



Minutes for Council Meeting

Tuesday the 20th of January 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	Acceptance of Reports
8	Matters arising from the previous Council Meeting
9	Items for Discussion
10	Any Other Business
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1.0 Apologies for Absence

John Gunn, Tony Radmall, Linda Wilson, Simon Perkins, Pete Knight, Tom Phillips

2.0 Persons present

Aidan Kuhlmann, Rostam Namaghi, Allan Richardson, Jenny Potts, Andy Eavis, Chris Bolton, Isaac Neale, Joshitha Shivkumar, Mike Higgins, Paul Taylor, Peter Jackson, Richard Vooght, David Jean, Todd Rye, Victoria Kocher, Zac Woodford, Chris Boardman, Ian Healey, Tim Nichols

Minutes compiled by Katie Eavis (not present at meeting) from the zoom recording.

3.0 Current Composition of the BCA Council

	Position	Name	Initials	Vote
BCA Executive	Chair (2024-27)	Rostam Namaghi	RN	N
	Treasurer (2024-27)	Chris Bolton	CJB	Y
	Secretary (2024-27)	Aidan Kuhlmann	AK	Y
Individual Members Representatives	Position 1 (2023-2025)	<i>Vacant</i>		
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Andy Eavis	AE	Y
Group Member Representatives	Position 1 (2023-2025)	<i>Vacant</i>		
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Jenny Potts	JP	Y
Regional Council Representatives	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
Constituent Body Representatives	Assoc. Caving Instructors	Stephan Natynczuk	SN	Y
	BCRA	John Gunn	JG	Y
	BCRC	Emma Porter	EP	Y
	CDG	Simon Perkins	SP	Y
	CHECC	Tom Phillips	TP	Y
	NAMHO	Peter Jackson	PJ	Y
	National Scout Caving Team	Tony Radmall	TR	Y
	William Pengelly CST	Richard Vooght	RV	Y
Working Group Convenors	Anchor	Pete Knight	PK	N
	Conservation & Access	Victoria Kocher	VK	N
	Finance	Chris Bolton	CJB	N
	Incorporation	Chris Bolton	CJB	N
	National Access	Rostam Namaghi	RN	N
	Publications & Information	Zac Woodford	ZW	N
	Qualification Management Committee	George Plant	GP	N
	Radon	<i>Dormant</i>		N
	Training & Equipment	Aidan Kuhlmann	AK	N
	Youth & Development	Isaac Neale	IN	N
Other Positions	BCL Representative	Jenny Potts	JP	N
	FSE Rep	Tom Phillips	TP	N
	Safeguarding Officer	Chris Boardman	CBD	N
	UIS Rep	John Gunn	JG	N
BCA Staff	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?	31/03	Report?	19/05	Report?	07/07	Report?
BCA Executive	Chair	RN	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y						
	Treasurer	CJB	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y						
	Secretary	AK	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y						
Members Representatives	Position 1		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A						
	Position 2	AE	N	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A						
Group Member Representatives	Position 1		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A						
	Position 2	JP	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A						
Regional Council Representatives N.B: Reports are optional	Ogofa Cymru	AR	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y						
	CNCC	TRY	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N						
	CSCC	LJW	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N						
	DCA	MH	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y						
	DCUC	DJ	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N						
Constituent Body Representatives N.B: Reports are optional	ACI	SN	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N						
	BCRA	JG	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N						
	BCRC	EP	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N						
	CDG	SP	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y						
	CHECC	TP	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N						
	NAMHO	PJ	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N						
	NCSASU	TR	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N						
	WP CST	RV	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N						
Working Group Convenors	Anchor	PK	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N	Y	N	Y						
	C&A	VK	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y						
	Finance	CJB	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A						
	Incorporation	CJB	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y						
	National Access		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	Y						
	P&I	ZW	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y						
	QMC	GP	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N						
	(Dormant) Radon		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A						
	T&E		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A						
	Y&D	IN	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y						
Other Positions	BCL Rep.	JP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N						
	FSE Rep	TP	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N						
	Safeguarding	CBD	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y						
	UIS Rep.	JG	N	N/A	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N						
	BCA Admin	KE	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y						

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

5.0 Acceptance of previous meeting's minutes

CJB raises one minor amendment needed to his section – it needs re-writing to clarify that CJB plans to separate out the BCA funded staff at the BCL, as this currently isn't clear.

Motion: To accept the previous Council Meetings' Minutes as most recently submitted by the Secretary

Proposer: Allan Richardson, **Seconder:** Aidan Kuhlmann

For: AE, JP, AR, AK, JS, MH, PJ, RV, CJB, TRY, DJ

Against: None

Abstentions: None

6.0 Officer Reports

6.1 Executive

6.1.1 Chair (Rostam Namaghi)

This is my busiest time of year employment wise and so my time has mostly been spent giving support and advice to the multiple working groups and officers of the association. People are quietly settling into their roles and things are beginning to move along. I have spent some time working with Isaac over the 'Organised Fun' and talking to member clubs and have also had some input into the demographics report which will again be completed by Eve Chaddock.

