



## Minutes for Council Meeting

Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup> of March at 7pm

Held via Zoom

<b>Agenda Item No.</b>	<b>Agenda Item Name</b>
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**

Allan Richardson, John Gunn, Andy Eavis, Jess Brock

### **2.0 Persons present**

Aidan Kuhlmann, Rostam Namghi, Tony Radmall, Chris Bolton, Josh White, Isaac Neale, Tom Phillips, Linda Wilson, Mike Higgins, Richard Vooght, David Jean, Stephan Natynczuk Victoria Kocher, Zac Woodford, Jenny Potts, Chris Boardman, Andrew Hinde

### 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)	Jess Brock	JB	Y
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Andy Eavis	AE	Y
<b>Group Member Representatives</b>	Position 1 (2023-2025)	Aodhán Ó Gabhann	AG	Y
	Position 2 (2024-2026)	Jenny Potts	JP	Y
<b>Regional Council Representatives</b>	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
<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
	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
<b>Other Positions</b>	FSE Rep	Allan Richardson	AR	N
	Insurance	Josh White	JW	N
	Newsletter Editor			N
	Safeguarding Officer	Chris Boardman	CBD	N
	UIS Rep	Ged Champion	GC	N
	BCL Representative	Jenny Potts	JP	N
<b>BCA Staff</b>	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?	15/03 Report?	
<b>BCA Executive</b>	Chair	RN	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	Treasurer	CJB	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	Secretary	AK	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
<b>Members Representatives</b>	Position 1	JB	N	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	
	Position 2	AE	N	N/A	N	N/A	Y	N/A	
<b>Group Member Representatives</b>	Position 1	AG	N	N/A	Y	N/A	N	N/A	
	Position 2	JP	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	
<b>Regional Council Representatives</b>	Ogofa Cymru	AR	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	
	CNCC	TRY	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
	CSCC	LJW	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	DCA	MH	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	
N.B: Reports are optional	DCUC	DJ	N	N	Y	N	N	N	
	ACI	SN	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	
	BCRA	JG	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	
	BCRC	EP	N	N	N	N	N	N	
N.B: Reports are optional	CDG	CC	N	N	N	N	N	N	
	CHECC	TP	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	
	NAMHO	SH	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	
	NCSASU	TR	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	
	WP CST	RV	N	N	Y	N	N	N	
<b>Working Group Convenors</b>	C&A	VK	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
	T&E	SG	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	
	Y&D	IN	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	N/A	
(Dormant)	CRoW		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
	IT		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
	P&I	ZW	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
	QMC	GP	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	
(Dormant)	Radon		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
(Dormant)	CoG		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
<b>Other Positions</b>	FSE Rep	AR	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	
	Insurance	JW	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	
	(Vacant)	Newsletter		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
		Safeguarding	CBD	N	N	Y	N	N	N
		UIS Rep.	GC	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
		BCL Rep.	JP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	Membership	KE	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	Y	

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

## 5.0 Acceptance of previous meeting's minutes

**Proposal: To accept the minutes of the previous Council Meetings as submitted by the Secretary**

**Proposer: AK, Seconder: TR**

**For: AK, LJW, RV, MH, SN, TP**

**Against:** None

**Abstentions:** CJB – abstained due to previous absence

## 6.0 Officer Reports

### 6.1 Executive

#### 6.1.1 Chair (Rostam Namaghi)

*The purpose of this meeting is to put things forward to the AGM and so I have chosen to focus on two things; proposals to the AGM and to signal what my report to the AGM will cover. The proposals (one constitutional change, one motion) are both aimed to restore the AGM as a place of importance and genuine debate - the BCA is better when its members hold it to account and are interested. My hope for the AGMs is that we have multiple small proposals and policies that are uncontentious - things like changing a wording in the bolting policy to accommodate insurance i.e. things that need scrutiny but have been on the whole uncontentious.*

*My proposal is to change:*

#### **"7.9 VOTING AT GENERAL MEETINGS**

*Any person may speak at a General Meeting, subject to the Chair's agreement. All motions must be first voted on by individual members present at the meeting and eligible to vote. All motions with support from at least 25% of those individuals who vote, or 10 individuals (whichever is lower) must be taken forward to an online ballot of all individual members eligible to vote."*

