



Minutes for Council Meeting

Tuesday 16th July at 7pm

Held via Zoom Video Conference

Agenda Item No.	Agenda Item Name
1	Apologies for absence
2	Persons present
3	Current Composition of the BCA Council
4	Acceptance of previous meeting's minutes
5	Officer Reports
6	Matters arising from the AGM
7	Items for Discussion
8	Any Other Business
9	Details of the Next Meeting

1.0 Apologies for absence

Apologies Received: Andy Eavis, Richard Vooght, Josh White, Christopher Boardman, George Plant, Jess Brock, David Jean, Allan Richardson,

2.0 Persons present

Present: Aidan Kuhlmann, Chris Bolton, Rostam Namaghi, Stephan Natynczuk, Jenny Potts, Steve Holding, Ged Campion, Tony Radmall, Gethin Thomas (GT), Linda Wilson, Allan Richardson, Andrew Hinde, John Gunn, Mike Higgins.

3.0 Current Composition of the BCA Council

	Position	Name	Initials	Vote
BCA Executive	Chair (2024-27)	Rostam Namaghi	RN	N
	Secretary (2024-27)	Aidan Kuhlmann	AK	Y
	Treasurer (2024-27)	Chris Bolton	CJB	Y
Individual Members Representatives	Position 1 (2023-2025)	Jess Brock	AE	Y
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Andy Eavis	JB	Y
Group Member Representatives	Position 1 (2023-2025)	Aodhán Ó Gabhann	AG	Y
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Jenny Potts	JP	Y
Regional Council Representatives	Ogofa Cymru / Caving Wales	Allan Richardson	AR	Y
	CNCC	Andrew Hinde	AH	Y
	CSCC	Linda Wilson	LJW	Y
	DCA	Mike Higgins	MH	Y
	DCUC	David Jean	DJ	Y
Constituent Body Representnatives	Assoc. Caving Instructors	Stephan Natynczuk	SN	Y
	BCRA	John Gunn	JG	Y
	BCRC	Emma Porter	EP	Y
	CDG	Claire Cohen	CC	Y
	CHECC	Tom Phillips	TP	Y
	NAMHO	Steve Holding	SH	Y
	National Caving Scout Active Support Unit	Tony Radmall	TR	Y
	William Pengelly CST	Richard Vooght	RV	Y
Working Group Convenors	Conservation & Access Committee	Richard Vooght	RV	N
	Equipment & Training	Steve Gray	SG	N
	Youth & Development	Jonathan Lester	JL	N
	Countryside Rights of Way			N
	IT			N
	Publications & Information	Zac Woodford	ZW	N
	Qualification Management Committee	George Plant	GP	N
	Radon			N
	Constitution & Governance			N
Other Positions	FSE Rep	Allan Richardson	AR	N
	Insurance	Josh White	JW	N
	Newsletter Editor			N
	Safeguarding Officer	Chris Boardman	CBD	N
	UIS Rep	Ged Campion	GC	N
	BCL Representative	Jenny Potts	JP	N
BCA Staff	Artificial Cave	Katie Eavis	KE	N
	Bookkeeper	Karen Lydon	KL	N
	Training Admin	Mary Wilde	MW	N
	Membership Admin	Katie Eavis	KE	N

4.0 Acceptance of previous meeting's minutes

4.1 Proposer: CJB. Seconder: Rostam Namaghi. Motion unanimously passed.

5.0 Officer Reports

5.1 Executive

5.1.1 Chair

It is a pleasure to be back on council after these past couple of years. I was heartened by the strong show of support at the AGM and I believe that with the candidates elected and appointed we can begin to rebuild our Association.

I must express my thanks to Chris Bolton who has been holding the fort while I was on holiday, and for being my only source of handover from the previous administration. He has done a great job with fairly minimal support at times and now things are more firmly in place myself and Aidan can step in to take some of the load from him.

My main job over the next 6 months is recruitment. We have multiple vacancies and jobs that need careful consideration and time investment. Most importantly we need a Data Protection Officer, and clarity on the IT situation, in these I aim to have made progress on by the September meeting. I also intend to meet with representatives from each regional council to work out what their long-term priorities are.

