple of things to think about:

1. If membership price is increasing please agree and let me know by September 2024 at the latest.

Some of our member clubs run an October – October membership year and will need to know the 2025 BCA prices by late September. (They do this so they can collect BCA fees from their members and be all ready to renew and pay at the end of the calendar year)

2. Please consider how easily divisible by 4 the new fees are!

The BCA membership prices decrease by a quarter, after each quarter of the year.

Currently:-

<b>3. Rates for club members</b>	<b>Date club member joins BCA*</b>			
<b>Member Type</b>	<b>01 Jan - 31 Mar</b>	<b>01 Apr - 30 Jun</b>	<b>01 Jul - 30 Sep</b>	<b>01 Oct - 31 Dec</b>

Club Individual Member	Caving member	£20	£15	£10	£5
	Non-Caving member	£6	£4.50	£3	£1.50
	Full time student	£8	£6	£4	£2
	Under 18 on 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan 2024	£0	£0	£0	£0

In my experience there were a lot more mistakes with fees owed and paid when the membership was £17 per year (and therefore also 12.75, 8.50 and 4.25 per part of the year), than now when it is £20 (Or 15, 10 or 5).

Doesn't have to be limited to integers – but maybe try and stick to 50p and not get into 75p and 25ps!

In case it is helpful current BCA fees are:-

Club members – see table above

DIMs – same as club members.

Associate member clubs - £25 per year

Access controlling bodies - £60 per year

Member clubs – £25 per year

Member clubs with a hut or who control access to caves/mines – additional £60 (Although clubs with huts who also control access only pay this extra £60 once)

Katie Eavis

BCA membership Administrator

After a wide ranging discussion, it was decided to decide on the membership rates at the May meeting, in order to give the new Treasurer time to study the figures.

### **Agenda item 5: Vacancies**

Treasurer

IT

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

One individual representative

One group representative

FSE Representative

The Radon group remains dormant.

The chairman reported that there is someone who is interested in the IT post, as a paid role.

Linda Wilson asked how much and for how long, Russell replied that the interested party knows the standard BCA rate. Russell also reported that the IT system needs fixing before June, he has estimated that it could cost us £5K to sort it.

### **Agenda item 6: Chair's Report**

Report from the Chair

Happy New Year everyone – perhaps a little late but it reminds me that we are in the second half of our administrative year with an AGM looming on Monday 3rd June. Following comments about

tying up Sunday mornings, the Executive, recognising the flexibility of on-line meetings agreed to move the AGM to an evening during the week hence Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

My point in emphasising this, is the timeline of milestones dictated by our Constitution along the way to the AGM, not least of which, **midnight 10<sup>th</sup> March** when nominations, proposals and other business should be in the hands of the Secretary.

My term of office as Chair expires at this AGM dictating that I should stand for re-election. I have given it some thought and decided I will **not** be standing for election. By the AGM, I will have undertaken 5 years of voluntary work for the BCA including my term as Secretary. I feel I have done enough and it is time to hand over the “reins” of the Association. To stand again, would mean a commitment to another three years; the time seems right and with the “troubled years” a distant memory, BCA is on a stable footing albeit struggling to attract volunteers to help run it. Even this situation may be turning a corner as there has been renewed interest to help with IT and dare I say it, the Treasurer’s position. It is early days to confirm these but green shoots are appearing. I hope they blossom.

In the meantime, I will continue to do my best for BCA and the caving community at large and thank everyone who has helped both the Association and myself during the years I have been involved.

At this point I should remind other post holders their term of office will also expire at the 2024 AGM:

Secretary – Allan Richardson

(Treasurer – vacant)

Group Representative 1 – Jenny Potts

(Group Representative 2 – vacant)

Individual Representative 1 – Andy Eavis

(Individual Representative 2 – vacant)

**Note** regarding Working Groups and respective convenors plus other individual appointments. The 2021 AGM consolidated responsibility for these to the National Council and subject to approval at the first Council meeting after the AGM.

Regional Council and Constituent Body representatives are nominated by their respective regional/constituent body with a place on the National Council

R. Myers

BCA Chair

28<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Russell to advertise the upcoming deadline for proposals and nominations at the AGM

### **Agenda item 7: BCA Secretaries Report**

Nothing to report

### **Agenda item 8: BCA Treasurer Report**

BCA Budget 2024

This is being sent as a separate file.

Discussion on the budget

Proposal to accept the budget as is.

Proposed        Steve Holding

Second         Tony Radmall

All in favour passed nem con

## **Book keeping Report**

### **BCA Book Keeper Report to BCA Council end of February 2024**

Current bank balances: as at 27/02/2024 was £228,000. Of which £88,000 is in medium term interest bearing accounts and £78,000 is in short term deposit accounts and £45,000 on overnight deposit.

