



Minutes for the Council Meeting Tuesday 14th May 2024

The meeting was held via Google Meet starting at 7.00 pm

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Next Meeting Important Agenda Items

BCA Council Diary 2023/2024

AGM 3/6/24

Deadline for reports 20/5/24

Deadline for posting reports 27/5/24

AGM 7pm 3/6/24

Voting for 14 days, if starting 4/6/24 then voting closes midnight 18/6/24

Minutes posted by 13/8/24

Next Council meeting 25th June TBC

Council Positions

Voting Position	Name	Initials
BCA Executive		
Chair 21-24 (3 years)	Russell Myers	RM
Secretary 21-24 (3 years)	Allan Richardson	AR
Treasurer	Chris Bolton	CJB
Group/Club Reps		
Position 1, 22-24 (2 years)	Jenny Potts	JP
Position 2		
Individual Member Reps		
Position 1, 22-24 (2 years)	Andy Eavis	AE
Position 2, 24-25 (co-opt)	Zac Woodford	ZW
Regional Council Reps		
CCC	Allan Richardson	AR
CNCC	Andrew Hinde	AH
CSCC	Linda Wilson	LJW
DCA	Mike Higgins	MH
DCUC	David Jean	DJ
Constituent Body Reps		
William Pengelly CST	Richard Vooght	RV
Assoc. Cave Instructors	Stephan Natynczuk	SN
National Caving Scout Active Support Unit	Tony Radmall	TR
BCRA	John Gunn	JG
NAMHO	Steve Holding	SH
CHECC	Jennifer Ryder	JR
CDG	Claire Cohen	CC

BCRC	Emma Porter	EP
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Non Voting Positions	Name	Initials
Working Group Convenors		
Training and Equipment	Steve Gray	SG
Conservation and Access	Richard Vooght	RV
Information Technology	Simon Mullens	SM
Youth and Development	Jonathan Lester	JL
QMC	George Plant	GP
CoG	Andrew McLeod	AM
Radon	Vacant	
P & I	Vacant	
Additional BCA Appointments		
Insurance Manager	Josh White	JW
Membership Administrator	Katie Eavis	KE
Safeguarding Officer	Chris Boardman	CDB
Training Administrator	Mary Wilde	MW
Library Representative	Jenny Potts	JP
Newsletter Editor	Vacant	
UIS Representative	Ged Campion	GC
FSE Representative	Allan Richardson	AR
Artificial Cave	Katie Eavis	KE
QMC Representative 1 (observer)	BCA Chair	RM
QMC Representative 2 (observer)	Chris Boardman	CB
Book Keeper	Karen Lydon	KL

Present

Allan Richardson, Russell Myers, Chris Bolton, Andy Eavis, Zac Woodford, Andrew Hinde, Linda Wilson, Richard Vooght, John Gunn, Steve Holding, Chris Boardman, Stephan Natynczuk, Tony Radmall, Ged Campion (arr 1945)

Agenda item 1: Apologies for absence

Mike Higgins, David Jean,

Agenda item 2: Acceptance of the 5th March 2023 Meeting Minutes

Proposer Jenny Potts

Second Linda Wilson

All in favour no abstentions passed nem con.

Agenda item 3: Important Agenda items

Cooptions

P&I rep

Zac Woodford

Proposed Russell Myers

Seconded Allan Richardson

Zac reported that he wished to stand down from the Individual Rep position as he wished to focus the majority of his attention on the P&I role.

All in favour no abstentions passed nem con.

FSE rep

Allan Richardson

Proposed Ged Campion

Seconded Russell Myers

One abstention, Allan

Rest in favour passed.

Allan confirmed that he was still standing as BCA Secretary at the forthcoming AGM.

Agenda item 4: Matters arising/Action Plan

JennyPotts asked had the FSE survey on Young cavers and caving been followed up, this was answered later by Ged Campion in his report.

Two new items of AOB:-

Countryside Rights of Way (Jenny Potts)

CSCA a new member club (Katie Eavis)

Agenda item 5: Vacancies

The Radon group remains dormant.

Individual Rep position, the Russell will seek a nomination from the floor of the AGM.