I am pleased to report that David Rose represented the BCA and gave a short presentation to the All-Party Parliamentary Group which was warmly received. More importantly however, David Rose helped the APPG keep its status by suggesting and approaching a Conservative MP (David Davies) for membership of the group. The working group is working well with significant input from its members.

Qualification Governance in Northern Ireland continues to be an issue, with the BCA remaining committed to the position that the SUI is the National Governing Body of Caving on the island of Ireland. Note that this is not in contradiction with clause 2.3 of the constitution, that though the national interests of the Association explicitly include Northern Ireland, it can reasonably be said that it is in the interest of British and Irish Caving that the Irish scene remain as a cohesive polity. Splitting would make as much sense as dividing Derbyshire in two.

Regarding constitutional implications I have further work to do in regards to pouring over AGM motions to see what may or may not be needed to formalise this position and will be reporting back to council.

RN re-iterates the good work David Rose has been doing with the APPG.

RN adds some detail to the section in his report about qualifications in Ireland and the discussions that have been going on. He adds the conclusions of these discussions may need agreeing at a future AGM.

RN is pleased to introduce recognising the Forest of Dean as a regional caving council, especially after an impressive few years of discoveries in the Forest. RN is very pleased with how smoothly this process has gone, and thanks Caving Wales for their understanding.

AK suggests before a vote on recognising FoDCCAG as a Regional caving council FoDCCAG are given the opportunity to speak.

Paul Taylor [PT], Chairman of FoDCCAG, states how much has changed in the Forest of Dean in the last 60 years. With discoveries in the 70s such as Otter hole, the 90s with Wet sink, Redhouse more recently etc. PT feels the move to be a RCC reflects how much the area has changed and how much more cave has been discovered. It is also important as the Forest is a unique area in terms of access, with a Deputy Gaveler, plus Forestry England to deal with.

On a personal level PT is proud to have played his part in the move to become a RCC. His tenure as chair ends soon, but he is passing it on to Tim Nichols, who has been Conservation and Access officer for FoDCCAG in recent years. PT states FoDCCAG will do a good job as a RCC, as reflected in their recent work in terms of managing, conserving, surveying, photography etc in Redhouse Lane Swallet.

Tim Nichols, Conservation and Access Officer for FoDCCAG, thanks everyone at BCA for their positive support. It has been a busy few years with the Redhouse project. There are conservation projects ongoing however they are keen to welcome visitors, once it opens, around May time. TN would like to thank VK and JP for their support in cave conservation and practical matters, and also Stuart France.

Motion: To recognise the FoDCCAG as a Regional Caving Council of the BCA

Proposer: Rostam Namaghi, **Seconder:** Allan Richardson

For: AE, JP, AR, AK, JS, MH, PJ, RV, CJB, TRY, DJ

Against: None

Abstentions: None

6.1.2 Treasurer (Chris Bolton)

Since the last Council meeting, apart from the day-to-day finances I have been working on the annual accounts for 2025, supporting Katie on the negotiations with our insurance broker and assisting Simon in getting out IT into condition for cyber insurance.

After discussions with Howden, and the quotes they obtained from Insurers, the cost of BCA's main insurance policies, on the same basis as 2025, represents a saving of about £7.7k. We decided, however, that we should increase the Professional Indemnity cover from £2M to £5M, for which the additional premium is £3.5k. There may be some further additions, as we are waiting for a quote for cyber insurance and we have asked for various equipment held by Regional Councils to be covered. I am pleased to say that with the above, and the revised membership fees, in 2026 the cost of insurance should be less than half of our membership income. This has historically been the case, but by 2024 it had risen to over two thirds, which left us very little funding for everything else. It also enables us to reinforce the message to our members that insurance is only part of what BCA does for them.

On IT, we now have a fully independent backup system for our email and documents in Google Workspace. This is on a micro-server that we own, and the backups cannot be altered, even by us, which protects against ransomware.

The updated budget, for approval by Council, is attached as an appendix. While I have not yet finished the annual accounts, my earlier prediction for only a small deficit in 2025 looks viable. This is better than originally expected and is

partly due to the Regional Councils keeping their claims low. Together with the insurance savings, we have bit more headroom in the budget. I have apportioned some of the reserves as a development fund; the intention is that this can be used for important one-off projects, not routine spending, at the discretion of Council. It's important that such projects are chosen because they need to be done, not because we have the funds.

I have paid BCA's subscription to FSE for 2026. The previous Council meeting agreed to donate £250 to the German caving federation. Their Chair has acknowledged this with thanks, but I have not yet received the expected invoice from their Treasurer.

