



Minutes for Council Meeting

Tuesday the 17th of December at 7pm

Held via Zoom

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

1.0 Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from: Allan Richardson, Andy Eavis, Chris Boardman, John Gunn (David Shearsmith representing in lieu), David Jean.

2.0 Persons present

Aidan Kuhlmann, Chris Bolton, Rostam Namaghi, Jenny Potts, Tony Radmall, David Shearsmith (DS), Gethin Thomas, Andrew Hinde, Isaac Neale, Linda Wilson, Mike Higgins, Stephan Natynczuk, Steve Holding, Tom Phillips, Zac Woodford, Jess Brock, Ged Campion

Quorum of ten voting members was met.

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	JB	Y
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Andy Eavis	AE	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 Representatives	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
	Training & Equipment	Steve Gray	SG	N
	Youth & Development	Isaac Neale	IN	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 Previous Meeting Attendance & Report Submissions

	Position	Initials	16/07	Report?	10/09	Report?	29/10	Report?	17/12	Report?
BCA Executive	Chair	RN	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Secretary	AK	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Treasurer	CJB	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Individual Members	Position 1	JB	N	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A
	Position 2	AE	N	N/A	N	N/A	Y	N/A	N	N/A
Group Member Representatives	Position 1	AG	N	N/A	Y	N/A	N	N/A	N	N/A
	Position 2	JP	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A
Regional Council Representatives N.B: Reports are optional	Ogofa Cymru	AR	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
	CNCC	AH	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
	CSCC	LJW	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	DCA	MH	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y
	DCUC	DJ	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Constituent Body Representatives N.B: Reports are optional	ACI	SN	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
	BCRA	JG	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
	BCRC	EP	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	CDG	CC	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	CHECC	TP	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
	NAMHO	SH	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
	NCSASU	TR	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
	WP CST	RV	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
Working Group Convenors	C&A	RV	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y
	T&E	SG	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N
	Y&D	IN	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	Y
	(Dormant) CRoW		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	IT		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	P&I	ZW	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	QMC	GP	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y
	(Dormant) Radon		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	(Dormant) CoG		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other Positions	FSE Rep	AR	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
	Insurance	JW	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N
	Newsletter		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Safeguarding	CBD	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
	UIS Rep.	GC	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
	BCL Rep.	JP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Membership	KE	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y

Note that Regional Council & Constituent body representatives are not required to submit reports and doing so is entirely at the representatives' discretion. Furthermore, Individual and Group Member representatives do not submit reports.

5.0 Acceptance of previous meeting's minutes

Motion: To accept the previous Council Meeting's minutes as submitted to Council

Proposer: RN. Second: CB.

For: AK, CJB, JP, TR, AH, LJW, MH, SN, SH, TP, JB

Against: No votes received.

Abstentions: DS

Proposal approved.

6.0 Officer Reports

6.1 Executive

6.1.1 Chair (Rostam Namaghi)

Most of my efforts as Chair since the last meeting have been to do with UIS and the bid for 2029. Recruiting a small effective team at this stage is crucial, and significant efforts are still underway to find an experienced secretary. The bid is an ideal opportunity to showcase the best of British Caving and to deepen our ties with Cavers from across the world, and to energise and replenish our own volunteer base within BCA.

Motion: To formalise the UIS bid by creating a working group and assigning a budget for expenses of £250

Recruitment to various parts of BCA continues to go well and providing volunteer support continues to be my main role. I'm very pleased to see Y&D begin to work again and am in the middle of helping our new C&A convener adjust to politics at the national level. I will also be helping P&I volunteers deliver on projects in the coming months (Surveys and the Demographics Report). It is safe to say that looking after our volunteers continues to be a key priority.

I also went to the SUICRO symposium in the Republic of Ireland and happened to have some productive informal discussions with our counterparts across the sea. We face many similar challenges, and I strongly believe it is in both of our interests to collaborate on many issues, though notably the issues faced with regards to University Clubs and safety concerns from Unions. Unfortunately, issues continue to worsen, and I believe particularly Y&D, CHECC, and QMC could still make very valuable contributions and so if you are approached by the SUI for advice/support see that it is treated as a priority.

RN explained that the focus of the meeting would be CJB's report in 6.1.2. and added that he had been working with a few different Council members to support getting parts of the organisation operating again and as part of this he has held discussions with Victoria Kocher who will be coming in as the new C&A Officer, as RV is leaving the role. RN added that the formal adoption of Victoria will be left to the following Council meeting. RN elaborated that as part of this work he has been doing lots of recruiting for BCA volunteers and encouraged Council Members to contact him if they needed help recruiting volunteers.

Motion: To formalise the UIS bid by creating a working group and assigning a budget for expenses of £250

Proposer: RN. Second: LJW

For: AK, CJB, JP, TR, AH, LJW, MH, SN, SH, TP, JB

Against: No votes received.

Abstentions: DS

Motion approved.

6.1.2 Treasurer (Chris Bolton)

N.B.: Please read in conjunction with Appendix 1: Budget Report 2025

This has been a busy time for me, working on getting full control of BCA's bank accounts and preparing for the budget. Several problems have occurred because previous Officers have used their personal email address to set up arrangements with, for example, banks or IT suppliers, and the current Officer cannot access these. It is important to use a BCA email address for BCA business, particularly with external organisations.

1. Certification of 2024 Accounts

The Constitution requires that the Accounts are certified by a suitably qualified person, to be appointed by the AGM or in the event of a vacancy, by Council. The previous appointee doesn't wish to continue so we have a vacancy, for which John Sheehy has volunteered and is qualified.

