



## Minutes for Council Meeting

*Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 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**

David Jean, Richard Vooght,

### **2.0 Persons present**

Aidan Kuhlmann, Chris Bolton, Rostam Namaghi, Andy Eavis, Jenny Potts, Linda Wilson, Stephan Natynczuk, Tony Radmall, Chris Bolton, George Plant, Isaac Neale, Mike Higgins, Tom Phillips, Vicotria Kocher, Joshitha Sivakumar, Peter Jackson, Allan Richardson.

No quorate number required.

### 3.0 Current Composition of the BCA Council

	Position	Name	Initials	Vote
<b>BCA Executive</b>	Chair (2024-27)	Rostam Namaghi	RN	N
	Treasurer (2024-27)	Chris Bolton	CJB	Y
	Secretary (2024-27)	Aidan Kuhlmann	AK	Y
<b>Individual Members Representatives</b>	Position 1 (2023-2025)	<i>Vacant</i>		
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Andy Eavis	AE	Y
<b>Group Member Representatives</b>	Position 1 (2023-2025)	<i>Vacant</i>		
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Jenny Potts	JP	Y
<b>Regional Council Representatives</b>	CNCC	Todd Rye	TRY	Y
	CSCC	Linda Wilson	LJW	Y
	DCA	Mike Higgins	MH	Y
	DCUC	David Jean	DJ	Y
	Ogofa Cymru / Caving Wales	Allan Richardson	AR	Y
<b>Constituent Body Representatives</b>	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
<b>Working Group Convenors</b>	Conservation & Access Committee	Victoria Kocher	VK	N
	Anchor	<i>Vacant</i>		
	National Access	<i>Vacant</i>		N
	Publications & Information	Zac Woodford	ZW	N
	Qualification Management Committee	George Plant	GP	N
	Radon	<i>Dormant</i>		N
	Training & Equipment	<i>Vacant</i>		N
	Youth & Development	Isaac Neale	IN	N
<b>Other Positions</b>	BCL Representative	Jenny Potts	JP	N
	FSE Rep	Tom Phillips	TP	N
	Insurance	<i>Vacant</i>		N
	Newsletter Editor	<i>Vacant</i>		N
	Safeguarding Officer	Chris Boardman	CBD	N
	UIS Rep	John Gunn	JG	N
<b>BCA Staff</b>	Artificial Cave	Katie Eavis	KE	N
	Bookkeeper	Karen Lydon	KL	N
	Membership Admin	Katie Eavis	KE	N
	Training Admin	Mary Wilde	MW	N

#### 4.0 Previous Meeting Attendance & Report Submissions

	Position	Initials	22/07	Report?	16/09	Report?	25/11	Report?	20/01	Report?
<b>BCA Executive</b>	Chair	RN	Y	Y	Y	Y				
	Treasurer	CJB	Y	Y	Y	Y				
	Secretary	AK	Y	Y	Y	Y				
<b>Members Representatives</b>	Position 1		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
	Position 2	AE	N	N/A	Y	N/A				
<b>Group Member Representatives</b>	Position 1		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
	Position 2	JP	Y	N/A	Y	N/A				
<b>Regional Council Representatives</b>	Ogofa Cymru	AR	N	Y	Y	N				
	CNCC	TRY	Y	Y	N	N				
N.B: Reports are optional	CSCC	LJW	Y	Y	Y	Y				
	DCA	MH	Y	Y	Y	Y				
	DCUC	DJ	Y	N	N	N				
<b>Constituent Body Representatives</b>	ACI	SN	Y	N	Y	N				
	BCRA	JG	N	N	Y	N				
N.B: Reports are optional	BCRC	EP	N	N	N	N				
	CDG	CC	N	N	N	N				
	CHECC	TP	N	N	Y	N				
	NAMHO	SH/PJ	Y	N	Y	N				
	NCSASU	TR	Y	N	Y	N				
	WP CST	RV	Y	N	N	N				
<b>Working Group Convenors</b>	Anchor	PK	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y				
	C&A	VK	Y	Y	Y	Y				
	Finance	CJB	Y	N/A	Y	N/A				
	Incorporation	CJB	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
	National Access		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
	P&I	ZW	N	Y	N	Y				
	QMC	GP	Y	N	Y	Y				
(Dormant)	Radon		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
	T&E		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
	Y&D	IN	Y	Y	Y	N				
<b>Other Positions</b>			Y	Y	Y	Y				
	BCL Rep.	JP								
	FSE Rep	TP	N	Y	Y	N				
	Insurance		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
	Newsletter		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
	Safeguarding	CBD	Y	N	Y	N				
	UIS Rep.	JG	N	N/A	Y	Y				
	BCA Admin	KE	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

AK apologised for not having produced the minutes in time for this meeting. He explained he had been very busy with other BCA work in the last period and consequently had run out of time. RN commented that it was important to get the minutes out for transparency reasons and requested that the minutes be produced and sent out by email soon after this meeting. He continued that the minutes could be approved at the next Council meeting alongside the minutes for this meeting.

## 6.0 Officer Reports

### 6.1 Executive

#### 6.1.1 Chair (Rostam Namaghi)

*Hidden Earth is almost upon us, and it very much feels like the caving year has started back up already.*

*Since our last meeting I regret to inform you that the ICS bid for 2029 went to Romania – I can't emphasise the quality of the work produced and I would particularly like to thank Lucy Hyde and Bartek Biela (as well as many others!) for their work on logos and videos, and John Gunn, Andy Eavis, Bill Nix and Les Williams for their work on venues. It was a great bid, and I think the UIS have made a mistake as I'm not sure Romania will be able to deliver.*

*The three main things that I have focused on:*

- *Training and Equipment: I chaired the meeting and Aidan ably stood in as Secretary. We identified a few candidates to run the group who I will be approaching and the prospect of BCA being able to provide a web client to run events was floated.*
- *Organized Fun: This company is the driving force that has caused 17 unions to review their health and safety policies regarding caving. Myself, Aidan, Tom and Isaac will be meeting with them on the 17th of September, and I have developed a briefing sheet. The BCA will be maintaining its principle that student caving does not need qualification, should be peer led and that caving is safer now than it has ever been.*
- *The 'missing years' Demographics Report: I've been working with Eve Chaddock, and she has analysed the 3 years' worth of demographic data between my two reports. She has done a wonderful job and I particularly want to highlight the findings that show we haven't lost a load of women (it seems to be an issue with transferring databases and data collection) and that our biggest drop off is Women aged 35-39. I am hoping a further Descent article will also be produced.*

*There is a substantial amount of work ahead, bringing new volunteers in and helping existing ones develop their skills will be key. I hope to have an update regarding the National Access Working Group for the next meeting as unfortunately time and priorities got in the way for this meeting.*

*P.S. Please note that one of talks at HE will contain a fair amount of BCA work ('A Year in the Void'), I will be manning the booth at least at lunch time both*

*days and that Myself, Aidan and Chris will be sporting BCA shirts to attempt to raise the profile and chat to people about BCA.*

RN started by thanking AE for his efforts regarding the UIS bid and his work in Brazil attending the GAM. AE apologised for wrongly judging the bid, in that until Romania presented, the team did not think Romania were genuinely putting in a bid. AE elaborated that the UK bid suffered from some international politics and that the UK's bid was aimed at how good the event would be not how good the caving was in the UK which appeared to be the wrong approach. AE added that there were others involved in the effort who put in a lot of work, including, Bill Nix, Lucy Hyde, John Gunn, and Rostam himself, among others. RN added that it was a bid they could be all proud of and that in four years' time a lot of work will already have been done.

Next, RN moved on to discussing the student caving issue concerning the Organised Fun consultancy which threatens to affect 10% of BCA member clubs. RN explained that they are very affiliated with the NUS but have no background in outdoor pursuits and yet they were proposing to suggest how universities can make these activities safer. RN stated he would email round a briefing sheet for the meeting he, AK, TP, and IN were having with them the following day and they were going to have a brief talk ahead of the meeting following the council meeting. RN added that if anyone else would like a copy of the briefing sheet then please email him to request it and he will share it.

LJW requested a copy of the briefing sheet and informed RN that the meeting of the unions with Organised Fun is being chaired by Ben Pilling, the CEO of Bristol University and a good acquaintance of hers. LJW also enquired how Organised Fun got appointed. RN answered that he has not been able to review all the NUS meetings but that it is clear that they all know each other through NUS meetings and having run different Student's Unions. Furthermore, the money for the initiative is being funded by the BCA's Insurance broker, Howden. The company also appears to be very small and that the contract to do this consulting is clearly a major contract for the company and consequently, they will be holding a large meeting with many representatives from Student's unions.

LJW added that she does not believe the group had met yet and that she was in contact with Ben Pilling regarding another issue currently facing UBSS.

TR asked if this was likely to affect the voluntary sector. RN qualified that he did not have all the facts since he has not met with Organised Fun yet but doubted that it would because the issue has been motivated by the student wild swimming fatality and consequently it is focused on Student's Unions. The main concern would be that if anything they produce becomes considered as Industry Standard.