We have made some progress on Incorporation and I hope to accelerate this once the annual accounts are complete.

CJB explains how the saving in the insurance costs for 2026 came about. An unsolicited email from a rival broker was used to negotiate a better deal with Howden. This year they are charging BCA a flat fee, as opposed to commission on premiums.

CJB would like the council to approve the budget by approving the officer's reports. However first he would like to check if FoDCCAG, as a new RCC, need a budget? He thinks some of the Conservation and access spending may have been included in the budget proposed by Caving Wales but wants to check. TN states FoDCCAG have estimated £300 for conservation in 2026. There has been talk of a much larger spend (£3000) but they currently are not in a position to move forward with that.

CJB explains how budgets for conservation and access projects work within BCA – the estimates by RCCs go into one pot. How this money is spent is decided by the C and A working group. RCC don't necessarily spend what they estimated – but the C and A working group may prioritise RCCs who provided budgets that added funds to the pot over those that didn't. CJB knows what Caving Wales added to the pot, but not the divide between CW and FoDCCAG projects.

CJB suggests adding £500 to the pot to ensure FoDCCAG are included. He states RCCs usually claim once their accounts are sorted and are paid around March time.

CJB provides more detail about the 2025 accounts:

Deficit for 2025 is looking to be £1050

Regions all underspent, except Wales.

T and E spent nothing but are only just getting up and running again.

Y and D spent very little, but it is picking up.

There was an overspend on IT, partly due to the change in systems. Some of the old system is still being paid for as BCRA are still using it. Some of this spending should probably be attributed elsewhere, and not to IT.

£4,400 for staffing costs at the library, in addition to the £12,000 library donation towards the building.

QMC had an overspend. This will be discussed at the next meeting, as they aim

to break even.

£1300 more in interest due to interest rates not dropping as much as expected.
Membership figures were about £2000 down on expected.

6.1.3 Secretary (Aidan Kuhlmann)

Since the last Council Meeting I have been quite busy, though the projects I have worked on are mostly reported elsewhere under others' reports.

A significant portion of my time has been involved in the insurance negotiations and renewals, detailed in Chris Bolton and Katie Eavis' reports. Alongside this work, I have attended meetings for the Anchor Working Group and co-chaired a meeting of the Training & Equipment Working Group (please see report below). I have also submitted a response to a survey by the Environment, Food, & Rural Affairs Committee on behalf of the National Access Working Group.

Additionally, I have been working alongside members of QMC and Rostam regarding the Northern Ireland qualifications and governance issue, which will hopefully be closer to being fully resolved following an upcoming meeting with SUI, QMC, and an affected individual.

Furthermore, I've continued to do my usual tasks of reviewing and authorising payments, responding to queries from BCA members and officers, and assisting with or directing these enquires on where appropriate.

In terms of my own tasks, I have made significant headway on the Health & Safety policies which are currently being reviewed by Rostam and Chris, and a second draft will be being produced soon with the ambition of them being ready for publication by the next Council meeting. Work on first drafts of the other policies I outlined in my last report has also begun. I have also been active within the Incorporation working group as we towards gaining a practical understanding of what an incorporated BCA will look like.

Finally, I mention this only for complete transparency, but since the last meeting I have become a CIC. I will of course continue to keep my professional career separate from my role in the BCA, as I have done previously as a Vertical Cave and Mine Leader and outdoor instructor.

AK runs through his report above and adds some more details.

The Health and Safety policy that covers volunteers and staff is nearly complete.

He states incorporation work is progressing but may not be ready in time for the AGM.

RN praises the amount of work both AK and CJB have done since the last meeting, in particular the negotiation of a much better deal on the insurance.

6.2 Regional Council & Representative Body Reports (Optional)

6.2.1 CNCC (Todd Rye)

No report received – report to be given at the meeting.

TRY reports great uptake on CNCC training courses – 50% of spaces go within the first 24 hours of being available. There are a few ongoing access issues that are being worked on.

6.2.2 CSCC (Linda Wilson)

No report received.

Joshitha Shivkumar is present at the meeting and asked if there is anything CSCC wants to report. She confirms nothing to report, all fine with CSCC at present.

6.2.3 Caving Wales (Allan Richardson)

The only news from Wales other than the ongoing difficulties with the NRW, is that the move by the Forest of Dean to become a separate Regional Council moves on, to this end Caving Wales was happy to second the proposal.

AR has nothing to add this to his report.

AK states there have also been issues with caving and NRW in North Wales recently.

6.2.4 DCA (Mike Higgins)

Little to report since the last meeting due to Christmas and bad weather. However, work is now commencing on the plan to deal with the entrance to Christmas Swallet and other projects will follow.