Motion: That John Sheehy, an associate member of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, is appointed as a suitably qualified person to certify the Association's accounts.

2. HSBC mandate

The Council meeting on 10 September 2024 agreed a motion to submit a new mandate form to HSBC, the terms of which were in an Appendix. The part of that Appendix on Signing Rules was incorrect, as a result of an ambiguity in the HSBC form and should be replaced by a statement that two signatories must sign together. The limits on authorisation for different rules will be implemented by the Treasurer within the HSBC online banking website.

Motion: That Council agrees to this change on the mandate form for HSBC

3. Budget for 2025

At the time of writing this report, I don't have confirmed numbers for all the budget estimates and fixed costs such as the insurance premiums. I will send out the latest figures I have a week before the meeting. The information I have, however, is enough to show the decision we need to take.

I expect the budget requests to be about £10k over our expected income. That's only a 6% deficit, but after taking out things like insurance and staff salaries that can't be cut, it's nearly 25% of what's left. It would

be hard for Regional Councils and Working Groups to cut budgets by 25% and still deliver what members expect, but a deficit budget would take our reserves below their target level.

Looking ahead, assuming all our costs go up by 3% per year, the deficit in 2026 would be 10% and our General Reserve would go down to nearly half what our strategy requires. To avoid that would need 35% cuts in the areas where we can make them. I don't expect that to be feasible.

The current strategy on reserves, as set by previous Council meetings, is to keep:

- an Insurance Reserve of one year's premium plus twice the claim excess. This is because a large claim would result in the premium doubling (as happened to BMC) and if we didn't have the money to pay, members would be uninsured. This will be £88k in 2025.
- a General Reserve of at least one year's income, less one year's insurance premium. This would give us a margin to stay solvent in the event of other disasters such as a bank collapse, fraud, IT failure, etc. This will be £55k in 2025. Actual reserves will be just enough to cover this at the start of 2025 so deficit budgets will eat into the Reserve.

Assuming we don't cut the budget, we will dip into reserves during 2025. We must change our strategy on reserves before 2026 or raise membership fees two years running.

I have started a risk analysis to examine what the General Reserve needs to cover, but have not made the progress I hoped for, as other parts of the Treasurer's role have occupied more time than I expected. To change our reserve strategy without an analysis to support it could leave us with insufficient reserves.

Motion: To accept the budget for 2025 as tabled, subject to confirmation of any estimated items at the January 28 Council meeting. To note that this will dip into reserves and to agree in principle to raise membership fees for 2026. To ask the Treasurer to lead a review of the strategy on Reserves and make a recommendation to the first Council meeting after the AGM.

CJB emphasised the importance of using BCA email addresses because previous officers not doing so has created difficulties in sorting the bank mandates. CJB then explained that the purpose of the second motion in his report was to ensure the minutes were inline with the bank mandate in case HSBC objected to the slight differences between the two, however CJB has been informed that HSBC have now accepted the mandate.

CJB added that in addition to John Sheehy's professional qualifications, he is the Treasurer for the Wealdon Cave and Mine Society and for the British Cave Rescue Council and thus is someone who is very competent who can be trusted and is happy to review the BCA's accounts.

Returning to email addresses, CJB informed Council that he has been frustrated that the BCA was unable to cancel a subscription bill for £72 in time because he didn't have the password, and we couldn't reset the password because he didn't know what email address was linked to the account. CJB said that he has 12 months to solve this before it comes around again but emphasised that issues like this are why using institutional email addresses for BCA work is so important.

Motion: That John Sheehy, an associate member of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, is appointed as a suitably qualified person to certify the Association's accounts.

Proposer: CJB, Seconder: RN

For: AK, CJB, JP, TR, AH, LJW, MH, SN, SH, TP, JB

Against: No votes received.

Abstentions: DS

Motion approved.

Motion: That Council agrees to this change on the mandate form for HSBC

Proposer: CJB, Seconder: RN

For: AK, CJB, JP, TR, AH, LJW, MH, SN, SH, TP, JB

Against: No votes received.

Abstentions: DS

Motion approved.

CJB stated that when he submitted his report for the agenda, he didn't have the insurance premium quotes and had assumed for the sake of the report that they would be 10% more than last year, as JW had suggested, however they are lower than this. Consequently, this has meant that some of the figures within the report aren't accurate – the deficit wasn't over £10,000, but actually £6,000. CJB explained that this doesn't materially affect the results for Council however, due to the expenses that can't be cut which make up over 50% of the budget, meaning that the cuttable budget areas would have to be reduced by 25-30% and potentially cut the following year too. CJB proposed this isn't a credible course of action.

CJB informed Council that while he had hoped to avoid raising subscription fees next year, he is suggesting that raising the fees is needed, though we currently do not know the exact number by which Council will need to, and that this will be made clearer once CJB has a better understanding as to the why the Reserve was set to be the size it is. CJB also informed Council that the fee for the artificial cave would be raised from £25 to £45 but that KE would be given the discretion to

provide discounts for good causes such as Cave rescue or when only a single section is desired.

Finally, CJB drew the forecasting at the end of the Appendix to Council's attention explaining the consequences of the different scenarios.

AH asked when membership fees were last raised. CJB replied that from his reading it was last done in 2021. AH stated that clubs tend to not like year-on-year increases. CJB said that he had hoped to avoid this, and that Council has no real choice but to do so. Additionally, if the original membership fee had increased with the rate of inflation, it would be approximately £65.

RN clarified is that the motion will mean there will be a freeze on the budget and following this a process will be established where the Finance Committee can explore what the membership fee raise would need to be for next year.