To finish on this topic RN stated that his biggest fear here was contagion since it directly effects 40% of the student sector which constitutes the largest single group that's he's ever seen effected by something like this.

RN moved on to highlighting the demographics report that has been produced by Eve Chaddock on the missing years between the most recent report and the one produced a few years ago. One of the key points it highlights is that as women reach 35 there appears to be a steep drop-off in membership and that these needs thinking about. RN observed that this was later than previously thought and potentially coincides with major lifestyle changes at this time, but that it provides a good opportunity to re-examine the membership demographics to gain a clearer picture of these trends and their causes. Additionally, Eve is writing a Descent article about the report to get this information out to cavers beyond the BCA website.

Finally, RN mentioned the BCA's planned presence at the upcoming Hidden Earth.

### **6.1.2 Treasurer** (Chris Bolton)

*There have been no unexpected or unbudgeted items of expenditure since the previous Council meeting. Following informal contact with Working Group Conveners, however, I have carried out a review of the expected out-turn of each budget line, as some may need to call on contingencies within the budget. I have therefore asked all Conveners and Regional Treasurers for an update on their expected spend for the year and have made estimates for central items of expenditure and income. I've also reviewed my estimates for salaries, etc, based on spend to date and forecasting based on 2024. As is usual, some areas are below budget, some are above, but overall, if my guesses are correct for the people I don't have a response at the time of writing this report, we're in the right field.*

*Our 3-month bond with United Trust Bank matured at the end of July. I have reinvested £85k (the limit for FSCS protection) in a new 3-month bond and moved the remaining £10,918 into an Easy Access account which will be transferred to our HSBC current account when necessary to cover routine expenditure.*

*Following the decision of the July Council meeting to increase membership fees for 2026, I have written to all members by email to explain the reasons for the increase and what BCA spends their money on. Reaction seems to be generally positive although some clubs have said that their members were confused, as they hadn't realised that part of their club fees were for BCA membership.*

*I have been working on implementing some of the recommendations from the Business Risk Assessment, concentrating on Incorporation and IT security.*

*For Incorporation, I have drafted a plan with the help of my Executive colleagues. The basis of this is that the new Company will be independent of BCA until such time as the assets and members are transferred. Rather take up Council time with half-finished ideas, the Incorporation Working Group will therefore liaise informally with Council members until we have a package that we believe will be accepted, and only then seek formal approval from Council and the membership.*

*For IT security I have reviewed the requirements of the Insurers and written to all officers and staff with access to BCA's IT infrastructure about how we should manage the confidentiality, integrity and security of BCA data. I have yet to receive confirmation from all the recipients that they are following this guidance. The Executive have agreed that we need to provide Katie with a BCA laptop due to the sensitivity of the membership data she handles.*

*The emails sent out for the post-AGM vote were often identified as spam by our members' email providers. I have been working with Simon and Katie to understand the reason. Email security protocols are becoming increasingly complex, but the essence of the problem is that emails that are nominally from BCA are actually sent by JustGo so are seen as potentially fraudulent. I have raised this with JustGo and apparently this should be avoidable, but I'm waiting for details of what we need to do. We put a temporary fix in place for the email to members about the membership fees and the indications are that this went to members' Inboxes.*

*The results of my budget review are tabulated on the next page. The plan for incorporation follows after that.*

CJB summarised that the point of the budget was not to prevent or control spending, but to allow accurate forecasting. Consequently, it should not be controversial. It is a means to prevent dipping into the reserves too greatly. Currently, the overspend represents 2% of turnover, which in business terms is not too great. CJB highlighted that currently there is a paradox in the size of the BCA's reserves in that it is established in relation to the BCA's turnover. This means that despite the BCA having a reduced income due to 120 less members in the last year, the target for the reserve has decreased as well, meaning that the overspend has reduced in as well.

CJB added that there had been one change to the budget which was that Caving Wales think they will be going to spend more than originally expected, but that he was waiting on this to be confirmed. CJB also hopes that with these figures there will be space in the budget for Council to give VK and the C&A Working Group the contingency they have requested. CJB emphasised that it was Council's decision to control and decide how much money is spent and where and that his role is to just present and explain the information needed to decide.

RN added that he had received a few comments that the only reason the BCA was dipping into its reserves was because of the CRoW Legal Case, and that he believes that this is a narrative that needs changing – the reason for the increase is due to structural factors and that the other policy decisions that were made. The BCA would still have found itself in the same situation. CJB replied by explaining that the BCA previously had a policy to run down its reserves and that the BCA had overshot due to the inertia effect of having the reserves tied to subscriptions. Additionally, the subscription rate had been reduced to less than was required to fund essential activities, meaning the BCA was effectively subsidizing the membership fees from the reserves.

Consequently, when the membership fees were increased to the equilibrium point, because of how the reserves are tied to turnover, the reserves were now dramatically too small.

RN added that maybe the BCA needs to do more to share this information in a more digestible way to prevent the narrative that 'costs shouldn't be rising' when a phenomenal effort has gone into keeping costs down and money has been very responsibly spent. Additionally, RN added he had held discussions with representatives regarding the BCA providing a deposit for the building of a club hut in the Forest of Dean. With the current situation the BCA is unable to do this, and he feels that structurally the BCA has failed financially by not being able to provide this.

CJB continued this is why the subs have been increased. CJB added that he had emailed the membership and Katie Eavis had shared the information on Facebook, the website, and the forums to explain why this move was being taken. CJB stated that from this he had become aware there were some club members which were unaware they were BCA members and noted that this was an issue that needed to be fixed going forward.

CJB summarised the Budget Review items, which can be found in the Appendices. He added again the the BCA needs to do more to promote to members what it was doing for members to help retain membership.

#### **6.1.3 Secretary (Aidan Kuhlmann)**

*Since the last Council Meeting, I have primarily been involved with the establishment of the Anchor Working Group, and the process of managing the change of remit for the Training and Equipment Working Groups. I chaired the first meeting of the former and was recorder for the latter Working Group. With both groups we had productive and insightful discussions, and I am looking forward to the work these groups will be doing on behalf of British Caving moving forward.*

*I have also been involved in managing the BCA's presence at the ever-closer Hidden Earth, in coordination with Zac. As mentioned in Rostam's report the Executive will be wearing t-shirts to identify ourselves to those who may not know us and/or our roles which I designed – so hopefully you like them!*

*Additionally, I have attended a meeting with representatives from QMC with Rostam regarding SUI and cross-recognition of the Irish awards scheme. This is an ongoing project and will be reported to Council by George Plant as convenor in due course, since it is in fairly embryonic stages currently.*

*Furthermore, I have attended executive meetings where we have discussed the move to become incorporated, alongside working to add Working Group Minutes to the website, reorganise and update some of the pages, as well as managing the usual variety of messages and queries I receive from individual cavers and regional councils.*



*I am personally looking forward to a wind down of my professional season so that I can once again pursue BCA projects on a timelier manner – something which has slipped recently and for which I apologise.*

*I have included in the appendices a copy of a new version of the Manual of Operations, which is more stripped back and less verbose. I have previously circulated this to Council and have not received any feedback, so I am now submitting it to Council for approval.*

**Proposal: To update the Manual of Operations to the version contained within the appendices.**

*Finally, in doing this work it has been revealed to me there are other policies and procedures whose documents have been lost or are in need a review. These are:*

- *Disciplinary Procedure (how this is displayed on the website)*
- *Media Policy*
- *Privacy Policy*
- *Complaints Procedure*

*The Privacy Policy will be my next key priority.*

AK added he had been editing and updating parts of the website. He explained the updates he had made to the Manual of Operations and how it was now going to be found as a page on the website, rather than on its own website and the benefits of this. Broadly these changes represent an update to how the BCA is currently doing things, rather than a significant change in how the BCA operates. RN added it has been well circulated before the meeting. AK added that it is and will remain the Secretary's job to make minor updates to the document as needed, but that significant changes will still need to go to Council to be approved.

RN explained that when the Doku version was created it was written by someone who knew how everything operated, but since only specific parts had been maintained, leading to the conflicting information in parts. Additionally, that a single document was much easier to understand and maintain. AK elaborated on the areas that had been removed from the document were items which should have their own documents and be managed by specific subgroups elsewhere or should be their own distinct policies e.g. the disciplinary procedure.