*To:*

#### **"7.9 VOTING AT GENERAL MEETINGS**

*Any person may speak at a General Meeting, subject to the Chair's agreement. All motions must be first voted on by individual members present at the meeting and eligible to vote. All motions failing to pass with a least 75% support of those individuals who vote must be taken forward to an online ballot of all individual members eligible to vote."*

*The rationale is to make the AGM matter - it was an important area of debate rather than a tick box exercise which the progression of everything to an online vote has become. It also allows uncontentious updates to policies to pass at AGM.*

*And a motion:*

*That the following policies be delegated to the National Council for regular update:*

*Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding, Bullying and Harassment, and Privacy Policy.*

*To signal what will be on my agenda for the coming year - I believe we have recruited well and so the next step is to see the people we have recruited deliver on projects, like the Demographics report earlier this year, it's important to begin delivering and making cavers proud to be members of the BCA. The major projects will be looking at funding for this National Governing Body (seeing if we can get even a fraction of what the SUI or FFS get) and looking to professionalise the organisation even further by looking at limited company status. Both of these major projects will take time, and it is all part of the future proofing we need to keep the sport alive and well.*

RN elaborated on his reasoning for his proposals, as summarised in his report, and added that the 75% threshold in the first proposal may not be the right threshold and that he was open to others' thoughts on it. RN also accepted CJB's suggestion to refine the wording of the first proposal to:

"7.9 Any person may speak at a General Meeting, subject to the Chair's agreement. All motions must be first voted on by individual members present at the meeting and eligible to vote. Any motion supported by at least 75% of the votes cast is passed at the AGM without further action. Any motion not passed at the AGM must be taken forward to an online ballot of all individual members eligible to vote."

CJB reminded Council that the discussion will be recorded in the minutes and therefore if any persons think an important point was missed then the discussion can be re-raised at the AGM.

JP raised concerns that the proposal could disenfranchise BCA members who are unable to attend the AGM due to constraints such as travelling distance. JP informed Council the NCA and BCA used to rotate around the country and found regional differences between the approach of cavers and that this influenced AGM policy due to the change in representation of cavers from different regions.

VK raised the suggestion of it being a hybrid meeting. RN agreed with this and explained that the plan was for it to be a hybrid meeting which would allow those unable to attend in person to attend. RN recognised some work will need to be done to ensure those participating online are able to effectively participate and went on to ask if it was the percentage threshold that was the root of the issue and if a greater threshold would allay these fears. JP responded that her concern was against the principle.

LJW added that she shared JPs concerns, adding that she has always found those attending online don't participate as equals in hybrid-meetings, explaining the loss of paralinguistic indicators hampers understanding and effective communication.

CBD reminded Council that the AGMs only moved to being online with Covid and previously they were all in person. CBD added that the requirement to travel was for only one day a year and very effective and useful. Consequently, he proposed that it should be experimented with and to give hybrid a try. CBD suggested that one person is given the job of observing the online room and make it their role to ensure online voices are heard.

JW contributed that the CNCC run all their meetings in a hybrid format and that they run smoothly and that it's simply a matter of how they're managed.

RN responded to the concerns raised that he was concerned that the current system dismissed the need for genuine discussion about the policies because all issues would be decided by an online vote. RN opined that the BCA currently doesn't examine policies well at AGMs because of this and being all online. He explained that for people to be driven to engage with items at the AGM and want to attend them in person where more valuable discussions are had, then they need agency at the meeting. Furthermore, he added that if anyone has any concerns over policies then they will have plenty of chance to attend the meeting online, having had 18 weeks' notice of the proposal, and be able to vote against the motion passing, causing it to fall below the threshold needed for it to pass without an online vote.

TR raised a concern about the proportion of the BCA membership who participate in the online vote. RN responded that before the online voting system the ~2-3% of the membership voted and with it the figure is ~8-10%. He added more needs to be done but that it is a significant proportion.

