



Minutes for Council Meeting

Tuesday 28th January 2025 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

Jess Brock, Chris Boardman, Isaac Neale

2.0 Persons present

Rostam Namaghi, Chris Bolton, Aidan Kuhlmann, Jenny Potts, Allan Richardson, Andrew Hinde, Lina Wilson, Mike Higgins, John Gunn, Steve Holding, Tony Radmall, Victoria Kocher, Zac Woodford, George Plant

N.B.: Chris Bolton and George Plant joined later in the meeting.

No quorate number required.

3.0 Current Composition of the BCA Council

	Position	Name	Initials	Vote
BCA Executive	Chair (2024-27)	Rostam Namaghi	RN	N
	Treasurer (2024-26)	Chris Bolton	CJB	Y
	Secretary (2024-25)	Aidan Kuhlmann	AK	Y
Individual Members Representatives	Position 1 (2023-2025)	Jess Brock	JB	Y
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Andy Eavis	AE	Y
Group Member Representatives	Position 1 (2023-2025)	Aodhán Ó Gabhann	AG	Y
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Jenny Potts	JP	Y
Regional Council Representatives	Ogofa Cymru / Caving Wales	Allan Richardson	AR	Y
	CNCC	Andrew Hinde	AH	Y
	CSCC	Linda Wilson	LJW	Y
	DCA	Mike Higgins	MH	Y
	DCUC	David Jean	DJ	Y
Constituent Body Representatives	Assoc. Caving Instructors	Stephan Natynczuk	SN	Y
	BCRA	John Gunn	JG	Y
	BCRC	Emma Porter	EP	Y
	CDG	Claire Cohen	CC	Y
	CHECC	Tom Phillips	TP	Y
	NAMHO	Steve Holding	SH	Y
	National Caving Scout Active Support Unit	Tony Radmall	TR	Y
	William Pengelly CST	Richard Vooght	RV	Y
Working Group Convenors	Conservation & Access Committee	Victoria Kocher	VK	N
	Training & Equipment	Steve Gray	SG	N
	Youth & Development	Isaac Neale	IN	N
	Countryside Rights of Way			N
	IT			N
	Publications & Information	Zac Woodford	ZW	N
	Qualification Management Committee	George Plant	GP	N
	Radon			N
	Constitution & Governance			N
Other Positions	FSE Rep	Allan Richardson	AR	N
	Insurance	Josh White	JW	N
	Newsletter Editor			N
	Safeguarding Officer	Chris Boardman	CBD	N
	UIS Rep	Ged Campion	GC	N
	BCL Representative	Jenny Potts	JP	N
BCA Staff	Artificial Cave	Katie Eavis	KE	N
	Bookkeeper	Karen Lydon	KL	N
	Training Admin	Mary Wilde	MW	N
	Membership Admin	Katie Eavis	KE	N

4.0 Previous Meeting Attendance & Report Submissions

	Position	Initials	16/07 Report?	10/09 Report?	29/10 Report?	17/12 Report?	28/01 Report?
BCA Executive	Chair	RN	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Treasurer	CJB	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Secretary	AK	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Members Representatives	Position 1	JB	N	N/A	Y	N/A	Y
	Position 2	AE	N	N/A	N	N/A	N
Group Member Representatives	Position 1	AG	N	N/A	Y	N/A	N
	Position 2	JP	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y
Regional Council Representatives N.B: Reports are optional	Ogofa Cymru	AR	Y	N	Y	Y	N
	CNCC	AH	Y	N	Y	N	Y
	CSCC	LJW	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
	DCA	MH	Y	N	Y	N	Y
	DCUC	DJ	N	N	Y	N	N
Constituent Body Representatives N.B: Reports are optional	ACI	SN	Y	N	N	N	Y
	BCRA	JG	Y	N	Y	N	N
	BCRC	EP	N	N	N	N	N
	CDG	CC	N	N	N	N	N
	CHECC	TP	N	N	Y	N	Y
	NAMHO	SH	Y	N	Y	N	Y
	NCSASU	TR	Y	N	N	N	Y
	WP CST	RV	N	N	Y	N	N
Working Group Convenors	C&A	VK	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	T&E	SG	N	Y	N	N	N
	Y&D	IN	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y
	(Dormant) CRoW		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	IT		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	P&I	ZW	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
	QMC	GP	N	Y	N	N	Y
	(Dormant) Radon		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other Positions	(Dormant) CoG		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	FSE Rep	AR	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Insurance	JW	N	N	N	Y	N
	(Vacant) Newsletter		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Safeguarding	CBD	N	N	Y	N	N
	UIS Rep.	GC	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
	BCL Rep.	JP	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Membership	KE	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A

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

Proposal to accept the minutes of the previous council meeting

A brief question regarding communications about the BCA/BCRA situation was raised by AK to JG as to whether there were any corrections to the minutes that might relate to this topic. JG elaborated and concluded there were no corrections to be made. JG and RN confirmed to Council that the BCA & BCRA were actively communicating about the topic.

Proposer: AK, **Second:** TR

For: AK, LJW, AR, SH, AH, MH, TR, JP

Against: None

Abstentions: JG – abstained due to being absent at the meeting.

6.0 Officer Reports

6.1 Executive

6.1.1 Chair (Rostam Namaghi)

It is important that we get C&A moving again and for the group to have enough of a plan to take to the AGM where we will have an opportunity to engage with the wider membership.

Proposal: to appoint Victoria Kocher as Conservation and Access Officer

Most of my focus since the last meeting has been on recruitment for the ICS bid (we have a secretary and people to run the advertising campaign) and on helping produce the demographics report.