SH asked about the relationship between the general reserve as a proportion of membership subscription. CJB explained that it was defined as a relative value of the turnover but that this is defined as income which he has understood to mean membership fees plus the bank interest. CJB elaborated that QMC's income could theoretically be included in this, however, since QMC has a neutral budget and effectively operates as a separate organisation. Furthermore, CJB quoted from Council meetings: on the 1st of October 2016 it was asked what the reserve pot was for. The question was answered then that it was originally intended to be one year's turnover, less the insurance premium. In relation to the insurance reserve, in 2010 it was set at the value of two claims plus a year's premium.

LJW commented that she is broadly in favour of the motion, she explained that she was uncomfortable with agreeing to raise the membership fee before a review of the reserves was complete. LJW stated she would prefer if the motion didn't commit to raising the fees in principle and instead stated that Council will warn its members that it may need to raise membership fees following the review. TR commented that he also believes it would be procedurally better to do things this way round. RN reminded Council that it can unmake its decisions and that the purpose of the motion was to give clear signposting as to the BCA's current financial situation. CJB agreed to amend the wording of the motion.

Motion: To accept the budget for 2025 as tabled. To note that this will dip into reserves and that it is likely that we will need to raise membership fees for 2026. To ask the Treasurer to lead a review of the strategy on Reserves and make a recommendation to the first Council meeting after the AGM.

Proposer: CJB, Seconder: MH

For: AK, CJB, JP, TR, AH, LJW, MH, SN, SH, TP, JB

Against: No votes received.

Abstentions: DS

Motion approved.

CJB concluded his report with a point of information on the email he had received before the previous Council Meeting from David Cooke. CJB informed Council he had suggested, among other things, that CJB should discuss the budget and the potential problems with finance committee, which he has done, and that he and David Cooke aren't in in too great a disagreement.

6.1.3 Secretary (Aidan Kuhlmann)

I have had a busy period since last Council Meeting. Not long after the last meeting I held discussions with Steve Gray, and separately with other members of the Training & Equipment Working Group ahead of their upcoming meeting the week prior to the Council Meeting this agenda is for. I have, with some help from Chris Bolton, been working to assist Steve Gray with a few IT matters (including establishing a BCA mailing list with dedicated email address).

In the last month I was also very fortunate to meet Steve Holding for a tour around Snailbeach Mine, operated by Shropshire Mines Trust, on a Shropshire CMC club meet. It was a very enjoyable trip and for those who haven't visited I must recommend doing so.

I also represented the BCA at 'Big CHECC', which I attended alongside other Council members including Tom Phillips, Isaac Neale, Zac Woodford, and Jess Brock. At CHECC I volunteered as a trainer and assisted in the running, as well as giving a short speech at the AGM promoting the work we do and encouraging attendees to consider getting involved with the BCA, BCRA, and other organisations within the caving community. It also provided a good opportunity to meet the heads of most student clubs and learn about the problems facing this part of the caving community, as well as meeting the new members of the CHECC committee.

Hopefully Council will have noticed the news posts I have put on the BCA website and on UKCaving concerning the European Research Council's KARST project and the FSE's ECPC's Conservation awards. I must thank those who made me aware of these and I encourage people to keep sending me items like these to promote.

Additionally, I have been involved in conversations regarding the renewal of the BCA's insurance policy and subsequently I am involved with reviewing our Health and Safety policies and Risk Assessments.

In other communications Gethin Thomas informed me that he is QMC's representative to the Welsh Adventure Tourism Organisation and that

WATO will be reviewing their Outdoor Alliance Manifesto. They're a group with growing support among the Senedd with their previous work in relation to the Outdoor Education Bill having only failed by one vote.

Finally, the Coal Authority informed me that they have now renamed themselves the Mine Remediation Authority.

AK added that he had attended a Training and Equipment Working Group Meeting and as well as contributing to the meeting had offered IT support. RN highlighted that if anyone is struggling with IT issues there are a few people who are able to help out.

Regional Council & Representative Reports (Optional)

6.1.4 CNCC (Andrew Hinde)

Jill Bolton (Sec) is leading a review/update of the CNCC Constitution with a few volunteers.

Pete Bann (Treasurer) has submitted a budget forecast for FY 2025 to BCA.

Andrew Hinde (Chair) has been supporting a cave archaeology partnership project with UCLAN.

Aila Taylor (Y&D) has taken on more responsibilities for CHECC.

Matt Ewles (PR) has enrolled 747 subscribers to the CNCC monthly email news mailshot.

Access

A memorandum of understanding is in development with landowner of Bowland caves.

Progress on a new MoU with Langcliffe Estate is progressing slowly.

Conservation

Notts 2, clean-up is about to start – removal of digging tat.

Anchoring Projects

Cow Pot -Ardvark Country, Yockenthwaite Pot, Cote Gill Pot, AKA Hole all completed.

Training

23 workshops are advertised for winter and spring 2025. All full until March 22nd.

Andrew Hinde

CNCC Chair.

6.1.5 CSCC (Linda Wilson)

The most recent meeting of CSCC was held by Zoom on 11 November 2024 and was well attended.

The next meeting is due to take place on **Monday 10th February 2025 at 7.00pm** and will be held online using Zoom. A link to join the meeting will be circulated closer to the date and be available on the website. The meeting is open to all cavers. If you would like to be added to the circulation list for both this and the CSCC newsletter you can subscribe to this list from a link on the CSCC website: https://csc.org.uk/wiki/information/mailling_list.

Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome if you have anything you would like us to publicise.