I wanted my first act as chair to send out a strong message of support for our volunteers, which is why I am proposing the letters of thanks. I recognise in each member of the council the same passion for the sport and eagerness to help that drives me. I will support you, even if we have disagreed in the past. Your wellbeing as volunteers is important to me and I want each of you to feel good about what you do.

Rostam

BCA Chair

RN thanked Working Group Convenors and Officers for their updates and mentioned the updated email lists with a hope that going forward everyone should stay up to date with Council affairs.

RN then acknowledged the unexpected passing of Sid Perou, remarking the loss of a great caver, a lovely person, and a fantastic ambassador for the sport whose films, while being older works, are still passionately watched today. RN proposed the best way to remember Sid would be a celebration of his life and all Council members raised a glass to his memory.

5.1.2 Treasurer

Since the last meeting, apart from managing the expected expenditure, I have set up Direct Debits to pay the Information Commissioner's Office, and to rejoin the Sport and Recreation Alliance. I also investigated joining the Outdoors for All Coalition and have established that there's no fee, it's a body set up to influence Government regarding access legislation and all they need at the moment is to have as many organisations behind them as possible. BCA is now included in their list.

I have received and paid all the Regional Council grants for 2023, with the exception of DCA. The DCA claims for 2022 and 2023 have not yet been submitted, and I understand their Treasurer is unwell. The total across all regions, including DCA, is expected to be about £2k less than was accrued in the 2023 accounts.

Membership income across all types of membership is looking about £4k lower than 2023; the 2024 budget was based it remaining the same. Interest rates are dropping faster than expected and we may also be a bit light on investment income.

IT costs are looking a bit lower than budgeted but there may be some additional costs to come, as a result of a review of the existing IT against cyber insurance requirements and lessons learned from the data breach.

Y & D have not yet spent much of their budget, the main item being a donation of £1k via CNCC to York University CPC to reinstate their SRT training facility.

Other areas such as Conservation and Access do not appear to be spending any money so far. Estimating the budget outcome is difficult since the budget was based on previous years and contains no specific activity to monitor against.

Since BCA now has limited reserves it is necessary to be a bit tighter on budget and prediction. This autumn I will be asking Regional Councils (as well as Working Groups and Committees) to estimate their likely costs in 2025. This should include planned items (a conservation project, a batch of bolts, etc) and an allowance for things that typically come up. Council can then compare the potential total with the available funds and agree a budget. I don't expected that budgets will be set in stone and there will be flexibility during the year. The objective is to be able to monitor how things are going, know where any spare cash is and avoid shocks at the end of the year.

Apart from my responsibilities as Treasurer, I have assisted with a safeguarding complaint, led the response to a complaint about a club's financial procedures, and co-ordinated the BCA response to the data breach.

I have also been liaising with Simon Mullins, who was appointed by the outgoing Executive to support BCA IT systems on a part time self employed basis. This was necessary because it had not been possible to find a volunteer replacement for Ari Cooper-Davis following the end of his term as IT Co-ordinator. Simon's role might be regarded as semi-volunteer, as he is a BCA member and the hourly rate he is paid is very substantially lower than the commercial rate for such support. He has made a valuable input to BCA's IT systems and the electronic vote would not have been possible without his support. Council are asked to endorse his appointment.

Chris Bolton

CJB added that the DCA 2022-23 accounts will be sent through to him by MH soon, which will allow BCA to process the DCA's expenses across the period. Additionally, the DCA's rental of a container has been approved as a claimable expense for the period 2022-24 and the expense will be reviewed at the end of 2024. This will total an outlay of £50 per month/£600 per annum. RN commented that such a claim should go through C&A in the future, Chris replied to inform Council that C&A hadn't had any budget allocated to it and therefore there was no money in it. He expressed a desire for C&A to have a more central oversight of Regional Council spending in relation to C&A activities in the future. Additionally, the BCA covering the costs of the container will be consistent with DCA's scrutinised accounts.

5.1.2.1 Proposal to Confirm Simon Mullin's continued Employment in relation to IT

5.1.2.1.1 CJB reiterated his comments within his report regarding Simon's role within the organisation and the important work he does.

