



Minutes for Council Meeting

Tuesday the 29th of October 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: Ged Campion, Josh White, and David Jean.

2.0 Persons present

Aidan Kuhlmann, Rostam Namaghi, Chris Bolton, Andrew Hinde, Jenny Potts, Andy Eavis, Tony Radmall, Jess Brock, John Gunn, Linda Wilson, Mike Higgins, Stephan Natynczuk, Steve Holding, Tom Phillips, Zack Woodford, Isaac Neale.

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 Champion	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?
BCA Executive	Chair	RN	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Secretary	AK	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Treasurer	CJB	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Individual Members	Position 1	AE	N	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A
	Position 2	JB	N	N/A	N	N/A	Y	N/A
Group Member Representatives	Position 1	AG	N	N/A	Y	N/A	N	N/A
	Position 2	JP	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
	CNCC	AH	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y
	CSCC	LJW	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
	DCA	MH	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
	DCUC	DJ	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Constituent Body Representatives N.B: Reports are optional	ACI	SN	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
	BCRA	JG	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
	BCRC	EP	N	N	N	N	N	N
	CDG	CC	N	N	N	N	N	N
	CHECC	TP	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
	NAMHO	SH	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
	NCSASU	TR	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
	William Pengelly CST	RV	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
Working Group Convenors	C&A	RV	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
	T&E	SG	N	Y	N	N	N	Y
	Y&D	JL	N	N	N	Y	N	N
	CRoW(Dormant)		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
	P&I	ZW	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	QMC	GP	N	Y	N	N	N	Y
	Radon(Dormant)		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	CoG (Dormant)		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other Positions	FSE Rep	AR	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Insurance	JW	N	N	N	Y	N	Y
	Newsletter Editor		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Safeguarding Officer	CBD	N	N	Y	N	N	N
	UIS Rep.	GC	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
	BCL Representative	JP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Membership Admin.	KE	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

One correction was received and made – the title read Agenda and was corrected to Minutes.

RN explained how the voting would work and explained how the poll information from the previous meeting did not save. The solution to this problem has been learnt so an exact voting record can be provided in the future.

AE commented that in Section 3.0 his initials and Jess Brock's initials were the wrong way round. AK responded that JW had informed him of this error shortly before the meeting and that it should be correct moving forward.

Motion to accept the minutes of the previous Council Meeting as most recently received from the Secretary:

Proposer: Aidan Kuhlmann, Seconder: Rostam Namaghi

For: AE, AR, SN, JG, JP, SH, TP, CJB, LJW, MH, JB, IN, TR, AK, AH

Against: No votes received. Abstentions: No votes received.

Motion passed unanimously.

6.0 Officer Reports

6.1 Executive

6.1.1 Chair (Rostam Namaghi)

With Hidden Earth going so well last month it does feel like the caving year has started off at pace, and things have been very busy from an Executive point of view. My BCA politics talk was very well attended, and I am pleased to see both interest and optimism about the BCA.

I subsequently met with Chris Scaife from Descent regarding BCA's use of advertising space and what Descent can do to aid the BCA's recruitment. This was followed up with discussions with Zac Woodford and I think strategic use of articles in Descent, coupled with advertising, can really help BCA's communication. So far, we have tentatively planned to publish a Demographics update once the end of year membership statistics come in, with an article planned for February. Hopefully a similar strategy will be employed for a BCA survey.

I think a messaging campaign around an updated Caving Code would also demonstrate the organisation is beginning to function effectively and would greatly aid recruitment. If you have something you would like to do and would benefit from targeted messaging, then please do let both me and Zac know as I think this could be a valuable tool for recruitment.

I am sorry to announce that Jono Lester has resigned as Y&D Officer. He has been someone who has been incredibly generous with his time to BCA, BCRA, CSG and the Cambridge Expedition in Austria. This combined with personal events means that he is unable to commit to the standard he wishes to provide to the role. I am very grateful for the work he has put in so far and appreciate his commitment to a smooth handover.

Ater discussions with a few people we approached Isaac Neale to see if he was interested in taking the role until the AGM. He's served on the CHECC Committee and Aberystwyth University for several years and was looking to take on a new challenge. After an hour long interview, I was impressed that he has both the set of skills to maintain continuity in Y&D and a realistic view of what the role entails. Please bear in mind that he will need some extra support having not been involved with BCA.