Unusual spend since last report:

£12k to Hiscox for 2024 top up insurance premiums

£14k to Hiscox for the same.

£2k set up fee with Justgo for new database system

£1k FSE fee for 2024

£2.5k to Stalactite publishing being Descent adverts for BCA for all 2024

BCA Financial year end 2023

HJJ will prepare the draft accounts and keep KL involved in the process. Once drafted they will be sent to BCA Chair and then the independent reviewer. Once reviewed will be presented to BCA Council, end of March 2024 target.

HJJ will also prepare the budget 2024 in Q1 2024.

The draft result for year ending 31/12/2023 shows a small deficit as forecast throughout 2023.

BCA Treasurer

An individual is interested in the role and has spoken to HJJ at length about the position.

BCA Book Keeper

KL continues in this new role and is being mentored by HJJ.

To date the following has been achieved:

KL is now a HSBC bank signatory to the BCA 3 accounts

KL has transferred monies between accounts

KL has set up new payees

KL has paid new and existing payees

KL has monitored bank balances and transferred into current account to ensure payments are not bounced

KL has begun the bank reconciliation process

Howard Jones and Karen Lydon BCA Book keepers 27/02/2024

No comments in the meeting.

## **Agenda item 9: Insurance Report**



Insurance manager report as follows

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The 2024 insurance renewals are now complete.

The main policy insured through Hiscox (cover up to 2 million public liability) increased in cost from c£35,800 to c£39,700

The top up cover policy through AIG Europe (cover from 2 million to 5 million public liability) increased in cost from c£9,900 to c£10,800.

The secondary top up cover policy through RSA (cover from 5 million to 10 million public liability) increased in cost from c£11,500 to c£12,600.

The total premiums (inclusive of tax) for the cover up to £10m is c£70,700 compared to £64,200 for last year.

An additional level of cover from 10 million up to 20 million was put in place this year through Ergo UK specialty Ltd, and the amount was paid up front for the period from October 2023 through to December 2024, with an approximate annual cost of £5,600.

We have an agreement that the underlying rates will increase by a fixed amount provided our claims ratio remains within a certain percentage range. The overall premium increase was higher than this percentage primarily due to a higher number of insured members, of which a higher proportion were cavers vs non-cavers.

Unfortunately during the renewal process, our cyber security insurer highlighted that in order to continue insuring us they would require our IT systems to be significantly improved. We therefore were unable to renew this policy. I believe we should be approaching an external IT provider to look to overhaul our IT to enable us to reinstate this policy. The relevant requirements are with the BCA executive for discussion.

I am at the time of writing finalising the renewal documents and they should have been uploaded by the time of the next council meeting.

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Hopefully this covers everything.

Josh White  
BCA Insurance Manager  
[Insurance@british-caving.org.uk](mailto:Insurance@british-caving.org.uk)

Linda asked in what respect did our IT systems need improving re the cyber cover, no comments in the meeting, to be investigated.

## **Agenda item 10: Membership**

## **BCA Membership Report 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

## 2024 Club Membership

**Katie Eavis – club membership administrator**

### Membership levels by year

	2020 (up until the 31st December)	2021 (up until the 31st December)	2022 (up until the 31st December)	2023 (up until the 31st December)	2024 (up until the 29th February)
<b>Groups (including Member Clubs, Associates and Access Controlling Bodies)</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>CIMs (including Cavers, Non-Cavers, Students, Under 18s and CDG)</b>	<b>5308</b>	<b>5049</b>	<b>5629</b>	<b>5746</b>	<b>4750</b>

There are about 18 clubs who have not yet renewed. These have all had a recent reminder email. Quite a few have since renewed and a few more replied to say they will be renewing soon. Clubs get till the 31st March to renew and pay and still be considered continuous members of the BCA, so these are not yet overdue.

Mid March I will chase any that still haven't renewed or replied, in case my emails are being missed.

### Not Renewing

Five member clubs and one access controlling body have contacted me to say they will not be renewing in 2024. This is more than a usual year, and more than I would expect.

The access controlling body is winding down and transferring the access control to a nearby caving club. Two of the member clubs are also winding down due to ageing membership, and any still active members are joining other local BCA member clubs. Overall I don't think there is reason to be concerned – but something to be aware of and keep a close eye on.

Katie Eavis - BCA Membership Administrator

[membership@british-caving.org.uk](mailto:membership@british-caving.org.uk)

The British Caving Association, The Old Methodist Chapel, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire, SK17 8RG

**Just Go**

Now that BCA membership renewals are beginning to slow down I am starting to work towards BCA memberships move to Just Go. Currently the planned date to 'go live' on Just Go is the end of April. But this may change!

When BCA membership moves to Just Go it will be sharing the platform with BCA Training – which has already been using Just Go for about 3 years. We need to be careful as we move membership, to make sure we don't cause problems for the training set up. Mary and I will work closely on this.