This report was slightly rushed and I'm very grateful for Lydia de Brett's quick turnaround - it is an excellent report and gives much food for thought. It really highlights the potential of the P&I group, and the potential service we can offer our members. If this raises questions you would like answering about our organisation in caving please get in touch with Zac Woodford.

With regards to the report, I personally found the geographic distribution of our membership fascinating. Most of our members live near caves (unsurprisingly) and it appears that we recruit poorly from cities, though historically we recruited well from them. I plan to write a full article for descent in order to start cavers really thinking about how we recruit and where we recruit from.

RN passed over the meeting to VK to give a background about herself to Council. VK informed Council she is a Peak District based caver with a background in education, being a science specialist. Additionally, she has a master's degree in conservation biology and used to work as a zookeeper in the USA.

RN added that VK is also involved with the Underground Conservation Forum. VK added she is currently the Conservation Officer for the DCA.

Proposal: to appoint Victoria Kocher as Conservation and Access Officer

Proposer: RN, **Second:** MH

For: LJW, AK, AR, SH, AH, JG, MH, TR, JP

Against: N/A

Abstain: N/A

RN introduced the Demographics report and explained his ambition for it to be included in the upcoming issue of Descent and remarked that he was surprised to learn that the LL postcode for North Wales was the fourth of the most populous postcode for cavers, remarking that two members of the BCA executive are based in the postcode.

MH raised a few limitations with the use of postcodes. RN explained that it was decided to be the most useful form of data that protected user's data and provided a way of seeing where British cavers lived, and some insight into where they caved.

TR queried if the report stated that the average age of cavers being in the mid-forties, which RN confirmed. RN elaborated that with the change between how the data has been captured between this report and previous report which will give further clarity on the trend of the age of cavers. To compound this RN added that it appeared large portions of student cavers data was missing from the 2020 dataset. RN stated that he has been working with KE to gather the data for the intervening years between the 2021 report and this one so that trend lines could be viewed with more confidence.

AK commented that other data, if it were possible to capture, including occupation and how members were introduced to caving would be very interesting.

RN commented that he was looking into collecting other data such as ethnicity, which as a large organisation the BCA has a responsibility to collect to ensure it's not discriminating. RN also stated that the BCA could provide membership analysis to others who would like it.

AH raised the point that from the CNCC's research 20% of those who use the cave booking system are not BCA members and therefore won't be captured in the data.

RN replied that from a survey conducted, before he left the BCA as Youth and Development Officer, but never published, that the vast majority of cavers were BCA members, but many didn't know they were members of club's who were BCA members, making it hard to

find the truth in the number of cavers who aren't BCA members, though he recognises that the BCA membership is not all of British caving. Rn stated that for now the BCA membership provides a good guide for discovering the current trends in caving.

LJW queried if the CBA is now collecting ethnicity data. Rn confirmed that the CBA is now, but there wasn't enough data to report on it this year, but it should be possible to do so next year.

LJW enquired about the balance between male and female cavers between the different BCA membership categories. AK responded, reading from the data that it implied that more female cavers were retained within the sport as non-active cavers through the years, but nevertheless female cavers aren't being retained or recruited to the sport in great enough numbers. RN added the caveat that the sampling error relating to student cavers may skew the data heavily regarding young female members.

JP informed Council that part of the current demographic make-up is affected by the relatively recent change within caving clubs to allow women members and therefore women are still playing catch-up.

RN informed Council that the BCA AGM will be held on Saturday the 7th of June, at Clapham Village Hall, which coincides with Rescon, hence the choice of location. RN also stated his intention for there to be some kind of joint event after the AGM for people to attend as well, though he hadn't decided on the form it would take.

RN updated Council about the UIS bid: David Jones of North Wales has been recruited as Secretary who's very experienced with lottery and grant applications, the recruitment Lucy Hyde and Bartek Biela to manage promotional materials and the promotional video, respectively. RN stated that things were looking promising.

JG added that Bill Nix had volunteered to become Treasurer too. JG also explained the format of UIS events for Council.

Treasurer (Chris Bolton)

I have now become 'Primary User' of BCA's bank accounts at HSBC. This has taken a long time to arrange, mainly because only the Primary User has access to see how the bank's systems work, not least how to become Primary User, as well as the 'signing rules'. To recap, the BCA Constitution says all payments should require two 'signatures' unless Council has resolved otherwise. We were not compliant with that. Council agreed to my proposal that two people were only necessary for amounts over £500 and that I would put this in place for online banking. It's now clear that HSBC's systems can't implement that, as they assume that people who can approve payments for a given amount will also be allowed to make such payments as sole signatory. I

will therefore be implementing 'Dual Control' meaning that all payments must be 'signed' by two people. This complies with the Constitution without requiring a resolution by Council.

I have set up Rostam and Aidan as HSBC users so that they can approve higher value payments that I or BCA staff initiate and, between them, make such payments if I'm unavailable.

The premiums for the BCA Public Liability Insurance are due as three lump sums in January, which have been paid, and a monthly Direct Debit, which is in place.

A BCA credit card was issued to Ari Cooper-Davies for IT services. This remains in use with 3 providers who have continuous payment authority (equivalent to direct debit) but as we don't have the card we are unable to set up new providers. I have therefore applied for a BCA card in my name which can be used for any BCA purchases. The existing payment authorities will be transferred to that when it's issued. I continue to liaise with Simon Mullins on I issues.

I have received and paid the invoice for BCA's 2025 membership of FSE (€795). As BCA's account doesn't have a facility for international payments, I have paid it personally and Aidan will authorise my reimbursement.