5.1.2.1.2 Proposer: Chris Bolton, Seconder: Rostam Namaghi. Motion passed unanimously. No Abstentions.

5.1.3 Secretary

It's been a very busy start to my term of office. I have had many communications with Chris Bolton, Mary Wilde, Rostam Namaghi and others.

These have concerned some issues left by the out-going executive who deemed it sensible to leave them for the incoming executive, the issues having arisen in the lead up to the AGM. These have involved:

- *a safeguarding complaint against a BCA member*
- *A complaint by a BCA member regarding a club alleged to have been "acting commercially".*

I have also contributed to a QMC issue regarding interpretation of the fine print of an award requirement, been working on updating the Council mailing list with Mary Wilde, have been talking with Rostam and Chris as we establish ourselves as an executive, and of course the unfortunate data breach has occupied a significant portion of my efforts, of which I have only played a small part in working to rectify.

I must really give thanks to those who have dedicated so much time in the last week to fixing the problem in stressful circumstances. The digital robustness and security of the BCA is something the executive will be scrutinising as we move forward from this incident.

Finally, I have been working to update the template for Agendas and Minutes. If anyone has any suggestions or criticisms, they'll be happily received because I doubt this will be the final iteration.

Aidan Kuhlmann

Secretary

AK: No further commentary added, and no further questions received from Council.

5.2 Standing Committee Chair Reports

5.2.1 Conservation & Access

No report received.

5.2.2 Training & Equipment

The regions are continuing with training programs, but I would like to know how I'm supposed to fund specialist courses and any equipment issues as I have been given a Budget of £0.

Thanks

Steve

RN contributed that T&E currently has no budget and had provided no costings in relation to one and that it was unfortunate SG couldn't attend. CJB said he had invited SG to contact him to contact him to discuss a budget for the T&E WG. AK confirmed that SG had been contacted by email and mentioned that SG had not been receiving emails from Council for the last three years.

5.2.3 Youth & Development

No report received.

5.3 Working Group Convenor Reports

5.3.1 Countryside Rights of Way

No report received.

JP updated Council about the new Labour government's stance on "improving access to nature" and informed Council that CRoW was still operating, albeit as a subcommittee to C&A. JP added that CRoW should start to become more active as government lobbying potential increases. RN agreed that the CRoW Terms of reference should be updated to better reflect the Labour Party's manifesto on this front to enable more effective campaigning.

5.3.2 Information Technology

No report received.

5.3.3 Publications & Information

"There has been little activity to report in the working group since last council meeting and consequently there is nothing to report."

All the best,

Zac

5.3.4 Qualification Management Committee

It's been busy at QMC with a lot of work put in by lots of great volunteers. Northern mining has taken a step forward with Dave Hollingham putting in a great shift along with Dave Baines. A whole raft of venues have now been inspected and are good to go for visiting groups. These are in the North Pennines and the Lake District and have been without inspections for a while.

The plan is to have the Mine Inspection Reports available in a PICA style arrangement (interested parties pay an annual fee for access to the reports).

We've been making a few 'minor' adjustments to our documents as-and-when things come to light or are brought to our attention. Ratios and procedures are the main things.

A note for the new executive: I always keep this report short and simple, as per advice from previous chairs. If you, or anyone, would like to know any more about QMC and what we do, then please ask.

George Plant

5.3.5 Radon

No report received.

5.3.6 Constitution & Governance

No report received.

5.4 Additional Reports by Appointed Officers

5.4.1 Artificial Cave

No report received.

5.4.2 British Caving Library

No report received.

5.4.3 FSE Representative

Ged has reported to the FSE that I am the new BCA Rep.

I have heard nothing so far from the FSE, but intend to attend the FSE GAM in November which is being held in Italy.

I will be in the South of France during the next BCA Council meeting, but will try to attend.

Cheers

Allan

5.4.4 Insurance Manager

No report received.

5.4.5 Library Representative

1. *Archive donation NCFC (29/5/24)*

Received from Mrs. Patsy Mellor from the estate of the late Don Mellor (CPC Librarian) an archive of the Northern Cavern & Fell Club. This club was active prior to WWII and the log books should have some original reports of cave discoveries.

2. *Archive donation Dave Gill (6/7/24)*

Received from Dave Clucas the collection of caving literature kept at Dave Gill's home in Manchester. This includes books and periodicals plus some important international cave conservation material.