Proposal: Council to adopt Isaac Neale as Youth and Development Officer until the AGM

Seconded: Aidan Kuhlmann

To update on an in-person AGM, we have had some struggles with chasing up venues for responses. We are looking at hiring village halls for an in-person event, nearby to caving clubs so that people will have accommodation and would like to organise a couple of caving trips for council members.

I had brief discussions with both Andy Eavis and John Gunn about supporting a bid for the UIS congress in 4 years time. The bid would have to be presented at the summer congress in Brazil. We had a brief discussion about the financial capability of the BCA to support such an event, and I am keen for it to happen, but it must cover its own costs. I would be grateful to hear council's views on such an event - I feel it would be a great showcase of our community. We are a set of outward looking countries and the strengthening of our international links would serve us well.

RN had hoped to start the meeting on a positive note but was disappointed to receive feedback from an outgoing BCA volunteer that negative comments about them had been circulated, using official email addresses. RN commented that comments of this nature weren't helpful or productive to the functioning of the BCA. RN asked Council members and BCA member bodies to be more mindful going forward, especially since everyone should be working to support the work of volunteers.

RN introduced his proposal to adopt Isaac Neale as Youth and Development Officer. IN elaborated on his origins as a now graduated Aberystwyth student caver and his involvement in CHECC and how he had seen first hand the benefits Y&D has brought to the caving community. He added that while he was slightly apprehensive with the step up, he was excited about the opportunities it would bring and confident it would be a rewarding role.

RN supported IN's comments, adding that he had all the relevant and necessary experience having held volunteering roles previously and that he has all the shareholders of the Working Group backing him. RN opened the conversation to questions for IN from Council.

TP asked IN what his immediate plans were for the Working Group. IN replied that the initial focus would be on taking stock of the composition of the Working Group and what projects it had been undertaking and the progress that had been made on these. IN stated

he hopes to have made progress on matters for new projects by the AGM in March.

ZW asked about IN's previous commitments to BCA related projects. IN responded that he had made progress on the Student Caving Handbook and has someone in mind to take over leading the project. RN reassured Isaac to not worry. He is stepping into a role which has been overcommitted to a framework and that he would rather IN focus on recruiting good volunteers for whom targeted projects can be handed over to.

JG informed Council that he was very encouraged to see Youth and Development involvement in the BCA and wanted to encourage and inform younger cavers to get involved with and to contact the BCRA too – informing Council the BCRA would help with anyone undertaking a cave related dissertation, himself being very aware of the benefits of doing so because his own dissertation was supported by a caver pointing him in the right direction. RN supported these comments and AE added that the BCRA had grant money available too.

Motion: Council to adopt Isaac Neale as Youth and Development Officer until the AGM

Proposer: Rostam Namaghi, Seconded: Aidan Kuhlmann

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

Against: No votes received. Abstentions: No votes received.

Motion passed unanimously.

RN mentioned his comments within his report concerning the potential UIS bid. ZW offered help in assisting the project. AH raised to Council that hosting the UIS would be a big undertaking and that while he supported the project, he cautioned the need to have enough volunteers with enough time and dedication to the project to make it happen. AE and RN added that they hope the event will encourage new people to volunteer, being on the periphery of politics and that they're looking for volunteers outside of the BCA currently. RN encourage Council members to point volunteers in the right direction. JG added that it will also be a good opportunity, from the BCRA's perspective, to encourage speleo-scientists to become more involved within the British caving community. Furthermore, he encouraged members to attend the upcoming UIS conference in Brazil.

6.1.2 Treasurer (Chris Bolton)

The transfer of signatories for the deposit account at Redwood Bank is now complete and I have given notice to the bank to transfer sufficient funds to our HSBC current account to keep it in credit until the 2025 subscriptions are received. While making the cash flow calculations I noticed JustGo had not sent invoices or collected Direct Debits for their subscription fee since May; I queried this and they are taking £5760 this month.

Current and projected expenditure is indicating that the deficit for 2024 will be about £29k, compared to the budgeted £27.5k. I will report more accurately on this, with the breakdown of spending under each budget head, at the next Council meeting.