As we plan with Just Go how membership will work and look, there are lots of questions and queries raised – it may be a good opportunity to tweak and change what data we collect and how we do things. If any members of the council would like to be involved in the set up of Just Go for membership please get in touch – it would be good to have someone from the BCA council involved in the process and the decisions that come up.

## **E-cards**

Unfortunately at the time of writing ecards have not yet been sent. There have been some unexpected delays – including the demands on David Gibson's time, as a volunteer. There have been several more urgent IT issues that have needed attention. Hopefully they will be sent very soon. David did sort a mass email to all clubs and club members to acknowledge their membership and explain ecards would be coming soon – this seems to have worked as the emails I was getting chasing up cards have currently entirely stopped.

On the bright side demand for plastic cards is lower than I was expecting. (We have offered to send them this year if requested.)

From over 4600 club members I have only had 50 plastic cards requested.

And from nearly 700 individual members 47 cards have been requested.

Once the ecards have been sent, and I have used up all the credit currently on the franking machine I will plan to arrange to return it to Pitney Bowes.

In previous years, with 6500 plastic cards a year to post, the franking machine made good financial sense, however with the current postage levels it would be cheaper for BCA to buy stamps when needed and not pay the fees on the franking machine.

## **Facebook**

I have just been given admin rights on the BCA Facebook page.

I have reached out to Imogen so we can work together on the Facebook page, but she is currently abroad so we will check in later.

In the meantime I will try and post regularly on the BCA page. Doing the membership role, as well as looking after the BCA Cave etc, I am well placed to post regular news and updates on the BCA page.

Katie Eavis - BCA Membership Administrator

[membership@british-caving.org.uk](mailto:membership@british-caving.org.uk)

The British Caving Association, The Old Methodist Chapel, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire, SK17 8RG.

There was no interest in anyone from Council getting involved with setting up JustGo, Russell Myers said he would look into it.

Chris Boardman asked was setting up JustGo being done by a volunteer or a paid member of staff, Katie Eavis is currently doing this. Katies hours on JustGo are being borrowed from her Library hours.

No comments on the Membership report in the meeting.

Linda Wilson asked about paid time for David Gibson who is working on JustGo, Russell Myers says he is aware of this and is in discussion with David Gibson.

#### 2024 BCA DIM membership report

DIM membership renewals are still trickling in. A renewal reminder was sent to BCRA DIMs last week, and a BCA DIM reminder will be mailed in the next few days (it being slightly more complicated, as some DIMs will have renewed as CIMs and that needs checking). There are "several hundred" overdue DIMs at the moment, but this is normal as BCA has a large turnover of membership. The e-cards will be available soon. Other recent activity has included my drawing up of a specification of the membership class code system for Katie, to help with the move to using Just Go.

David Gibson

### **Agenda item 11: Other Reports**

#### **Library Report to BCA Council, 5 March 2024**

Work continues at the Library itself with volunteer Library Co-ordinator (myself), Librarian Mary Wilde and 2 other paid part-time library workers - all 3 are also doing other part time work for BCA. The number of enquiries dealt with and the number of visitors to the Library rose again in 2023 after the hiatus of the Covid years.

Cataloguing surveys and maps is nearing completion with 2 volunteers dealing specifically with archive surveys.

We can at last report some progress towards making the Simpson/BSA archive material available online. This had been placed on permanent loan to the British Geological Survey (BGS) in 2010 and has been, to all intents and purposes, inaccessible to cavers since then. We are not quite there yet but are very close to completion - thanks are due in particular to Alan Jeffreys (AJ) and his colleagues from Grampian S.G. who have been scanning the material at the Edinburgh BGS facility. Already online is the Jack Myers archive, thanks to John Cordingley's efforts: scanned by AJ in Edinburgh, the copyright remains with the family and the physical archive will be held by NPC. Special thanks go to John Gardner, our volunteer who is responsible for our online archives. We shall shortly be collecting the archive material relating to Norway, Grotte Casteret, etc., left to us by David St. Pierre and are grateful to his family for their help with this. David also made a donation of £1000 to the Library.

It should be recognised that BCL is both a Library and an “Archive” and it is essential that BCL keeps control of the archive material acquired so that it is available for reference by enquirers who come to us as the first resource. This, in turn, has implications as regards the storage facilities we have at Glutton Bridge and this is being looked into.

The Library had a stand at Hidden Earth last year and our traditional “Lucky Dip” boxes enabled material surplus to our requirements to be passed on to other cavers and clubs in return for donations to the Library funds. Our visibility at Hidden Earth helped to raise our Facebook audience to over 2000 by the end of 2023.