Agenda item 6: Chair's Report

Chair's Report to the Council Meeting of 14th May 2024

This will be my final National Council meeting as Chair in the run up to the forthcoming AGM when I will be standing down. It has been an interesting ("fascinating") period of time since I volunteered to help BCA in April 2020, and a real privilege to represent British Caving and the caving community at large. I intend to expand on this in my report to the AGM and must thank the many individuals who supported me in so many ways. I'm tempted to name them but that would be

at risk of missing someone out; suffice to say you know who you are, your help has been much appreciated.

The lack of volunteers to help run BCA has been to its detriment during this period but we seem to be turning a corner, and I'm pleased to note that at long last we have someone volunteering to take on the vacant Publications and Information position, in Zac Woodford together with a volunteer for the role of FSE Representative in place of Ged Campion who moves across to the UIS Representative position in place of Andy Eavis. Both these positions will require co-opting by Council at the meeting.

Since co-opting Chris Bolton to the Treasurer's position, he has been very busy analysing our financial situation and produced a very comprehensive report circulated along with this showing amongst other matters, that we need to raise the subscription rates BCA charges. I don't think this will come as a surprise to anyone, considering the inflationary pressures we have all experienced in recent years. The decision we have to make in Council is how much? Chris's report gives us a clear indication and I recommend reading it before the meeting.

Finally, I am leaving BCA in a better shape than I first found it and whilst not claiming any spectacular successes or innovative ideas, I do feel it has stabilised into a business-like, functioning organisation providing support to the national caving community. Long may it remain so.

Russell Myers

Chair

BCA

7th May 2024

Andrew Hinde offered a vote of thanks to Russell Myers for all the time he has put in as Chair and Secretary

The chair reported that Simon Mullins the new IT Convener, has identified a number of problems with the IT, he and his wife have managed to get the voting system up and running. We wish to have a dry run using the Council List to identify a group of people to test the system

Agenda item 7: BCA Secretaries Report

An interesting if somewhat frustrating time, trying to get things posted on the website.

Thank you to all who helped.

Now that we have an IT Convener things should get easier.

Allan apologised to the meeting for missing out the FSE report, which has been added to the Minutes.

Agenda item 8: BCA Treasurer Report

Having been co-opted at the previous meeting. I've met a steep learning curve and am grateful for the help I've had from the previous Treasurer, Howard, and the BCA part time staff, Karen, Katie and Mary. Unfortunately my first report is bad news – please don't shoot the messenger!

The BCA has a financial issue to resolve. Costs have risen, mainly as a result of inflation, increased insurance risk and having to employ staff where no volunteers could be found. Reserves have been depleted by the CRoW case, COVID and costs rising above income.

The March Council meeting approved a budget for 2024 based on a deficit of about one fifth of our income. Having now looked at the books and what we have already paid and are committed to, this

seems a likely out-turn. The distribution of costs within the budget may be different but the deficit will be similar. By the end of 2024, therefore, our remaining assets are likely to barely exceed the sums which Council has decided we should retain as Reserves. Costs are likely to continue to rise due to inflation, particularly insurance, and interest rates on our bank balances are dropping.

BCA policy on reserves:		
Insurance Reserve	£80k	one year's premium plus twice the claim excess
General Reserve	£52k	one year's income less one year's premium
Total required Reserves	£132k	
Assets at 31 December 2023	£165k	
Projected deficit during 2024	£27k	
Assets at 31 December 2024	£138k	
Margin on Reserves	£6k	
At first glance that means our reserves are just adequate, but they aren't really, as the requirement is based on our current, insufficient, income.		

An increase in membership fees is overdue and is essential if BCA is to continue to serve cavers. To avoid unnecessary work for Club officials and our own membership team, it would be preferable not to have a further increase for 3 years and for the amounts to divide simply by four. An increase in fees should be accompanied by other measures to keep it to a minimum.

Summary of Proposal

1. To increase fees by enough to avoid an annual deficit but not to attempt to increase reserves.
2. To manage the budget more actively and look for opportunities to reduce costs without reducing what we do for cavers.
3. To carry out a risk analysis for BCA and if possible to establish a case for reducing the amount of General Reserve held. While reserves are essential, holding funds unnecessarily should be avoided.
4. To explain the increase to the membership, and promote the BCA, by explaining clearly how their fees are spent and how cavers benefit, and by putting the amount of the increase in context.