Access matters

Harridge Woods: A new access arrangement has been set up between CSCC and Somerset Wildlife Trust was agreed, for access to caves etc. in Harridge Woods. This is similar to that set up for the Charterhouse Caving Company and will require a similar form of online permit system. This was approved by the meeting and will be implemented shortly

Caves at Loxton: Access control to caves at Loxton has been established between Cerberus Speleological Society and Loxton Parish Council, but it has been agreed that in due course CSS will recommend that this arrangement will transfer from them to CSCC.

Cheddar Gorge: A comprehensive access agreement between Longleat Estates and CSCC has been drafted and accepted by the Longleat board. Our C&A Officer, Wayne Starsmore, is in the process of drafting and agreeing the formal paperwork. This is a major exercise as it needs to cover Access Conditions and Procedures, the required Warden system, Conservation and Warden training plans for each cave, etc. CSCC also needs to implement an on-line "User Agreement" system and trip reporting process. It is hoped that this work will all be completed by the end of the year. CSCC can then start training Wardens, with a view to having trips starting as soon as practicable in 2025.

The agreement covers recreational caving, caving diving and cave digging, initially for Reservoir Hole, Spider Hole and Gough's Cave. It is hoped that CSCC will be able to expand this in the future to cover the other sites of interest in the Gorge.

Singing River Mine: The Singing River Mine access agreement has now been in place for 12 months and is running smoothly. During this time there have been 17 trips, involving some 100 cavers.

Wookey Hole Cave: The access agreement with Wookey has run without issue over the past three months. There have been 8 trips since the August CSCC meeting, involving some 48 cavers.

For anyone wishing to cave in the southern region, up to date information can be found on our access guide <https://access->

guide.csccl.org.uk/. In addition, our website can be found at <https://csccl.org.uk/wiki/>.

Anchors etc

Hunters Hole: A loose anchor has been replaced.

Swildon's Hole: The anchors between Sump 2 and Sump 3 have been replaced. See separate report below.

Exploratory Anchor Guidelines: CSCC Equipment Officer Andrew Atkinson has drafted some guidelines for placing anchors in new explorations. The introduction explains the need to have such a document:

When a new pitch or other vertical feature is found whilst exploring new passage, there is often a fever to explore and survey as quickly as possible. However, if the explorers are lucky enough to discover significant or interesting cave beyond there is a real likelihood that the obstacle will need to be passed by many other cavers in the future.

Good rigging often can only be done in very limited places, so the placement of the 'exploratory' anchors is important as they may reduce the possibilities for future rigging.

The full guidelines were discussed and adopted at the meeting and will be available shortly on the CSCC website for reference.

Funding

Following discussion at the last BCA Council meeting and the adoption of new funding guidelines, the queries raised by CSCC regarding the change in what had previously been known as 'core funding' were flagged up the CSCC pending further discussions to be led by CSCC Treasurer Tom Harrison with advice and assistance from CSCC Chair David Cooke where needed. The meeting noted this and accepted the need for sensible budgetary controls and will await the outcome of these discussions. Thank you to BCA Treasurer Chris Bolton for his willingness to engage in dialogue on this admittedly complex matter and its history.

Linda Wilson

CSCC BCA Rep

LH added that everything included in the report seems to be on track.

6.1.6 DCA (Mike Higgins)

DCA's Autumn Council meeting took place on 9th November at its usual venue, the British Caving Library at Glutton Bridge. We were pleased to welcome BCA's Treasurer, Chris Bolton, to the meeting. He was able to explain the current position regarding BCA finances and the recent requirement for Regional Council's to submit budgets. We hope that he

enjoyed the homemade cakes and that his electric car made it home before running out of juice!

The Conservation Officer reported on the recent meeting of the Underground Conservation Forum, an offshoot of DCA, and it had been good to welcome a representative from the National Trust at that meeting given that we have two major projects in the pipeline on their land in the Castleton area. Elsewhere on the conservation front, large quantities of rubbish have been removed from Wapping Mine and graffiti is in the process of removal from Suicide Cave.

After an hiatus in DCA's programme of training workshops following the standing down of Nigel Atkins at the last AGM, we have been pleased to at last recruit a new Training Officer, Aiden Lumb, and this important part of DCA's work should resume very soon.

Recently completed access projects include a much-needed new lid on Oxlow Caverns entrance shaft, new anchors on Pitch 1 in P8 and the provision of a new fence round Hazard Mine shaft which we hope, coupled with work on the lid, will lead to official access being granted. Damaged anchors in Wharf Climbing Shaft have been renewed after vandals threw stonework from the ruined coe down the shaft and hopefully the construction of a barbed wire fence on the boundary with the adjacent track will prevent further problems.

At the moment the post of Project Officer is vacant and the Equipment Officer is having to deal with urgent access issues, so if there is a Peak District caver out there who would like to take on this important work, please get in touch with DCA.

DCA has just received a delivery of 198 standard BP anchors, 20 long BP anchors and 4 standard BP anchors with fixed rings. This should last us for some time to come.

A new issue, no 159, of the DCA's periodic publication The Derbyshire Caver has hit the newsstands and is packed full of interesting stuff. It can be downloaded for free from the DCA website at <https://thedca.org.uk/publications/the-derbyshire-caver/>.

Mike Higgins

DCA BCA Rep

JP commented that at least two of the DCA's current projects were unfortunately the result of vandalism.

6.2 Working Group Convenor Reports

6.2.1 Conservation & Access (Richard Vooght)

I have very little to report from the last meeting. I haven't had any issues brought to me from the regions. Also, I have a willing volunteer who is happy to replace me as C and A Convener that is Victoria Kocher from Derbyshire. She is the current DCA Conservation Officer and is willing to step into the role as the BCA C&A Convener in January.