Jenny Potts, 10-7-24a

5.4.6 Membership Administrator

BCA membership

As is usual for this time of year currently there aren't many members joining BCA. In a typical year new membership stays quiet over the summer and picks up again in September/ October time.

Most membership runs pretty smoothly, although a few clubs need chasing multiple times to pay.

Just Go Update

We are hoping to 'go live' on JustGo on the 15 th July! I will update council if that does happen, and if it ends up being pushed back I'll let you know the new date before the meeting on the 16 th. There is still quite a bit to get sorted this week – I have two training sessions with Just Go, plus a meeting with Mary to work on integrating the new membership sections with the QMS side which has been on Just go for 3 years.

When we do go live it will need to be a soft launch to start with. Everyone who is a QMS member, and a member of the BCA will end up with two Just Go accounts – which me and Mary will need to merge into one. We can't merge duplicate member accounts until we are live, but it is best to get this done before too many members start interacting with the system.

Hopefully the individual membership side will be live very soon after the 15 th July, so individual members will be able to join BCA (and BCRA) via Just go rather than the current web form. Clubs will take a little bit longer as I will need to teach the club contacts how to use the new system. In the meantime, I will be able to add club members to Just Go, so they won't get missed.

There are bound to be some teething issues as we all get to grips with the new membership system. Once we are live Council should go and have a look around and check it all makes sense, and functions as desired. In the first couple of months after launch Justgo will tweak the system, without extra charge, however anything we want changing later on may incur extra charges. (although after the training I had last week with JustGo I have seen I will be able to alter much more than I realised – for example adding extra membership types to our JustGo set up won't need involvement from JustGo, and can be done by me).

I'll definitely be feeling the pressure in the next few weeks, to get everything done that still needs doing, and then the hope that the system will work as it should for BCA, BCRA, individuals, clubs, associates etc, without too many issues.

However British Gymnastics went live on JustGo last week, and they have 600,000 members so JustGo should be well able to handle the data I have sent them!

Katie Eavis – Membership Administrator

ZW inquired about GDPR in relation to Just Go and KE explained how with all the information being collected & held by JustGo, that most issues in relation to the handling of such data would be JustGo's concern – particularly those issues in relation to the recent BCA data leak. RN decided that the topic of conversation was a good time to jump ahead to item 7.4.

5.4.7 Safeguarding Officer

No report received.

5.4.8 Newsletter Editor

No report received.

5.4.9 Training Administrator

No report received.

5.4.10 UIS Representative

Currently the UIS comprises 57 countries worldwide.

The job of a country's delegate to the UIS is to represent its cavers and speleologists from each country. In the case of the BCA and those countries that have just one national body the expectation is for the UIS delegate to report directly to its national body.

An elected bureau runs the affairs of the UIS and an international congress is held every four years where the general assembly meeting is held. The work of the UIS is largely done by members of its commissions and working groups.

The next bureau meeting of the UIS is to be held in Indonesia at the Asian Trans Disciplinary Karst congress in Yogyakarta on 14th August which both myself and Andy Eavis (past president of UIS) will attend.

The UIS routinely provides financial support to cavers and speleologists who are conducting research or planning expeditions.

The UIS bureau is currently working on a number of important initiatives to raise the profile of international cave & karst conservation and protection. A few of these include.

- The compilation of a register of endangered caves and karst around the world.*
- An application to UNESCO to have a date set for the international cave and karst day each year (likely to be in September).*
- Achieving membership of the International Science Council.*
- Publishing guidelines for cave and karst protection under the umbrella of the Union for the conservation of nature (ICUN).*

Ged Campion

UK delegate to the UIS.

6.0 Matters Arising Following the AGM

6.1 Proposal to formally renew the following Working Groups:

6.1.1 Qualifications Management Committee

- 6.1.2 Youth & Development**
- 6.1.3 Publications & Information (with 2018 Terms of Reference)**
- 6.1.4 Conservation & Access**
- 6.1.5 CRoW**
- 6.1.6 E&T**

Note that this does mean a suspension of COG and Radon.

