

**The National Caving Association
Minutes of the Equipment and Techniques Committee**

Date: 24th November 2001

Location: Stafford Social Club

Attendees: Les Williams, Jenny Potts, Owen Clarke, Adrian Fawcett, Andy Pryke,
Glenn Jones (minutes)

Apologies: Bob Mehew, Les Sykes, Chips Rafferty, Bob Darman, Dave Appleing

1.0 Agree minutes of previous meeting:

The minutes of the August 5th 2000 meeting were agreed apart from:

- 4.1.2 JP to speak to Bob Dearman re DCA replacement for ML on this committee
- amend section 4.1.3 to LS
- chase LS re: 7.1.2/3

It was also agreed that where possible, these minutes should be written up and distributed for comment within four weeks of the meeting, followed by a further two weeks to receive comment and feedback. The minutes should then go to the NCA web site.

(Update: This is a fine aspiration, the reality, as demonstrated, is sometimes just not achievable!)

Outstanding Actions from Minutes of 5th August 2000

NB: Please note that I have changed the following action numbers to reflect agenda items. I intend to work to a standard agenda – AOB items will be added incrementally as appropriate.

No	Action	Owner	Action Date	Status
1.1.1	Chase BM for current list of EC assets and who holds them	GJ	By next meeting	Ongoing
1.1.2	Discuss EC budget with BM	GJ	By next meeting	Ongoing

2.0 Anchor Replacement Programme

Current Status:

- LS submitted a detailed report on the ARP Seminar held on 3rd and 4th November.
- JP commented that in Derbyshire, where anchors are placed within NT/SSSI areas, DCA have to request permission from NT/SSSI prior to anchor placements due to SSSI status and possible increased usage.
- LW has had a request from Cheddar Adventure Caving to place Eco anchors (specifically for their commercial use) under the ARP. This forum confirmed that provided CSCC agreed, then he should install the anchors to ARP specification.
- AP noted that DCUC were waiting for LS to arrange for the testing of DCUC's anchor test bed.
- AF commented that he is still waiting on LS to arrange dates for ARP training course. AF is still checking anchors as they come up for inspection, but he is not installing further anchors until training is complete.
- LS (written) reported that he would not be able to complete the Regional ARP documentation assessment until early 2002.
- A discussion took place re the impact of F&M on ARP installers – some installers will not have installed anchors for more than 12 months.

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- GJ needs to confirm latest version of ARP policy with LS and agree version control. Also require confirmation on current policy for training refresher courses.
- The meeting discussed whether there is a requirement for a separate (training and insurance) policy required for people who only test (and submit reports) on anchor status.
- JP requested clarification on insurance position if someone installed anchors on DCA scheme and consequently changed to BCRA scheme – is that person still covered? .

Actions

No	Action	Owner	Action Date	Status
2.1.1	Copy Dave Appleing with minutes of this meeting <u>DA has been invited to send representative to these meetings.</u>	GJ	By next meeting	Closed
2.1.2	Distribute latest rope access specifications <u>ML has resigned as DCA rep to this forum. Who is current owner of this action?</u>	ML	By next meeting	Ongoing
2.1.3	Produce a costed proposal for a programme of comparative tests to demonstrate the relationship between ECO anchors and all other fixed anchors likely to be used in caving. <u>Update required from LS</u>	LS	By next meeting	Ongoing
2.2.1	Update from LS on DCUC test bed	LS	By next meeting	
2.2.2	LS to confirm dates for (AF) training	LS	ASAP!	
2.2.3	LS to confirm version of current ARP policy	LS	By next meeting	
2.2.4	LS to confirm if there should be a new policy for people who (only) test anchors	LS	By next meeting	
2.2.5	BM to confirm insurance position re change of insurance scheme.	BM	By next meeting	

3.0 Fixed Aids Policy

Current document history:

Draft 1 (based on DCA Draft 4 and discussions at the Equipment Committee Meeting of 13 June 1998).

Draft 2 agreed at the Equipment Committee meeting of 13 February 1999

Draft 3 agreed at the Equipment and Techniques Committee Meeting of August 5th 2000.

Draft 4 (BM draft) for discussion at this meeting.

A general discussion took place to review the current draft (draft 4) and, whilst a number of minor amendments were identified, it was agreed that this draft (now draft 5) should be issued for comment.

A further discussion ensued as to whether digs and other artificial (and sometimes transient) features should be included within the Fixed Aids Policy. It was agreed that due to the nature of the problem, and that it would be impossible to manage, there would be no value in including within the policy.