I attended a meeting of QMC on 10 January where their budget for 2025 was discussed. A sub-group has been set up to review their fee levels to ensure an adequate margin to cover costs, including the possibility of making some training videos.

I am currently working on the annual accounts. When they are complete, I will move on to production of a Business Risk Assessment, primarily to understand the level of financial reserves BCA should hold, as discussed in December's Council meeting. I propose to form a small sub-group for this purpose and ask any volunteers for this to please let me know.

Motion: To accept the Treasurer's report

CJB added he had now received the HSBC debit card, and he is working with Simon to move some of the BCA's spending to the card. CJB informed Council he also attended QMC's recent subcommittee meeting (reported elsewhere) where they set out QMC's new rates for different items and is working on the BCA's annual accounts and expects to send them to the scrutineer around the middle of February.

CJB and JG re-capped the information discussed earlier in the meeting regarding BCA & BCRA IT now that CJB was present at the meeting. Both concluded that they are cooperating, and things are making progress.

CJB also informed Council he was pulling out all the BCA's expenses incurred on behalf of the BCRA to provide a better explanation to BCA Members and Council where the BCA's money is going. This is not to charge the BCRA for these expenses, but to provide greater transparency within the BCA's accounts.

RN stated that CJB's motion to accept the Treasurer's report will be included with other reports and voted on later in the meeting.

6.1.2 Secretary (Aidan Kuhlmann)

In addition to the usual variety of correspondence, I have been setup as a user on the HSBC account and reimbursed Chris for the FSE fee he paid from his personal account, as explained within his report.

I have also continued working on the draft Health and Safety policies that we will be looking to implement to better satisfy the requirements of our insurance policies.

Additionally, I have reviewed, updated, and reformatted large portions of the BCA's Manual of Operations (which can be found here: <https://manual.british-caving.org.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=start>). This work has been to update the document to become in line with the constitutional changes made over the last few years. The changes reflect the current reality of the BCA's operations and should be uncontroversial to all. It is simple to see which pages have been edited because I have noted that I have done so at the bottom of each page. Should anyone have any comments, concerns, or suggestions for improvement on this then I encourage you to contact me about them. If any changes are deemed to be unreasonable then due to the nature of the Doku Wiki platform it is hosted on then I, and other administrators, can roll back the page to the previous versions with ease. This version of the Manual of Operations is unlikely to be the final version, therefore I will delay on asking Council to formally recognise and approve these changes until I have reached a point where I believe it is suitably up-to-date.

Finally, while not in the role of BCA Secretary, I have been involved with some of the planning and organisation of this year's NAMHO Conference which will be hosted in North Wales, centred around the Conwy Valley.

AK elaborated on the Health and Safety Policies mentioned, explaining that they weren't finished enough yet to bring to Council but that more details about them would be coming when it was appropriate to do so. AK re-capped the updates he has made to the Manual of Operations and encouraged those who spotted anything in need of correcting to contact him.

RN used the opportunity to again extend the Executive's offer to anyone in need of IT help to contact them and they will help how they can.

AK added that he had recently been contacted by a caver who had spotted an issue on the BCA website and been able to make the small change. Ak encouraged Council to contact him with issues like this because he does not have the time to review every page on the website, but does to go in and fix specific issues if he is made aware of them.

6.2 Regional Council & Representative Body Reports (Optional)

6.2.1 Caving Wales/Ogofa Cymru (Allan Richardson)

The discussions with NRW re the Mines Access agreement which they unilaterally cancelled the other year are getting nowhere. They simply don't respond.

Other than that, nothing else to report.

RN added that he believes there is an Outdoors for All campaign that Caving Wales has signed it's name to.

AR added that NRW is pushing forward with a large expansion to the Mynydd Llangynidr SSSI, as well as extending the Fforest Fawr Geopark by up to 10%.

Secretary's Note: Following further information from AR following the meeting – NRW intends to combine Mynydd Llangatwg SSSI, Cwar y Ystrad a Cwar Blaen Dyffryn SSSI, and Mynydd Llangynidr SSIs into one expanded SSSI. This information was uncovered following a planning application for the installation of wind turbines at Pen March, Gelligaer, Merthyr Common.

AR added that the issues concerning Ogof Teilio (the new entrance into the Ogof Draenen) was continuing, with NRW blaming cavers for some issues when it is believed to have been caused by the sheep.

6.2.2 CNCC (Andrew Hinde)

Jill Bolton (Sec) has led a team of volunteers who have produced the first draft of a revised CNCC constitution to go to the AGM for approval.

Matt Ewles (PR) has produced a new printed edition of the CNCC Newsletter – Northern Caving.

Conservation

Notts 2 has been cleared of accumulated digging tat and scrap.

Shuttleworth Pot has had a restoration of shoring at the bottom of the entrance pitch.

Calf Holes Stile has been repaired by members of CPC.

Inclusivity

Josh White has published an article in Northern Caving on Accessible Caving which is a really helpful guide to clubs and individual cavers.

Access

The online caving system was discussed during a review at the CNCC committee meeting.

It will continue in its current form.

Andrew Hinde

Jan 2025.

AH added that the CNCC is making an application to the Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust fund for Cave Conservation works. AH stated that the CNCC had worked with them previously under the Stories in Stone project and reminded Council that there is external funding out there and available.

LJW added that the CSCC had also been able to receive £2,000 for the refurbishment of the Swildon's Barn from a local community fund and that they were keen for something different to draw from these funds.

LJW asked AH if JW's article regarding equality and inclusivity article could be shared in a way which could be passed around Southern Clubs. AH informed LJW that it was contained within the Northern Caving newsletter and informed LJW JW has a dedicated email address which he can be contacted about this.