JP said that she was not opposed to face-to-face meetings. However, explained that her concern was that nevertheless the host and neighbouring regions will be better represented than those further afield and how this could cause a proposal to meet the threshold where elsewhere it would not.

CJB clarified that by 'votes cast' those present online were included. RN also clarified that the proposal does not apply to constitutional amendments. CJB asked if a very high threshold would solve JPs concerns. RN also proposed that there could be a mechanism where National Council could force an item to go to a national vote.

LJW spoke in support of having a high threshold as a trial. CJB proposed that the alternative approach to a high threshold to pass would be a low number of individuals to veto the proposal and force it to go to a national vote.

RN told Council that this was something they would be deciding at the AGM and asked for anyone who had a strong opinion about the

proposal to right to him with well-reasoned thoughts and a proposal to help him craft the proposal into a better policy.

JW asked if there was any mechanism where the Chair of the AGM or the Executive could step in and prevent abuse of the mechanism. LJW explained that this would be a very hard thing to appropriately word and that she believed the current % based threshold was the most resilient form suggested.

Council discussed the previous thresholds for passing constitutional amendments and proposals. RN stated he would amend his proposal to require a threshold of 90%.

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

*The annual accounts for 2024 are complete and I expect they will have been signed off by the scrutineer, John Sheehy, before the date of the Council meeting. I will present the accounts to the Council meeting on 6 May.*

- *the deficit was £21k, less than the budget of £27.5k, mainly as a result of lower than expected spend on Y&D and Regional Claims (based on estimates from Regional Treasurers)*
- *Net assets are £142k, compared to £165k the previous year. After deduction of the Insurance reserve (£80k), the General Reserve is £62k compared to a target of £60k.*

*The change to JustGo has resulted in many more 2025 membership fees being paid during December, approx. £31k compared to £10k the previous year.*

*There has been no unexpected expenditure so far in 2025.*

*I have now implemented Dual Control on the BCA's accounts with HSBC, to meet the requirements of the Constitution. This means that every transaction must be approved by two people, or in some cases three. Council has previously approved smaller payments being made without this safeguard, but HSBC's systems don't allow that flexibility.*

*The 2-year bond we had invested in with the United Trust Bank matured in January and I have re-invested the funds in a 3-month bond. The interest rate is only 0.1% lower and I do not think it wise to lock up our reserve for 2 years.*

*My next task as Treasurer is to lead a Business Risk Assessment, to establish whether the amounts we have previously decided to retain as reserves are still appropriate. This is crucial to deciding whether we need to raise fees for 2026. If any Council members have previous experience of similar work I would appreciate their assistance.*

*For at least the last ten years, the payroll administration for BCA's staff has been generously provided by Nick Williams' company,*

*Conformance. I would like to record BCA's thanks for this support. They have now asked that BCA find another way to manage this, and I am looking for a suitable payroll bureau.*

CJB added that he hadn't yet had confirmation of the annual accounts by the scrutineer (John Sheehy), but that they had been in communication and no concerns had been raised with his (CJB's) methodology.

RN thanked Nick Williams for the work he and his company Conformance has done for the BCA over the years and acknowledged the difficult situation Nick Williams is in. RN said that this was a good cause to look at the future of the BCA's administration with its administration slowly moving away from all being centralised in Derbyshire and that the BCA needs to make sure it doesn't take the persons granted, recognise all the hard work they do, as well as look to recruit more people into these important background roles.

CJB told Council that Conformance had advised him that managing the payroll could be done by a member of staff, but he didn't believe this was a sensible option because the BCA would need at least a few members of staff to manage the payroll to ensure that everyone still gets paid when one or more persons are on leave. Furthermore, it requires a level of expertise to manage when things go wrong. CJB said that currently the cost for Conformance to run the payroll is £250 and that he would guess the cost could likely double. Finally, CJB said that he was looking to progress with the business risk assessment and was looking for volunteers to assist with it. LJW offered her help.

