



Council Meeting 12th October 2019 Supplementary Documents

Spanset, Telford Way, Middlewich, CW10 0HX
Saturday 12th October 2019, 10:30am

These reports and items of supplementary information were submitted too late for inclusion in the original published reports document/agenda.

Please review this in parallel with the main reports/agenda documents.

Polite appeal to all Council members: Please help the Secretary by ensuring all reports and agenda items are supplied by the date requested. This is to ensure they can be published in accordance with the timeline specified in the Manual of Operations.

Membership Administrator (Wendy Williams)

A printed report will be brought and circulated to the meeting.

Additional information of relevance communicated to the Secretary by email since publication of the original reports document:

“With regards to Ulster Speleological Society & Caving Club is it possible to include them in the Agenda for the Meeting and I will bring enough copies of their 100 word statement for the meeting too” ***Secretary comment: I will not amend a published agenda document, however, Council should be aware that this club has applied for membership and so discussion/voting on this should be factored into the Membership Administrator report discussion section of the agenda.***

“It is also my intention (with Councils approval) from 12th October to send new clubs a M2 form, so they can fill it in when they apply and pay the initial Club Fee, because we have 2 Clubs (Birmingham University & Cardiff University) who have been Members since the beginning of the year, and have not returned their Forms or paid any monies, despite reminders being sent. I have also spoken to Rostam about this a couple of times.” ***Secretary comment: Again, this can be discussed under the Membership Administrator report section of the agenda.***

Insurance Manager (Howard Jones)

Secretary comment: The following is some supplementary data to accompany the former comprehensive report (these additional stats have only come to light since then and are provided for information purposes as I am publishing this document anyway):

Expedition policy:

Since the launch of the BCA Members’ Scheme.

| | | |
|--------------------|-----|---|
| Number of Quotes | 174 | (109 Single Trip, 61 AMT 45 days & 4 AMT 90 days) |
| Number of Sales | 53 | (41 Single Trip & 12 AMT 45 days) |
| Percentage take-up | 30% | |

Howard Jones
3rd October 2019

British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)

No report was provided, as Jenny has recently done a very detailed report for the BCRA AGM, which is (or will be) available on the BCRA website and printed in the BCRA Annual Review for 2018. Anyone interested is recommended to review these sources.

Cave Registry (David Cooke)

David Cooke has confirmed that there is nothing to report on this.

Web Services and IT Working Party (David Cooke)

Online Ballot:

I have attended several planning meetings. I have written the necessary software to provide the contact details and essential voting 'token' to send out the ballot papers electronically and by post. Gary Douthwaite (Webmaster) has written the corresponding software to provide a webpage where members can place their vote. The electronic ballots will be sent by a commercial mailing list (phpList.com). That has come with its own problems to solve. Next time around we should look for a better solution. I have provided my experience from the previous electronic ballot and offered a design to make it secure, however I will not take part in running the live ballot for obvious reasons.

Training Admin Software:

There are on-going consultation meetings with GoMembership. These are focused on mapping the existing working processes and award scheme structure onto the GoMembership software and what it can achieve. Currently this is a task for QMC and requires little input from the ITWG.

Software Development:

The work on enhancing BCA Online and the Membership System continues. The BCA-Online software that I've developed for BCA is open-sourced and is available on GitHub. This is the best way to manage software development with a team of volunteer programmers. If you are a programmer and keen to be involved please get in touch.

Membership Renewal:

There are proposals to amend the membership structure. The timescales required to update the existing processes and systems should be born in mind.

Webmasters Role:

I took the opportunity of Gary Douthwaite (Webmaster), Matt Ewles (Secretary) and myself all being at Hidden Earth to call a face to face meeting to discuss this issue. Gary said that he saw 95% of his role being responsible for the content and presentation of the website. That would exclude the systems/infrastructure side of IT, for example the email services. We agreed on this. Gary has all the necessary passwords and full access to the website.

The conversation turned to BCA-Online which is written using a framework (cakePHP). The framework gives many benefits including rapid software development, built in security, maintainable code, testability, debugging tools, documentation, etc. The reason I chose this framework over others is its emphasis on coding to a standard which makes working as a team so much more efficient and straight forward. We didn't agree on continuing to use the existing framework.

Finally we talked about access to the membership database. Since access to the membership database isn't required for the existing website I asked why access was required. No reason or example that required access was forthcoming and therefore I recommend access isn't given. There are obviously significant data integrity issues and data protection issue around the membership database that need to be treated seriously and considered carefully.