RN added that he had talked to Victoria about the role and what she can expect. JP added that the group was lucky that it was able to produce a grant for the Forest of Dean Cave Conservation and Access Group by using the UK Cave Conservation Emergency Fund. CJB added that it had paid its contribution of £281, as has Caving Wales. JP added that it was worth remembering there are other funds and sources of money that can be accessed.

6.2.2 Countryside Rights of Way (Dormant)

No report received.

6.2.3 Information Technology (Vacant)

No report received.

6.2.4 Publications & Information (Zac Woodford)

Progress this month has been slower.

However, the Y&D meeting hosted last month was productive in shedding light on where our objectives could be sharpened.

The ascendance of Issac Neale to the Y&D role has pushed back the Student Caving Handbook project.

An initial assessment of the BCA Membership survey project has been conducted and work is ongoing in that area.

Finally, I have been composing a P&I development plan document that will be ready for our first meeting in the new year.

6.2.5 Qualification Management Committee (George Plant)

The number of courses being run has picked up, as is usual for this time of year.

We've been keeping going with updates and queries about the scheme. We've had a few feedback forms returned – some good, others less positive, but all good for us to discuss and review.

A couple of Trainer/Assessor Workshops as well as CIC Update days have taken place, which means lots of people are all up to date with best practice and any new developments in equipment or procedures.

We've been invited to the AHOEC National Conference in Bala on the 13th-15th of January. This is a good opportunity for us to showcase our award scheme and answer any queries from Heads of Outdoor Centres. There will be a few other Trainer/Assessors there, as well as myself.

George Plant

6.2.6 Radon (Dormant)

No report received.

6.2.7 Training & Equipment (Steve Gray)

No report received.

6.2.8 Youth & Development (Isaac Neale)

Happy to say that in November a meeting in the name of Youth and Development did occur! The purpose of the meeting being to try and take stock of the wider Y&D situation, work out what projects had been going on, if any progress was known about these projects, and where energy might be best allocated. I've sent the minutes off to Aidan so you may be able to view those shortly if interested.

In short, there are no projects currently being pushed, each matter from the previous set of minutes available has either become dormant (coordinating a push for under 18 youth caving) or progressed to a state where it is no longer required to be a focus of BCA Youth and Development (CHECC and its recent success and stabilisation).

With a lack of clear ongoing projects, I can foresee slight difficulties arising from the relationship between volunteers and projects. To acquire good volunteers, one must know what projects the volunteers would be suited for, but then without having a wide range of volunteers to contact one does not know what projects to get the ball rolling on.

Whereas I have previously been chasing up leads on previous projects, the second step may now be to hunt down previous volunteers and find out if they would still be interested. I have had a few people contact me from my current circle but getting a wider demographic than 'people who I knew from student caving' would be ideal.

Post meeting, I discussed the findings with Rostam and have subsequently refined some ideas to take forward. By the AGM there will be projects on the go. Feel free to tag any vague car related platitudes/ analogies onto the end 'kick start', 'breathe life back into' 'heating the engine' etc.

Isaac.

IN added that the working group was becoming more active, and that Descent has a new Youth Correspondent whom he knows well and is in contact with.

AK apologised to IN, explain that he had added IN's documents to the BCA website but that when the website had moved servers it had been rolled back by a few days, and this had undone this work and he as of the meeting had not had a chance to redo this work.

RN informed Council he had had a meeting with IN and in that they had discussed whether IN was looking for any particular volunteers or had skills gaps that the working group would benefit from. RN explained that he was mentioning this to Council because the BCA is intending to use its advertising space in Descent to recruit for specific BCA positions, and that the offer of doing this extends to all Council members too because good volunteers tend to end up at the BCA eventually.

AH asked that a draft of the Youth Caving Handbook is sent to the Conservation and Access Working Group to make sure that everyone is sending the same message on this issue.

TR commented that the Working Group had had a good meeting which he thought was productive and added that he thought it was great there had been 3-4 university groups at the Wessex that weekend and that everyone had a great Christmas Party.

6.3 Additional Reports by Appointed Officers

6.3.1 British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)

No report received.

6.3.2 FSE Representative (Allan Richardson)

I was unable in the end to attend the GAM in Italy, but by using a proxy I was able to vote on the various items.

Cheers

Allan

AK added that he had messaged AR and that the details of FSE AGM will be published when the FSE publish their minutes later on.

6.3.3 Insurance Manager (Josh White)

No report received.

6.3.4 Safeguarding Officer (Chris Boardman)

No report received.

6.3.5 Newsletter Editor (Vacant)

No report received.

6.3.6 UIS Representative (Ged Campion)

Work continues to promote the UNESCO International Day of Caves and Karst initiative (IDCK) The initiative will hopefully ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable management of caves and karst systems worldwide. Work continues to encourage national organisations and bodies to support this initiative.

Scholarships have been offered to a number of students to attend the International Congress of Speleology (ICS) in Brazil next year. This is the offer of free registration but not travel costs. There were no names submitted from the UK this time.

The UK are currently considering submitting application to host the 2029 ICS. The idea was met with considerable enthusiasm at Hidden Earth and efforts are being made to assemble an organising committee.

Ged Campion (UIS delegate for BCA).