6.2.3 DCA (Mike Higgins)

Little to report for this meeting as things have been quiet with the Christmas / New Year break plus the inclement weather.

On the access front, the securing of the rear access gate on Devonshire Cavern is now in the process of being sorted after some delay. The worn anchors on the Eyam Dale Shaft entrance to Carlswork have now been replaced. They incorporate 8mm stainless steel rings to facilitate pull through descents, the main cause of the wear on the old anchors installed in the 1990s and have been repositioned to provide a better Y hang.

With the end of 2024, entries have now closed for the two DCA annual competitions, the Peak Cave Exploration Competition and the SSSI Cave Monitoring Competition. Prizes will be awarded at the Derbyshire Explorers Forum to be held at Eyam Mechanics Institute on 1st February.

The DCA AGM will be held at the British Caving Library, Glutton Bridge, at 10.00 am on 22nd February.

Mike Higgins

DCA BCA Rep

6.2.4 CSCC (Linda Wilson)

CSCC has nothing of significance to pass on since our last report dated 28.11.24.

Linda Wilson

CSCC BCA Rep

Date: 9.1.25

6.3 Working Group Convenor Reports

6.3.1 Conservation & Access (Vacant)

6.3.2 Countryside Rights of Way (Dormant)

6.3.3 Information Technology (Vacant)

6.3.4 Publications & Information (Zac Woodford)

Again, P&I has been uneventful over the holiday period with little to report on.

The Membership report project has now become a team with the additional volunteer, Eve Chadock joining Lydia de Brett.

The student caving handbook has become a joint project shared with Y&D.

Finally, I have completed the first draft of the P&I development plan which will set the working group's agenda for the year, a copy of which I enclose with this report. The document is non-final and subject to change.

Thank you,

Zac.

ZW accepted that the report was currently quite vague but that it was intended to provide accountability for the group to Council so that it had something to be held to, but that progress was being made,

JP informed ZW that stored in the BCL there was a BCA banner that may be useful.

AH asked about the Student Caving Handbook and whether the Working Groups will see a draft of it before its publication, particularly Conservation & Access. ZW responded that he is working with Youth & Development and members of CHECC with it and that a draft will be coming forward.

AK commented that it might be worth ZW, JP, and GP talking in regard to the banner at the BCL due to QMC also being after a banner, as mentioned in GP's report for QMC.

LJW said she was delighted to see P&I wanted to bring back the BCA Newsletter and asked if it can be sent out via Just Go. RN replied that it is. LJW offered her help regarding proof-reading to ZW.

ZW added that Elin West was now helping on the Student Caving Handbook project.

6.3.5 Qualification Management Committee (George Plant)

As usual, we've been keeping going with updates and queries about the scheme. Mary is always tweaking the admin and keeping all the Trainer Assessors up to speed.

We didn't go to the AHOEC National Conference in Bala on the 13th-15th of January due to lack of promotional material. I discussed it with the organisers, and we thought that having me sat at an empty table wouldn't be a very good advert! This led to some good discussion about where we would get some banners and what we'd have on them; they could be put to good use at any conferences as well as Hidden Earth.

A meeting about finances was held which included how we'd fund banners and other things that we'd like to develop – most notably the Rescues Videos that the CIC panel want to produce. The Treasurer told us that BCA wouldn't fund this as QMC is seen as self-sufficient. Which led us nicely to review our prices, after realizing that they haven't been increased for many years.

George Plant

GP added that the desire for a banner was to represent QMC at forums and events such as Hidden Earth and that Mary may have a contact in Derbyshire for getting one for free.

AK asked GP if QMC had considered a demographics report of its members. GP and AK discussed whether the information would be on JustGo and concluded it should be well formatted already. RN advised to be clear about the questions that are being asked to avoid issues due to fluctuations and offered to chat to GP about the topic if he wishes.

6.3.6 Radon (Dormant)

6.3.7 Training & Equipment (Steve Gray)

No report received.

6.3.8 Youth & Development (Isaac Neale)

No report received.

6.4 Additional Reports by Appointed Officers

6.4.1 British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)

No report received.

6.4.2 FSE Representative (Allan Richardson)

Other than that BCA have paid the 2025 subscription to FSE, I have nothing to report.

The link to the latest Eurospeleo Newsletter is below:

https://www.eurospeleo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/EuroSpeleo_Newsletter_December_2024_EN.pdf

AR explained that he couldn't attend the last meeting and was denied his request to attend via Zoom and commented that they had complained there was poor attendance at their meeting in their newsletter.

AR mentioned the FSE's Clean Up the Dark project and whether this had been published more widely. Ak replied that he had shared it on the website & UKCaving. VK, AR, and AK agreed to work together on it.

6.4.3 Insurance Manager (Josh White)

No report received.

6.4.4 Safeguarding Officer (Chris Boardman)

No report received.

6.4.5 Newsletter Editor (Vacant)

6.4.6 UIS Representative (Ged Campion)

No report received.

6.5 Reports by BCA Staff

6.5.1 Membership Administrator & Artificial Cave (Katie Eavis)

Membership:

Group Membership of BCA

So far 105 groups have joined BCA for 2025. There are 60 groups who were 2024 members and have not yet renewed.

This compares with 63 groups renewed at the same time last year – so I think the new system is encouraging groups to join more promptly. Also, the new system is much more efficient, so I don't have a back log of clubs' renewals awaiting my time to process.

Most of these groups have renewed via the new online membership system themselves. A few are still sending me spreadsheet to renew for them. I am very happy to continue to do this to help out clubs are not able to engage with the new system right now.