I have emailed all the Regional Treasurers and WG Conveners asking for their budget estimates for 2025 by early to mid-November. These should be split into bands of expected, possible and contingency spend according to the probability of needing the funds: 100%, 50% and 10% respectively. To date I have responses from three regions and no WGs. I will collate the estimates and compare with the available BCA funds. If there is a shortfall I will advise the Treasurers and Conveners that Council, on 17 December, will need to decide what to fund. They may then reconsider their estimate and/or bring information to Council to support it.

Having asked Regional Treasurers to submit estimates, the rules for Regional Council claims previously agreed by Council require some changes. Allowing each region up to £3k for routine C&A work, whether they need such a limit or not, and total expenditure of up to 50% more than the previous year, are incompatible with budgeting. Instead, the budget process allow each Region to set its own limit.

I propose the following changes to the document "BCA Funding of Regional Councils":

1. In section 2.3, replace "more than 150% of the previous year's claim" with "more than the total, across all spending heads, of the expected (100%) and possible (50%) amounts in the budget agreed by Council for the Region"

2. In section 7.8a, replace "annual total of £3000* per year" with "more than the sum of the expected (100%) and possible (50%) amounts for routine C&A in the budget agreed by Council for the Region"

* as previous amended by Council in December 2023

Motion for voting: "To amend the document "BCA Funding of Regional Councils" as proposed in the Treasurer's Report [and amended by the meeting]"

I received an email from Caving Wales regarding a request by FODCCAG for just under £1600 of BCA funding to pay legal fees and nominal purchase cost for land at the Wet Sink entrance to Slaughter Stream Cave. FODCCAG had, however, approached the BCA C&A Working Group directly, rather than through Caving Wales, for approval of the project to purchase the land. This was a good opportunity made possible by the generous co-operation of the existing landowner and was approved by the WG. There was a misunderstanding that this approval included the funding. The C&A WG has never had a budget allocation so had no funding to allocate (now changed for 2025). The application should have gone via Caving Wales, who would have included it in their estimate and it would have been included in the

budget for Regional Councils and BCA resource calculations. Notwithstanding that this was a genuine misunderstanding, BCA cannot grant money that is not available, particularly when already running in deficit. A Zoom meeting set up by Stuart France on 14 October agreed that FODCCAG would apply to the UK Cave Conservation Emergency Fund (UKCCEF) for a grant of £1000. This fund apparently has had about £20k unspent for several years. If this application is successful BCA and CW will each contribute about £300 from their reserves.

Motion for voting: To grant £300 to FODCCAG towards purchase of land at Slaughter Stream Cave

As BCA Treasurer, I attended a meeting of the Ghar Parau Foundation at Great Hucklow. While in the area I took the opportunity to visit the BCL and meet the BCA's hard working, dedicated and valuable part time staff, which I was very pleased to do.

I also attended a meeting of the Outdoors for All Coalition. This grouping of 51 outdoor activity bodies aims to co-ordinate action to press the Government to improve responsible access to "green and blue spaces". With our membership this now includes dark spaces. BCA had difficulty making contact with the group and I became involved because of a previous contact with the founder. I would now like to pass this on to a more appropriate officer.

As Treasurer, I attended the recent meeting of QMC. The budget assumption for BCA funding is that QMC activity is approximately cost neutral, overall. While the income from courses and the payments to Trainer/Assessors were well understood, staff costs and other expenses were not. Following the meeting I extracted these from the 2023 accounts and sent a summary to the Convener and Training Administrator.

Chris Bolton

CJB commented on his report that shortly before the meeting he had received an email from David Cooke who had been talking to LJW about the proposal to amend the funding arrangement. The email suggested that the motion should not be voted on at the Council Meeting and CJB should take it to the Finance Committee first. CJB asked LJW to expand on this. LJW said that she was broadly behind the motivations behind the proposal. She added that on further discussion between David Cooke and others, David Cooke had raised issues with her that she didn't feel able to adequately bring to the meeting and subsequently requested he contain them within an email to CJB, which she is yet to read.

CJB informed Council it contained mentions of concepts including 'core funding for regions' which in his reading he was yet to come across. CJB added that he does not understand how the BCA can have a situation where regions can spend as much money as they want and then get the BCA to pay for it. CJB elaborated this is particularly untenable in light of the BCA running very low on its accessible reserves. LJW added that

her understanding was that the issue was not concerning the change to the £3000 limit but more in relation to how regional councils interact with the BCA. CJB explained that the change would allow regional councils to set their own limits. CJB theorised that David Cooke's concerns might be in relation to how Council may have to decide how the money is split should the requested limits add up to more than the available budget. CJB said that in such a case these decisions would be up to the next Council Meeting to decide.