**Motion: To update the Manual of Operations to the version contained within the appendices.**

**Proposer:** Aidan Kuhlmann **Seconder:** Jenny Potts

**For:** AK, JP, CJB, AR, AE, SN, TR, MH, LJW, JG, PJ, TP

**Against:** None

**Abstentions:** None

**Motion passed unanimously.**

## **6.2 Regional Council & Representative Body Reports (Optional)**

### **6.2.1 DCA (Mike Higgins)**

*Not a lot has been happening since our last report to BCA Council. However, on a positive note it looks like we shall shortly have a new Equipment Officer in post, releasing Pete Knight to move back into his Project Officer role. Hopefully this will enable some of the currently outstanding projects to be completed.*

*New anchors have been installed in the top entrance to Steaks Pot in Stoney Middleton Dale and a new bolt fitted to the entrance at Hoo Valley mine. The quarry entrance to the Masson Hill workings is being measured up for a gate following the recent change of ownership.*

*The next DCA Council meeting will be held at the British Caving Library on 1st November 2025.*

*RN asked who Pete Knight's replacement as Equipment Officer is. MH answered that it was Josie Skirrow, a SUSS member. Pete Knight met with her the day before and all was fine. Consequently, moving forward she will be formally accepted. RN commented that it also shows that if volunteers are needed, that putting adverts in Descent does work eventually.*

### **6.2.2 CSCC (Linda Wilson)**

*Presented by Linda Wilson, Joshitha Shivkumar, BCA representative(s)*

*Access & Conservation matters:*

#### **Longleat**

*A final draft of the Access Agreement for Reservoir Hole, Spider Hole and Gough's Cave has been submitted to Longleat and their Estates Director confirmed it was acceptable. A recent CSCC EGM was held to ratify the agreement and elect two officers to sign it. Unfortunately, Longleat's lawyers then raised some additional queries that our C&A Officer, Wayne Starsmore, has had to respond to. He hopes the agreement will be ready to sign soon and after that he will be able to get the agreed conservation warden system up and running.*

*In the meantime, Wayne has undertaken an inspection trip that was arranged to Lloyd Hall in Gough's Cave. The purpose of the trip was to inspect the various fixed aids and platforms installed some years ago by the Cave Diving Group. The Technical Officer of the CDG, Mike Thomas, accompanied him. All the bolts and fixed ladders were found to be in good order. The wooden decking on the Hauling Platform seems solid but probably needs replacing and the decking on the Diver's Platform definitely needs replacing (once the several tons of silt have been removed from it). The CDG will undertake this work once access is restored.*

#### **Eastwater**

*A report was received of a broken ladder. This is the ladder mentioned in*

Mendip Underground that leads down to the balcony overlooking the Chamber of Horrors. A CSCC bulletin was sent out to warn people. Having reviewed the situation, with a number of different cavers who have recently visited this area, it has been decided that the ladder is rarely used and so there is no intention to replace it.

Also in Eastwater, Andrew Atkinson attempted to change the anchors on Gladman's and Lolly Pot. In his words: "This did not go well." The original anchors snapped with a very low force. He reports that currently it is unlikely that the pitches can be rigged safely. He hopes that this will be resolved soon, but in the meantime avoid this route.

### **Stoke Lane Slocker**

A report was received that a large boulder had been deliberately dropped into the entrance of Stoke Lane Slocker. This was severely restricting access. The boulder was quite large (triangular 1m by 0.5m at the base and around 0.5m thick). Judging by the scuff marks around the entrance, it had been forced in rather than being washed in. The boulder succumbed to plug and feathers and the resultant pieces were used to form a rough wall to the right of the stream sink. Wayne also took the opportunity to remove a lot of debris from the stream sink and this was stashed behind the new wall.

### **Thrupe Lane Swallet**

An assessment visit to Butt's Chamber was completed. The purpose was to look at the options to stabilise the large boulder that was on the move and threatening to block access from Perseverance Pot. It was decided the best approach would be to build a wall up, underneath the boulder, to support it. Three working trips were undertaken. A large quantity of sand and cement (some 300kg of materials) were transported through Hobnail Hole and used to complete the wall. The CSCC contributed £50 towards the materials.

### **Waterwheel Swallet**

The traverse rope beside the lake at the bottom of the cave was found to be in a very poor state. This has been removed and replaced.

### **Hilliers Cave**

The padlock on Hilliers Cave, in Fairy Cave Quarry, has been vandalised and a replacement padlock has been installed.

### **Stock Hill Mine Cave**

The exploration of Stock Hill Mine Cave has been completed. Over the last seven years, some 1.5km of passageway has been discovered by the diggers. The cave offers a rather sporting trip with some unusual geology on display. A survey is available, and a full description has been written for the forthcoming version of Mendip Underground. The diggers would like the CSCC to take over access control and they are happy having a CSCC padlock installed. A replacement gate is likely to be needed and CSCC will seek funds for this from BCA.

### **Harridge Woods**

The Harridge Wood Nature Reserve access agreement is ready to go but is

waiting for the CSCC to complete the work required to provide an online permit system.

### **Hunter's Hole**

Andrew Atkinson received a report of loose anchor(s) on Sago's Pot. These were checked and the movement was found to be within the acceptable limits, but only just, so they have gone on the non-urgent replacement list.

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/>.

### **Comms**

Our comms officer, Peter Burgess, produces a newsletter after each CSCC meeting. If you would like to be added to the circulation list, please let me know.

### **BCA Matters**

Following the subs increase, one CSCC club raised concerns over the increase to the non-caving membership subscription and feel that such members don't receive any tangible benefits from such membership, other than the need for all club members to be covered so the club can be covered. They feel that this is likely to result in them losing members, and in addition, a certain amount of confusion has been caused by BCA communicating the increase direct to all members, including those where their club deals with the admin. In one case, a club absorbs the non caving membership themselves rather than passing this back to the non caving members, but the direct communication led to at least one member cancelling their club subscription in the mistaken belief that they were being asked for money direct, and so they resigned, saying they felt they received no benefits from BCA. I have done my best to act as a sympathetic intermediary between the clubs concerned and BCA and have liaised with Chris Bolton to pass on the comments whilst also doing my best to explain the benefits that BCA brings to the caving community, not always an easy task against a backdrop of rising costs in general. However, as I explained to the most recent CSCC general meeting, I voted in favour of the subscription increases, as I accepted the reasoning that these are needed to enable BCA to continue with the provision of its services and support to cavers, particularly conservation and access which is fundamental to our activities.

LJW elaborated on the concerns felt by clubs and was entirely sympathetic to the BCA's position but raised the point that some members felt that they were only contacted by the BCA when it came to asking for more money, and that the BCA needs to work on improving its communications about what it does for its members. LJW suggested that a more regular BCA newsletter would help to solve this.

TR gave an update regarding Longleat access that he had hoped to be meeting with them this week to sign the agreement, but that this had been put off by Longleat for a later date.

RN came in on the communication's point. He agreed that this was something the BCA needs to work on, but that any efforts need to be sustainable, and that the BCA needs to work on having the people in place to do the work. Hopefully, a lot will be learnt from Hidden Earth, but that also more needs to be done with Descent. He agreed that there was space for the BCA to publish items directly, but that he needed to give ZW more support in this regard.

LJW added that Descent wasn't universally read. RN said that with ZW's upcoming survey it would be a good opportunity to see more how cavers are getting their news.

### **6.2.3 Caving Wales (Allan Richardson)**

AR reported to Council Cave Access Ltd has now completely closed.

RN told AR that he had received no communication from Caving Wales regarding mediation between them and the Forest of Dean and that if BCA is to get involved it needs a formal written request to do so. AR responded saying that Caving Wales has no opposition to the Forest of Dean leaving and therefore mediation wasn't needed. RN requested then that he gets included in the outcome of any meeting then. AR stated that it may take a year to progress with different constitutional developments.

LJW enquired how procedurally a new region is accepted by the BCA. RN stated that simply it needs to be brought to National Council.

SN asked how the use of caves under the LCMLA scheme in the Forest of Dean might be affected by the split. RN replied that they could potentially be affected but encouraged SN to contact Paul Taylor regarding adding more caves under the scheme because those who would be controlling access would certainly be happy to talk about the caves, even if access could not be granted.

## **6.3 Working Group Convenor Reports**

### **6.3.1 Anchor (Vacant)**

See Training & Equipment for combined report by Aidan Kuhlmann.

### **6.3.2 Conservation & Access (Victoria Kocher)**

*We have had one meeting of the C and A Working Group on 25.6.25. I have been working on reestablishing contact with regional representatives via email. Linda Wilson supported with minute taking which was extremely helpful. We have received several requests for funding for regional projects. These have been well thought out through their submissions. We have scheduled the next online meeting for the evening of the 17th of September at 7:00.*

*Chris Bolton has been working to support the working group by laying out the budget for C and A. This will hopefully move the projects to the forefront for consideration. I have been active in attending the BCA meetings to familiarize myself with the members in the different roles.*

JP raised the point that UK Conservation & Access has a second funding source in the BCA & BCRA independent UK Cave Conservation Emergency Fund.

RN added that there are other sources of conservation money that Regional Council can access through organisations like National Parks and other support groups and that the BCA needs to do more to point help Regional Councils to access this external funding.

**6.3.3 Finance** (BCA Treasurer)

See Treasurer's Report.

**6.3.4 National Access** (Vacant)

**6.3.5 Publications & Information** (Zac Woodford)

*In the last term in my capacity as P&I Officer, I have undertaken a transparency exercise to make the membership more aware of who the Officers and Staff are. This is still ongoing. The membership survey is also all but ready for dissemination.*

**6.3.6 Qualification Management Committee** (George Plant)

*We at the QMC have all been busy working away (except for the lucky ones who have six weeks of holiday!) but just admin issues that wouldn't make for interesting reading!*

GP added that there will be a large meeting between QMC and SUI the following evening and that he will feedback on this meeting afterwards.