GC informed Council that the next UIS meeting will be held in February and that they will be looking for an update from the BCA about the BCA's bid to host the International Congress of Speleology in 2029. GC

explained the current recruitment issue for find a secretary for the bid and asked RN if he had an update on this issue. RN said that he had had a few people come forward and ask about the role and went on to explain that the workload for the role would be low in the first few years, but very busy in the final year. RN asked Council to contact him if they had any good candidates in mind for the role. RN also explained that the role would be very well networked and a good opportunity to recruit someone from outside the current pool of volunteers and that this person would be well placed to take on a big role in British caving politics afterwards.

6.4 Reports by BCA Staff

6.4.1 Membership Administrator & Artificial Cave (Katie Eavis)

Final numbers for BCA membership for 2024 are 6730. This number includes those who join BCA directly and those who join via caving clubs.

(Anyone who joins BCA in December is joining for 2025, so this is the final total)

Breakdown of 2024 membership types is:

<i>Caving Members</i>	<i>Non-Caving Members</i>	<i>Student Members</i>	<i>Members Under 18</i>
<i>4773</i>	<i>1036</i>	<i>722</i>	<i>199</i>

Renewals opened on the 1st of December and all BCA members (that we hold an email address for) should have had an automatic email to let them know renewals are open, and containing some instructions to help them renew.

By the 6th of December 276 people have joined BCA for 2025, either directly or through clubs.

18 groups have renewed so far. The vast majority have had no problems with the new system.

There have been a few teething issues – most notably if a required information box is blank on the members profile the system won't let you renew – but doesn't tell you why! As we never previously collected gender data this is often blank and had thrown a few people.

To start with I instructed those struggling to set a gender and try again but since I have asked JustGo to set all the blank ones to 'prefer not to say' so it should no longer be an issue.

The above is a remaining issue with the 'bulk renew' function for some clubs, which hasn't been rectified. This will only affect clubs who haven't provided gender details. JustGo are looking into solving it, however as clubs have until the 31st of March to renew it isn't an urgent problem.

Some clubs are embracing the new system and busy regularly adding their new members. Others have chosen not to use it yet and will send me a spreadsheet as usual and I'll update their club profile online. Either is fine this year, I am happy for clubs to do it themselves or send it to me to process.

Overall, I am very happy with how the new system is working. Members seem to be finding it easy to use, and it is easy for me to see what is going on and pull reports from. Members also automatically get their e-cards as soon as they renew.

Renewal time is highlighting a few small issues but nothing major and these should be ironed out soon.

Additional information for membership report 16th December 2024

Two clubs have requested to join BCA:

- 1. Out on Rock – a new caving and climbing club. Josh and I both helped look over their constitution and answered membership/ insurance questions.*
- 2. Morgannwg Caving Club. This is an established caving club, but one which hasn't been a BCA member previously. They would like to apply to join now and have sent their constitution to me.*

I recommend BCA accept both these clubs as member clubs. Both fulfil BCA's expectations of member clubs and will help to promote and develop caving within the UK.

Membership update:

Renewals opened on the 1st December.

- To date (16th of December) the following have renewed:*
- 5 Access controlling bodies*
- 5 Associate Clubs*
- 23 Member clubs*
- Over 730 Individual members (via clubs or directly with BCA)*

RN commented that membership numbers are fairly static and that a demographics report will be coming soon. RN also added that he was aware the BCA had emailed all BCA members about them renewing their membership with the BCA and that some clubs were irritated by this. RN explained that this was a teething problem with the new system and that there had so far been relatively few teething issues considering the size of the database.

CJB informed Council that in relation to JustGo about half of what the BCA pays is balanced by what we think will be saved in Katie's time and by not having to print and send out plastic membership cards. Consequently, what JustGo is actually costing the BCA for the benefits that we're getting is very good value for money.

Motion: To accept Out on Rock as member club of the BCA.

Proposer: KE, Second: AK

For: AK, CJB, JP, TR, AH, LJW, MH, SN, SH, TP, JB, DS

Against: No votes received.

Abstentions: No votes received.

Motion approved.

Motion: To accept Morgannwg Caving Club as member club of the BCA.

Proposer: KE, Second: AK

For: AK, CJB, JP, TR, AH, LJW, MH, SN, SH, TP, JB,

Against: No votes received.

Abstentions: DS

Motion approved.

7.0 Matters arising from the previous Council Meeting

8.0 Items for Discussion

8.1 The Adventure Academy

Report by BCA Treasurer Chris Bolton

In January 2020, Council approved funding of £5600 towards the Adventure Academy, a project managed by Yorkshire Dales Guides (YDG) as part of the Stories in Stone initiative. A report on the project was sent to the BCA Treasurer at the time who stated at the February 2023 Council meeting that he and then Chair had no concerns about it, but some parts were commercially confidential. He and the Chair would discuss it and report to the following Council meeting.

The intended report to Council was never made so the current Chair has obtained a copy of the report and reviewed it with the current Treasurer. The following summary outlines the report in the context of value for BCA funds but avoids any confidential information.

The project recruited a core team of eight, between 8 and 17 years old with varying levels of caving experience. This core team developed through the project and supported the expansion to other (generally young) people. Eight caving trips were organised, covering both knowledge of the cave environment and techniques and ropework. These trips were well received. Three local teenagers were trained in SRT with a view to them becoming trainers for the Academy or YDG. One has done this although the other two have left the area.

The Academy provided free training for the Northern CHECC weekend in 2021, and a subsequent leadership course for students. Free SRT training was provided to surface members of CRO who were inactive cavers and wanted to become more involved in underground rescues.