There have been a few teething issues, and it is a learning curve for all the clubs (and me!) but mostly it is going smoothly, and the issues have been minor, and all resolved quickly.

Individual BCA members

3424 people have joined BCA for 2025 – this includes members joining directly and also those joining via clubs.

Most members joining directly seem to be using the new system quite happily and without issue.

Any queries/ problems have been dealt with swiftly.

New membership system

For the first year the new membership system seems to be working really well. Some benefits I have noticed are:

1. Lots of members are signing up to subscription payments so will pay automatically each year. Less faff for them, and more prompt payments for us.
2. Lots of clubs have embraced the new system to make changes/ additions to their membership regularly. It is certainly easier for clubs to add one or two late payers at a time than it used to be.

Plus, more small benefits.

Last year was very busy as we moved membership to the new system and some bits were done in a bit of a rush. One thing I am not happy with are the new BCA membership cards. They are a bit basic to look at, and generally not very impressive.

After renewals quieten down, I hope to re-visit the cards and see if we can improve them. If any one from council who is arty and techy wants to be involved, please get in touch!

Insurance:

Invoices for 2025 insurance have been received, and Chris has paid those that are due.

Documents for 2025 have been received. Josh has reviewed these and has suggested a few changes, plus a few errors that need correcting. This is back with Howdens for now. As soon as these have been sorted, we can get them on the website.

Artificial Cave:

Aidan has recently had a look at the cave and reviewed the risk assessment. He has suggested some changes. I will review these and make the necessary alterations once renewals calm down a bit. The cave has no bookings until April so there is no rush.

The cave fee has been increased to £45 per booking and I have informed all 2025 bookings of this change.

7.0 Matters arising from the previous Council Meeting

8.0 Items for Discussion

8.1 Proposal: To accept the Officer reports

Proposer: RN, **Seconder:** JP

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

Against: N/A

Abstain: N/A

8.2 BCA Presence at Hidden Earth 2025

Matter raised by Tony Radmall (Badger) on behalf of QMC.

TR explained that he is the Trade Hall Manager at Hidden Earth and brought the item following Mary Wilde asking him how much it would cost to have a stand at Hidden Earth. TR continued that every trader gets one free plot which is an 1800 x 1800cm space, but that currently with the Llangollen venue the Hidden Earth team are flexible on this. However, the delegates for the stands would still need to pay their entry fee.

TR said that it would be sensible if the BCA, BCRA, BCL, and QMC were all in one area of the trade hall, with their plots adjacent and suggested that a rota was put together to man these stalls because unmanned stalls are ignored.

TR emphasised that doing so would help represent the BCA and improve its image among cavers.

JP and TR discussed how a BCA stand was run previously and what resources the BCA has.

JG mentioned that previously the BCRA has used students to help man their stalls by paying for their ticket for that day if they man the stall for half of that day. JG stated that the BCRA would be very happy to assist the BCA on this to work together. RN suggested this might be an area for ZW as Publications & Information. ZW agreed and Council resolved to coordinate about this.

9.0 Any Other Business

10.0 Details of the Next Meeting

Saturday the 15th of March at 7pm via Zoom.

AK also mentioned that the Council meetings and other BCA events can be found on the BCA website via it's Google Calendar on the Events page.

BCA Demographics Report

Lydia de Brett, Rostam Namaghi, Will Burn

Introduction

The report was produced to understand the demographic composition of the current BCA membership population and to understand trends relating to age and sex. This report has taken past influence from the 2020 BCA demographics report in structure and intent.

Methodology

Data was collected from the membership database, and anonymised then sent to the publications and information officer. The data was imported to an Excel spreadsheet where simple statistical tests were carried out.

In this iteration, active caver and whole memberships were subcategorized within the dataset. Active cavers were taken to be any caver membership type not of the Non-Active caver which included student and the under 18 category. Furthermore, due to a small sample size of both age and gender data, for this report age and sex data were analyzed individually.

Geographic Dataset Methodology

The dataset contained 6730 records. 247 records without postcodes were removed (these being the non-Irish international members), leaving 6483 membership records. There were 1791 unique postcode outcodes (first half) in the data, and there were members in nearly all of them.

After data cleaning, including removing blank or duff postcodes, a total of 5255 member records were added to the produced map. Due to issues with the shapefile the Northern Ireland dataset could not be easily rendered.

Note that there are a few postcodes where we have no recorded members such as central Scottish Motherwell postcode.

Results

Statistical reporting

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. (rounded to 3sf)

	Active caver	All members
Total Records	5695	6730
Complete records Age-Sex	869 (15.3%)	905 (13.4%)
Female mean age (years)	40.6	41.4
Male mean age (Years)	46.4	46.1

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 (round to 3sf)

	Active Caver	All Members
Complete records Age Only	2828 (50%)	3133 (47%)
Average Caver age (years)	45.5	47.1
Complete records Sex Only	1203 (21.1%)	1312 (19.5%)
Average Male: Female ratio	3.5:1	3.3:1