RN enquired if this was a point of principle or practice. CJB elaborated, reading from the email:

"moving to a system where the regional councils apply for a budget effectively abolishes the core expenditure idea. The regional councils can no longer be sure that their core expenditure items will be fully funded. There is a loss of control by the regional councils."

RN observed that it's a point of principle. CJB emphasised how the regional councils can't have a carte blanche on spending or how he can function as treasurer in such circumstances. LJW agreed with CJB and explained that the problem was that the move was a shift of control away from the Regional Councils to the Finance Committee.

CJB explained it was a shift of control from Regional Councils to Council, not the Finance Committee. CJB added that Working Groups and Regions had been encouraged to only request what they need to avoid unneeded contentious discussions in Council.

RN added that he believed the proposal would protect the idea of the 'BCA one-stop-shop' in that this would ring-fence funding for Councils. CJB stated that it would mean that regions would go into the next financial year knowing what their funding might be. CJB admits that perhaps he should have discussed the proposal in more detail with the Finance Committee, though he did share it with them, and no one got back to him. RN acknowledged that this issue maybe highlights how vulnerable BCA communication channels may have become and how people may not be used to having their concerns heard. RN opened the conversation for input from the other Regional Councils.

AH stated that an in-meeting email was quite unusual and that as the proposer CJB does not need to amend the proposal if he didn't want to and that he would support the proposal as it is. MH echoed the comments regarding the late arrival of the email when the topic had been well circulated previously, as well as acknowledging that the BCA cannot spend money it does not have.

CJB proposed the motion but wished to formally note: There are concerns that these might be restrictions on Regional Council's expenditure and requested that in the event that it's necessary for Council to decide as to who gets money in the budget that the historical position of the regional councils is considered.

RN stated that he does not wish to enable similar last-minute emails going forward and that if this motion is a problem, then Council is able to change it.

LJW stated that she is personally happy with CJB's comments and RN's further explanations and that she has not been mandated to vote a particular way. LJW added that she's in favour of the proposal and personally happy with the reassurance given, as well as apologising that the issue was raised late and explained it was a consequence of personal circumstances of those involved.

Motion: To amend the document "BCA Funding of Regional Councils" as proposed in the Treasurer's Report".

Proposer: Chris Bolton. Seconder: Rostam Namaghi

For: AE, AR, SN, JG, JP, SH, TP, AK, CJB, AH, LJW, MH, TR.

Against: No votes received. Abstentions: No votes received.

Motion passed unanimously.

CJB moved the meeting to his next motion. He asked Council if anyone had any questions regarding, which no one did.

Motion: To grant £300 to FODCCAG towards purchase of land at Slaughter Stream Cave

Proposer: Chris Bolton, Seconder: Tony Radmall.

For: AE, AR, SN, JG, JP, SH, TP, AK, CJB, AH, LJW, MH, TR

Against: No votes received. Abstentions: No votes received.

Motion passed unanimously.

Secretary (Aidan Kuhlmann)

I must start my report by thanking all the volunteers who made Hidden Earth happen this year. Besides it being a fantastic social & scientific event, it was immensely useful to be able to meet so many fellow council members in person. I could say lots about how great the event was, but that would make this report very long.

As Secretary, I have directed a notable number of instructors towards Mary as our training administrator to answer their questions regarding updating their qualifications and engaged with QMC over email. Furthermore, I have engaged in discussions with other officers & volunteers regarding insurance, membership fees, and the activities of different Working Groups; alongside the usual array of emails.

AK apologised for not having the recorded votes in the previous minutes and added that it shouldn't be a problem moving forward. Furthermore, that he had been very busy but that it was the usual array of many small tasks as is common with the role and the items were not

significant enough to be worth individually bringing to Council, but notable in their number.

6.2 Regional Council & Representative Reports (Optional)

6.2.1 CNCC (Andrew Hinde)

CNCC has a new name. The Council for the Northern Caving Community.

CNCC has appointed an Inclusivity Coordinator.

Two new clubs have joined recently – Birmingham Student Caving Club and Ulster Speleological Soc & CC.

Access

Work continues to contact Lancliffe Estate to review memorandum of understanding.

No progress with High Birkwith owners.