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

*Over the last period, Rostam and I have met with our counterparts at SUI and been subsequent in discussions with them about how we can best help each other. We are keen to assist SUI in doing all the activities the BCA currently does in whatever way we can.*

*I have responded to the usual variety of questions from outdoor instructors, and these were passed on to Mary Wilde. Unusually, I received an enquiry from a BBC journalist about the Godstone sinkhole. I put the journalist in contact with the WCMS and they received from them everything they were looking for.*

*At the TSG AGM I received an enquiry about the new Ofcom regulations that will affect caving clubs who host forums. Unfortunately, I have been unable to provide much assistance in understanding the new regulations – it is an area with a severely labyrinthine grouping of primary legislation, policy documents, and secondary legislation that I haven't been able to dedicate the time yet to come to understand it in a significant enough way.*

*I attended CHECC's Southern regional event, and it was good to see that the southern student caving clubs seemed broadly healthy, as well as finding myself in the Mendip Hills the following weekend for a double dose of lovely weather on Mendip.*

*Finally, I have been continuing to work on the Health and Safety documents and procedures, alongside Chris.*

AK reported to Council that an updated version of the manual of operations would be brought to Council to approve soon, with the intention being to have it on its own webpage on the BCA website, where it would be more visible and accessible. Additionally, AK reported he had created a new page on the BCA website with a list of all of Council's previously passed proposals so that Council is more transparent and so it is easier for Council to know its own prior actions. AK added that helping to maintain this page would be a job shared between himself and BCA staff.

RN contributed that one of the key benefits of moving more work to BCA staff has helped make the organisation more contactable and transparent, as well as worthwhile considering the high turnover of secretaries due to the administrative burden of the role.

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

### **6.2.1 CSCC (Linda Wilson)**

#### **General**

*Our treasurer has reported that if all BCA clubs renew, we will have 40 CSCC affiliated clubs this year and one non-BCA club. The latest club to affiliate was the Plymouth University Adventure and Expeditions Club. He is still working on the accounts for this year for our upcoming AGM in May but believes our core claim will be £187 for this year.*

*CSCC is planning an event on 31st May 2025 provisionally entitled Cave the Sun. Initial publicity for this generated some initial outside concerns that this would have a deleterious effect on cave conservation. The organiser, Dave Keegan, our training officer, has corresponded with those concerned and has, we believe, allayed their fears by confirming that full consideration is being given to the conservation aspects of the event and that there will be a strong conservation focus. If anyone still has any concerns, please contact Dave Keegan as organiser.*

#### **Equipment**

*Our Equipment Officer has received bolting requests for Rhino Rift fourth pitch and GB Devil's Elbow climb. Both have been approved. Further improvements have been made with relevant sections of our website.*

## **Conservation and Access**

### *Longleat*

*The formalisation of the Longleat Access Agreement is, unfortunately, taking longer than expected. A first draft of the formal documents was written and submitted to Longleat at the*

*end of November. This has been reviewed by Longleat and their comments were received at the end of January. None of the comments or suggested changes are contentious and a second draft has now been written and submitted. There are two clauses they intend to pass to their solicitors for review and we await the outcome of this.*

### *Harridge Woods*

*The Harridge Wood Nature Reserve access agreement is ready to go but is awaiting CSCC to complete the work required to provide an online permit system.*

### *Waterwheel Swallet*

*Several reports were received that the padlock on Waterwheel Swallet had seized and could not be opened. The padlock was inspected the next day, and the lock barrel was found to be full of mud. Flushing this out allowed the padlock to be opened and it was changed for a new one. The old padlock has been cleaned, lubricated and put back in stock.*

### *Denny's Hole*

*The suspect blue polypropylene tow rope has been removed from the entrance.*

### *Sludge Pit Cave*

*The landowner of Sludge Pit has reported that person's unknown had emptied the money from the collection bucket and changed the padlock. This is the second time this has happened, the first being November 2023. He has stated that if this happens again, he will seriously consider closing the cave. Following a lengthy discussion with him, several actions have been agreed and actioned. The padlock has been changed and the money that was in the bucket has been collected and banked. The Cheddar Cave Club have undertaken to empty the money from the bucket on a regular basis. Also, the log book has been changed for a waterproof one.*

### *Goodwill Fees*

*The goodwill fees for Swildon's Hole, Eastwater Cavern, Sludge Pit, and North Hill Swallet have increases to £2.*

## CSCC Access Guide

Many updates have been made to the CSCC Access Guide including:-

- An updated telephone number for Rocket Drop
- Updating 14 sites to include a link to the CSCC maintained bolts list
- Sludge Pit access information
- Revised good will fee

## Access Agreements

The Singing River Mine access agreement has now been in place for 18 months and is running smoothly. During this time there have been 21 trips, involving some 125 cavers.