AK requested QMC look through the draft QMC Terms of reference so that this could be approved at the next Council Meeting. GP responded that members of QMC were working on it and would get it done in time.

**6.3.7 Radon** (Dormant)

**6.3.8 Anchor and Training & Equipment** (Vacant)

AK reported that the first meetings of both Working Groups have been held and that they appear to be more productive in their new format than previously due to being two smaller, more focused groups. However, AK informed Council that unfortunately some regions were notably absent in attending these groups and that it would be good to some more involvement from them. The Anchor meeting was co-chaired by himself and CJB while the T&E meeting was co-chaired by himself and Rostam.

The Anchor group will be looking at updating the BCA Anchor Policy and collecting a history of the scheme, alongside collating all the test data generated by the regions and standardising approaches to testing.

Furthermore, the historic test data will be condensed and moved to being held centrally by the BCA. Also, work is going to be undertaken to research if/how the BCA Anchor scheme can be expanded to other rock types i.e. those commonly found in mines. Finally, Pete Knight has stepped forward to chair the Working Group.

The T&E group is making progress to find its new direction. Unfortunately, the meeting was not as well attended as would have been liked, but some good ideas were raised and some issues considered. It is hoped that the next meeting will be better attended now that members know meetings will be shorter and more specific to the topics. AK concluded, saying that they were looking for a convenor and that if anyone knows anyone who would be suitable, then to please mention them to himself or Rostam.

RN added that it had been raised advertising in Descent for the role, but the group felt that they would prefer the kind of person who would be 'voluntold' to the role, rather than volunteer, to help find someone who was a 'convenor' and not a 'training officer'.

#### **6.3.9 Youth & Development (Isaac Neale)**

*No report received.*

RN started by apologising to Isaac in that he had included in his report most of what Isaac would otherwise have to say.

Building on RN's report on the topic, IN informed Council that there was a new Student Caving Club – Staffordshire University. IN reported he had talked to the main person involved and that he seemed to be sensible with a realistic understanding of the hurdles and involved and is aware of many of the important details e.g. peer to peer training. Furthermore, they appear to be regularly visiting the TSG and are being supported by the members there.

VK stated that she ran into Callum, the Staffordshire founder, the other night while caving and promoted the BCA, DCA, and Conservation to him.

### **6.4 Additional Reports by Appointed Officers**

#### **6.4.1 British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)**

*The BCL will be having a stand at Hidden Earth where hundreds of duplicates of publications already held by the BCL will be available in return for donations. The BCL intends to try to circulate a list of what is available prior to H.E. so that clubs and cavers may ask in advance if they want particular items so that these may be boxed up ready for them.*

JP added that she was bringing to Hidden Earth for the BCA stand. AK, JP, & RN discussed logistics about organising the BCA Hidden Earth stand.

#### **6.4.2 FSE Representative (Tom Phillips)**

No report received.

#### **6.4.3 Insurance Manager (Vacant)**

#### **6.4.4 Newsletter Editor (Vacant)**

#### **6.4.5 Safeguarding Officer (Chris Boardman)**

No report received.

#### **6.4.6 UIS Representative (John Gunn)**

The UIS is governed by the General Assembly (GA), comprising one delegate from each member country. There were two GA during the UIS Congress which was held in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, from 20 -27 July, one on the first day and one on the last. Andy Eavis acted as UK delegate during the first GA and presented the GB bid for the 2029 UIS Congress [For anyone unclear on UK / GB, the UIS works on political boundaries (=UK) but there is a long-standing agreement that BCA covers caving in Great Britain and SUI covers caving across the island of Ireland]. During the Congress there was a GB bid stand with information and a continuous showing of the promotional video.

Over 450 lectures were delivered, including six by three British cavers: a Keynote Lecture by Andy Eavis ("The Largest Caves in the World"); three lectures by Trevor Faulkner (Quaternary Deglacial Speleogenesis On The Gower Peninsula, South Wales, UK; Speleogenesis of the calcareous littoral caves on the Island of Lismore, Scotland; and More exotic tufa deposits on the island of Lismore, Argyll, Scotland) and two by John Gunn (Contrasts between British Carbonate Karst Areas and Project MIKAS (Most Important Karst Aquifers Springs): progress and request for information). In addition to the lecturers three British cavers picked up prizes and congratulations are due to Andy Farrant who received the Giovanni Badino Award for the paper Pervasive speleogenetic modification of cave passages by nitrification of biogenic ammonia, to Chris Howes who received several awards including the Sami Karkabi Photo Award, and to Mark Tringham who was second in the Cave Survey competition.

At the 2nd GA John Gunn was the UK delegate and he was also elected as an Adjunct Secretary of the UIS receiving votes from 33 of the 35 voting countries. The newly elected UIS Bureau comprises:

UIS President: Zdeněk Motyčka (Czech Republic)

UIS Vice President of Administration: Mario Parise (Italy)

UIS Vice President of Operations: Mladen Garašić (Croatia)

UIS Secretary General: Johannes Mattes (Austria)

UIS Treasurer: Nadja Zupan Hajna (Slovenia)

UIS Adjunct Secretaries

Ángel Acosta-Colòn (Puerto Rico)

Josè Maria Calaforra (Spain)

Allan Silas Calux (Brazil)

John Gunn (United Kingdom)

Val Hildreth-Werker (USA)

Marc Mentens (Philippines)

Nathalia Uasapud (Colombia)



Unfortunately, the GB bid for the 2029 Congress was unsuccessful and the Congress will be held at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Looking forwards, the main UIS initiative with implications for BCA is the proposed UNESCO International Day of Caves and Karst (IDCK) to be celebrated on 13th September. This is due to be voted on by UNESCO in October but at the GA it was agreed that even if the day is not approved by UNESCO, it will be celebrated as an UIS IDCK and each member country would be requested to organise IDCK events.

RN commented that the BCA needs to get more involved and learn how to use the UIS's resources better.

JG explained to Council that the UIS unfortunately does not have much money for funding beyond the prizes it awards and that it is more of an international lobbying Body, hence the International Day of Caves & Karst initiative. It does have various commissions e.g. the Commission for Cave and Karst Protection which have various conservation related initiatives including the Clean-up the Dark in conjunction with the FSE and the Franz Habe Prize.

RN built on this saying that the BCA and BCRA need to get more involved in organisations like the FSE and UIS to help elevate the success of caving in the UK, which would help the UK's efforts to support like-minded caving in other countries e.g. the recent efforts in Greece.

## **6.5 Reports by BCA Staff**

### **6.5.1 Membership Administrator, Artificial Cave, & Insurance** (Katie Eavis)

#### **New clubs:**

*No new clubs have applied since the last meeting.*

#### **Individual BCA members**

*6527 people have joined BCA for 2025 – this includes members joining directly and also those joining via clubs.*

#### **Clubs**

*I am hoping to send the September club newssheet out in the next week. It will be the third one in 2025.*

#### **Insurance:**

*A couple of BCA groups have requested TWIMC letters from the insurers that mention a site by name. This have been quickly and easily arranged with Howdens.*

#### **Artificial Cave:**

*I have paid annual invoice for the trailer storage (£350)*

*The cave has taken £540 in booking fees for 2025*

#### **Social Media:**

*I am still trying to regularly post on Facebook and UKCaving on behalf of the BCA.*

*I'd welcome contributions from anyone in BCA. Please feel free to email me with anything that might interest BCA members and UK cavers generally.*

## **6.6 Acceptance of Officer's Reports**

**Motion: To accept the reports received by BCA Council by the BCA Officers and other representatives**

**Proposer:** Chris Bolton, **Seconders:** Rostam Namaghi

**For:** AK, JP, CJB, AR, AE, SN, TR, MH, LJW, JG, PJ, TP

**Against:** None

**Abstentions:** None

**Motion passed unanimously.**

## **7.0 Matters arising from the previous Council Meeting**

### **7.1 Motion: To Appoint Pete Knight as the Convenor for the Anchor Working Group**

*Following the creation of the Anchor Working Group last Council meeting, an inaugural meeting was held and Pete Knight stepped forward as a candidate to be the group's convenor and was accepted as such by the group, leaving it to Council to formally adopt Pete Knight into the role.*

- Aidan Kuhlmann

AK added that Pete Knight is very experienced in this area, having been a DCA Anchor Installer and Equipment Officer. He is also professionally involved with anchor installation and certification and therefore is very well suited to the role.

**Proposer:** Aidan Kuhlmann **Seconders:** Mike Higgins

**For:** AK, JP, CJB, AR, AE, SN, TR, MH, LJW, JG, PJ, TP

**Against:** None

**Abstentions:** None

**Motion passed unanimously.**

## **8.0 Items for Discussion**

### **8.1 Draft Plan for the Incorporation of the BCA**

*The Business Risk Assessment accepted by Council in July recommended that BCA move to incorporated status. The Executive proposes the following outline plan to convert BCA into a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLbG):*

*1. Many of the necessary tasks, such as establishing a new bank account, require that the Company exists. The intention is therefore to form a CLbG, British Caving*

Limited, with the Executive members as Directors, as soon as practical. The subscribers (members) would also be the Executive members with perhaps one other subscriber to avoid the administrative issues that might arise with an individual have more than 25% of the votes. This company will run in parallel with BCA, not trading, with nominal assets but the power to set up accounts, etc. This will require no commitment by BCA until a General Meeting of BCA agrees to transfer the assets, obligations and membership of BCA to BCLtd.