JP enquired about the use of the term 'Officer' in relation to Working Group's Terms of Reference (ToR). RN clarified that Officer should be treated as a synonym for Working Group Convenor and that convenors would continue not to hold a vote on Council.

RN informed council that the only amendments to the 2018 ToR P&I was going to return to were corrections to the numbering.

CJB enquired about whether the Finance Committee should become a working group. It was decided that since they report to the Treasurer there was no urgent need to change this. RN added that giving the group a ToR might overcomplicate things and this would be better left an item for the next Council Meeting.

CoG and Radon were decided that the term for their state would be 'dormant', and that the proposal is to renew the other groups, with no reference to suspending CoG or Radon.

Discussed at the end of the meeting, after 8.3. GT informed Council dormant was the best state to leave the Radon WG since there were no new regulations for work to be done in understanding and interpreting. However, the needed 5 year resample of venues was upcoming and that the funding for this resampling had been historically funded by the BCA. RN stated that not renewing the group would remove the active requirement to meet and produce reports for Council, but that this does not constitute a formal end to the Working Group.

6.1.7 Proposal to renew the following Working Group: Qualifications Management Committee, Youth & Development, Publications & Information (with 2018 Terms of Reference, numbering amended), Conservation & Access, CRoW, and E&T

6.1.7.1 CoG and Radon to sit dormant

6.1.7.2 Proposer: Rostam Namaghi, Secunder Jenny Potts. Motion passed unanimously. 0 Objections, 0 abstentions.

6.2 Proposal for dates of meetings:

6.2.1 Council meetings: 10/09/24, 29/10/24, 17/12/24, 28/01/25, 15/03/25 (AGM deadline), 06/05/25

6.2.2 AGM: 07/06/2025, in person.

RN explained that the proposal for an in-person AGM was with the view to help bring Council closer together to facilitate and encourage easier collaboration. He added that it would remain a hybrid meeting and that recorded digital voting on proposals would remain.

AH enquired whether transport expenses would be covered for Council members to attend the AGM. SH informed Council that previously travel expenses weren't covered for travel to the AGM. RN added that the AGM used to coincide with a Council Meeting which members would receive travel expenses for.

SN asked whether the AGM would rotate around regions and if it would last all weekend. RN replied that he would like it to both rotate around the regions and be a weekend-long event. He said that this year would probably be a compromise and suggested the Castleton Rotary Centre where AGMs had been held previously as a potential venue for the upcoming AGM. Various council members agreed that it had been a good venue and that starting in Derbyshire was sensible since the rotation of regions has to start somewhere and Derbyshire has the benefit of being the most geographically central of the regions.

6.2.2.1 Proposal to hold the next AGM on the 7th of June 2025, in person.

6.2.2.1.1 Proposer: Rostam Namaghi, Seconder: Aidan Kuhlmann. Vote passed unanimously. No objections, no abstentions.

7.0 Items for Discussion

7.1 Proposal to Formally Thank Allan for his Time Serving as Secretary

Proposed by Rostam Namaghi

Item discussed & voted for in tandem with 7.2. See notes under 7.2. It was decided that since Allan was on Council that his thanks should be given when he's present at a Council meeting.

7.2 Proposal for Council to co-sign 'Letter of Thanks' to Outgoing Members

Proposed by Rostam Namaghi

RN explained he had been careful to be apolitical in the writing of the letters. He wrote the letters to thank previous Council Members who had left during times of conflict in Council that was exacerbated by miscommunication and structural problems within the organisation. RN added that a letter to Wendy was upcoming, he just wanted to ensure such a letter was accurate. The separate proposal in relation to AR was because he wasn't leaving Council. RN finished by adding that any corrections are gladly received and that if he has missed anyone then for Council to let him know and he will write a letter and bring forth a proposal for them.

7.2.1 Proposer: Rostam Namaghi, Seconder: Linda Wilson. Motion passed unanimously. No objections, no abstentions.

7.3 Discussion of the Organisation and Terms of Reference of the Equipment & Training Working Group

This item was discussed under 6.1. The E&T working group's own proposed Terms of Reference were accepted by council within the same vote.

7.4 Discussion regarding Data Protection

Discussion continuing from 5.4.6. CJB informed Council that Just Go holds the data and that we have access to it. The first upload of the data base enables Just Go to capture the data and that some manual processing will be required by Just Go to separate BCRA members.