Age and

Gender

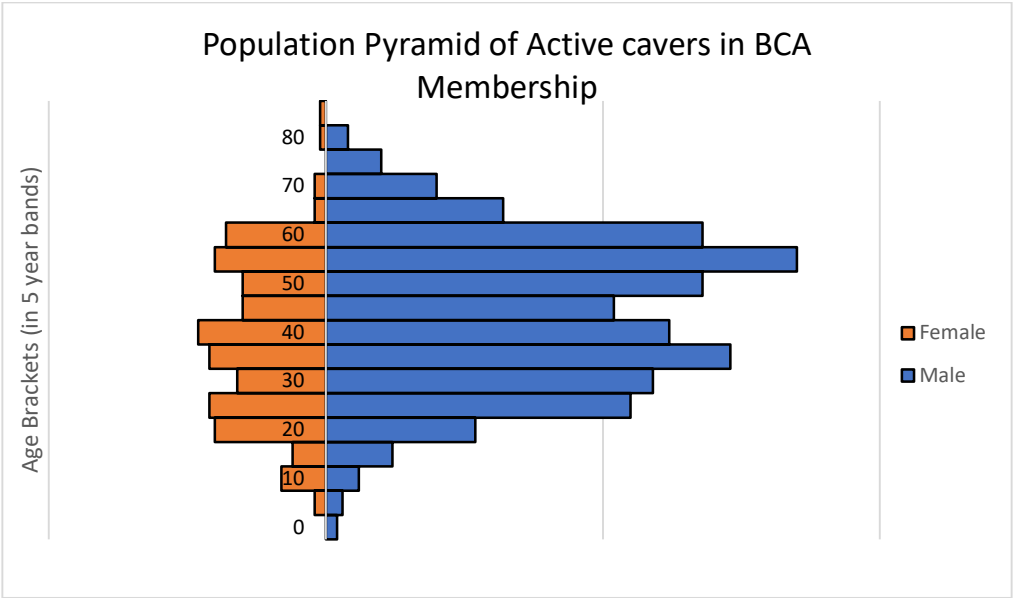
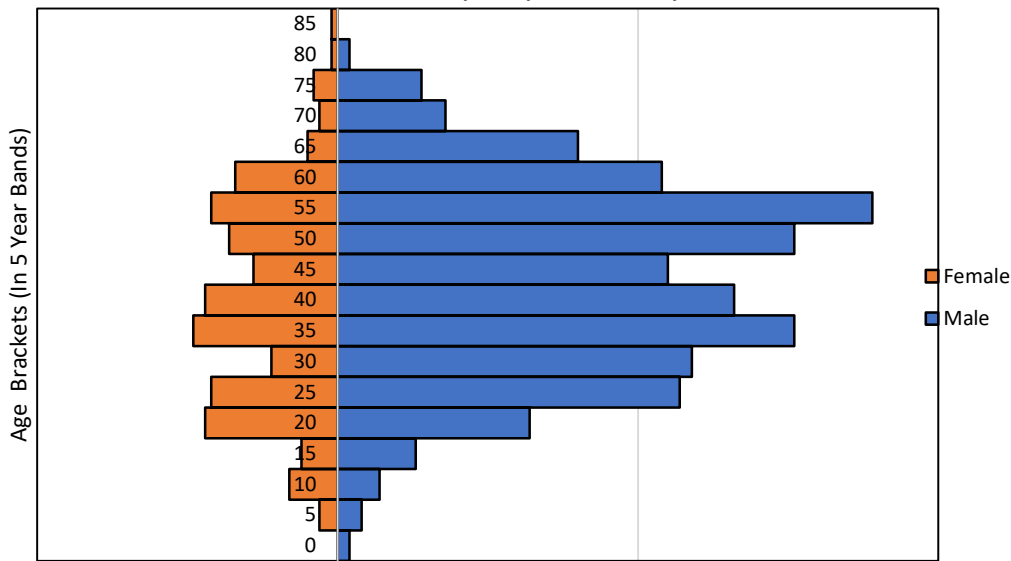


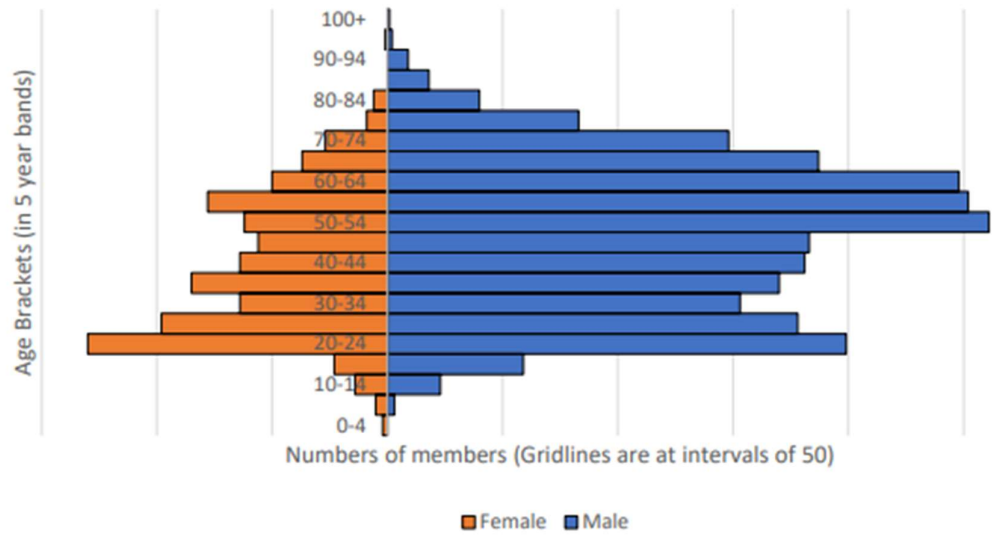
Figure 1 Across most age categories there is a larger number of male cavers to female cavers with the largest total number difference in the 55-59 Age category with a ratio of 4.25:1. Data lines are at intervals of 50.