2. The Articles of Association (equivalent to the Constitution) can be changed at any time with the agreement of 75% of the members (i.e., until transfer, the three Exec members) so BCLtd will be established with a basic set of Articles which will be updated prior to presentation to the AGM.

3. The details of the Articles and the transfer process will be developed by the Executive supported by an Incorporation Working Group consisting of the Executive and others as they co-opt. Actions by BCLtd, such as setting up a bank account, will not formally require BCA involvement, but Council will be kept informed. The fees for registering the Company, using an agent, are not expected to be more than a few hundred pounds and will be met by BCA.

4. Legally, a CLbG must be controlled by the Directors, who must be elected by the members, giving the members ultimate control. It would not be practical for all voting members of Council to become Directors, as most are elected by the body they represent, not by BCA members. Detailed proposals will be developed by the Incorporation WG, but it is envisaged that only the current Executive will be Directors, while Council will remain broadly as it is now and will make recommendations to the Directors, which they will normally follow. The Directors are, however, legally required to use independent judgement, so must have the option to choose not to follow the recommendations of Council. In that case the Directors may call a General Meeting, or the members may require them to, or wait until the AGM. A General Meeting may mandate any action, including reversing any decision and/or requiring the resignation of one or more Directors.

5. Only individuals can be members of a CLbG. Constituent Bodies and Group Members cannot therefore be members of the Company but could still be represented on Council and make recommendations to the Directors. There is, however, an opportunity to review the membership structure.

6. The target for agreement to the transfer is the 2026 AGM. If this is not feasible a separate GM may be required.

7. Council members who are interested in being involved in the Working Group, or who have concerns or comments about the outline process described here, should contact the Treasurer.

- Chris Bolton

CJB recapped that at the last meeting Council agreed to move forward with work to become an incorporated body. CJB proposed that the BCA Executive form a

company alongside BCA that would run in parallel while important details such as the Constitution and bank accounts were set up to allow a smooth transition to the new company later. This would mean that every detail would not need to come to Council, but that the Executive would keep Council updated. CJB further summarised his report above.

RN added the executive were looking to get some professional advice regarding this as well.

AE asked what CJB saw as the main advantage of incorporating. CJB responded that nominally it was the removal of personal liability for the BCA by its officers and its members. On this note every other governing body is a company limited by guarantee. More practically, CJB continued, the BCA runs into issues whenever it interacts with financial organisations because it does not have a company registration number. The lack of a legal identity is the main issue.

AK added that it would also enable the BCA to own property which from a long-term perspective could be structurally very beneficial to British caving, as well as financially providing a secure large financial asset which could be beneficial as well.

LJW stated she endorses all the points raised by AK, RN, and CJB regarding this and fully supports the direction. LJW queried if there will be a formal point at which the assets are transferred from one organisation to the other. CJB answered this in the affirmative but that the exact details of how and when are yet to be fully worked out.

CJB suggested to Council the new company would be called British Caving Ltd and operate under the name British Caving. AK added that after the transfer to the new company it could operate under the trading name British Caving Association. RN emphasised that he is keen to make sure that the BCA's name persists because of the great reputation that is attached to it. CJB reiterated that the name BCA could continue as a trading name and the technical legal name of the company could be different. CJB suggested that the exact name of the new company could be left to the Working Group to decide, which was accepted.

PJ commented his support for the move, detailing his experience with Nenthead Mines Conservation Society and its predecessor North Pennines Mines Heritage Trust which was a CLbG. He added that through this and his work with another charity he has encountered all the raised problems regarding banking and money laundering and emphasised that without being incorporated these can be serious problems.

TR asked what the timeline in mind for the move is. CJB answered it was for the 2026 AGM, but that this could be moved to a later AGM or a Special general meeting. RN stated he would prefer it to be an AGM to ensure the change is widely supported enough.

## **9.0 Any Other Business**

### **9.1 BCA AGM**

Following on from the Incorporation discussion, JP raised the matter of organising the BCA AGM. JP suggested that the BCA ask a region to host the AGM on its behalf, as used to happened. RN stated it was on his to-do list for Hidden Earth to persuade a region to do this. LJW asked if it were feasible to organise the AGM in line with Hidden Earth. It was answered that the Constitution means that the AGM must be held in June.

Concluding the discussion, AK suggested that the regions should express their interest in hosting the next BCA to himself or RN and that any offers received can then be brought to the next Council meeting.

JP mentioned that there had been a very successful AGM held in the Forest of Dean at Clearwell Caves. AK added that Ies Williams had offered to help in the organisation of future BCA AGMs as well.

## **10.0 Details of the Next Meeting**

Tuesday the 25<sup>th</sup> of November at 7pm via Zoom

# BCA Demographics Report

## 2020-2023

Publications and Information

Authored by: Eve Chaddock

### Introduction & Aims

The purpose of this report is to accurately reflect the age and sex composition of the BCA membership of the BCA. This is a follow up report to Tim Allen and Kay Easton's reports from 2017, 2018 and 2019 and the one Rostam Namaghi wrote in 2020. This report is being published in 2025 due to the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is still the aim of the P&I group to publish a demographic report every year.

The main finding from this report is that the gender gap in caving appears to be shrinking, especially amongst members under the age of 60. The average age of female active cavers reflects the average age of the UK population. It also confirms that participation among young women is increasing relative to men. However, it is worth noting that these figures have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that there may be some groups that experienced artificial growth in the post-pandemic years.

### Method

The data was collected on 16/02/2025 from the membership database, anonymised and then sent to the author. The data was transferred to an Excel spreadsheet and simple statistical tests carried out as per previous iterations of the report. The age data had to be converted from year-of-birth to age, so all ages are as at end-of-year, rather than when membership was renewed. Due to the old data collection method of club secretaries filling in non-standardised information, there were some age records that did not effectively transfer over and were lost. The data has been subcategorised by Active (caving members, students, and under-18s) and All (also including non-caving members). CIMs and DIMs were not separated in this report, as the data provided did not have these listed separately.

## 2021

Table 1: These statistics were generated from the combined Age-Sex dataset, showing a good set of complete records. It is interesting that there is a much larger age difference between female active cavers/all-female members compared to males. (N.B: rounded to 3 sf)

	Active Cavers <sup>1</sup>	All Members
Total Records	4996	5985
Complete Age-Sex Records	2533 (50.7%)	2918 (48.8%)
Female Mean Age (Years)	40.3	43.5
Male Mean Age (Years)	49.1	50.1

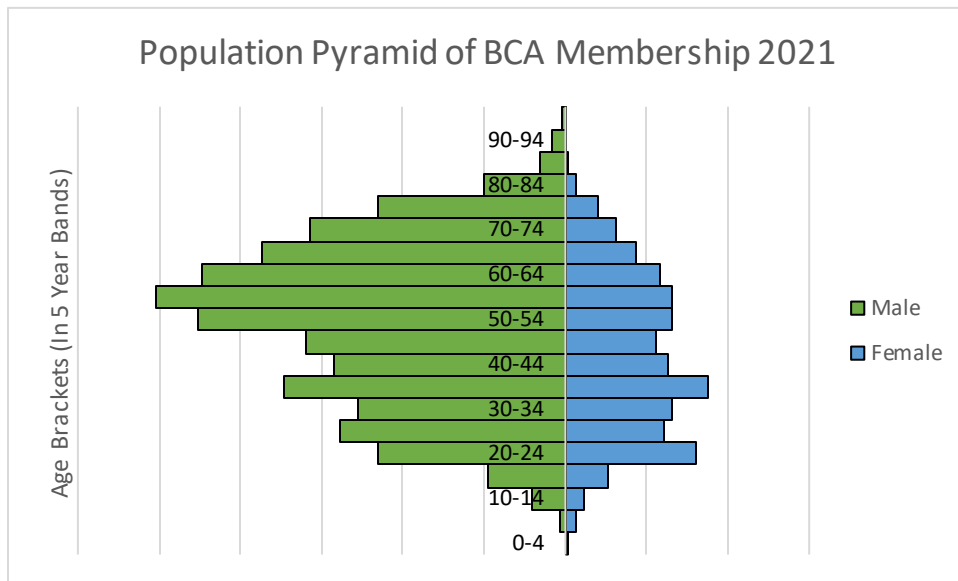
Table 2: taking both age, and sex as two separate datasets the average age of a caver rises, and the gender imbalance becomes more apparent.