Jenny Potts, 28-2-24

No comments in the meeting

### **Youth & Development Report to BCA Council, 5 March 2024**

After a rather busy first month and the latter part of last year, many of the university-based issues have been sorted out for now. The unions themselves seem to be in a much clearer position regarding the Birmingham Caving Club's (BUCC) activities and how they impact student caving.

BUCC is now in a more stable position within the university, ensuring a clear future moving forward. I will continue to support its endeavors.

The York University Caving Pothole Club (YUCPC) has secured its funding due to a change in the University's willingness to "Fund and Install" the required equipment for the student club to return to its roots in terms of training facilities. An agreement has been reached that the funds approved by the CNCC will be reimbursed by the BCA, covering the costs from our budget rather than the CNCC's.

CHECC has hosted two very successful and stress-free events, both Southern and Northern CHECC. We have also decided to work on a new standard that CHECC expects for expeditions to adhere to. This will be advertised by CHECC, allowing clubs to give recruiting and science talks. Clubs view CHECC as a valuable resource for improving skills and fostering relations. Work continues on a solution with regards to ‘Main CHECC’ as many venues now can’t support the demand CHECC requires.

The Science weekend was highly successful, and as I write this, a Humanities and Social Science weekend is in the works, with another Science weekend planned towards the end of the year.

In other matters, many clubs have faced issues with storage and maintaining gear. I am in talks with the university to emphasize the proper storage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the need for appropriate storage solutions.

Thank you for all the help and support provided by members of the caving community. We are witnessing a growing and thriving network.

Jonathan Lester – 02/03/24

In the meeting there was a discussion on where the money for York University was coming from, the Y&D report currently states that the money would come from BCA, the report should probably state that the money will be paid from the Y&D budget, this needs to be checked, Russell Myers to talk to Jonathan Lester.

#### **FSE delegate report to BCA Council Meeting January - March 2024.**

The FSE has a membership of 30 countries.

The FSE's last General Assembly Meeting (GAM) was held at the German National Congress in Breitscheid, Germany. This was also labelled a Eurospeleo Forum.

The legacy of the International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK) is showing positive signs of continuing for some years to come. Over 2,000 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. A new working group on 'Children and Young Cavers' was established at the last GAM and the BCA have contributed to a survey that was sent out to all FSE member countries. The findings of the survey are currently being collated and a report being prepared.

EuroSpeleo Projects (ESPs) sponsoring and supporting caving expeditions, events, and projects from member countries. There were two successful applications for funding from the UK, for expeditions to Austria and Lebanon. The expedition reports will appear in the next copy of the FSE newsletter.

Cork Speleological Group (CSG) won the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) protection label award last year. **Digging into the Past: Preserving Irelands Cultural Heritage through Cave Exploration.**

Stanislaw Drapala and members of the Cork Speleological Group (CSG) received the award at the Suicro 2023 event of the Speleological Union of Ireland in the weekend of 27-31 October 2023 in Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, Northern Ireland.

They also received a grant of € 800 and equipment from the FSE sponsor Aventure Verticale

The next GAM of the FSE will be held in either Southern Italy or Austria. The decision of venue will be announced shortly.

I will be stepping down from the position of FSE representative for the BCA but have agreed to cover the role until a new rep is appointed.

Ged Campion.

Acting BCA delegate to FSE

Jenny Potts was interested in the working group on Young Cavers, she suggested that the report should be made available to all BCA club members. Jenny also queried what had happened to the above survey.

Tony Radmall commented on the fact that some European countries have different rules and regulations on under 18's.

Chris Boardman replied that European nations were coming closer together on the regulations and guidelines.

Tony Radmall emphasised the importance of ensuring people are competent to take people caving as well as DBS checks.

Russell Myers reported that BCA has currently very few children caving with caving clubs, due to the perceived risks by the clubs.

Russell Myers said he will go back to Ged Campion and ask where the report went as nobody on Council has seen it.

### **QMC Report March 2024.**

It's been a busy period at QMC with a lot of work put in by lots of great volunteers. Northern Mining has taken a lot of effort but it does seem to be on the path to being up-and-running once more.

The QMC have had a review of our fees and after consultation with all the regions, we have implemented a small increase to reflect rising costs and inflation, which will take effect in April. Thanks to Mary for pulling together a lot of information on this.

Mary is also involved with working alongside Katie on the rollout of membership onto JustGo. There will be quite a lot of work involved and could do with someone from the exec to support them.

George Plant

Chris Boardman commented on the problem with Petzl caving harnesses. This has now been resolved, though it has taken two years to sort.

Chris also asked should BCA have a near miss reporting page on the website. Linda Wilson asked about Insurers getting information about mistakes. Chris reported that Insurers liked this approach as they showed that people were learning from mistakes.

Andrew Hinde asked about recording mistakes and any investigations into the mistakes.