The access agreement with Wookey has run without issue over the past three months. There have been 7 trips since the November CSCC meeting, involving some 36 cavers.

## Future Priorities

In the coming months our C&A officer will be concentrating on the following priorities:-

- 1) Write the formal access agreement for the Caves of Cheddar Gorge
- 2) Arrange and complete the training of Wardens for the Cheddar Caves
- 3) Finalise the access arrangements (on-line facilities) for Harridge Woods
- 4) Discuss and agree the required Cow Hole entrance work with the landowner.

Date: 8.3.25

### **6.2.2 CHECC** (Tom Phillips)

Since becoming CHECC Chair 18 months ago, the organisation has gone through significant revitalisation. This has included the reinstatement of our 3 key forums alongside additional training opportunities for student cavers.

Given the limited financial capabilities of Youth and Development at present we have shifted the pricing of our events to allow of accrual of savings within the organisation. These have been and will be used to help run dedicated training weekends and provide additional support to student clubs.

TR informed TP that at the recent WSG meeting they had a very positive letter about CHECC's recent SCHECC event.

### **6.2.3 DCA (Mike Higgins)**

*The DCA AGM took place at the British Caving Library, Glutton Bridge, on Saturday 22nd February. No changes in the Officers other than that Aiden Lumb has formally been elected as Training Officer. Nigel Atkins, DCA's Training Officer for many years, was elected an Honorary Member. We are still without a Project Officer and this has meant a lack of progress on a number of outstanding access and conservation issues. On a positive note, however, a meeting had taken place with the new owners of Masson Quarry who are keen to support access to the mines on their land.*

RN added that in this period there had also been the Derbyshire Explorer's Forum.

### **6.2.4 Ogof Cymru/ Caving Wales**

Nothing to report.

### **6.2.5 CNCC (Andrew Hinde)**

*Dow Cave and Park Gill has been purchased by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.*

*CNCC Anchor Policy will be reviewed and updated later this year.*

*Far Country (GG) fixed ladder will be removed and replaced with a new one with funding from CNCC. IC anchors will be installed by the anchor team at the pitch head.*

*CNCC committee endorsed the revision of the constitution which will be voted on at the AGM.*

*Shuttleworth Pot has undergone some stabilisation work and is open for online booking.*

LJW asked what the purchase of Dow Cave and Park Gill Cave by the Yorkshire Wildlife trust meant for access. AH responded that it would be an improvement with groups no longer being berated by the landowner. Nevertheless, instructed caving groups still need to contact the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to negotiate their own access.

## **6.3 Working Group Convenor Reports**

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

*Victoria Kocher with Richard Vooght*

*This report is a report from the former C and A Officer Richard Vooght. I have recently taken over the role. As I get in touch with the different regions, I will be able to report on the current matters arising.*

*During the last 6 months, several items have been dealt with regarding conservation and access. The main ones were. After the previous AGM, the annual allowance for each region has been increased to £3,000. This money was to allow each region to carry out any tasks that didn't require approval from the Conservation and Access Working Group; these were the replacement of gates, locks, repair of fences and more.*

*The land purchase around Wet Sink in the Forest of Dean was completed thanks to all the hard work from Caving for Wales and the Forest of Dean Cave Conservation and Access Group.*

9.3.25

CJB clarified that the £3,000 limit was introduced in 2023 and that in Autumn 2024 Council changed the system to one where each region has a budgeted amount that they can spend on routine C&A projects without needing to go to the Working Group.