(N.B: rounded to 3 sf)

	Active Cavers	All Members
Complete Records Age Only	2618 (52.4%)	3020 (50.5%)
Average Caver Age (Years)	47.1	49.3
Complete Records Sex Only	3905	4661
Average Male: Female Ratio	3.4:1	3:1

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<sup>1</sup> Caving members, full time students, and under-18s



\*The 100+ Demographic is omitted as it would heavily skew the graph.



## 2022

Table 1: These statistics were generated from the combined Age- Sex dataset, showing a low set of complete records. Female and male ages though contain a similar average.

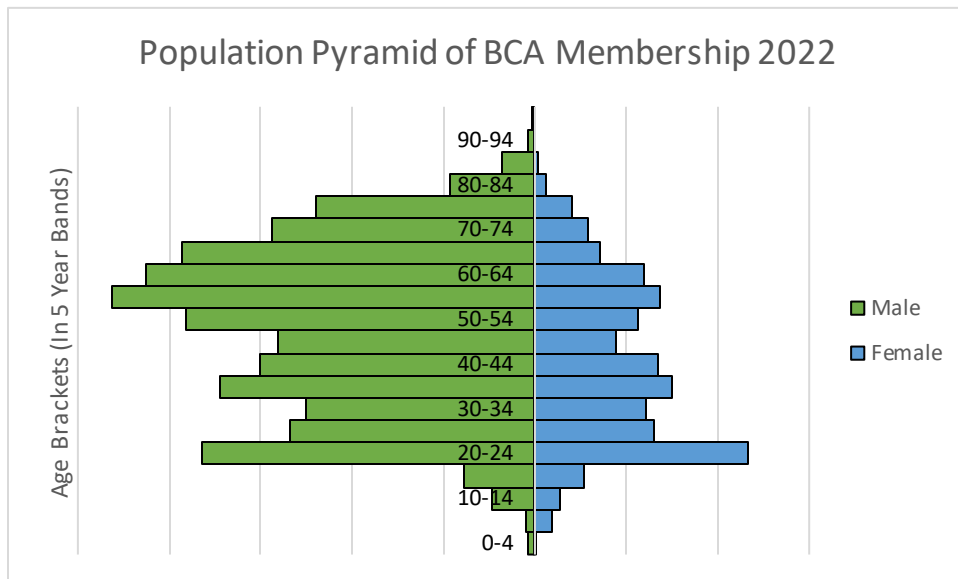
(N.B: rounded to 3 sf)

	Active Cavers	All Members
Total Records	5693	6668
Complete Age-Sex Records	2548 (44.8%)	2896 (43.4%)
Female Mean Age (Years)	39.1	40.1
Male Mean Age (Years)	48.2	49.9

Table 2: taking both age, and sex as two separate datasets the average age of a caver rises, and the gender imbalance becomes more apparent.

(N.B: rounded to 3 sf)

	Active Cavers	All Members
Complete Age Records Only	2645	3016
Average Caver Age (Years)	46.1	48.7
Complete Records Sex Only	3643	4293
Average Male: Female Ratio	3.2:1	3:1



\*The 100+ Demographic is omitted as it would heavily skew the graph.

## 2023

Table 1: These statistics were generated from the combined Age- Sex dataset, showing a low set of complete records. Female and male ages though contain a similar average.

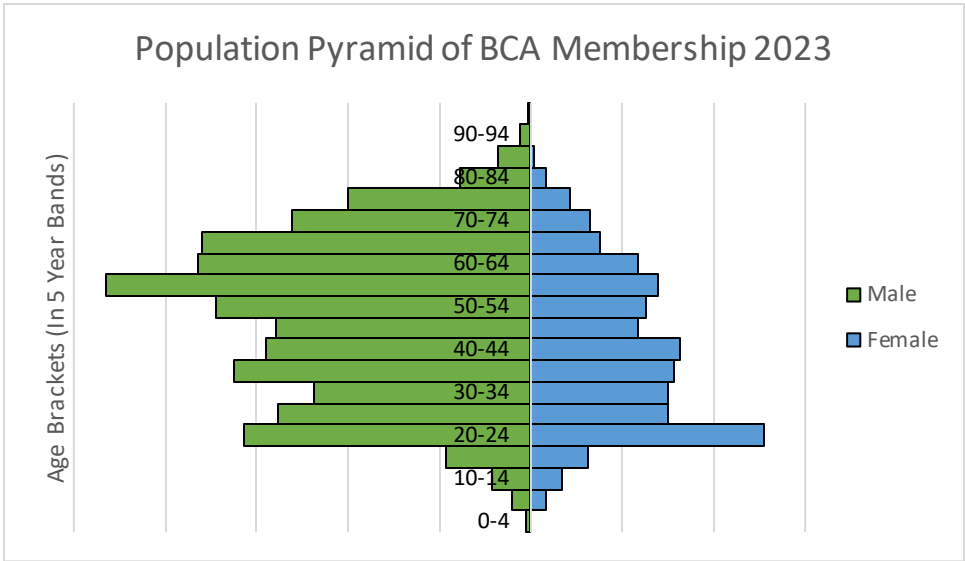
(N.B: rounded to 3 sf)

	Active Cavers	All Members
Total Records	5894	6848
Complete Age-Sex Records	2866 (48.6%)	3210 (46.9%)
Female Mean Age (Years)	39.1	41.8
Male Mean Age (Years)	47.2	48.8

Table 2: taking both age, and sex as two separate datasets the average age of a caver rises, and the gender imbalance becomes more apparent.

(N.B: rounded to 3 sf)

	Active Cavers	All Members
Complete Age Records Only	3024	3393
Average Caver Age (Years)	45.0	46.9
Complete Records Sex Only	4657	4020
Average Male: Female Ratio	3.1:1	2.9:1



## Discussion

There were 5985 BCA members in 2021, 6668 members in 2022, and 6847 members in 2023, showing a steady increase. Between 2021 and 2022 there was an increase of 11.4%, and a 2.7% between 2022 and 2023. This is quite a large difference and it's possible that the large increase between '21 and '22 could be a post-covid surge. Whilst it's pleasing to see an increase in members, numbers have still not returned to pre-covid figures, with 7075 members in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

We may see student caving member numbers decreasing, as there are fears amongst the higher education sector that student numbers will fall over the coming years<sup>3</sup>, and university clubs have been one of the 'traditional engines of growth'<sup>4</sup>. However, there has not been any decline in student membership yet, with numbers rising 88% between 2021 and 2023, from 375 to 705. This is the largest increase in all the insurance categories (caving, non-caving, student, and U-18s). It is difficult to understand exactly how many students are involved in caving, as most university clubs take advantage of the '4 trip rule', where members are covered by their club's policy until they've done a certain number of trips, and then have to be a named, insured individual member.<sup>5</sup> In my opinion, this extremely large surge in student numbers is due to a post-COVID rebound; 375 is an particularly low number of student cavers, and during 2021 many universities were still implementing rules around social mixing for student clubs. This may have meant that many clubs didn't need to declare individual members due to this '4 trip' policy, as many students won't have gone on more than 4 trips in the 2020-2021 or 2021-2022 academic years. It's highly likely that 375 was an abnormally low year, so rather than the 88% increase being due to caving fever in universities, it was a return to 'normal' after COVID.

We can see that the gap in representation between female and male participants is slowly closing, dropping from 3.4:1 to 3.1:1 over the three years surveyed here. In the 2023 data, the male: female ratio goes from 1.2:1 in the 20-24 category to 1.8:1 in the 40-44 category to 4.1:1 in the 70-74 category. This is probably residual, as women haven't always been welcomed in all caving spaces, and hopefully we will see these gaps closing over the coming decades.

Female member numbers increased by 3.9% (1151 in 2021 up to 1196 in 2023), whereas male member numbers decreased by 1.5% (3511 in 2021 down to 3457 in 2023) amongst those who submitted gender data. Females between the age of 20-24 (where most students sit) increased by 60%, which is unsurprising given the increase in student membership. However, females aged 35-39 saw a decrease of

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<sup>2</sup> R. Namaghi, 'BCA Demographics Report 2020', accessed 20.08.2025, <https://british-caving.org.uk/about-bca/working-groups/publications-information/>

<sup>3</sup> "The coming decline in the number of 18-year-olds makes the future 'bleak' for some universities", HEPI, accessed 12.08.2025, <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2024/10/24/the-coming-decline-in-the-number-of-18-year-olds-makes-the-future-bleak-for-some-universities/>

<sup>4</sup> Namaghi, 'BCA Demographics Report 2020'.

<sup>5</sup> "Insurance & Membership FAQs", British Caving Association, accessed 20.08.2025, <https://british-caving.org.uk/our-work/insurance/insurance-faqs/>

11.4%. It is worth considering how we can retain these members to create a more equal membership profile. Encouraging more family-friendly opportunities to cave may help us to retain people who'd like to continue caving through this period of their life but can't currently make it work.