Chris Boardman replied that the completion of the form was generally the way it was done, people want to share what went wrong, the form describes the incident so that investigations are not normally needed. He recommended that it became an Agenda item as required, Chris was happy to volunteer to collate the forms.

Chris Bolton queried whether the Training Committee would be a better recipient of the forms, it was agreed that this was a better way forward, Chris Boardman said he would raise it with QMC.

The reports were accepted, with the various comments raised noted.

All in favour nem con.

### **Agenda Item 12: Any Other Business**

1) Application to join BCA as a member club

Three Stags Moose Titan (3SMT) Caving Club Statement

3SMT caving club was started by 4 friends with a mutual interest in caving. Having completed several professionally led trips our interest and the will to start exploring on our own in cave and mine exploration grew.

With all of us investing in basic equipment we started exploring without an instructor some of the more basic systems that we had been introduced to. Along with previous experience and self-learning from various professional publications we started to grow our skills in to underground navigation along with some basic rigging and SRT skills.

Again with growing confidence and skills we undertook some training with Nigel Atkins where more valuable skills and techniques were gained and our current skills confirmed as being safe and correct.

We have recently formed as a club and wish to register with the BCA to support the activity of Caving and Mine exploration responsibly with access to public liability insurance and further training events.

As individuals we all actively promote the sport of caving and would look to grow the club with new members, again as members of the BCA we would look to do this in a safe, correct and responsible manner.

Rob Kester  
3SMTCC Chairman

Three Stags Moose Titan Caving Club

## Constitution Created December 2023

- Definitions

“3SMTCC” or “The Club” means Three Stags Moose Titan Caving Club and may be used to abbreviate the clubs official name.

The Committee” means the elected members of The Club. See section 5.

“BCA” means the British Caving Association – the UK body that provides information and insurance to caving clubs. “Caving” may refer to the act of caving, potholing or mine exploration. “Cave” may refer to a pothole or abandoned mine. “SRT” means Single Rope Technique.

- Objectives

The objectives of 3SMTCC include:

- To promote the sport of caving, cave research and mine exploration
- To maintain the good reputation of the club in the caving world
- To establish and maintain a friendly and active club
- To adapt to fulfil the caving ambitions of its members

- Equal Opportunities



The club shall be an equal opportunities organisation. Discrimination will not be tolerated on the basis of sex, religion, creed, sexuality or ethnic origins. Likewise, any behaviour deemed inappropriate may result in membership being withdrawn. All club trips will be available for all full members to attend however (with the exception of where there are limitations on numbers). The Committee reserve the right to refuse individuals attendance on a particular trip if it is deemed that the cave exceeds the capabilities or technical knowledge (e.g. SRT skills) of the individual.

- Membership

Full members of the club should have year-round access to club equipment with reasonable notice and the opportunity to attend all club events with club trip fees where required., Members will have the opportunity to attend the club Annual General Meeting (AGM), vote and stand for committee positions (in accordance with section 5.2).A

- Target Membership

Membership of 3SMTCC is aimed towards any caver with sufficient experience and equipment to be self-sufficient in a cave. New members should be experienced and competent in most **aspects** of caving, including as a minimum those skills set out in the code of practice, as the club is unable to provide any training and can not provide personal caving equipment such as clothing, lighting and SRT kits.

With exception, the club may organise trips that do not require ropework skills, and therefore individuals who have caving experience but limited skills could be considered for membership at the discretion of The Committee. However, it should be highlighted to the applicant upon joining that they may initially only be able to attend some of the club trips due to their limited experience. The club is under no obligation to provide any form of training.

- Membership Fees

Membership fees are to be reviewed on an annual basis by The Committee and will include BCA membership and public liability insurance provided by the BCA. BCA insurance is a requirement to attend any 3SMTCC caving trip.

- Processing of Membership Applications

Non-members wishing to apply for membership or returning members wishing to renew their expired membership will be required to be nominated by an existing member or 3SMTCC and complete a very short membership application form. Submission of this will require the applicant to confirm that they have read and agreed to abide by the club constitution and code of practice. Upon receipt of this form the Committee must decide whether to accept the application. For new members this may involve a discussion and meeting with the applicant to discuss their prior experience, at the discretion of The Committee. Upon approval of the Committee and payment of membership fees, the applicant will be admitted membership to the club. The Committee should make every effort to assist new members to become involved with and integrated into The Club.

- Disputes over Membership

In the event of any member of the club raising concern over issuing of membership to any individual, this will be discussed by The Committee, and a decision whether to allow membership will be taken by majority vote of The Committee. Proceedings of the vote should be

documented in club records, and if membership is rejected, reasons for this should be recorded. The reason for rejection does not need to be communicated to the individual; however this is at the discretion of The Committee.