Problems are still being experienced with the gates on Rookery Black Marble Mine and Arrocks Black Marble Mine, where once again bars have been removed by angle grinder. The puzzling aspect to this continued damage is that there is no difficulty in obtaining the key if someone wants to have a look inside them. Repairs will be carried out and a surveillance camera installed at Rookery. At Arrocks, given the small size of the mine, which is only visited very occasionally, it may be necessary to consider blocking the entrance.

The winners of the Peak District Cave and Mine Explorations 2025 prize are:

- **Most New Cave Discovered** - SUSS for their extension of 104 metres of new passage in The Origin inlet in Rowter Hole;
- **Runners -up to Most New Cave Discovered** - EPC for their extension of 31.4 metres to Elastic Passage in Doom, Cussey Pot;
- **Most Mine Re-discovered** - TSG for their re-opening of 40 metres of Knowlegates Level in Odin Mine, unentered since closure of the mine in 1869.

DCA has volunteered to host the BCA AGM over the weekend of 27th/28th June and work is under way to make the event an outstanding success!

MH has high hopes DCA will complete many projects this year, especially now PK is back in role as projects officer.

RN notes that advertising for people to fill positions worked well for DCA. If CSCC wanted to try similar BCA would be happy to help with use of space in Descent etc.

VK adds there was a prize for completing a SSSI conservation form for 2025 too. All submitted forms are given an entry and winner chosen at random. VK is pleased conservation reports are received and having a prize is a good incentive.

6.2.5 DCUC (David Jean)

No report received.

DJ and RV report that they have nothing to report and everything is running smoothly.

6.2.6 CDG (Simon Perkins)

Gough's Cave - thanks to the hard work of the CSCC, access to Gough's has been re-established and operations have commenced to overhaul the infrastructure to dive base. This requires the new platforms, renewing the SRT rigging down the diver's pitch and the installation of new rope and pulleys on the hauling pitch. It is anticipated that this will be complete by spring, thus allowing diving to resume in accordance with the conditions required by Longleat.

Wookey Hole - a new access platform has been installed in the resurgence, away from the unstable section of cliff above. Once the risk assessment has been approved by the Wookey Hole management team divers can recommence use of the resurgence as a dive base

Dale Barn Cave, Kingsdale – 50m of well decorated, albeit crawling sized, passage has been discovered at the top of the bolt climb above the 540 m air bell in Boot Trapper Sump, with a notable draught and exploration ongoing.

Marble Steps Pot, Masongill – a notable enlargement to the passage within the newly discovered Picnicking Party's Paddling Pool sump has been entered, with the return intended to push this "very promising location".

Speedwell Cavern, Castleton – divers are continuing to make progress in the Main Upstream Sump of Whirpool Rising, with the setup now being in place to enable what should be some worthwhile diving in 2026. Exploration of the Mary Rose Left Hand Inlet Sump of Whirpool Rising looks to have terminated at Sump 3, owing to the very awkward nature of access to it, combined with the "seriousness" of the preceding diving.

Other recent exploration & setup work for future dives has been ongoing in, amongst others, Aquamole Pot, Cowside Beck Rising, Douk Gill Cave, Cwm Dwr 2, Tras La Jayada in the Picos de Cornion and a number of Greek caves, most promisingly in Nestani, Arcadia, where a 30m sump has been passed and open passage discovered, that has been left for Greek cavers to explore further.

Other Matters:

The Derbyshire Section are currently in the process of raising funds to purchase a new compressor. The Welsh and Northern Sections too are in the process of

considering their options in respect of substantial expenditure with regards to their own compressors.

RN thanks SP and CDG for submitting a report. He would be interested to discuss their training with them at some point.

6.3 Working Group Convenor Reports

6.3.1 Anchor (Pete Knight)

I have nothing new to report regarding the AWG at this time. The minutes of the previous meeting will be published soon.

If Council members have any questions they wish me to respond to by email before the 20th of January, please let me know. I am working away in Wales that week and probably won't have a sufficiently stable internet connection to dial in.

AK adds the group is currently quite active with email conversations going on, and upcoming meetings of sub-groups on technical issues.

RN wants to thank Bob Mehew for his contribution over many years.

6.3.2 Conservation & Access (Victoria Kocher)

I received an email from Luke Moore, a 2nd year PhD student in the University of Glasgow, who has been actively caving for a number of years. Luke has a PhD project to identify ammonia oxidising bacteria in the caving environment and is planning on writing a proposal for taking cave mud samples. Luke wanted to make sure he had the ethical and risk assessment side of things covered before he made a proposal to his university. Luke's question was does the BCA have specific guidelines for a proposal for cave sampling. An interesting question. I consulted John Gunn for a response. Here is a summary of John's response:

"At present, neither the British Caving Association (BCA) nor the British Cave Research Association (BCRA) have specific guidelines relating to sediment sampling. The following summarises relevant conservation considerations alongside the outline of the proposed research.