New procedure issued for cavers accessing East Kingsdale via Braida Garth Farm.

Access to Gatekirk Cave is being denied at present.

Conservation

Work has completed to install a plastic twin wall pipe at entrance to Stream Passage Pot.

CPC have capped several open digs at Stump Cross.

New gate and stile furniture have been deployed at Bull Pot Farm and Lost John's.

Anchoring projects

The following projects were approved for IC anchors: Yockenthwaite Pot, Langstrothdale Jingling Pot, Kingsdale OBJ Hole, Gaping Gill Gaping Gill, Lost River Series, SE Pot Gaping Gill, Stream Passage Pot, last pitch.

Simpson's Pot and Swinsto Hole have been anchored for pull through trips.

Training.

19 training workshops have been delivered in Spring/ Summer 2024 by the CNCC training. Very few places were left unfilled. Most sell out within days.

Andrew Hinde

CNCC Chair.

RN asked what the Inclusivity Officer is. AH replied it is an advisory post where the officer works to ensure the CNCC, particularly in its literature and how it's formatted, can be made to better suit those with additional needs. RN thought it was a wonderful idea and requested the CNCC keep Council updated with the changes it brings to the organisation.

6.2.2 CSCC (Linda Wilson)

As the next BCA Council Meeting is taking place two weeks before the CSCC general meeting on 11th November, I don't have a great deal to report at the moment.

Our C&A Officer hopes to conclude an access agreement with Longleat Estates by the end of the year and for anyone wishing to cave in the southern region, here's another plug for our access guide <https://access-guide.csccl.org.uk/> which is regularly updated. In addition, our website can be found at <https://csccl.org.uk/wiki/>.

Anyone who would like to receive a copy of the CSCC newsletter is welcome to sign up by contacting comms@csccl.org.uk and contributions to the newsletter are always welcome if you have anything you would like us to publicise.

I'd like to thank Rostam for pointing out that a letter of thanks had in fact been sent to CSCC Chair David Cooke for his work for BCA and that this hadn't been an omission. Thank you also to Rostam for confirming that this would be resent.

Linda Wilson

CSCC BCA Rep

6.2.3 William Pengelly CST (Richard Vooght)

During the past few months, we have had a couple of studies from a Student from Oxford University researching the behaviour of Cave Spiders in the Caves in Devon. Also, a Professor from Birmingham University was is researching 3D surveying of Caves and making a detailed VR survey of one of the caves at Pengelly.

We have had a very successful summer walk scheme with a record amount of visitors to the caves as well as our Bat Walks.

We have had the sad passing of Professor Patrick Boylan, who was the Present of Pengelly and did a lot of work with the Yorkshire Geological Society and his early work in caves in Centro de Arte Rupestre de Cantabria Alberto I de Mónaco.

Richard

6.3 Working Group Convenor Reports

6.3.1 Conservation & Access (Richard Vooght)

The Conservation and Access Working Party had a meeting on the 10th of October via Zoom. Throughout the last 6 months, there has been a lot of work happening in every region, and this is a summary of what has happened.

CNCC

In Access, there have been issues with access to the Hudgill mine/cave, where the landowner has only allowed access to scientific and surveying. Negotiations are currently happening regarding access to the mine/cave. In Conservation, with the kind help of the Craven Pothole Club, they have helped repair stiles near Calf Hole—also a new gate at Bull Pot Farm. In the pipeline, there will be a litter pick on Notts 2 and work to repair the shaft collar at Aquamole.

Caving Wales

The Bolting programme has started in OFD, placing and replacing fixed aids in the Cave. The OFD1 Hydro Project is now live online, and it is recommended to look at this before visiting the Cave. Access to some mines of which Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has fallen through between them and Caving Wales (CW). A second try will happen in 2025. Also, NRW has made 250 people redundant, so I can imagine Caving isn't at the top of their list at the moment.

Ogof Draenen has a 4th entrance; the landowner is very positive and is keen to work with CW.

CSCC

There has been a significant step forward with Longleat Estate, where access to the caves in Cheddar Gorge has been approved. But, look out for official notice from CSCC. Loxton Caves, the current access is through the Cerberus Caving Club, but work is on its way to transferring the access agreement from Cerberus to CSCC.

DCA

A new sign has been put up at Giants Hole to try and warn people of the danger within the cave. There has also been a spite of graffiti in the cave at the moment. There have been a few cavers looking into the removal of modern graffiti from caves as well as removing modern-day graffiti and protecting old graffiti.