Another notable change is the age of active cavers, dropping over two years over the space of two years, a rapid change. Potential causes include greater numbers of under-18s<sup>6</sup>, greater recruitment of students, better retention of graduates, or maintaining members in their 30s (a usual drop-off point)<sup>7</sup>. The 2020 report asks whether we will experience a large increase in members in the 70+ category. Whilst that report does not directly state how many members we had over the age of 70, in the three years studied here, the percentage of membership aged 65+ dropped from 11% in 2021 to 9.6% in 2023. The UK population aged 65+ was 19% in 2022.<sup>8</sup>

All the above (closing gender gap, female member numbers increasing, age of cavers dropping), could be explained by return to normal student numbers in 2023, so it would be prudent for future researchers to take these statistics with a pinch of salt. However, the fact that the 2023 40-44 gender gap is only 1.8:1, whereas the 2021 one is 2.3:1, suggests that we are making moves towards greater gender equality.

## Going forward

It is hoped that with the standardisation of data collection (i.e. drop-down options) that JustGo allows, future reports will not have as many issues with data non-conformity as this one had. This should mean that there are more profiles with at least one of our demographic profiles filled in. The other advantage that JustGo may provide to these reports is that members can login to their profile and self-report on various sections, such as disability, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality. This will provide a greater insight into who our members are, and perhaps who we need to work harder to invite into our sport. Of course, because one must be internet-literate to access JustGo, this may skew our statistics towards young people.

I'd like to encourage any readers of this report to complete the demographic data on JustGo and ask others in the community to do the same.

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<sup>6</sup> There were 109 under-18 members in 2021, compared to 133 in 2023, an increase of 22%.

<sup>7</sup> There were 430 active members aged 30-39 in 2021, compared to 498 in 2023.

<sup>8</sup> C. Barton, G. Sturge, R. Harker, 'The UK's changing population', accessed 29.08.2025, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/the-uks-changing-population/>

## Budget Review 2025

	A (100%)	B (50%)	C (10%)	Nominal claim	Owned Budget (Note 2)	F'cast	Diff	Treasurer's comment at review
DCA	4520	1550	2250	5520	3820	2865	-955	Lower than planned – resource limits and complexity
DCUC	2000	500	500	2300	2300	2300	0	No update received – assume no change
CSCC	1650	2700	1800	3180	1080	1500	420	Slight increase
CNCC	5800	0	0	5800	5800	5800	0	No change
CW / OC	1900	400	2000	2300	1200	1200	0	No update received – assume no change
	A (100%)	B (50%)	C (10%)	Weighted total	Budget			
Conservation & access WG	2900	3000	5000	4900	4900	5900	1000	Expect to use some contingency for emerging projects
Equipment & Training WG	1000	4000	1000	3100	3100	500	-2600	Reorganising – unlikely to use full budget
Youth & Development WG	3000	1000	1000	3600	3600	500	-3100	No update received – unlikely to use full budget
Publications & Information	0	0	500	50	50	50	0	No change
Safeguarding	48	24		60	60	48	-12	No change
JustGo for membership	4557	45			4580	4573	-7	
IT Licences, servers, etc	2500	400			2700	2915	215	Legacy server remains in use for BCRA
IT equipment (laptop)					0	500	500	Planned purchase following IT security review
IT Support (Simon)	1000		500		1050	717	-333	Lower than expected so far
Public Liability < £2M + combined					45131	45427	296	Small increase to cover Hidden Earth equipment
Public Liability £2M - £5M					12451	12451	0	
Public Liability £5M - £10M					15120	15085	-35	
Public Liability £10M - £20M					5601	5600	-1	
Descent Magazine					2520	2520	0	
Ghar Parau Foundation					3000	3000	0	
British Caving Library					12000	12000	0	
Artificial Cave			300	-450	150	-100	-250	Hire fee increased to break even but making surplus
Staff					13428	14300	872	Slightly higher salary increase than budgeted
Payroll service					300	492	192	Switch from NW's company to commercial bureau
Admin expenses					200	200	0	
Bank charges					72	47	-25	
AGM venue and expenses					200	152	-48	
QMS (Instructor Training & Certification)					-230	1890	2120	Forecast a small surplus but workshops not well attended
Sport and Recreation Alliance					305	250	-55	
UIS Congress 2029					250	0	-250	Cost covered by others
FSE					668	682	15	
<b>Total Budget</b>					<b>145406</b>	<b>143365</b>	<b>-2042</b>	
<b>Income</b>								
Membership					134831	130690	-4141	Slight drop in members (~120). Stripe fees not budgeted
Interest					4645	5575	930.15	Interest rates haven't dropped as fast as expected.
<b>Total Income</b>					<b>139476</b>	<b>136265</b>	<b>-3211</b>	
					<b>5930</b>	<b>7100</b>	<b>-1170</b>	<b>Potential overspend of £1170</b>



# BCA Manual of Operations

## Explanatory Note

The manual of operations is a working document detailing the BCA's standard operating procedures. It is an advisory, not a binding document, of how the BCA should operate.

The BCA Secretary has the duty and the right to update the document to ensure it stays up to date. However, substantive changes should be brought to the BCA's National Council.

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## 1. National Council

- (1) Often referred to as [the] 'Council', the BCA's National Council is defined under Article 6 of the BCA Constitution.
- (2) The Nation Council is attended by:
  - (a) the Executive.
  - (b) 2 Group Member Representatives.
  - (c) 2 Individual Member representatives.
  - (d) A representative from each Regional Caving Council.
  - (e) A Representative from each of the National Caving Bodies.
  - (f) Working Group Convenors.
  - (g) Appointed BCA Officers.
  - (h) BCA Staff.



- (i) BCA Members who request the Executive to do so.

## **2. National Council Meeting Procedures**

- (1) The National Council must meet at least twice a year as per Article 6.11 of the [Constitution](#) but should aim to meet four times a year.
- (2) Meetings of the National council will ordinarily be scheduled to coincide with important constitutional and financial deadlines and to avoid dates and periods which will reduce the ability for members to attend e.g. religious holidays and major national caving events.
- (3) The dates for Council Meetings throughout the year will ordinarily be decided at the Council Meeting following the AGM and advertised in the minutes of that meeting.
- (4) Emergency Council meetings may be called by the Executive and may follow a contracted timeline. Such meeting should concern only those topics that are necessary to be dealt with immediately and otherwise cannot wait until the next scheduled Council meeting.
- (5) Council meetings may be held online or in-person at any suitable location in a multi-modal format to allow participants to also join remotely via video link.
- (6) Voting is by simple majority of those present and eligible to vote with no minimum number necessary for the meeting to be quorate.
- (7) The following persons shall be entitled to a vote:
  - (a) The Executive
  - (b) 2 Group Member Representatives.
  - (c) 2 Individual Member representatives.
  - (d) A representative from each Regional Caving Council.
  - (e) A representative from each of the National Caving Bodies.
- (8) The Chair shall hold the casting vote. An individual is free to represent more than one Group, but nobody is entitled to more than one vote.
- (9) This is the recommended timeline ahead of Council Meetings:
  - (a) Six Weeks prior – the Secretary should request reports from the Executive, Working Group Convenors, Officers, and option reports from other Council members; as well as agenda items from Council members.
  - (b) Three Weeks Prior – the deadline for the submission of agenda items from Council members to the Secretary.
  - (c) Two weeks prior – the deadline for the submission of reports to the Secretary. The Secretary will then ensure the agenda and draft minutes from the last meeting are published on the website and advertised to Council and the caving community.
  - (d) At least one week prior – the Secretary will collate and ensure all reports are published on the website and advertised to Council and the caving community. Council members are expected to have read these reports prior to the meeting.
  - (e) No later than eight weeks following the meeting – the Secretary should ensure the draft minutes are published on the website and advertised to Council and the caving community.
- (10) As standard the Agenda for a Council Meeting will include:
  - (a) Welcome by the Chair & Apologies for Absence.

- (b) Acceptance of the Minutes of the previous meeting.
  - (c) Matters arising from the previous meeting including review of the action log.
  - (d) Officers' Reports, including the opportunity for questions/discussion.
  - (e) Items/proposals for discussion/voting submitted by BCA Council members.
  - (f) Any other business.
- (11) Any items for discussion which are not on the agenda should be declared no later than the start of the meeting and will be included under 'Any other Business' at the discretion of the Chair. There should be a good reason why the item was not included on the advanced agenda or in an appropriate report.
- (12) Reports should:
- (a) Update Council on developments/changes since the last Council meeting and include proposals for Council's consideration, including the necessary background information and any recommendations of the author.
  - (b) Identify anything that may:
    - (i) Constitute a material change to the business and operation of the Officer, Working Group, body or representative.
    - (ii) Involve other Association groups or members.
    - (iii) Have legal implications for the Association.
    - (iv) Have financial implications for the Association beyond those already agreed.
    - (v) Involve the Association in a change to established policies or require the Association to agree a new policy or procedure.
- (13) Council Meeting Minutes should include:
- (a) Date, time and location.
  - (b) Details of those present.
  - (c) Apologies given for absence.
  - (d) Any matters arising from previous minutes.
  - (e) Outcomes of any actions from the previous meeting.
  - (f) Details of discussions regarding the reports including a record of their acceptance. The reports themselves may be attached or included within the minutes, or they may be included in a separate document available alongside the minutes.
  - (g) Details of discussions on specific issues, points raised, and decisions taken including, where appropriate, records of proposers, seconders, votes for and votes against.
  - (h) A means of indicating actions to be taken outside of the meeting, such as an action log; it is suggested to include this clearly at the end of the minutes.