As a general reference, the section on Scientific Research in Caves within the IUCN–UIS Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection is recommended. While these guidelines focus primarily on protected areas, many British caves are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and permission should therefore be obtained prior to undertaking any sampling within an SSSI cave. This process can be complex, as applications are normally submitted by the landowner, and in some cases the landowner above a given section of cave may not own any entrance to that cave.

The CNCC has produced guidance relating to digging in SSSIs, and similar principles apply to the collection of sediments for scientific purposes:

<https://cncc.org.uk/conservation/digging-guidelines/>

When preparing an application for permission — and potentially for consideration by an ethics committee — it is helpful to structure proposals around the questions of why, what, where, and how.

This is a balanced and informed response to which Luke responded....

The proposed research aims to investigate whether microbial communities are actively involved in the removal of ammonia from cave environments. In a cave such as P8, a depth-dependent study may be informative, for example by assessing whether differences in microbial populations and activity can be detected between upper and lower sections of the cave. While ammonia-oxidising activity has been extensively studied in soils, much less is known about these processes in deeper cave environments.

Active cave streams are considered less suitable as primary sampling sites, as flowing water is likely to introduce a significant microbial input from surface environments. Instead, sediment samples collected close to active streams may provide a better opportunity to characterise established cave microbial communities, while minimising disturbance. Although there have been two visits to the Peak District this year, P8 has not yet been visited and an exact sampling location within the cave has therefore not been identified at this stage.

Further discussion with BCA Conservation would be welcomed, particularly regarding appropriate site selection, permissions requirements, and ensuring that any sampling is proportionate, justified, and undertaken with minimal impact on the cave environment."

I thought this was an interesting issue addressing conservation and wanted to share the conversation. Thanks go to John for such a quick and informed reply.

RN adds that occasionally BCA has students who are keen for a project but are unsure how to start. It might be good for C and A to work with BCRA to make a projects list and encourage more students to pursue a scientific interest in caves.

AR adds that NRW in Wales do have some guidelines and these have been used for sampling in OFD. VK asks AR to email with some more details. RN asks to be cc'd.

6.3.3 Finance (BCA Treasurer)

See Treasurer's Report.

6.3.4 Incorporation (Chris Bolton)

See Treasurer's Report.

6.3.5 National Access (Rostam Namaghi)

See Chair's Report.

6.3.6 Publications & Information (Zac Woodford)

I have just started organising and raising awareness around our plan to put on a series of events for the International Day of Caves and Karst. Regional Caving Council representatives/chairs should have received an email about this already and I would appreciate it if people could all start building some hype for it.

ZW reports he has just emailed the regional reps and currently trying to get an idea how how/ what/ where events can be arranged for this.

AK states he has had an email from John Gunn, who is pleased ZW has got the ball rolling and BCRA are keen to support.

RN suggests a meeting with ZW soon.

6.3.7 Qualification Management Committee (George Plant)

No report received.

RN and AK state both GP and RH at QMC have been very busy lately. There is a QMC meeting soon so probably more to report next meeting.

6.3.8 Radon (Dormant)

6.3.9 Training & Equipment (Aidan Kuhlmann)

The T&E Group met on Wednesday the 10th of December and we had a productive meeting. The meeting was chaired by Rostam and I, but we are still seeking a convenor. In the interim, I am producing the agendas and the tande@ email is pointed to my secretary@ email address.

Progress is continuing to be made on investigating using Just Go or creating our own platform for a centralised place to display all regions' training events.

A technical document looking to update the Pulley-Jammer document is also being written considering technical development since its' publication, as is a news item advising about the interaction between the Petzl Omni Triact D-ring and the Alp Design Avalon harness.

Colin Foord, a student at Bangor University, informed the group of his research into the Scott's Lock way of tying a bowline which he has seen used by cavers and will report his findings back to the group.

Recent updates to standards and news items from the UIAA were discussed and decided they currently do not require any activity from the group.

The minutes will be uploaded to the BCA website soon.

I have also been contacted by a Southern caver requesting training and I have talked to the relevant officers at CSCC to see if their request for training can be met.

AK states he is currently acting as convenor but hopes someone more permanent will found for the role soon. The group is becoming more active and a few technical documents have been planned that will help advice cavers, regarding interactions between specific bits of caving equipment and also warnings from manufacturers. RH has been looking into whether JustGo could

be used for regional training events.

RN invites anyone to propose someone for the role of convenor and then himself or AK would be able to explain the role, its scope, etc.

6.3.10 Youth & Development (Isaac Neale)

No report received.

IN reports he has spent £500 of Y and D funds to help get the SUSS Swaledale domestic expedition off the ground.

IN reports Organised fun are still active. They sent a survey around during the holidays with some strange questions. IN is not sure how many students would have seen the survey in time and answered it. He is also aware some universities didn't send the forms out at all. Organised fun have a launch event in March to discuss their findings that IN is planning to attend.