DCUC

Access to Penn Recca Mine has now been successful. With both entrances open.

In the pipeline, there will be two gating projects, Afton Red Rift and Great Rock Mine. Both local clubs have been tasked with repairing or removing objects in a couple of caves as part of the adopted cave

scheme. Devon Speleo is repairing a fence/stile by the cave. Whilst Plymouth CG is removing a fence within Radford Cave in Plymouth.

Wet Sink in The Forest of Dean, a lot of great work has happened here in terms of purchasing the land around the entrance.

Richard

RN informed Council that RV had informed the Executive that he was not going to be in his post past January and encouraged Council that if they knew someone who would be suited to the role to get in contact with the Executive.

6.3.2 Countryside Rights of Way (Dormant)

No report received.

6.3.3 Information Technology (Vacant)

No report received.

6.3.4 Publications & Information (Zac Woodford)

In the last month considerable progress has been made, with two information gathering projects launched.

The first project is an information collation project with the overarching aim of creating a student caving club handbook. The information for which is being gathered by inquiring standard operating practices as well as new practices they've found beneficial from student caving clubs. It is hoped that, when published, this handbook will enable the sharing of best practices and disseminate ideas other student caving clubs can then adopt or build on.

The second information gathering project is concerned with polling the BCA's membership to ascertain more detailed demographics than what the annual membership report provides. The survey will also poll behaviours and attitudes and should enable us to better understand our membership and how we can serve them. This survey will be based on previous surveys, the structure and outcomes of which can be found at

<https://british-caving.org.uk/about-bca/working-groups/publications-information/>.

In the publishing realm, we are beginning to look at resurrecting the BCA newsletter, to keep the membership abreast of what we're up to and what events to look out for. We are also looking at more effectively leveraging our space in Descent to communicate with our membership.

ZW had nothing further to add. CJB asked whether the plan to poll the membership was to poll the entire membership or a selection. He

asked whether ZW had discussed the email procedures under JustGo with KE. CJB informed ZW of a few technical issues, work arounds, and things to explore that he ought to be aware of. ZW said that he hasn't contacted KE yet but that he was also planning on using all available media channels as well.

RN added that he would get in touch with ZW regarding what people may want to study about any membership data gathered.

6.3.5 Qualification Management Committee (George Plant)

Summer tends to be quieter at QMC, less courses run as most people take to the hills in the sunshine!

We've been keeping going though, with updates and queries, as well as Mary working on the membership onboarding.

As I said before: 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.

6.3.6 Radon (Dormant)

No report received.

6.3.7 Training & Equipment (Steve Gray)

Next meeting will be late November.

I've had a few enquiries for training but have pointed most towards Regional bodies or in some instances encouraged them to join Local clubs. I'm expecting bigger training requests to come in over the winter as usual.

I have been contacted by Alan Speight about the distribution of the BCA anchors and have authorised him to distribute as he sees fit, but to keep records. Who funds the next supply of anchors? Is it the T and E group? In the near future I will be asking regions and installers for an estimate of how long their current stock will last and when they will require more.

To this note I have not requested funding for Anchors from the treasurer yet. Chris Bolton is working with me to agree a budget for the next 12 months. Thanks Chris for your patience with my IT skills.

I am in the process of trying to log on so I can receive the Training Officer emails directly. Thanks Mary for forwarding on the important ones to me.

As usual I am happy for people to contact me by phone if they have any questions.

Thanks

Steve

AH asked whether the group was operating. RN stated that it was operating and that quite a few IT issues were being overcome. RN asked if the CNCC had any particular issues. AH said that there wasn't but that he wanted the CNCC's training provision to be more in-line with the working group and expressed his desire for other regions to also be providing training like the CNCC does. AH observed that the group didn't seem very coordinated currently and that they need some good projects to encourage activity.

AK informed Council he had a call with SG organised for the following meeting and had a few projects for them to undertake.

CJB added that he had setup for SG a dedicated BCA email address: tande@british-caving.org.uk, but that he didn't know if SG was using it yet. RN took the opportunity to encourage anyone else who was struggling with IT issues to contact the Executive so they can be helped before problems start to arise. CJB added that he was happy to be a main contact for IT issues, alongside the IT Officer, Simon Mullens.