**6.3.2 Countryside Rights of Way** (Dormant)

**6.3.3 Information Technology** (Vacant)

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

*A quiet period but building up the structure of the student handbook. Also developed some communication channels to better enable communications with the Higher education clubs in anticipation of polling them for information for the handbook and going forward into the future as well.*

RN added that a BCA Survey would be being sent out soon, hopefully before the AGM with the view of getting feedback from the BCA membership.

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

*QMC continues to be a busy little entity - Mary is reviewing all our documents after/during the move to Google Workspaces, with the help of myself and a few others.*

*Also, we've had no applicants to take over from me as Chair, so you're stuck with me for a while yet!*

**6.3.6 Radon** (Dormant)

**6.3.7 Training & Equipment** (Steve Gray)

No report received.

**6.3.8 Youth & Development** (Isaac Neale)

*If I were to give an overall message for this report it may be "this could be the start of something good"*

*I am planning on giving £72 of the Y&D budget to Manchester University Speleology Club to alleviate a bit of their cost of running their first trial month of SRT training at a new venue.*

*The BCA was approached by the student caving club at Newcastle University asking for a financial injection which, in their view, was required to keep their club running. In this instance we weren't able to provide the exact assistance they were asking for. Instead, I have responded laying out a plan for contacting a wider network of individuals / groups who may be able to assist the club in other ways. In terms of direct student liaison (not discussing here the obvious way forward of reaching out to alumni / cavers in the Newcastle area), ULSA may be able to offer some assistance, I have asked them to reach out to Newcastle and describe their processes to them. Aidan, ULSA's president has agreed also to ask ULSA's freshers about what like about the club, especially how they feel about trip prices (apprehensiveness about raising costs being a particular factor in Newcastle's situation). This information has a double use as it could subsequently be fed into the student caving handbook.*

*With International Women's Day recently passing it presented an opportunity for a project now being ran in conjunction with Polly Judd, the Descent youth correspondent. I discovered that my town's mayor was a caver a few months ago. We plan on filming an interview with her down a cave for a non-caving audience. This can both promote the mayor as an important female figure in the community and likewise promote caving to an audience which may not ordinarily consider it.*

*At the time of writing, I am planning to have a chat with Emily Tilby about creating a central list of research directions / options / ideas for students interested in cave science. From chatting to people recently everyone says this sounds like a brilliant idea and supports it wholeheartedly. Now all is left to do is work out what that idea would actually look like!*

*Final one we have is some potential good news for the student surveying project. Of course, the big factor that needs to be addressed in such a regard is longevity. A friend of mine (who has previously expressed interest in helping Y&D activities) is currently involved in surveying around Chapel-le-Dale and would be willing to include some keen students as part of a longer-term effort. Whilst it is of course a bit small, it could serve as a good proof of concept to help sell the idea to other parties.*

*Finally on the 8th of March I attended the UBSS annual dinner. As tempting as it is to try and sell this as a Y&D networking effort I would have been going anyway and it was, for a large part, fun with my friends.*

*It has been a longer report this time around. Perhaps I am trying to make up for my lack of a report from the last meeting. There are a lot of things to crack on with here but none of them should be too taxing. If all goes to plan the next report will be an awesome affair.*

IN added that the discussion with Emily Tilby had been delayed due to calendar issues but was still going ahead. Additionally, IN reported he had recently met Lancaster University Speleological Society and impressed on them the value of becoming a BCA member club. RN remarked that some Council members will know that the BCA invested in starting up LUSS several years ago. RN also explained that as part of his spending IN had done some incredibly valuable work networking to create an entire support group of experienced cavers to assist the club.

LJW asked whether there was the space in the Youth and Development budget to provide a grant for student cavers to travel overseas to the international events that were happening. JW replied that the ones he and LJW put together few years ago were done with the view the next similar events (UIS) would be many miles further away. Additionally, those grants were ~£500 but that for travelling to South America the same value would not be great enough to significantly reduce the barrier to access for student cavers.

ZW confirmed that the £500 given to clubs previously to assist several student cavers to attend, while it didn't cover half the cost for one person this time round.