A film "The world beneath your feet" was produced. This was shown at the Kendal Mountain Film Festival and is available on YouTube and is linked from <https://british-caving.org.uk/yorkshire-dales-guides-adventure-academy/>

The Academy project was significantly hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic, and did not deliver all the original intent nor use all the offered funding. YDG, however, have given significant support to caving, via CNCC, CHECC, and other routes. Without quoting figures here, they have committed significantly more time to this than the BCA funding for the Academy would represent at commercial rates.

While £5600 was originally authorised by Council, the amount actually paid by BCA was very much less. The report refers to the retail value of equipment provided as £2646, the actual cost of which BCA would have received a discount on, and some of which may have been funded by Stories in Stone. Detailed BCA accounts for 2020 and 2021 are not available but a review of bank statements and cheque stubs show only one payment related to the Adventure Academy, £1426 paid to Safety Aloft on 18 March 2020.

In conclusion, despite the impact of Covid-19, the Adventure Academy delivered significant benefit to caving and the funding provided by BCA gave value for money.

9.0 Any Other Business

9.1 BCA & BCRA IT

CJB informed Council he had a statement from Simon Mullens (SM), the IT Officer, regarding the transfer of webpages to new servers. CJB stated that JG had felt there was some confusion between the BCA and BCRA over this and asked CJB to clarify this.

CJB summarised SM's report: SM has moved the CBA website to a new server and is moving the Regional Council websites and the other non BCRA caving websites onto a new server by negotiation with the owners of those websites – of which the DCA's sites have moved already. SM and the BCRA are negotiating what is happening with the non-caving websites the BCA used to host – the BCA hosted these because at one point a small profit was able to be made from this, but it transpired it wasn't worth the effort, and they were stopped being charged. Nevertheless, they were continued to be hosted at the BCA's expense. Consequently, they're now being moved to become their own responsibilities. This will leave just the BCRA sites remaining on the old server, which once this has been done, will be handed over to Dave Cooke to manage, and to the BCRA to pay for.

Furthermore, CJB clarified the current hierarchy of responsibility over current BCA IT issues (in ascending order) as SM, then CJB, followed by the Executive, and lastly Council; and added that communication between SM, David and Cookie is currently good.

10.0 Details of the Next Meeting

Tuesday the 28th of January at 7pm via Zoom.

This report underpins the proposal in the Treasurer's report. Numbers are now confirmed and although the insurance premiums are lower than expected, making the shortfall only £6k, the difficulty of making cuts and the overall conclusion doesn't change. This page summarises the proposed amounts for each area of expenditure, including weighted contingencies.

Pages 2 and 3 are optional reading and analyse the breakdown of expenditure in 2025 and the effect on reserves. I will talk through them in the meeting if required.

Regional Councils	£	Notes
Derbyshire Caving Association	3 820	As estimates by Regional Treasurers, but with estimates for Conservation & Access major projects moved to the Working Group
Devon & Cornwall Underground Council	2 300	
Council of Southern Caving Clubs	1 080	
Council for the Northern Caving Community	5 800	
Caving Wales / Ogof Cymru	1 200	
Working Groups		
Conservation & Access	4 900	For major projects
Equipment & Training	3 100	
Youth & Development	3 600	
Publications & Information	50	
Other expenditure		
Insurance premiums	78 303	
Descent Magazine	2 520	Advert / Support
Ghar Parau Foundation	3 000	Donation
British Caving Library	12 000	Donation
Staff costs	13 728	Salary, NI, payroll
Miscellaneous expenses	622	Admin, AGM, Artificial Cave
Safeguarding	60	Fees for DBS checks
JustGo for membership	4 580	
IT Licences, servers, domains, etc	2 700	
IT Support	1 050	Non-commercial contractor (Simon Mullins)
QMS (Instructor Training & Certification)	-230	Net. Aims to at least balance. Includes JustGo
External memberships: SRA, UIS, FES etc	1 223	
Total Expenditure	£145 406	

Income		
Membership fees	134 831	New rates, number of members as 2024
Interest	4 645	Assumes 3.5%
Total Income	£139 476	
SHORTFALL	£5 930	

Assets at 31 December 2024		All estimated
Cash at banks	180 442	
Debtors and prepayments	1 000	QMS invoices
Creditors & Accruals	-31 970	Salaries, BCRA, 2025 fees paid 2024
Net assets	£149 472	
Reserves		
Insurance reserve	82 150	As 2023 increased in proportion to premiums
General reserve (Actual)	67 322	Balance of assets
General reserve (Target)	61 173	Income (turnover) minus insurances
General reserve actual as % of target	110%	