Proposed Annual Fees for 2025 subscription year

	Current fee (£)	Proposed fee (£)	%
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Caving member	20	24	20
Non-caving member	6	8	33
Student	8	10	25
Club	25	36	44
Club hut or ACB	60	72	20

Budget management

Where people may have said ‘BCA has plenty of money, we need to spend it for the benefit of cavers’, there should now be a question ‘Should this be paid for by BCA, the Regional Council, the Club or the cavers concerned’? Communication with the membership will assist in recruiting volunteers. The annual budget should be based on submissions from each Convener, Regional Council or equivalent. These will be reviewed by the Treasurer and approved by Council as part of the budget. The recipients will retain control over how the approved budget is then spent, but significant additional costs will require Council approval.

Risk analysis

The amount of Insurance Reserve is decided on the logical basis that a large claim could result in payment of the excess and a doubling of the renewal premium. There is no similar basis for the General Reserve, but there are a number of scenarios that could disrupt BCA’s income temporarily or require emergency expenditure, such as a cyber attack, denial of banking or illness of staff or officers. There are also areas of BCA spending that could cope with their funds being delayed for a year. A small team led by the Treasurer should conduct a formal review and recommend the level of General Reserve required.

Explaining the increase and the benefits of membership

A website article will be written to explain the increase to members and add context based on the ideas below:

BCA does a lot for cavers, and many of them don’t know what we do. Most are aware of the Public Liability Insurance, but not all understand that it is key to access to many caves. Just over half the membership fees go to pay the Insurance Premium. Less than one sixth goes on admin and IT. About a tenth goes to BCRA and its Library and just over that to the Regional Councils, who among other things deliver caver training, cave access and conservation and local liaison. Nearly all the resin anchors in UK caves have been funded directly or indirectly by BCA. BCA technical experts research and publish ways to make caving safer.

‘Descent’ magazine receives a substantial sum, nominally for advertising BCA. Professional caving qualifications (QMC) are not funded by membership fees but are an important part of introducing people to caving. The Youth and Development team promotes caving for all, particularly young people. BCA helps fund expeditions via a grant to the Ghar Parau Foundation.

The increase is small compared to the amount most cavers spend on caving. Membership fees were cut in 2015 as BCA’s reserves were more than required and now need to be raised again. In 2022,

individual membership fees increased from £17 to £20. Since then, RPI has increased by 30%. In 2004, when BCA started, fees were DIMs £28, CIMs £18 and clubs £50. Inflation has been just over 100% since then so the proposed new fees are low by comparison. BCA membership costs significantly less than PaddleUK (£47), BMC (£43.90) or CyclingUK (£52).

Council are asked to approve this proposal, to suggest improvements or to identify other ways to ensure that BCA can continue to deliver for cavers.

Linda Wilson commented re CSCC, the Council voted unanimously for Chris Boltons suggestions. Andrew Hinde re CNCC, they were all in support.

CNCC historically have been very successful in getting external funding, there are opportunities out there for funding.

Andrew felt that Chris's efforts to engage with UKCaving have been successful

Chris Boardman added his support for the report and agreed with everything Chris Bolton has said.

Chris Bolton asked for people to volunteer for the risk analysis working group, to find out how much we should be keeping in reserve, Linda Wilson volunteered, Stephan Natynczuk could also help in the conversation, but was short on time at present.

Andrew Hinde asked could the Finance Committee be involved, Chris will ask them.

Acceptance of the report

Proposer Linda Wilson

Second Tony Radmall

All in favour passed nem con

Chris Bolton said he will write to the members explaining things when JustGo is running in about one month, this will be after the AGM so will put a report on the Website in the meantime.

2023 BCA Annual Accounts for approval by Council

Please see separate document.

Andrew Hinde asked were the Regional Council claims a year behind, Chris replied that it was more complicated than that, depending upon when claims were sent in and accruals.

Acceptance of the Accounts

Proposer Chris Bolton

Second Jenny Potts

All in favour passed nem con

Agenda item 9: Insurance Report

Ongoing work

Various queries are being dealt with as and when, mostly revolving around membership and how to structure clubs to ensure insurance is in place.