IN is keen to recruit more people to help with BCA Y and D.

RN thanks IN for the work he has done but wants to encourage IN to submit written reports in future due to the serious nature of the threat posed by Organised fun.

RN will try to help IN recruit more people for Y and D.

6.4 Additional Reports by Appointed Officers

6.4.1 British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)

No report received.

Nothing raised at the meeting.

6.4.2 FSE Representative (Tom Phillips)

No report received.

AR reports the new newsletter from FSE, EuroSpeleo, has just arrived. He has sent to AK to circulate. He points out there is a conservation award worth 800 euros plus caving kit, with a 30th April application deadline. The other thing to note is the general assembly meeting of the FSE will take place on the 16th April, online this year.

AK adds the newsletter and conservation award details have already been passed to KE to circulate. The conservation award details have also been sent to VK so the C and A working group can consider it.

6.4.3 Insurance Manager (Vacant)

6.4.4 Newsletter Editor (Vacant)

6.4.5 Safeguarding Officer (Chris Boardman)

No report received.

Nothing raised at the meeting

6.4.6 UIS Representative (John Gunn)

No report received.

Nothing raised at the meeting

6.5 Reports by BCA Staff

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

New clubs:

No new clubs since the last meeting.

Renewals:

Groups:

106 clubs have so far renewed for 2026. With 56 clubs yet to renew.

2 clubs have let me know they won't be renewing. This is due to dwindling numbers, and most members also being members of other clubs.

Most clubs are renewing their own memberships online. A few still send me spreadsheets, however it is much quicker and easier for me to renew for these clubs than with the previous membership system, so I have no issues with clubs continuing to send me lists by email if they are unable to use the online membership system at the moment.

Individuals:

3544 people have joined BCA for 2026 – 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.

This is our first year of renewals with subscription memberships in place and these worked well. Over 650 membership auto renewed on the 31st of December.

Insurance:

Insurance has been quite busy since the last meeting.

2026: The insurance has renewed for 2026, and invoices received for all levels of cover. Chris is organising payment of these. We are awaiting the 2026 policy documents. Once they are received, we will get them on the website ASAP. Howden have promised a micro-site to include our insurance FAQs. I will plan to re-write and update the membership-based FAQs once we have the insurance-based questions sorted by Howden.

Working mines: Myself, Chris and Aidan had a meeting with Howden where we discussed the issue of working mines. After clarification of the definition of working mines, and the type of working mines BCA clubs are involved with (no employees, no ore extraction) Howden agreed for these are covered by our PL policy. Howden will produce insurance FAQs for us, and I intend to ensure the working mines issue is specifically mentioned in writing.

Tours for members of the public: At the same meeting Howden were quite positive about the idea of including tours of caves/ mines for members of the

public run by BCA member clubs within the PL policy. To satisfy the insurers we are now working on some guidelines for BCA member clubs who run such trips. The groups that run such trips are already well organised and safety conscious and we anticipate they will have no problem meeting the guidelines. This is still a work in progress – hopefully we will have something confirmed by the end of this month.

Potential claim: BCA has been notified of a potential claim on our insurance by a farmer, for the loss of a cow who fell down an old, abandoned cave dig. The insurers have been notified, and we are working to get all the information they need to decide whether to accept the claim or deny liability. I am in communication with the brokers, regional council, local caving club and the farmer.

Artificial Cave:

Nothing to report at the moment.

Social Media:

I am still trying to regularly post on the BCA website, Facebook, UKCaving and Buddlepit 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.

Working groups – I would love to share some of your news – if you have anything that would be good to share, please email me! membership@british-caving.org.uk

Minutes:

Since the last council meeting I have compiled minutes for the last council meeting, one anchor group meeting, plus a Training and equipment meeting.

RN clarifies that the numbers of clubs and individuals who have renewed are higher than usual at this time of year.

CJB adds that twice as much 2026 subscription money was received in December 2025, than 2025 subscription money in December 2024. Partly due to fee increases but also that more cavers are joining earlier for the following year.

AK reports Howden will be creating a microsite for BCA insurance FAQs. This will take the responsibility for these away from the BCA and on to Howden.

7.0 Acceptance of Reports

Motion: To accept the reports received by National Council from the BCA Officers and other representatives to the National Council

Proposer: David Jean, **Seconder:** Jenny Potts

For: JP, AR, AK, JS, MH, PJ, RV, CJB, TRY, DJ

Against: None

Abstentions: None

8.0 Matters arising from the previous Council Meeting

9.0 Items for Discussion

9.1 Forest of Dean Cave Conservation & Access Group: Request to become a Regional Caving Council

Please see Appendix 2 for the letter from Forest of Dean Cave Conservation & Access Group.