Full BCA Membership Population Pyramid December 2024



With the same data listed below for the end of 2020

Population Pyramid of BCA Membership



Sex

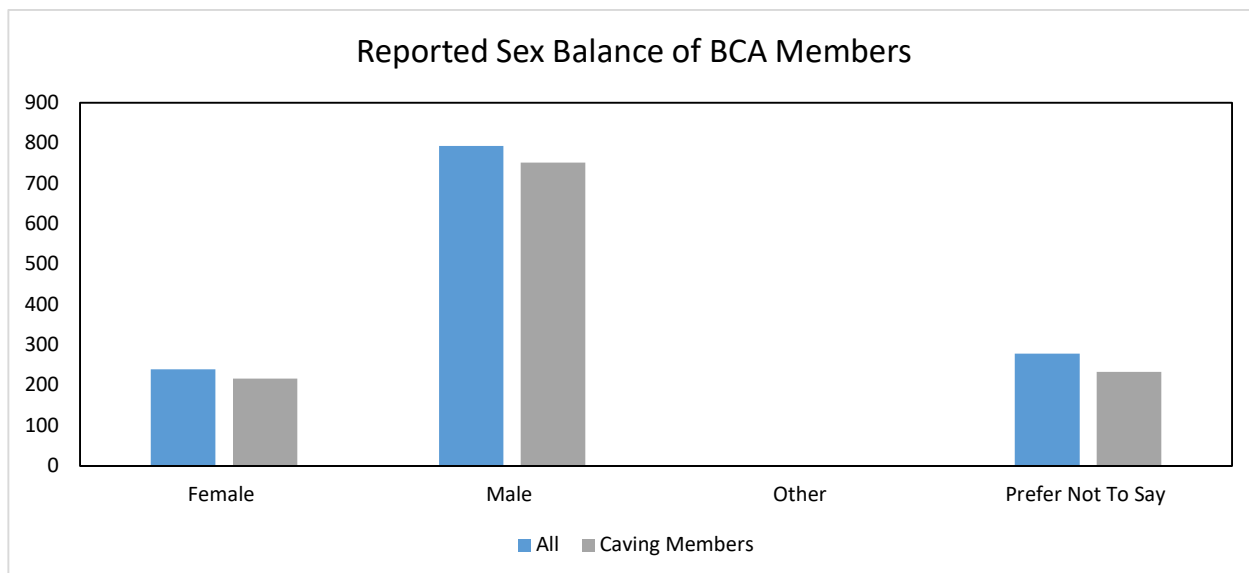
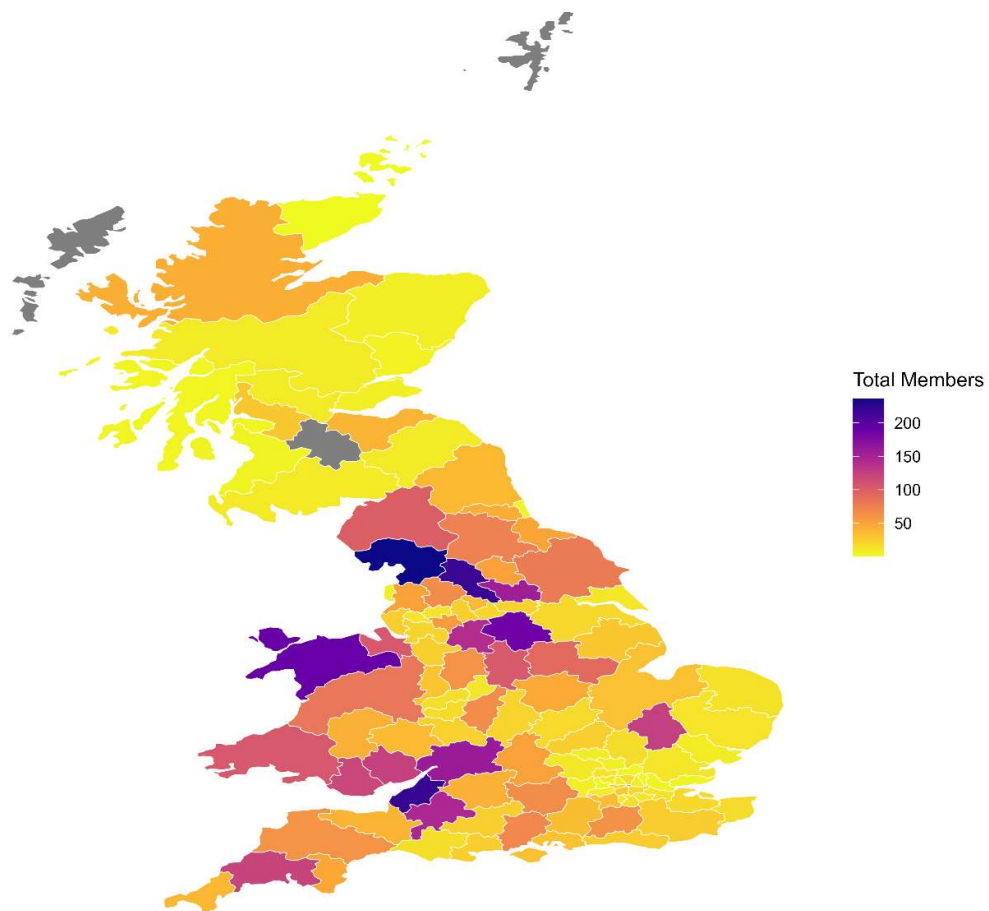


Figure 3: A separate sex dataset was made to look closer at the reported sexes and to compare the number of people reporting Prefer not to say. Though people report reporting as other were present they appear as a very low number in the dataset.