One query received was about the expedition insurance offered through PJ Hayman and whether it definitely covered exploratory caving. I've confirmed this with PJH and all their team have been reminded of this to avoid any future miscommunications.

BMC project

BMC are undertaking a pilot exploring options around 'multi-activity clubs', specifically joint mountaineering and caving clubs. They are going to feed back how this pilot goes, and it may be we are able to replicate their structure to simplify our membership structure for clubs, therefore reducing the workload on our membership team (and the insurance manager).

Cyber security policy

Since providing details of the requirements in order to put the cyber security policy back in place to the exec, I have heard nothing further. The new email system, I presume, is a step towards this more robust system. Once the requirements are met and I receive instruction from the exec, I will be able to approach Howden to reinstate this policy.

Online FAQs

In the coming weeks, I intend on checking and refreshing all of the FAQs on the website, please notify me if there is anything you think needs changing, and I'll add this to my list.

Proposal

I have notified the relevant members of council that I intend on standing down from this position from the 2025 AGM. Between now and then is the 2025 policy renewal. I propose that paid admin support carry out the majority of the work for this renewal, supported by the insurance manager where required. This obviously will have financial impacts, as well as an impact on Katie's time. Having discussed this with Katie, she believes (but doesn't for certain know yet) that JustGo being implemented should heavily reduce the amount of time worked on admin.

As always please reach out to me at insurance@british-caving.org.uk with any queries or issues.

Thanks

Josh

BCA Insurance Manager

Insurance@british-caving.org.uk

Acceptance of the Insurance report

Proposer Tony Radmall

Second Andrew Hind

All in favour passed nem Con

Agenda item 10: Membership

2024 Club Membership

Katie Eavis – club membership administrator

Membership levels by year

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 (up until the 5th May)
Groups (including Member Clubs, Associates and Access Controlling Bodies)	166	162	169	168	161
CIMs (including Cavers, Non-Cavers, Students, Under 18s and CDG)	5308	5049	5629	5746	5455

One new caving club has joined BCA since the last meeting – Cardiff Underground Explorers. A few more clubs have renewed and clubs continue to up date their membership lists, as new members join and previous members re-join. Three clubs who were members in 2023 haven't renewed their membership or told me they aren't intending to join for 2024. As I have chased these at least 3 times each I don't feel I can keep asking. One is a university club – so I will email them once more as officers often change regularly in university clubs and it may have been missed. After that I will assume they don't wish to join BCA this year and stop emailing, leaving the ball in their court, should they wish to re-join.

Since the last meeting I have chased all the club members who stated they had joined BCA elsewhere but whose membership I couldn't find a record of. With the help of club secretaries this list has reduced from over 120 to less than 60. It should keep dropping as clubs are still actively chasing these members.

Just Go Update

Just Go are still busy setting up the membership system for the BCA and BCRA. A lot of the structure is in place and soon we will start the data import of the 2024 membership data. Current date to 'go live' is middle of June.

I keep in regular touch with Mary, Josh and Russell about the move to Just Go and the changes it will lead to. I think it would be good to write an article for the next Descent about the move to Just Go.

Ecards and the Card printer

Most of our members are happy with the ecards. Club members: less than 2.5% have requested a plastic card. Individuals members: about 7.5% have requested plastic cards. This year we have said that plastic cards would be available by request, only whilst stock lasts. Whilst we still have stock of plastic cards we are nearly out of printer ribbon for the card printer, so now seems a good time to consider the future of the card printer. My suggestion is stop issuing plastic cards completely. We can sell the card printer, and remaining stocks of plastic cards. Benefits include not sending out plastic that is only used for a year maximum, it will save the BCA money in terms of plastic cards, and printer supplies and will free up some space in my house!! However I don't think the BCA

wants to alienate those members who don't have computers/ smart phones/ internet etc. So I suggest we offer paper/ card membership cards instead, by request only. These can be printed on my normal printer using perforated 'business card' A4 paper with normal ink etc. These will be much cheaper to produce than the plastic cards and not need specialist equipment. As a trial I bought a pack of printable business cards (10 per sheet of A4) and printed some with the same logo/ text as on the current plastic cards. They need some tweaking but are a similar size and worked fine through a normal printer. See photos below – the paper card, and the card compared to a current plastic card.