- **Withdrawal of Membership**

Membership may be withdrawn from any individual, with good reason (for example, inappropriate behaviour or conduct, or failure to adhere to the code of conduct). Decisions regarding withdrawal of membership will be taken by majority vote of The Committee, and membership fees will not be refunded if membership is withdrawn due to inappropriate behaviour or conduct.

- **Use, Storage and Availability of Member Data**

All data submitted to The Club by members (including name, contact details and any additional data) will be held within the club records, either as hard-copy or electronically or both. No data will be passed from The Club to any other organisation or made available to any non-member. Upon joining, member's names, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers will be made available to other members of the club for the purposes of assisting club communication and event planning. Any members who do not wish their contact details to be made available to other members are required to notify the Committee of this by E-mail or in writing at the time of joining or at any other appropriate time.

- **Committee**

All business of The Club shall be controlled by The Committee which shall consist of at least three Officers (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer), elected by a vote of members of the club at an Annual General Meeting. Several other optional Officers as detailed below may be present on The Committee, or their functions may be performed by other Committee Officers.

A minimum vote of 2/3rds of members are required for any notion to be valid. Any prior notice of absence of a member at the Annual General Meeting has the right to vote on any notion in the agenda before the event by recording their vote in writing by Email or letter to the Club Chairman no less than 24 hours before the event.

- **The Club Officers**

- **Chairperson (required post) Currently Occupied By Robert Kester**

- Represent the club at official meetings and events
  - Organise the general running of the club and chair meetings
  - Regularly check / respond to / forward email messages from the main email address
  - Liaise with members, and members of other clubs
  - Apply for permits and arrange meets
  - Organise BCA membership and insurance
  - Arrange events (e.g. Committee meetings, AGM, social events, weekends/trips away, etc)

- **Secretary (required post) Currently Occupied By Philip Long**

- Take minutes of meetings wherever appropriate
  - Perform other secretarial duties as requested by the Committee

- Treasurer (required post) Currently Occupied By Joshua Shaw
- Keep the club accounts in order
- Collect and record payments from club members for trips or events
- Monitor collection of annual and monthly membership fees
- Prepare an annual budget if required
- Reimburse costs/expenses upon approval of the Committee
- Monitor payments to external bodies as approved by the Committee for items such as trips, events, club equipment, etc
- Co-opted Committee Member (optional post) Currently Elected - Jamie Robinson  
Forms part of the Committee to discuss and make decisions on the official running of the club.
  
- Socials organiser (optional post)
- Arrange and encourage regular pub meets and social events
- Help welcome new members to the club by inviting them to socials
  
- Equipment Officer (optional post)
- Gear maintenance (this does not replace the need for all members to check the safety of equipment)
- Monitoring the condition of the club equipment and maintaining an inventory
- Submit new equipment or replacement/renewal requirements to the chairperson and treasurer
  
- Founder members  
To ensure the continuity required for the smooth running and establishment of the club, the founder members (Robert Kester, Joshua Shaw, Philip Long & Jamie Robinson) who established the club in 2023) are automatically entitled to a 'Founder Member' position on The Committee, if they do not already hold one of the other Committee positions.
  
- Election of Committee Members  
Only full members who have held membership for longer than six months may hold a position on The Committee. Members may be nominated or may volunteer for positions on The Committee. All of the positions shall be decided by a simple majority vote of all full members present and voting at the Annual General Meeting (any prior notice of absence of a full member at the Annual General Meeting has the right to vote on any notion in the agenda before the event by recording their vote in writing by Email or letter to the Club Chairman no less than 24 hours before the event)  
. The method of voting can be decided at the time of the elections and should be documented, along with election proceedings in the minutes. Officers are elected for one year but may be re-elected. An Annual General Meeting will be held once a year at a convenient time and minutes should be available to members if requested. Every effort should be made to ensure maximum attendance for an Annual General Meeting.
  
- Roll of The Committee  
Additional points that the whole Committee should consider each year prior to the Annual General Meeting should include (but are not limited to):

- What the membership fees are for the following year
- What club equipment may soon require to be purchased/replaced
- Reviewing the club constitution and code of practice, any amendments to be presented at the AGM
- Improvements to the way the club is organised
- Ensuring that members are satisfied

With the exception of the individual roles detailed above, the job of The Committee is to ensure the smooth running of The Club, in such a way as to meet with the clubs objectives, while ensuring the club is run in accordance with the rules and requirements detailed in this document. Any change to the details set out in this document, or any other change to the way in which The Club is run (i.e. one that will significantly affect the functioning of The Club or one where the views of The Committee are clearly split) must be discussed and then voted in by a minimum of a 2/3rd majority decision of all members of The Committee.

- Club Equipment

- Access and Storage

The equipment must be stored in an appropriate location, where ropes are able to dry and be protected from freezing. Access to this location will be controlled by The Committee. However, every effort will be made to ensure that access to equipment is available to all full members whenever this is required. Members are advised to contact the Equipment Officer or Club Chairman in advance to communicate their equipment requirements.