10.0 Any Other Business

10.1 BCA Yearly Newsletter

AK explains the proposal KE sent to RN, AK and CJB: KE is proposing BCA start producing an annual newsletter in the style of the BCRA Review. It should be possible to generate lots of exciting input for an annual publication – to include reports from the working groups, the exec, regional councils, constituent bodies, events such as HE, NAMHO and CHECC. The proposal is for an electronic version plus a printed version for clubs and events.

The Executive discussed the proposal at their meeting yesterday and liked the idea.

KE has the costing for the BCRA 2024 Review (published Oct 25) £1536 for printing, postage plus page layout labour costs for 100 copies.

ZW asks when it is likely to be published. JP states the BCRA review is published just before the October AGM, and It might be good to aim for the June AGM for BCA. RN adds he thinks a BCA review should focus on what is happening in the organisation and where funds are being spent.

JP suggests some of the new discoveries in Forest of Dean would make a good front cover.

Both AK and RN apologise for ambushing ZW with this and explain the exec meeting was only yesterday, so they haven't had a chance to bring him up to speed.

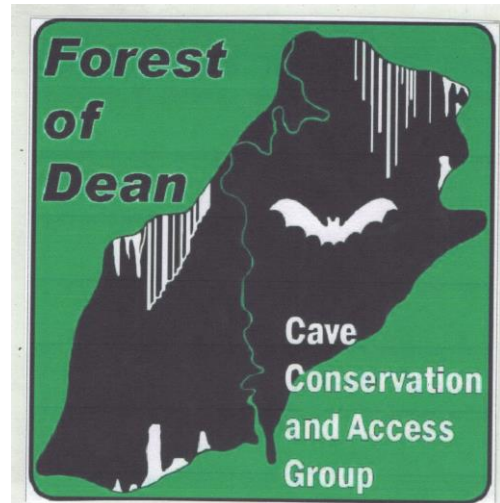
CJB adds the budget has already been agreed, so some thought needs to be given to how to get this into the budget. RN suggests bringing to a future meeting as a one off spend.

11.0 Details of the Next Meeting

Tuesday the 31st of March at 7pm via Zoom

BCA Budget 2026

EXPENDITURE	Contact	A	B	C	Weighted total	
Regional Councils						
Caving Wales/ Ogof Cymru		5000	800	2000	5600	3.6%
Council for the Northern Caving Community		5100	3000	1000	6700	4.3%
Council of Southern Caving Clubs		2450	2300	7275	4328	2.8%
Derbyshire Caving Association		4820	1650	600	5705	3.6%
Devon & Cornwall Underground Council		2500	2500	500	3800	2.4%
Total for Regional Councils 17%						
Working Groups						
Conservation & Access	VK	0	0	0	0	0.0% VK agrees the WG doesn't need a budget for itself
Equipment & Training	AK	500	1000	1000	1100	0.7% Working group accepted by default
Anchors	PK	200	200	1000	400	0.3% Working group accepted by default
Youth & Development	IN	1000	1200	1400	1740	1.1% Email from Isaac
National Access	RN	500	0	0	0	0.0% As decided by WG Meeting 23 Nov
Publications & Information	ZW	410	50	300	465	0.3% Request £80 + £300@10%, HE banner £80, stand £250-300
Qualification Management Committee	GP	0	0	0	20933	-0.6% Percentage is net of income
Radon	GT	0	0	0	0	0.0% Dormant
Artificial Cave	KE	450	90		495	0.0% £350 storage, service was £80 in 2024 allow £100
Insurance – assume 5% + 5% as 50% risk						
Public Liability < £2M + combined	CJB/KE	35329			35329	22.5% As invoice
Public Liability £2M - £5M	CJB/KE	8780			8780	5.6% As invoice
Public Liability £5M - £10M	CJB/KE	14337			14337	9.1% As invoice
Public Liability £10M - £20M	CJB/KE	4480			4480	2.9% As invoice
Cyber insurance	CJB/SM	2000	2000		3000	1.9% Awaiting quote - this is just CJB guess
Broker fee	CJB/KE	10500			10500	6.7% Total for Insurance £76426 49%
Descent	ZW/RN				2520	1.6% As 2025
GPF	Exec				3000	1.9% As 2025
BCL – grant	Exec				12000	7.6% As 2025
BCL- staff	CJB				7200	4.6% Not previously itemised, £3k in 2025 but lots to do
Membership admin	CJB				8600	5.5% Katie's work on Membership
Stripe/Adyen fees	CJB				1390	0.9% Based on members paying through JustGo in 2025
Payroll admin	CJB				625	0.4% Increased from £300 when Conformance did it
Staff support to of fers	CJB				4800	3.1% Katie's work on Insurance, Minutes, etc
Admin expenses	CJB				50	0.0% phone, post
Bank & CC charges					44	0.0% Bank no longer charging monthly fee
AGM	Exec	400	200		500	0.3% Effectively £500 +/- £100 (Rostam & Aidan to review)
Incorporation	Exec	400	200		500	0.3% Effectively £500 +/- £100 (Rostam & Aidan to review)
Safeguarding		48	24		60	0.0% DBS checks, as budgeted for 2025
SRA membership	CJB				260	0.2% 2025 + 4%
UIS membership	CJB	400	36		418	0.3% 480 Euro @ 1.2 to 1.1 Euro/£
FSE membership	CJB	711			711	0.5% 795 euro as invoice
Donation to VDHK for UNEA-7	CJB	250			712	0.5% As decided Nov Council
JustGo for membership	CJB	4749	44.88		4771	3.0% Assume 4% indexing for Q3-Q4
IT						
Licences	CJB/SM	2706			2706	1.7% Includes some legacy still used by BCRA
Support (Smon)	CJB/SM	600		500	650	0.4% Based on 2025
					179208	100.0%
INCOME						
Membership	KE/CJB	182032			182032	
Artificial cave	KE/CJB	450			450	
QMC (set against expenditure above)	MW/CJB	21825			21825	
Interest	CJB	4355			4355	
					208662	
Overall surplus					£29,454	Surplus forecast in proposal for fees increase £26150
Reserves at 1 Jan 2025	142,908	From 2024 accounts				
Anticipated deficit 2025	1050	As Sept Council with adjustments (2025 budget predicted £5930 deficit)				
Estimated Reserves 1 Jan 2026	141858					
Surplus as above	29454					
Estimated Reserves 31 Dec 2026	171312					
Allocation to development fund	15000	(provisional)				
General reserve	156312					
Target minimum reserve (75% of turnover)	156497					
	-185	margin				