Franking Machine With the ecards being sent out, and the low number of requests for plastic cards the BCA having it's own franking machine no longer made good financial sense. So I have returned it to Pitney Bowes and requested to close our account. I will post cards and publications with stamps and via the post office in future.

Facebook/ UK caving

I am trying to post regularly (at least once a week) on facebook and UK caving as BCA. It is a good way to communicate with our members about all the many different things BCA are up to.

Proposal to accept the report

Proposer Chris Bolton
Second Andrew Hinde

All in favour passed nem con

11: Other Reports

UIS Representative Report

Within the UIS people are working towards the bureau meeting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia from 10th – 16th August. This is taking place at the TransAsian Karst Congress organised by the Asian branch of the UIS. Many of the bureau members are going on a pre-congress excursion to Mulu that I have organised.

The other main event within UIS is the proposal for the International Day of Caves and Karst. So far, a proposal document has been prepared by the UIS president Nadja Zupan with help from several people including John Gunn Chairman of BCRA. It is hoped that this document will be presented to UNESCO by the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO.

With feedback from SNCU, it is hoped that UIS can look for support among member countries, regional and national organisations of UNESCO and national commissions with UIS following UNESCO guidelines to further the proposal.

More on the International Day of Caves and Karst after the bureau meeting in August.

Andy Eavis

May 2024

Andy reported that he was standing down as UIS rep, the position being taken over by Ged Campion.

Andy will remain as UIS President.

Acceptance of the report

Proposer Tony Radmall

Second Chris Bolton

All in favour nem con

FSE delegate report to BCA Council Meeting May 2024.

The FSE has a membership of 30 countries.

The FSE's last General Assembly Meeting (GAM) was held in May 2023 at the German National Congress in Breitscheid, Germany. This was also labelled a Eurospeleo Forum.

The work of the bureau continues to be conducted by exchange of emails, regular update meetings held online which since February have included commission leads and the newsletter editor. A new working group on 'Children and Young Cavers' was established at the last GAM and the BCA have contributed to a survey that was sent out to all FSE member countries. The findings of the survey are currently being collated and a report being prepared.

EuroSpeleo Projects (ESPs) sponsoring and supporting caving expeditions, events, and projects from member countries. Last year there were two successful applications for funding from the UK, for expeditions to Austria and Lebanon. This year the FSE has received three new applications from CUCC expedition to Austria, Imperial College exploration in Slovenia and the Ario expedition. These are currently being considered by the FSE.

The next GAM of the FSE will be held at the 16th Eurospeleo Forum at Syphonia 24 in Caselle Pittari, Southern Italy on 1st November.

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

Ged Campion.

Acting BCA delegate to FSE

Jenny Potts and Tony Radmall asked a question on the Children Survey, the collated report has been produced and is in the FSE Newsletter published a few months ago on page 5 on the Eurospeleo site. The UK responded but a lot of countries didn't, the UK is fully in support of encouraging young people to take an interest in Caves and Karst.

Library Report

- David St. Pierre's Legacy

Following receipt of the £1,000 left to the Library by David, with the assistance of his daughter we have since been able to collect his books, valued for probate purposes at £3,430. Some of these are duplicates and we shall be offering these first to the NGF Norsk Grotteforbund (to whom he left his main Norwegian collections) and then to British caving libraries, etc. In addition we have David's Svalbard caves collection, which he wished to be kept in Britain, and also his Grotte Casteret collection; these two collections will be catalogued and added to our archives.

2. The BSA/Simpson Collection at the British Geological Society (BGS)

We are still working to try to ensure that scans of the Record Books and Administrative Papers are made available to cavers in general on the BCRA cloud. (Note that all scanned photographs are now available via the BGS website but BGS will not put the Record Books etc. online because of copyright issues, though they are content for BCRA to do this.) We are very grateful to Alan Jeffreys and his colleagues from Grampian S.G.; to John Gardner and David Gibson from BCRA; and to Bob McIntosh and Andrew Morrison from BGS for what has been achieved so far. However there are now changes to BGS policies which appear to be holding things up; Linda Wilson and I hope to be able to meet with appropriate people in BGS for discussions aimed at overcoming these difficulties.