6.3.8 Youth & Development (Jonathan Lester)

No report received.

6.4 Additional Reports by Appointed Officers

6.4.1 British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)

BCL had a stand at Hidden Earth to enable us to pass on duplicate publications to club libraries and cavers in return for donations. (The duplicates have been acquired through bulk donations to BCL so we don't need them.) We took with us over 300 books, hundreds of periodicals and some surveys and had also advertised in advance a list of what we had available, so boxes of "goodies" had already been made up beforehand to pass on to some clubs. We took £382 in cash on the stand and have several hundred of ££s still to come in from electronic payments and from clubs whose boxes are being delivered by "caver post". A list is being compiled of what we still have left to pass on, to be updated as we receive more donations, so that we can continue to make the list available to clubs and cavers.

JP added that she forgot to include in her report her thanks to Russel Myers for his help managing the BCL stand at Hidden Earth, without whom she wouldn't have been able to do it.

RN used the opportunity to thank BCA staff for the great work they do at the BCL. JP told Council they have recently received a collection from Don Mellor and David St. Pierre.

6.4.2 FSE Representative (Allan Richardson)

Nothing to report.

6.4.3 Insurance Manager (Josh White)

The 2025 pre-renewal meeting has happened between Howden and BCA. As per a previous vote by council, Katie in her administrative role will be taking the lead on the renewal, backed up by myself, with a view to the majority of this role being covered by the BCA's paid staff.

There were several things discussed including the following:

- reporting rates. Howden noted our rates of reporting incidents is much lower than expected. We have republished the notification guidelines and these will be uploaded to the website shortly.*
- insurance limits. Due to increasing our maximum limit to £20m last year we are ahead of the curve and ahead of a chunk of the industry who are still playing catch up with the increased cost of living.*
- personal accident insurance was suggested as a potential bolt on to the main insurance policy. We are looking to obtain a quote to include this as standard, as well as try and obtain details of a preferred provider scheme (where our members could benefit from a discount by being BCA members, at no cost to the BCA) but this is not guaranteed. In general, my feeling is appetite is low for this to be an included benefit of membership.*
- income protection. Howden provided details of an individual income protection scheme for freelance instructor types. This info will be passed onto QMC for distribution as appropriate.*

RN elaborated that more of the responsibilities are moving to BCA staff and that this is a trend that's happening with most BCA core services and that he does not believe that doing so will lead to a large cost increase for the BCA. Furthermore, it is a sensible move.

LJW agreed that it was a sensible idea that would provide continuity for the executive and for the insurance brokers going forward. AK added that the work regarding income protection for instructors would be an area worth keeping an eye on, especially considering the industry's poor record on being able to claim from these policies.

6.4.4 Safeguarding Officer (Chris Boardman)

No report received.

6.4.5 Newsletter Editor (Vacant)

No report received.

6.4.6 UIS Representative (Ged Campion)

I can report that the UIS application to be a member of the International Science Council (ISC) has been successful and this membership will hopefully help increase awareness of the work of cavers and speleologists internationally.

Work continues to promote the UNESCO International Day of Caves and Karst initiative (IDCK) which is designed to raise awareness, promote sustainable practices, encourage scientific research, preserve cultural heritage, protect biodiversity, and foster international cooperation. The initiative will hopefully ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable management of caves and karst systems worldwide. Both the chair of the BCA and BCRA have jointly submitted a letter to the UIS pledging their support to the initiative.

In September the UIS received the news that the Austrian Speleological Federation have decided to withdraw their application to host the 2029 International Congress of Speleology (ICS). The UIS bureau are currently looking to find a host country to run this event. The matter was raised at Hidden Earth by John Gunn as BCRA chair and there is a possibility that the UK could submit an application. This however will need further discussion.

Ged Campion (UIS Adjunct Secretary).

6.5 Reports by BCA Staff

6.5.1 Membership Administrator & Artificial Cave (Katie Eavis)

BCA new membership system.

On the 4th September we switched the link on the BCA website to direct new members to join BCA/ BCRA via the new system.

This has had no issues at all, and new members are happily joining with no queries

Quite a few new joiners are signing up to 'subscription' membership so their annual membership fee will automatically be paid at renewal time. This will help BCA as members won't forget to pay, or pay late. And helps members as it cuts down on the effort of re-joining every year.