CJB also provided a summary of how the recent breach occurred – namely through human error, being accidental and not the result of any malicious activity.

GT feedback to Council QMC's experience and knowledge from having been using Just Go for a few years that: it is a secure system with controls for limiting different person's access to information. With ongoing work on merging QMC and BCA's databases on the systems. GT remarked that Just Go's basis within an Indian time zone meant that the timing of things was offset from ours. Consequently, big updates from them would be delayed or arrive early. Additionally, GT added that BCA members will see little change to the membership system for now because most of the work is happening behind the scenes. Finally, Gt reported that recently QMC organised a big purge of data to ensure it remains compliant with GDPR.

ZW enquired about whether there's an email opt-in/opt-out option for members with a view that member-wide emails could be a good medium for P&I to broadcast information. GT answered with the information that there are indeed such options, but that there is a charge for sending out so many emails above a certain number of recipients. RN suggested that one email a month would be more than sufficient for the BCA's needs.

7.5 Discussion regarding the BCA's IT Situation

7.6 Proposal to Hold an Exact Voting Record of Council Members Contained Within Minutes

Proposal that a record is kept of how members vote on proposals at BCA Council meetings. This is with a view to make it easier and simpler for cavers to know how their representatives cast their votes and thus hold them to account for it.

Proposed by Aidan Kuhlmann

The discussions regarding this point were broadly held in tandem with item 7.7.

AH informed Council that this had already been voted on by Council and that he was unsure why it wasn't implemented. He suggested just doing it. RN responded the executive didn't want to blindside Council by just doing so Council.

A.H. asked how this would be implemented. AK and RN responded with a few options and that the exact details of how could be sorted later. LJW requested that it would be a good way of creating a table of attendance for voters.

- 7.6.1** Proposer: Aidan Kuhlmann, Seconder Rostam Namaghi. Motion passed unanimously. No objections, no abstentions.

7.7 Proposal to Video Record Council Minutes and Publish Them

The proposal is that, in the name of transparency and absolute record keeping of BCA Council meetings, that BCA Council Meetings are recorded and published whenever and wherever reasonably practicable. The idea would be post them onto a BCA YouTube channel where all cavers could view the meeting at their own leisure. Furthermore, this would obviously greatly assist the creation of written minutes.

Proposed by Aidan Kuhlmann

LJW raised a concern that by doing so could stifle open and confidential discussions. RN responded by saying that Council Meetings weren't necessarily the place for confidential discussions since any BCA member has the right to attend a Council meeting. RN asked whether we need another form of discussion or does Council need to change how it attends the meetings to make meetings more formal.

SN agreed with LJW in principle but offered the practical solution of breakout rooms.

AH stated that the publication aspect may put people off volunteering and raised concerns regarding how clips of Council meetings could be easily misused once on the internet. AH suggested that maybe recordings could be held onto and only distributed when asked for instead.

RN suggested that the voting on the proposals should be separated, and AK resolved to drop the proposal for now and explore other options.

- 7.7.1** No vote held.

8.0 Any Other Business

8.1 Sid Perou Moment of Silence

This matter was discussed at the beginning of the meeting as part of 5.1.1. Chair's Report.

8.2 Invitation to the FSE to attend Hidden Earth

AH asked whether the BCA was going to invite the FSE to Hidden Earth. GC added that he thinks they would really like that, and suggested RN email them. JG suggested it is made a BCA/BCRA joint invitation. RN agreed.

8.3 UIS International Day of Caves and Karst

GC informed council of the UIS's efforts to create a formally recognised International Day of Caves and Karst (IDCK). JG added that he had helped draft the UIS IDCK proposal to UNESCO and also noted that the Guidelines for

Caves and Karst Protection (referred to in GC's report, item 5.4.10) had been published in 2022 as a joint UIS-IUCN document. JG also informed Council that the UIS needs letters from national bodies to support its application to UNESCO and suggested that a joint BCRA-BCA letter should be sent, and this was agreed.

9.0 Details of the Next Meeting

Next Council Meeting: Tuesday 10th September, via videoconferencing, beginning at 7pm.