- Priority

Use of club equipment is prioritised to planned club meets organised in advance such as weekends away or planned trips. In the event of two events competing for equipment, agreement between individual members is desirable, however failing that the decision of The Committee will be final.

- Rules for Use

For every trip it is the responsibility of all attending 3SMTCC members to ensure that the equipment is used appropriately and returned CLEAN after use, particularly with ropes washed and shanked. If the returning or cleaning of equipment is not possible immediately after the trip, the Equipment Officer or Club Chairman should be informed and arrangements should be made to ensure the equipment is returned and cleaned as soon as possible. The member packing equipment for the trip should ensure that all items taken are accounted for on return, and any losses or damages to club equipment during the course of a trip should be reported to The Committee immediately.

- Maintenance

A live inventory of all club equipment should be kept and updated regularly. Regular dedicated audits or inspections of club equipment are not considered necessary; however, instead, all equipment should be inspected before and after use (particularly ropes, which should be inspected for defects during packing and washing). Ropes and slings should be assigned a maximum working life of 10 years, after which time they must be decommissioned irrespective of their condition. Any rigging item with a suspected defect should be immediately withdrawn from use pending investigation. Repairs to non-rigging items such as tacklesacks should be performed when deemed necessary.

- Liability

The Club takes no responsibility or liability for the use of any club owned equipment. This is at the risk of any member using this after making their own suitable inspections and assessment that it is safe and suitable to use.

- Decommissioning

Equipment that is decommissioned due to age or defects should be removed of the 3SMTCC identifying markings then destroyed and disposed of. The decommissioning of any item of equipment, and the fate of all decommissioned equipment should be recorded in the equipment inventory.

- Losses and Damages

All trip participants must report any damage or loss of equipment on the trip to The Committee. Depending on the nature of the damage or loss, individual members may be responsible for funding the replacement costs of the equipment.

- Non Members and Club Associates

- Definitions and Entitlements

- Non Members

Non-member refers to anyone who is not a full member or an associate of the club. Non-members may attend club trips in the company of full members, on the conditions set out below.

- Club Associates

Individuals who are not full members of the club, but who have expressed an interest in attendance on occasional trips or social events may be given the status of club associate. This position should only be given at the discretion of The Committee and is not an entitlement. Club associates could include those who wish to be involved socially with the club or those who wish to follow the proceedings of the club and take an occasional underground involvement, but not regularly enough to warrant full membership.

Members who do not renew their membership will be automatically downgraded from full member to club associate upon expiry of their full membership. During the first few months of each year, the list of club associates should be reviewed at the discretion of The Committee and those deemed not to have a valid reason for being a club associate, or who have not participated significantly in the club during the last 12 months will be returned to non-member status.

- Attendance of Non Members and Club Associates on Trips

Non-members and club associates are welcome to attend any 3SMTCC event with the following criteria:

- At least half the people attending the trip should be full 3SMTCC members.
- The non members and club associates must be covered by BCA insurance.

- The non members and club associates must pay a trip fee if appropriate (see below).

Non members and club associates may attend a maximum of two sporting caving events per calendar year. The first trip will be free for individuals who have been a non-member throughout the current and previous calendar years. The first trip will incur a trip fee for club associates and non members who held full membership during the previous calendar year. The second trip will incur a trip fee for all non-members and club associates. Attendance on a third trip will require full membership to be purchased,

although any trip fees paid for the second trip will be deducted from the full year membership rate (but not from any partial-year discounted membership rates).

It is the responsibility of the 3SMTCC full members on the trip to ensure equipment is booked out and returned clean and that trip fees are collected and passed to the Treasurer. Where space is limited on any trip or event, priority will always go to full members, followed by club associates irrespective of when the individual signed up for the event.

- Exceptions

Note that these are general conditions and rules and for many events and situations, exceptions to the above may apply. Deviations from the above that are deemed to be in the interest of The Club or fairness to members or potential members may be made at the discretion of The Committee

- Trips and Events

- Organisation of Trips

The Committee will organise several events in advance at the start of the year. Ideally these events should encompass a range of types of caves and potholes, and should aim to reflect the wishes of the club members. Further events may be organised throughout the year at shorter notice by The Committee or individual members or associates,

Club trips will be made available for members and club associates to sign up to. Places on trips organised by The Committee but with limited spaces will be on first-come first-served basis (with full members taking priority over club associates). Members may suggest trips or may represent the club for organising a trip (although The Committee should be kept informed), in which case, the member(s) specifically suggesting, requesting or organising the trip will have discretion over who has priority attendance.