Budget breakdown 2025

	A (100%)	B (50%)	C (10%)	Nominal claim	Owned Budget (Note 2)	% of BCA spend	Fix	% of non- fixed	Notes
Derbyshire Caving Association	4520	1550	2250	5520	3820	2.6%		8.7%	Total for Regional Councils 9.8% of BCA and 32.4% of non-fixed expenditure
Devon & Cornwall Underground Council	2000	500	500	2300	2300	1.6%		5.3%	
Council of Southern Caving Clubs	1650	2700	1800	3180	1080	0.7%		2.5%	
Council for the Northern Caving Community	5800	0	0	5800	5800	4.0%		13.2%	
Caving Wales / Ogof Cymru	1900	400	2000	2300	1200	0.8%		2.7%	
	A (100%)	B (50%)	C (10%)	Weighted total	Budget				
Conservation & Access Committee	2900	3000	5000	4900	4900	3.4%		11.2%	Note 2
Equipment & Training	1000	4000	1000	3100	3100	2.1%		7.1%	
Youth & Development	3000	1000	1000	3600	3600	2.5%		8.2%	
Publications & Information	0	0	500	50	50	0.0%		0.1%	
Safeguarding	48	24		60	60	0.0%		0.1%	DBS checks
JustGo for membership	4557	45			4580	3.1%	###		Index linked
IT Licences, servers, domains, etc	2500	400			2700	1.9%	###		
IT Support (Simon)	1000		500		1050	0.7%	###		
Public Liability < £2M + combined					45131	31.0%	###		2023 + 10%
Public Liability £2M - £5M					12451	8.6%	###		2024 + 10%
Public Liability £5M - £10M					15120	10.4%	###		2025 + 10%
Public Liability £10M - £20M					5601	3.9%	###		2026 + 10%
Descent Magazine					2520	1.7%		5.8%	As 2024
Ghar Parau Foundation					3000	2.1%		6.8%	As 2024
British Caving Library					12000	8.3%		27.4%	As 2024
Artificial Cave			300	-450	150	0.1%		0.3%	Hire £30 was £25
Staff					13428	9.2%	###		Membership, Admin
Payroll service					300	0.2%	###		
Admin expenses					200	0.1%	###		Phone, post, etc
Bank charges					72	0.0%	###		Note 3
AGM venue and expenses					200	0.1%		0.5%	
QMS (Instructor Training & Certification)					-230	-0.2%		-0.5%	Note 4
Sport and Recreation Alliance					305	0.2%	###		
UIS (International Union of Speleology) Congress 2029					250	0.2%		0.6%	Expenses for bid (note 5)
FSE (European Speleological Federation)					668	0.5%	###		795 euros
Total Budget					145406		###		
Income									
Membership					134831				
Interest					4645				
Total Income					139476			Shortfall:	5930

Assets at 31 December 2024

Redwood Bank	49876
Mansfield Building Society	9500
United Trust Bank	91566
HSBC current a/c	14600
HSBC deposit a/c	4400
HSBC training a/c	10500
Creditors & Accruals	-31970
Debtors and prepayments	1000
Total	149472

Insurance reserve	82150 As 2023 pro rata
General reserve	67322 Balance of assets after taking off Insurance Reserve
Income (turnover) minus insurances	61173 Target for General Reserve
Gen reserve as % of turnover less insurances	110%

Notes:

- Columns A, B and C allow estimates to include uncertainty. Budget is amount times probability.
- Regional Council estimates for major C&A projects are pooled and controlled by C&A WG as decided by Council 10-9-24
- Bank charges etc included with IT, membership etc where fully attributable
- QMC admin, JustGo etc included in QMC figure – aims to at least balance, slight surplus expected
- UIS membership fee 480 Euros, paid in 2023

2025 budget as requested, fees +20% in 2027

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
inflation		1.03	1.03	1.03	1.03
bank interest	1	0.99	1	1	1
fees increase	1	1	1.2	1	1
Expenditure less insurance	67103	69116	71189	73325	75525
2025 savings					
Insurance	78303	80652	83072	85564	88131
Income – membership	134831	134831	161797	161797	161797
Income – interest	4645	4600	4600	4600	4600
Surplus during year	-5930	-10337	12136	7508	2742
Assets at year end	143542	133205	145341	152849	155591
Insurance reserve at year end	82150	84615	87153	89768	92461
General reserve at year end	61392	48590	58188	63082	63130
General reserve as % of turnover – insurance	100%	83%	70%	78%	81%

2025 budgets cut by £6k, fees +20% in 2027

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
fees increase	1	1	1.2	1	1
Expenditure less insurance	61103	69116	71189	73325	75525
2025 savings	6000				
Insurance	78303	80652	83072	85564	88131
Income – membership	134831	134831	161797	161797	161797
Income – interest	4645	4600	4600	4600	4600
Surplus during year	70	-10337	12136	7508	2742
Assets at year end	149542	139205	151341	158849	161591
Insurance reserve at year end	82150	84615	87153	89768	92461
General reserve at year end	67392	54590	64188	69082	69130
General reserve as % of turnover – insurance	110%	93%	77%	85%	88%

2025 and following budgets cut by £6k, fees +20% in 2027

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
bank interest	1	0.99	1	1	1
fees increase	1	1	1.2	1	1
Expenditure less insurance	61103	62936	64824	66769	68772
2025 savings	6000				
Insurance	78303	80652	83072	85564	88131
Income – membership	134831	134831	161797	161797	161797
Income – interest	4645	4600	4600	4600	4600
Surplus during year	70	-4157	18501	14065	9495
Assets at year end	149542	145385	163886	177951	187446
Insurance reserve at year end	82150	84615	87153	89768	92461
General reserve at year end	67392	60770	76733	88183	94985
General reserve as % of turnover – insurance	110%	103%	92%	109%	121%

2025 budget as requested, fees +20% in 2026

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
fees increase	1	1.2	1	1	1
Expenditure less insurance	67103	69116	71189	73325	75525
2025 savings					
Insurance	78303	80652	83072	85564	88131
Income – membership	134831	161797	161797	161797	161797
Income – interest	4645	4600	4600	4600	4600
Surplus during year	-5930	16629	12136	7508	2742
Assets at year end	143542	160171	172307	179815	182557
Insurance reserve at year end	82150	84615	87153	89768	92461
General reserve at year end	61392	75557	85154	90048	90096
General reserve as % of turnover – insurance	100%	88%	102%	111%	115%

This budget is only considering the principle of a membership fee rise – but what might a “20%” fee rise look like?

	2025	20% rise
DIM / CIM	£24	£28 or £30 rounded down or up from £28.80
Club	£36	£42 or £44 rounded down or up from £43.20

...and remember that the DIM fee in 2004 was £32 and would be over £65 if it kept up with inflation