19th December 2025

Dear Rostam,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of the British Caving Association on behalf of the Forest of Dean Cave Conservation and Access Group (FoDCCAG) to formally request recognition as a Regional Caving Council under the British Caving Association framework.

FoDCCAG has been actively involved in promoting safe and responsible caving within the Forest of Dean area for many years.

The principal landowner within the Forest of Dean is Forestry England with whom we have both an Access Agreement and a Management licence. The former provides the basis for caving and exploration for the Full Member Clubs of FoDCCAG (Gloucester Speleological Society, Royal Forest of Dean Caving Club & Hades Caving Club) and the latter allows FoDCCAG to administer access for visiting cavers on behalf of FE.

The Forest of Dean is a unique area that requires a local “Hands on Approach” which is what FoDCCAG has achieved and continues to do. The group works closely with the local cavers to ensure sustainable access, cave conservation, and education.

A prime example of the work of FoDCCAG was the negotiations and subsequent purchase of the land surrounding the Wet Sink and Dry Sink Cave Entrances by FoDCCAG Ltd the company we set up to enable this to proceed which has secured access for **all cavers** for perpetuity. Add to this the amazing work undertaken within Redhouse Lane Cave on the surveying and conservation work that was run hand in hand with the discoveries and you have a group that is really working hard.

FoDCCAG has also been very proactive and works very closely with the Gloucestershire Bat Group on the ongoing monitoring programme for the significant bat population that exists within the area.

We believe that becoming a Regional Caving Council will allow us to:

- Strengthen our ability to represent local cavers and clubs.
- Improve coordination with the BCA and other regional councils.
- Enhance conservation efforts and access negotiations in our region.

We already operate in line with BCA principles and maintain strong relationships with local stakeholders. Formal recognition would help us better serve the caving community and contribute to the national network.

We are in the process of finalising constitution amendments ready to support becoming a Regional Council and have agreed that the area should be broadly the same as the present FoDCCAG region – that being The Forest of Dean and the immediate surrounding areas of Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire and Herefordshire.

We can supply an outline boundary map if required.

It should be noted that Otter Hole and its catchment area is already within the area administered by FoDCCAG and this situation is not going to change. This has already been clarified with Caving Wales.

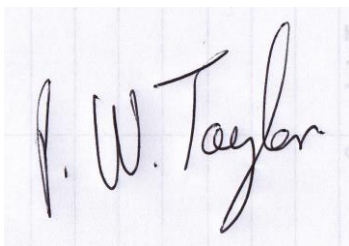
We have also decided to keep our present name – Forest of Dean Cave Conservation and Access Group (FoDCCAG) to retain recognition and branding etc. and because it summarises what we are and the present acronym is valued.

Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to your response and to working more closely with the British Caving Association.

We have the full support of Caving Wales for this application and they have agreed to Second it.

If you require any further information or documentation then please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Ian Healey our secretary. secretary@fodccag.org.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink on a white background. The signature reads "P. W. Taylor" in a cursive, slightly slanted script. The letters are connected, and the overall style is fluid and personal.

Paul Taylor FoDCCAG Chair

chairman@fodccag.org.uk