Newsletter:

I've given the online ballot project priority but hopefully by the Council meeting I'll be able to report that the sign-up to the Newsletter mailshot with the all important single-click-signup will have occurred.

David Cooke, 2nd October 2019

Supplementary material provided that may be of Council relevance – Item 1

APPLICATION TO BCA FOR FUNDING TO SUPPORT BCRA ACTIVITIES

BCRA Council have been provided with a copy of a note from Howard Jones regarding distribution of the financial surplus built up by BCA. This note includes the following statement:

“BCRA gets a 12k donation from BCA each year towards its library costs. It is well funded and does not need more money”

The statement is not clear, and there are two misunderstandings here.

(1) The BCRA does not have a library.

Please visit <http://caving-library.org.uk> which clearly sets out the actual situation and provides a great deal more information:

“The British Caving Library (BCL) is a national research and reference library based in the Peak District, staffed by a Senior Library Assistant. It is funded by the British Caving Association (BCA) and the British Cave Research Association (BCRA) and run by the BCRA on behalf of all cavers.”

The final phrase is underlined as it is very important. The library is a resource for all and is used in connection with a wide range of enquiries from local digs, through international expeditions and on to academic research. Jenny Potts is preparing a separate case for additional library funding and in doing so she has the full support of BCRA Council.

(2) The BCRA is not well funded.

The misunderstanding may have arisen because past BCRA accounts have included the assets of the GPF which was a BCRA sub-charity. In the 2018 calendar year these amounted to £101,701, 36.8% of total 'BCRA' assets. GPF is now an independent charity and the GPF funds will move from BCRA accounts to GPF accounts. A further £20,921 of 'BCRA' assets is tied up in the UK Cave Conservation Emergency Fund (see <http://bcra.org.uk/ukcccf/>) and there is £3,188 in the Library and Heritage Fund.

When these restricted funds are removed BCRA had funds amounting to £150,569 at the end of 2018. This might seem to be a healthy amount but the reason for the large reserve is that prior to 2009 the Association received several large bequests. Since 2011 the Association has run at a loss, averaging out at around £5400 per year. In 2018 the income was over £10,000 less than expenditure and the imbalance would have been even more were it not for some trustees forgoing expenses to which they are entitled. The year on year imbalance has only been possible because Council have made a decision to run down the reserves in order to maintain our core activities. These are outlined below:

Publications: Many BCRA publications make a loss because the cover price is deliberately kept low to encourage as many cavers as possible purchase them.

CSTRF: The Cave Science and Technology Research Fund was launched in 2005 when council agreed to allocate £5,000/year from 2006 onwards. In 2018 Council agreed to extend the fund for a further five year period to 2024. Between 2006 and 2018 there were 82 applications for funding with a total of £131,176 requested. 58 grants were made totalling £62,880.

BCMC: The British Cave Monitoring Centre was launched in 2018 as a joint initiative of BCRA and

Buxton Civic Association both of whom committed £3,000 in the first year and £1,000/year thereafter subject to a review after five years. A generous donation of over £7,500 of equipment from Tinytag plus valuable technical support means that we now have what is probably the best equipped monitoring centre of any national caving association. The aim is to encourage cavers with an interest in science and technology, and scientists with an interest in caves, to set-up their own experiments in the cave making use of the baseline data. We also aim to use the baseline data to promote an interest incaves within schools, colleges and universities and see this as an important means by which we can increase interest in, and the profile of, British caves.

Request for funding

In addition to support for the BCL which is the subject of a separate request there are three main areas where BCA could assist BCRA:

1. CSTRF: We request BCA to 'match-fund' the BCRA contribution of £5,000 per annum over the period 2020 - 2024 inclusive and to consider a long-term commitment to supporting cave research. At present CSTRF grant applications can only be made by a member of BCRA but if funding is available from BCA then the fund can be opened to all BCA DIM. The additional funds would enable us to make more grants and we would also encourage application for expedition-science grants, an area that GPF are also keen to expand.

2. BCMC: We request BCA to 'match-fund' the BCRA contribution of £1,000 per annum over the period 2020 - 2024 inclusive. This will enable us to purchase additional sensors and live stream additional data.

3. To invest money in developing the Cave Surveying Group's Cave Registry Data Archive by converting existing datasets currently held in cave survey software formats (survex, tunnel) into more widely used formats including ESRI shp files. We request a BCA contribution of £5,000 per annum over the period 2020 - 2024 inclusive to scan and digitise paper cave surveys (subject to copyright approval) and convert them to 3D .shp files to make them accessible to cavers and the wider user community.