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

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

#### **1. Further archive donations received.**

*A substantial collection of material from the late Don Mellor has generously been donated to BCL by Don's widow. This is now being sorted and includes a great deal of important archive material. It also includes a large number of duplicate items which are currently being listed and which will shortly be offered to caving clubs seeking to enlarge their libraries.*

#### **2. BSA Online Archive**

*The BSA Records, housed at the British Geological Survey, are at long last available in full on the BCL website as part of the BCRA Online Archive. A huge effort by a number of volunteers associated with BCL, assisted by BGS staff, has been required to make this available online and accessible to all cavers. There is now an online index to the contents of the collection and it can be accessed at <https://archives.bcra.org.uk/bsa.html>*

#### **3. Hidden Earth**

The BCL stand at Hidden Earth 2024 saw duplicated publications of all sorts available in return for donations, raising a total of around £700. BCL also had a presence at the Derbyshire Explorers Forum in February this year, raising over £100 in donations for duplicate items. There will be a BCL stand at Hidden Earth 2025.

#### **6.4.2 FSE Representative (Allan Richardson)**

The next General Assembly Meeting (GAM) is to be held online on the 13th of May at 20:30. They are hoping that a lot more delegates will attend. This follows the near debacle of the GAM in Southern Italy which was difficult to get to and where they refused to allow online access, even though I requested it.

##### EuroSpeleo Protection Label 2025

This is an award from the FSE to help promote cave protection activities, applications need to be in by 30th April, more details on the EuroSpeleo website.

##### Support Speleo-TV

Speleo-TV is a working group of the European Speleological Federation with a mission to offer cavers a platform for sharing their creative work with the caving community around the world, more details on the EuroSpeleo website.

##### EuroSpeleo Project guidelines change

These have changed in terms of participants check the Eurospeleo website for details.

##### World Cleanup Day 2025 (Addition by AK on behalf of AR)

Following on from the FSE's efforts last year for World Cleanup Day 2025 the FSE wants to expand its efforts in collecting information about clean-up activities and situations in the countries of FSE Member-Organisations.

They are again inviting each FSE Member-Organisation to join in and send them the information concerning their countries. The FSE have also reminded their members that this does not need to be a large report but instead basic facts and a general overview. Photos of activities would be highly appreciated.

#### **6.4.3 Insurance Manager (Josh White)**

The 2025 renewals have now been finalised, and the documents are available on the BCA Insurance page.

Several queries have been received over the last few months which can be found within our FAQs. This reiterates to me that the existing FAQ format is unsuitable, and so I'm beginning to rethink the format

*and content of this page on the website. I'll be working through these with Katie to see what questions are the most important to have shown within these FAQs.*

*Katie has worked through the 2025 renewals with very minor support from myself, and I have full faith in her knowledge to carry on this work, and so as planned as of the 2025 AGM, I'll be standing down as Insurance manager, and the email insurance@british-caving.org.uk will be monitored by Katie going forwards.*

JW added that he hadn't added the documents to the webpage due to IT issues he believes he has now resolved and will be adding them soon.

AK added that recently JW had used the new capabilities of google Workspace to create a shared drive to create a shared folder so Katie, himself, and the BCA executive now all have access to all the insurance documents. AH asked JW about this year's Letter of Proof and whether it was available. JW replied that he now had this and would be adding it to the website very soon.

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

*No report received.*

CBD explained that he almost never makes reports because his role has two halves: replying to questions about taking young people caving and processing DBS certificates; and the other part of his work is confidential.

CBD informed Council that the previous week he had taken a course where he had been recertified as a Safeguarding Officer. Furthermore, CBD that unless asked by Council he normally stays quiet.

RN echoed CBD's comments, adding that there had been incidents over the last 12 months and that CBD had done his due diligence and they weren't supposed to be reported to Council. As well as confirming that the BCA was providing a valuable service for BCA members and covering the BCA in terms of liabilities. RN proposed that it would be good to communicate to the membership the value of the work and the role.