- Access Permission

All club trips MUST obtain the appropriate access permission, i.e. a permit, or permission from the landowner. Typically a selection of club permits should be organised in advance by The Committee, however, all members are welcome to use the club name to apply for any permits or permission throughout the year, provided The Committee are kept informed. No members of 3SMTCC should under any circumstances knowingly breach access restrictions or 'pirate' any cave as such actions could compromise the reputation of The Club and may result in withdrawal of membership without refund.

- Additional Trip Costs

Petrol costs, and all other associated costs for all trips (including bunkhouse and camping fees and land access fees) will be split between individuals by personal agreements, and are independent from the club funds except at the discretion of The Treasurer.

- Dissolution of The Club

- Reasons for Dissolution

The dissolution (termination of the existence) of The Club may occur under the following circumstances:

- If there are insufficient members to form the minimum Committee (Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary), in which case The Club should be put into suspension for a minimum of 12 months prior to dissolution while new members can be sought.
- If the decision is taken by 2/3rds of all full members of The Club to terminate the existence of The Club. This must include the full approval of the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and all active Founder Members.

- Actions in the Event of Dissolution

In the event of the dissolution of The Club, all money in the club bank account will be used to pay any outstanding club debts (including any debts outstanding to members who have loaned money to The Club, or are owed reimbursements by The Club). Any remaining money will be divided by all remaining club members equally. All club assets, including ropes and all equipment will initially be offered as payment to any member owed money by The Club (if the person owed money agrees to accept equipment in payment or part-payment, assuming all used equipment to be valued at 50% of the current replacement cost) or sold to raise as much money as possible, with all proceeds being used to repay debts and the remaining will be divided by all remaining club members equally. No member may profit from dissolution of The Club.

All members must read, understand and agree to the following information:

This code of practice is aimed at ensuring all members are familiar with what is expected of them, in terms of caving skills. This is particularly important as 3SMTCC is not able to provide any training facilities. All club trips will assume the following levels of understanding and competence, as well as an appropriate level of fitness, and by signing up to any trip you must agree with the statements set out below.

- Single Rope Technique (SRT)

Before taking part in a caving trip involving the extensive use of SRT, you must be capable of the following:

- Safe and controlled abseiling and traversing
- Passing all manner of re-belays and deviations
- General pitch etiquette and safety

Some trips may require SRT to be performed in awkward and constricted spaces, often requiring a very advanced understanding of the above. For many trips this is not essential,

however, it is your responsibility to obtain the necessary information about individual trips before signing up to ensure that your capabilities match the requirements of the trip.

- Rigging

Rigging skills are not essential (there are always other members who are capable of this, and often trips that do not require ropework), however, if you are involved in rigging you should understand the following:

- The ropes should be clear of water and mud and should not be against rock without protection
- Ropes should be attached to at least two sound belays (check the condition of P-hangers and spits)
- Damaged or worn rope should not be used and should be brought to the attention of The Committee
- You are solely responsible for checking all rigging prior to using it and understand that no liability of failure remains with any individual or the Club

- Team Work

In general, all trips will have a main organiser who will consider the capabilities of the team, the equipment requirements and the risks associated to that trip. The decisions of the trip organiser are final, however, as a member of the team you must express any opinions on matters concerning the safety of the caving trip, even if they contradict the opinions of others, including:

- Danger of flooding or loose rocks
- Inexperienced or incompetent member(s)
- Dangerous rigging or equipment

It is the responsibility of all club members to look after each other, always ensure that those in your group are well and offer assistance where appropriate, for example, by taking a tackle sack from tired individuals or by offering a helping hand to those struggling with challenging climbs. 3SMTCC is a team-orientated club, and an entirely self-orientated attitude to caving is discouraged. You must not do anything to put either yourself or other members of the team at risk.

- Conservation

You must understand the need to conserve and respect the cave environment, including

- Not leaving litter or removing anything other than litter from the cave
- Not damaging cave formations by touching or climbing on them
- Not using flash photography where bats may be in habitation
- Ensuring the country code is followed at all times

#### Protection of Equipment

You must try to avoid damaging/losing any equipment owned by The Club. All damages/losses should be reported to The Committee. All equipment will be checked regularly and replaced



when deemed appropriate. The Club reserves the right to charge relevant member(s) for damage to any club equipment.

This Constitution has been agreed by the following founding members and subject to an annual review

Robert Kester  
3SMTCC Chairman

Joshua Shaw  
3SMTCC Treasurer

Philip Long  
3SMTCC Secretary

Jamie Robinson  
3SMTCC Co-opted Committee Member

Council was happy to accept the new club as they meet the criteria for membership.

2)AOB from Jenny, now a movement about Countryside Rights of Way, a whole range of groups getting together and attempting to influence access in the future. Jenny wondered if the C&A group would like to get involved, Richard Vooght said he would look into it.

### **Agenda Item 13: Date of next Council meeting**

May 14<sup>th</sup> 2024 at 7pm.