Total Members per UK Postcode Area



Most Populous Postcodes	
LA	236 Lancashire
BS	220 Bristol and surroundings
BD	218 Bradford and West Yorkshire
LL	190 North Wales
S	186 Sheffield and South Yorkshire
GL	159 Gloucestershire
LS	155 Leeds and West Yorkshire
BA	145 Bath and Somerset
SK	140 Stockport and Derbyshire
CB	126 Cambridge and surroundings
Least Populous Postcodes	
KW	1 Orkney and Northern highlands
MP	1 Isle of Man
PT	1 Plymouth and South Devon
D	2 Dundee
IG	2 Ilford and East London
JE	2 Jersey
EN	3 Enfield North London

Discussion

Just Go has been implemented since the last demographics report and this has altered the way that data is collected. The addition of address data has contributed to a drop in the percentage of 'complete records' but it is evident that the old database had a greater ratio of Sex and Age data than the current one. It will be interesting to see if this changes as the database matures.

The other major impact since the last demographic report has been the legacy of Covid 19. The previous report published in 2021 used end of year data from 2020, a highly unusual year. Unfortunately yearly reports were not produced and so a large question mark remains over the 2020 data being an unusual snapshot or more indicative of the preCovid trends.

There remains a significant skew in the population towards older male cavers, though it is notable that the mean age of male cavers has dropped (from 48.6 to 46.1) though the female age rose (40.6 to 41.4). This may reflect three things: more retention of male cavers into their 30s without the same retention of female cavers, a loss of male cavers in their 80s and 90s and a small drop in the overall membership (from 7075 to 6730). Conclusions about this drop would be dangerous – again we have changed the membership database, and the last snapshot was during the first year of Covid.

The active caver population has a slightly younger average age than the full BCA membership present, this was not previously commented on but is intuitive.

The male-to-female ratio remains high and has slightly increased from a rough 2.9:1 ratio to a 3.5:1. This appears to mainly be driven by the reduction in women aged 20-24.

The addition of geographic data is very illuminating – all four of the traditional caving regions are easily visualised and comprise 8 of the 10 most populous postcodes. The two striking findings is the large membership in North Wales and the scarce membership in London. The former is driven by some very large healthy clubs, like UCET, who draw on very different demographics to other caving clubs. The poor recruitment in the capital likely reflects two things. Firstly ICC (Imperial) is the only BCA University club that recruits in London and their data will be isolated to one/two postcodes that will be lost in that visual. This comes with the caveat that students often remain registered at their home address though you can still see clubs like Cambridge and Southampton have strong showings on the map.

Secondly it likely reflects the traditional London clubs (think the Chelsea, Westminster, Croydon etc) both diversifying their membership around their huts and their own membership moving out of London and into the commuter belt. The low recruitment in London is not the only urban area with poor showings – Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool are surprisingly absent from the map. This may represent significant potential for growth in the membership, though how to keep a recruitment engine that remains in cities as their members move away as they get older will be a significant challenge.

In conclusion it is hard to extrapolate significant conclusions without further work. The singular definitive action point from the demographic data is to make more of an effort to ensure people in their 80s and 90s get all the support they need in order to stay connected to caving as we continue to undergo our digital transition. The data does raise the troubling prospect of successful female recruitment over many years backsliding and so should be treated as a priority by the BCA and its member clubs. The geographic data raises significant questions, and highlights the potential data services we can offer to our member clubs.

British Caving Association Publication and Information Development Plan for 2025

About this Document

This document describes the planned development of the British Caving Association (BCA) Publication and Information (P&I) working group over the course of 2025. This document is subject to change before and as it is implemented. It is an attempt to create a robust and targeted plan on how the working group will deliver P&I provisions to the BCA and its members.

Goals

Listed below are the goals that the P&I working group aims to achieve during the tenure of this document.

Short term

1. Deliver services to BCA members.
2. Bring back the BCA newsletter - to help transparency and keep people informed of the workings of the BCA.
3. Create a BCA calendar of events for members to follow.

Long Term

1. To Change the public perception of caving.
2. To facilitate the training and passing on of skills to younger volunteers.

Services

Services will be sub-sections of the working group that offer a service to our members and constituent bodies. Currently there are plans for **two** services, **Review** and **Survey**. Each service will be staffed by a contingent of volunteers with the requisite skills as well as support volunteers who will assist and learn from the primary volunteers. Each service will be launched via a **project**. Services will be reactive in that the work they undertake will come from BCA members.

Review

The review service will offer a proof reading facility to members. This will primarily cover articles but may be extended to larger volumes of work. This service will also be used internally within the working group whenever material for publishing is generated.

Survey

The Survey Service will not cover cave surveys but will instead offer the opportunity for constituent bodies to survey their members. For example, if a particular caving club wished to better understand their demographics, they could ask the Survey service team to plan, conduct and analyse a survey of their membership.

Projects

Projects are articles of work that are undertaken by members of the working group to proactively meet the goals and objectives of the working group. Currently there are two projects planned, A student caving club handbook (in association with the Youth and Development working group) and a survey of the BCA membership. The Student Caving Club handbook will be used to launch the **Review** service as it will be the first article for the review service to Evaluate. The Survey of the BCA membership will likewise launch the **Survey** service with the volunteers who work on that service going on to work on future surveys.

Meeting our long term goals

Meeting the long term goal “To facilitate the training and passing on of skills to younger volunteers” will largely be accomplished via the **services**. These will equip younger members of the community with the skills required to produce and publish their own articles. The production of more content by our community will then in turn support the other long term goal “To Change the public perception of caving”. However, this goal will require a multi-faceted approach which will be published in a supplementary strategy document.

Volunteers needed

Below is a brief list of the volunteers we need in the short term (i.e. immediately). To begin to work on our declared projects.

- Review lead
- BCA Newsletter Editor