Professor John Gunn, Chairman BCRA
1st October 2019

Supplementary material provided that may be of Council relevance – Item 2

Comments by David Gibson on BCA Membership Proposals

(I'm writing this wearing two hats: 1) BCA membership team, and 2) BCRA Secretary)

5.1 Proposal by Matt Ewles: Abolish Couples DIM membership.

“The discounted rate for joint DIMs is stated on our website as being due to only one set of publications being sent out. However, the BCA no longer posts any publications. Therefore, joint membership does not reflect any real-life cost saving to the BCA. We currently have 126 DIM members with joint membership; this would increase our revenue by £315/year.”

I agree with this proposal but there are some points to bear in mind.

Even if there is no discount on joint membership, it would cause problems for both the membership team and for BCRA if BCA was to fully *abolish* the category. This is because...

1) Two people living at the same address will still expect to join using the same form and to pay with a single payment. Therefore the membership form needs to accommodate this, and the membership process needs to flag the transaction as 'joint'. Therefore, even if "joint membership" is not actually advertised by BCA (which point I agree with), it will still need to be used as a category by the membership team.

2) Matt is correct that "BCA no longer posts any publications" but that is not true of BCRA. BCRA still posts Cave & Karst Science to joint members. We do not collect any additional income from the second joint member but, to have to explain to two *former* joint members of BCA that only *one* could be a BCRA member unless they pay an extra fee, would surely be perceived badly. In other words, the BCA membership form will still have to accommodate joint BCRA membership. To do so without mentioning joint BCA membership could be tricky but perhaps I can work with Matt to produce some appropriate wording?

Concluding Remarks:

It is easy to abolish the joint member discount, but the membership form will still need to flag members that are part of a 'joint' application, and it will still need to offer joint membership as part of the BCRA option.

5.2 Proposal by Matt Ewles: Bring DIM membership rates down to match CIM rates.

“The elevated price for DIMs was originally intended to reflect receipt of publications which is no longer the case. DIMs get nothing extra for their money so they should not be charged more. Based on the BCA having 775 DIM members, the annual cost is estimated to be £3875.”

1) This proposal is slightly incorrect in its statement, i.e. DIMs *do* get something extra – they receive individual attention from the membership officer, and they receive their membership card more speedily (This has been cited by a member writing on ukcaving.com as a reason for choosing DIM over CIM). The salient point about CIMs is that the rate is lower because the data collection (and card distribution) is done by the clubs. If the clubs have no incentive to collect data (i.e. no CIM discount), will they continue to do so? If they do not, then the workload for the BCA membership officer is likely to rise, for a *reduced* membership income.

2) Removing the DIM/CIM differential might be considered to make it possible for CIMs to join BCRA,

which is not allowed at present. One reason for currently stipulating that CIMs have to upgrade to DIMs in order to join BCRA is to do with the additional “individual attention” from the membership team – membership cards, BCRA online logins, postage of BCRA publications. However, there is another, more fundamental reason why CIMs cannot join BCRA, which is *not* a stipulation of BCRA’s (nor of BCA’s), and is simply the practicality of it: it means extra work for club secretaries. Of course, some clubs might be willing to collect the data and perhaps it is time to test the water on this?

Concluding Remarks: I would therefore like to suggest that if the DIM/CIM differential is removed, BCA should instruct clubs to collect the additional data that will allow CIMs to join BCRA.

5.3 Proposal by Howard Jones to change membership cost for Non-UK resident BCA members:

“It is proposed that non-UK residents pay a non-caver membership fee as they do not enjoy the liability cover member benefit”

It may be that the wording on the form has been unintentionally diluted over time, as and when various stipulations were accommodated regarding insurance. Originally, it was always understood that overseas members could join as non-cavers.

The Membership Team can easily arrange for non-caver insurance to be the default for overseas members. However, there are some cavers who have residential addresses outside the UK but who remain UK citizens and who cave regularly in the UK. What is BCA’s intention regarding these cavers? Originally, it was understood by all, that these people were “cavers” for the purposes of insurance. The current form is not as clear as it used to be, following the rephrasing of the statements on insurance.

Concluding Remarks: I suggest that the form should say something like “If you have an address outside the UK, then you may join as a “non-caver” because [something about insurance cover] but if you wish to cave in the UK you should join at the caver rate because [something about insurance cover].

David Gibson (IT/Web Services Working Party)
3rd October 2019