Discussion of this issue in detail is deferred to the BCRA Meeting on 7 July when we hope we shall have further progress to report.

3. Archive Materials

BCL has at long last cleared the aftermath of the enormous quantity of unrecorded publications from the BCRA Library which were found following the death of Roy Paulson, the previous BCRA Librarian, in 2007. Karen Lydon is taking on responsibility for archive materials which are coming into the Library with increasing frequency. She is now beginning work on the early CRG archive, mainly consisting of boxes of material from Aubrey Glennie and Arthur Butcher. We have also acquired additional BSA material from various sources and have the Lowstern Archive (donated by YRC) to work through. Other archive material has already been scanned and is available on the BCRA Online Archive, created and maintained by John Gardner.

We are conscious that BCL is already, de facto, the archive centre for British caving with its own collections and links to other caving archives around the country. Recognition as the "British Caving Library and Archive" will have implications for expense, manpower and space so should be subject to approval by both BCRA and BCA.

Jenny Potts, 12-5-24

Jenny Potts commented the Roy Paulson had actually been working very hard on the Library but was working under difficult conditions. After he died it was not possible to access his laptop where all the data was stored.

Jenny also reported that the Library depended upon the two part time staff and a number of volunteers who were spread across the UK.

Andy Eavis asked about expanding the area of the Library, Jenny reported that they already had a room upstairs, they still have space to expand a bit more, they may need more storage elsewhere at some stage.

Acceptance of the report

Proposer Linda Wilson
Second Tony Radmall

All in favour passed nem con

Agenda Item 12: Any Other Business

1) Suggestion from Chris Bolton that BCA should consider rejoining the Sport and Recreation Alliance. BCA was a member but decided to leave when they put their subs up in 2014.

Chris Bolton spoke to the item, they give advice on governance, how to attract volunteers etc, costing £205 pa + VAT

Proposer Chris Bolton
Second Andrew Hinde

All in favour passed nem con.

2) Application to join BCA as a member club

Cardiff Underground Explorers

Constitution and aims of the club documentation has been received by Katie.
Membership of BCA agreed

3) Jenny Potts suggested joining Outdoors for All, where a whole range of groups are getting together and attempting to influence access in the future. Jenny wondered if the C&A group would like to get involved, Richard Vooght said he would look into it.

Chris Bolton is looking into it and has sent an email requesting costings. Executive to decide once details received.

4) Combined Services Caving Association wish to become a full BCA member club, currently they are an Associate member and have been so for years. In the past they had close links with the Forces from where they got their PL Insurance.
They have changed to being a civilian club with some links to the Forces and want to be a full BCA member club.
They have sent a copy of their constitution and the aims of the club are clearly set out right at the start of the constitution.

Membership of BCA agreed.

Agenda Item 13: Date of next Council meeting

25th June tbc

Treasurer's report to Council 14 May 2024

Having been co-opted at the previous meeting, I've met a steep learning curve and am grateful for the help I've had from the previous Treasurer, Howard, and the BCA part time staff, Karen, Katie and Mary. Unfortunately my first report is bad news – please don't shoot the messenger!

The BCA has a financial issue to resolve. Costs have risen, mainly as a result of inflation, increased insurance risk and having to employ staff where no volunteers could be found. Reserves have been depleted by the CRoW case, COVID and costs rising above income.

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Budget management

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‘Descent’ magazine receives a substantial sum, nominally for advertising BCA. Professional caving qualifications (QMC) are not funded by membership fees but are an important part of introducing people to caving. The Youth and Development team promotes caving for all, particularly young people. BCA helps fund expeditions via a grant to the Ghar Parau Foundation.

The increase is small compared to the amount most cavers spend on caving. Membership fees were cut in 2015 as BCA’s reserves were more than required and now need to be raised again. In 2022, individual membership fees increased from £17 to £20. Since then, RPI has increased by 30%. In 2004, when BCA started, fees were DIMs £28, CIMs £18 and clubs £50. Inflation has been just over 100% since then so the proposed new fees are low by comparison. BCA membership costs significantly less than PaddleUK (£47), BMC (£43.90) or CyclingUK (£52).

Council are asked to approve this proposal, to suggest improvements or to identify other ways to ensure that BCA can continue to deliver for cavers.