#### **6.4.5 Newsletter Editor (Vacant)**

#### **6.4.6 UIS Representative (Ged Campion)**

*I attended the last UIS bureau on 27th February.*

*The main issues are:*

#### ***International Day of Caves and Karst***

*Work continues to promote the UNESCO International Day of Caves and Karst initiative (IDCK) The purpose of this is long-term conservation*

and sustainable management of caves and karst worldwide. Work continues to encourage national organisations and bodies to support this initiative.

### **International Congress of Speleology (ICS) 2029**

A planning group has been established to submit a bid for 2029.

President - Andy Eavis

Vice President, Science and Publications - John Gunn

Vice President, Caving (including Pre and Post excursions) - Rostam Namaghi

Secretary - Dave Jones

Treasurer - Bill Nix

Entertainment Manager - Les Williams

International Union of Speleology Link - Ged Campion.

Venue Coordinators-Jointly Andy Eavis and Ged Campion.

Promotional material - Lucy Hyde.

Promotional Video - Bartek Biela.

IT Coordinator - Gary Douthwaite

Council may be aware that Romania has recently submitted a bid for 2029 ICS. It may be that they have submitted too late for their bid to be considered by the ICS general assembly in Brazil in July. There is therefore the possibility of the bureau agreeing not to accept their bid. Equally, the bureau may have flexibility to accept their submission and then we would be in direct competition with Romania. In that case delegates at the ICS general assembly in Brazil would vote on which bid was the better one. The consensus so far, however, is that the UK should still submit a bid. There is considerable enthusiasm for us to host ICS in 2029 amongst the planning group.

## **6.5 Reports by BCA Staff**

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

#### **Membership:**

#### **New club:**

The Subterranean Explorers Club have applied to join BCA as a member club.

This new club has been set up primarily for alumni of Southampton University caving club, current students, recent graduates from other university clubs plus people local to the Southampton area.

The focus of the club is caving, with climbing and scuba diving to a lesser degree.

I have looked over their constitution and recommend BCA accepts them as a member club.

### **Group Membership of BCA**

So far 157 groups have joined BCA for 2025.

There are 14 groups who were 2024 members and have not yet renewed. 6 of these are not re-joining BCA for 2025. One further group is currently considering whether to renew.

The other 7 are either planning to renew soon or haven't replied to my emails. I will make contact with these 7 again later in March to check if BCA can help them renew.

### **Individual BCA members**

5774 people have joined BCA for 2025 – this includes members joining directly and also those joining via clubs.

### **New membership system**

The system is working well and is a vast improvement on the multiple, and very long, spreadsheets of previous years. Clubs are offering useful feedback, and I am continuing to tweak the new system, so it better suits the BCA membership system.

### **Insurance:**

See Josh's report for more info.

Since the last meeting I have added the Hidden Earth tech equipment to the insurance.

### **Artificial Cave:**

The risk assessment and cave information sheet have both been updated, following a review by Aidan. The cave has bookings from April onwards but has plenty of availability if you know of any events who might be interested!

### **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.

RN added that AK, CJB, and himself had enquired with Katie why the clubs hadn't renewed and learnt that they had disbanded, and that

the BCA hadn't lost many members because the persons in those clubs were already members of other clubs. RN informed Council that Katie was asking every club who wasn't renewing why they weren't to learn if they needed any support that BCA officers or other organisations could provide.

CJB confirmed to Council that under the Constitution KE had the power to accept applications to become BCA member clubs on Council's behalf. Consequently, both clubs are accepted.

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

**8.0 Items for Discussion**

**9.0 Any Other Business**

**9.1 Establishing the Recorder and Chair for the AGM**

*"The 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."*

***Proposal: That Rostam Namaghi be nominated Chair for the General Meeting***

***Proposal: That Aidan Kuhlmann be nominated Recorder for the General Meeting***

**Proposal to appoint Rostam Namaghi as Chair and Aidan Kuhlmann as Recorder for the Annual General Meeting**

**Proposer:** TR, **Seconder:** LJW

**For:** JP, CJB, AK, LJW, RV, TR, MH, SN, AH, TP

**Against:** None

**Abstentions:** None

**10.0 Details of the Next Meeting**

Tuesday the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2025 at 7pm via Zoom.