### **3. The Executive**

- (1) The Executive shall be comprised of:
- (a) The Chair.
  - (b) The Secretary.
  - (c) The Treasurer.
  - (d) other Members as may be deemed necessary by the National Council to carry out the administrative business of the Association. See Article 6.14 of the Constitution.
- (2) The Executive officers will conduct the tasks specific to their roles while working in cohesion to guide the Association.

- (3) The Executive will make decisions by discussion and mutual agreement. Should a vote be necessary, it will be by simple majority with the Chair holding a casting vote.
- (4) The Executive shall:
  - (a) Manage the Association in the period between Council meetings.
  - (b) Shall guide the Association in terms of policy and goals, with the approval of the National Council.
  - (c) Make any urgent decisions, and subsequent actions, that may become necessary for the good of the Association
- (5) The Executive may call an Emergency General Meeting.
- (6) In the absence of an Executive member, the remaining members should aim to only decide on the most urgent, or non-controversial business. If a decision is necessary in a member's absence, then it should be dealt with by more than one Executive member and at least two other Council Members should be included in the decision-making process. It is recommended a record of these discussions is kept.
- (7) The Treasurer shall have the specific role as the convenor of the Finance Committee Working Group.

#### **4. Regional Caving Council and Associate Body Representatives**

- (1) Representatives are empowered to agree matters on behalf of the Body they represent, unless instructed specifically to the contrary by that Body.
- (2) Representatives who feel unable to express the view of the Body they represent should be given the chance to refer the matter back to their Body for clarification.
  - (a) The time given to refer a matter back must not be used as a delaying tactic.

#### **5. Working Groups**

- (1) Working Groups are established under Article 6.10 of the Constitution. They are set up by National Council, which should determine their Terms of Reference.
- (2) Each Working Group shall publish their Terms of Reference on the BCA website.
- (3) Working Groups are organised by the Working Group Convenor, an Officer appointed by National Council, who chairs the group.
- (4) Working Groups should report to National Council at each meeting and preferably send a representative to each National Council Meeting.
- (5) Working Groups should meet at least three times a year and provide minutes of these meetings to the Secretary.
- (6) The Convenor of the Working Group decides the membership of the group. Each group should aim for its membership to represent the interests of regional councils and constituent bodies, but this does not mean each body must have a direct representative in the group. Active volunteers, professionals, and experts are other classifications of person encouraged to be members of the group. Ultimately, the Convenor decides the membership of the group with the aim that the group operates to the best of its ability to achieve the specific business contained within their Terms of Reference.
- (7) The continued operation of:
  - (a) the Working Group,
  - (b) the Convenor,

(c) together with a review of their remit,

shall take place annually at the National Council meeting directly following the AGM.

## **6. BCA Officers**

- (1) At the Council meeting following the Annual general meeting the National Council shall confirm the appointment of BCA Officers.
- (2) The appointed officers usually include:
  - (a) The representative & deputy representative to the International Union of Speleology
  - (b) The representative & deputy representative to the European Speleological Federation
  - (c) British Caving Library Representative
  - (d) Safeguarding Officer
  - (e) Insurance Officer
- (3) The National Council may appoint or remove individuals to/from these roles as it sees fit.

## **7. General Meeting Procedures**

- (1) General Meetings are regulated under Article 7 of the Constitution.
- (2) An Annual General Meeting should be held in June each year or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.
- (3) An Emergency General Meeting may be called by any 2 members of the Executive with an agenda and accompanying documents circulated no less than two weeks in advance.
- (4) Emergency General Meetings shall be limited to discussing only the subjects that gave rise to the emergency.
- (5) A Special General meeting may be called by:
  - (a) The Executive,
  - (b) National Council,
  - (c) 20 or more BCA members
- (6) The agenda and accompanying documents for a Special General Meeting must be circulated no less than 12 weeks in advance and the meeting shall be limited to discussing only the matter(s) that gave rise to the original request for the meeting.
- (7) The date, time, venue, and format of all General Meetings will be agreed on by the National Council.
- (8) National Council shall nominate a Chair and Recorder for the General Meeting. The General Meeting may elect a Chair or Recorder in their absence. Neither the Chair nor the Recorder shall be entitled to vote.
- (9) The time, date and venue, whether physical or teleconferencing, of an Annual or a Special General Meeting shall be published at least 18 weeks in advance of the meeting.
- (10) This is the recommended timeline ahead of Annual General Meetings:
  - (a) 18 Weeks before –
    - (i) the Secretary will publish the time, date, place, and format of the meeting.

- (ii) The Secretary will request and make BCA members aware of the deadline by which they must be notified of matters and proposals to be discussed at the AGM.
- (iii) The Secretary will advertise the roles and positions up for election
- (b) 84 Days (12 Weeks) –
  - (i) Deadline for notifying the Secretary of any matters and proposals, including all proposals for constitutional change to be discussed at the AGM. This will ideally coincide with a Council Meeting.
    - (1) Proposals do not need to be seconded until the AGM but finding a seconder before the AGM is recommended.
  - (ii) Deadline for receipt of nominations for positions up for election.
- (c) Council Meeting Preceding – National Council shall nominate a Chair and Recorder for the General Meeting. These are usually the Chair and the Secretary, respectively.
- (d) 6 weeks before – Secretary to circulate the agenda to the membership.
- (e) Two weeks before – Officers and Convenors and other Council Members to send written reports to the Secretary.
- (f) One week before – Secretary to publish the reports document for the meeting together with any other supporting documentation.
- (g) Up to 6 weeks after – Secretary to publish the draft minutes.
- (11) Agenda items may be submitted to a General Meeting by any Member of the Association (Group or Individual).
- (12) Anyone may attend and speak at a General Meeting.
- (13) The quorum for a General Meeting is 10 individual members who are eligible to vote.
- (14) The following items require voting:
  - (a) Appointment of Honorary Members and an Honorary President
  - (b) Accepting minutes, reports and other regular 'housekeeping' duties or matters arising that would not be considered 'motions' (50% majority of all votes required with no subsequent online voting).
  - (c) Submitted motions. It is suggested that before any voting occurs, those attending the meeting should debate any presented motions and, if necessary (and with the permission of the proposer), refine or consolidate them. The final motions must then receive the support of  $\geq 25\%$  of all individual members present and eligible to vote, or  $\geq 10$  individuals, whichever is lowest, to pass at the meeting. Motions passed at the meeting must then be progressed to an online ballot of all individual members.
- (15) Motions are items that would make any change to the constitution or involve taking a significant action or making a significant change to BCA operations, policy, procedure or position. They are expected to be submitted in advance on the agenda. In the event of uncertainty as to whether something should be a 'motion' or a 'housekeeping' matter, the Chair shall make the final decision, and the idea is that common sense should prevail here. The default position, in the event of indecision or dispute should be to consider the item a 'motion' and process accordingly.
- (16) The constitution states that 'uncontested candidates' for Council positions 'will be elected'. This wording was based on the pre-2019 status quo of

appointing unopposed candidates without a vote. This should therefore be the default interpretation.

- (17) It desirable for contested Council positions to be resolved at the meeting by mutual agreement between the candidates. The Chair is encouraged to facilitate discussions of this nature. However, if this is not possible, then the contested position and candidates will be progressed automatically to an online vote, in which it would be good practice to provide the candidates the opportunity to include a statement.
- (18) Online voting should be available to all BCA Individual Members for a 14-day period commencing as soon as is possible after the General Meeting. It is good practice to ensure this is well communicated to all members by email (if possible) and through the BCA website and social media. Motions will be passed by simple majority (50% support of all votes cast) or by a majority of 70% for changes to the constitution. For contested positions or multi-choice option motions, the candidate or option with the most support will be appointed/accepted.
- (19) For the purposes of all voting, abstentions are not considered a 'vote'.
- (20) Minutes of meetings should be prepared by the recorder and be distributed as soon as possible after the meeting. The draft minutes must be distributed within eight weeks of the AGM.
- (21) Draft minutes should be approved by at least two meeting attendees before publication. It is recommended that at least one of the approving attendees should be members of the executive.
- (22) General Meeting Minutes should include:
  - (a) Date, time and location.
  - (b) Details of those present.
  - (c) Apologies given for absence.
  - (d) Any matters arising from previous minutes.
  - (e) Outcomes of any actions from the previous meeting.
- (23) Draft minutes will be voted on at the following AGM.

## **8. Publishing A Document**

- (1) Documents containing new policies or changes to existing policies of the Association must be approved at an AGM as per item 7.11 of the Constitution.
- (2) Meeting minutes may be published automatically.
- (3) Officers should circulate the document they wish to publish to the Executive and National Council for comments with a sufficient timeframe to receive feedback before its publication.
- (4) Documents which are likely to be contentious should be brought to the National Council for approval. If an Officer or Working Group is unsure if a document is contentious, they should seek the advice of the Executive.