Actions

No	Action	Owner	Action Date	Status
3.1.1	Amend draft 3 as per meeting agreement	GJ	End Sept 2000	Closed
3.1.2	Produce draft guidelines for ladders (to include provision for lifelines)	OC	By next meeting	Ongoing
3.2.1	GJ to amend Fixed Aids Policy as agreed and distribute with minutes (as draft 5)	GJ	By next meeting	

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4.0 Rope Test Programme

There was a discussion re the purpose of the Rope Test Programme. OC confirmed that the fundamental purpose of the Rope Test Programme was to provide a service to cavers – he is sent approx. 100 samples a year for testing. Aspiration is to return test data within two months, although recently (for various reasons) results have taken up to 18 months to be returned. OC was asked to confirm that he was confident he could maintain a two month turn around for the service, although he described various constraints (such as his neighbours) which could impact the frequency of testing.

Various alternatives were discussed (with no clear conclusion) such as:

- taking the rope test rig to various caving regions on a regular basis
- ensuring test rig is always taken to regional training events
- obtaining a second test rig (c. £500.00 - £1,000.00 to build)

OC further explained the benefits of recorded data from usage – which he agreed was a distinctly separate item of research from the Rope Test Service described above.

The latest version of the Rope Test Relationship document was reviewed and it was generally accepted that the current version is too complex to provide the basic information that cavers require. It was suggested that the current document was an extremely useful paper, that with some additional detail, should be submitted to Caves and Karst Science for possible publication.

The Rope Test Results document (that is issued to rope owners following testing) was also reviewed and it was agreed that this too, was too complex. It was suggested that a more easily understood format should be used (in order for the rope owners to make a judgement in comparing their rope with the results of a new {test} rope).

The question of including fixed ladders (as an appendix.) of the Fixed Aids Policy was discussed. OC agreed to write a specification document (based on his experience of the Darren ladder) to describe materials, manufacture, installation and on going maintenance.

OC then discussed the possibility of a proof test over almost all the length of a rope instead of the current destructive test of a 2.5 metre length: *“The current form of used SRT rope testing is based on the EN1891 manufacturing standard. The big drawback is that this only tests two 30mm long sections in the knots to destruction, and the rope in between the knots is tested to only about half its strength. A method of non-destructive proof testing is suggested that will enable almost the total length of a caving rope to be proof tested to a tension similar to that experienced by the majority of the tested section of rope at present. A machine would be required which would generate the force by various diameters of pulleys, the force being controlled by an hydraulic cylinder. Testing speeds of 0.5 metres per second are envisaged, with a set-up period of 15 minutes. Design study and funding of manufacture would be required”.*

The meeting discussed OCs proposal, but unanimously agreed that we are not currently in a position to consider such testing – nor are we ever likely to be.

Actions

No	Action	Owner	Action Date	Status
4.1.1	email wording for Speleoscene	OC	ASAP	Closed
4.1.2	Prepare the rope lengths, labelling and documentation in order that ropes can be distributed at Hidden Earth	GJ	Hidden Earth	Closed
4.1.3	Document static rope test requirements	LS	By next meeting	Ongoing
4.2.1	Think about options for providing a more effective	All	By next	

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	rope testing service to the regions		Meeting
4.2.2	Think about options for research	All	By next meeting
4.2.3	OC to provide critical component specifications for the existing test rig	OC	By next meeting
4.2.4	OC to consider options for Rope Test documentation	OC	By next meeting
4.2.5	OC to produce specification document for fixed ladders	OC	By next meeting

5.0 Long Term Rope Test

GJ commented that due to F&M few clubs had had the opportunity to make progress using the NCA ropes.

OC reported that he had yet to complete the Long Term Rope Test benchmarking tests.

No	Action	Owner	Action Date	Status
5.1.1	OC to document benchmark tests	OC	By next meeting	

6.0 Equipment and Techniques Committee Budget

GJ reported that he had yet to talk with BM re budget
Following on from action 4.2.3, there could be a requirement to fund production of a second rope test rig

No	Action	Owner	Action Date	Status
6.1.1	GJ to talk to BM re budget	GJ	By next meeting	Ongoing GJ

7.0 Minimal Impact Caving Code

This agenda item was briefly discussed, and it was agreed to leave with to leave with the Training Committee.

8.0 AOB

Following on from agenda item 7, the word "Techniques" in the context of this committee was discussed. It was agreed, that "Techniques" when applied in this context refers to:

- new or developing techniques in caving
- techniques required for the installation of fixed aids that are described in the Fixed Aids Policy
- the option for appraising new equipment

By default, therefore, techniques in this context do not apply to personal caving skills.

9.0 Next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 10.30 at the Stafford Social Club on Saturday April 20th 2002

Please ensure that any items for AOB are sent to the Convenor a minim of 7 days prior to the next meeting.