On the 10th September I emailed all members (club and direct members) and let them know about the new system. There was a flurry of emails with members struggling to log in for various reasons, however these were all dealt with swiftly.

It has gone quiet for now, however there will be a busy period again at renewal time, when more members need to log in to renew their membership. There will be automatic emails to remind members to renew and I will add some tips and pointers to this email so hopefully most members will manage on their own. I'll be there to help any that struggle and I can do it entirely for the members who can't/ won't use computers.

Also on the 10th September we let all the BCA group members know about the new system. Quite a few groups have logged in and had a

look around. Six groups have so far added their own new members. The rest are either asking me to add them, or just don't have new members at the moment.

Clubs have discovered some advantages of the new system. Such as:

- 1. Being able to see the list BCA holds for a club's membership. A couple of clubs have since realised they had forgotten to tell us about some club members and added these. With the old system clubs couldn't easily view the list BCA held for them.*
- 2. Another advantage is that clubs are able to see what type of BCA membership their 'AN' members hold - so they can check they have paid for caving membership if they are attending club trips.*
- 3. Clubs can add members as often as they like, and at any time of day or night without having to wait for me to reply. So if you need a membership number urgently, for an upcoming trip, this can be generated quickly.*

Once club admins have got to grips with the new system it is good and gives them a lot of control – but it does take some time to get to know. I have produced a user guide to help clubs.

For clubs that haven't the time to get to know the new system right now, or haven't got the IT skills, I can continue to administrate their membership for them, via the new system.

Overall, I am very pleased with how the new system is working, and JustGo are being very helpful as we continue to tweak minor features to keep improving how it all works.

Renewals will be a big test of the new system, but I am pleased we have managed to launch it in September – so by renewals we should have ironed out any issues, and I will hopefully have worked out everything I need to know....

RN commented that he had logged into the new system and found it quick and easy to use, and it allowed him to see which clubs he was a member of and that he wasn't a BCRA member – something he has changed now he knows. RN added he was also very interested to hear that Clubs had been using the system to check the membership types of their membership. RN commented that he thinks JustGo will become a really powerful tool going forward.

AK added that it was also providing accountability for Clubs now that members can easily check who they're members of with someone being able to check and resolve this with Katie earlier that day.

LJW passed on thanks for KE from UBSS's treasurer about how helpful and responsive she has been, and how he's found JustGo to be a powerful tool so far.

CJB, on this note, requested that Council note all the hard work Katie has put into the move to JustGo and congratulate her on its successful roll-out. RN stated that he didn't believe this was a contentious issue and expressed that this didn't need voting on and that this was something he would just do on Council's behalf. RN said he will put something in writing and requested Council message him with any stories like those given because they show the practical impact her work has had on people.

TR added that KE had also had a lot of help from MW. RN said he will include MW in the document as well.

7.0 Matters arising from the previous Council Meeting

8.0 Items for Discussion

9.0 Any Other Business

9.1 CNCC Individual Member

AH informed Council that the CNCC was reviewing its constitution, and they had found that over 20% of people caving in the region were caving outside of the Club structure. AH asked whether reviewing this would be a task for the BCA's Constitution and Governance Working Group. AH mentioned discussions the CNCC had had with AK regarding who does the BCA represent. It was found that the BCA constitution states the BCA should work to disseminate information to all cavers nationally. AH said that you can't do that if you only address your own membership. AH said that we need to widen our representation and our horizons as to who we represent.

RN replied that these efforts by the CNCC were very valuable to the caving community. RN shared the anecdote that when he first joined the BCA, he remembers Nick Williams saying 'Cavers help cavers' and that if our efforts are always to all cavers and we do a good enough job, they join our organisation. RN added that ZW membership poll will be an opportunity to reach a wider group of cavers than previous efforts and provide a chance to better analyse and understand the demographic of cavers needs who cave outside of the BCA/club structure.

LJW supported ZW's survey efforts and suggested, if it wasn't already being done, that it ask if respondents are BCA members, and if not, why not. LJW also raised the problem of GDPR in relation to emailed surveys and informed Council it had previously prevented Council from distributing newsletters without the presence of an opt-in clause.

RN explained that within the JustGo member terms and conditions we have re-written the conditions to allow us to contact our membership

for such legitimate purposes. LJW expressed her thanks that this had been resolved.

10.0 Details of the Next Meeting

10.1 Tuesday the 17th of December at 7pm via Zoom.