



**Minutes of BCA Council Meeting held on Saturday, 09 January 2016
at The Red Lion Inn, Alvechurch.**

Present:

Nick Williams (NW)*	BCA Equipment & Techniques Officer, BCA Insurance Manager (and meeting Chair)
Damian Weare (DW)*	BCA Secretary
Nigel Ball (NB)*	BCA Training Officer
Andrew Hinde (AH)*	BCA Conservation & Access Officer
Rostam Namaghi (RN)	BCA Youth & Development
Tim Allen (TA)	BCA CRoW Liaison
Bob Mehew (BM)	BCA Rope-Testing
Robin Weare (RW)	BCA Assistant Treasurer / Newsletter Editor
Dave Tyson (DT)*	CCC Rep.
Brian Schofield (BS)*	CDG Rep.
Martell Baines (MB)*	CNCC Rep.
Jenny Potts (JP)*	DCA Rep.
James Begley (JB)*	CSCC Rep.
David Jean (DJe)*	DCUC Rep.
Stephan Natynczuk (SN)*	ACI Rep.
Alan Finch (AF) *	WPCST Rep.
Idris Williams (IW)*	ASCT Rep.
Steve Holding (SH)*	NAMHO Rep.
Bernie Woodley (BW) *	Individual Member Rep. 1
<i>Richard Vooght (RV)</i>	<i>observer</i>
<i>John Hine (JH)</i>	<i>observer</i>
<i>Graham Mollard (GM)</i>	<i>observer</i>

(* voting members)

The meeting commenced at 10:30am.

1. Chairman's Welcome

NW welcomed everyone to the meeting, taking the Chair in Andy Eavis's absence. A minute's silence was observed in memory of Owen Clarke who passed away last week.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Andy Eavis, David Cooke, Faye Litherland, Hellie Adams, Ged Campion, Les Williams, John Gunn, David Judson, Paul Ibberson, Boyd Potts and Matt Wire.

3. Applications for Club Membership

The Hagg Farm Caving Club has provided the correct paperwork and payment to become a BCA Member Club.

Proposal: *to accept the Hagg Farm Caving Club as a Member Club.*

Prop: DW, Sec: NB *agreed unanimously.*

AF: There is a group claiming to be a BCA Member, but it is not. We need to watch this.

NW: If they are individual members via another BCA club, they are, of course, insured.

[Post-Meeting Note: The club in question has in fact already applied for Group Membership and this should have been brought to this meeting for ratification. As it was not, they will continue to be recognised as a Group Member pending formal approval at the April meeting. Apologies to AF for this. DW]

4. Minutes of the last Council Meeting on 10 October 2015 (previously circulated)

SN: Please remove an "n" from my surname.

Proposal: *to accept the amended Minutes from 10 October 2015 as a true record*

Prop: DW, Sec: JP *agreed unanimously*

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the last Council Meeting

Review of Action Log

Action 36 (Manual of Operations): *Ongoing*

Action 83 (Produce Asset Register): *Ongoing - nearly complete.*

Action 116 (Weil's Disease Publication Update): *Ongoing*

Action 150 (Liaise with Joel Corrigan): *No progress – ongoing.*

Action 151 (Investigate social media): *HB and DW have agreed a protocol, but discussion is still needed with DC.*

Action 154 (Proposed Roadmap on Publications): *See P&I report – complete.*

Action 155 (Update Account Signatories): *See Treasurer's report - ongoing*

Action 157 (Set up Auto-Enrolment Pension):

RW: There has been some progress – We will likely recommend the Government scheme and will look at it in detail in June. BM: Have we spoken to our employees to tell them this? NW: No, but this will be included in a letter due to be sent shortly. Our starting date for the auto-enrolment is actually 2017, rather than 2016 as reported last meeting.

Action 158 (Liaise with HA and LW over C&A publications): *Ongoing*

Action 159 (Speak to NAMHO re: CRoW): *See CRoW Report – completed.*

Action 160 (ACB Advice Wording): *See CRoW Report – completed.*

Action 161 (Economic Arguments for Caving): *See CRoW Report – completed.*

Action 162 (Bear Grylls' Statement): *See Secretary's Report*

Action 163 (Liaise with UKCaving Owners):

DW: Since the last meeting DW has received a message from UKCaving in which the original terms appear to have changed somewhat. In light of this it seemed appropriate to return to Council to clarify how we should proceed. In October Council appeared to see the benefit of the advertising as to encourage existing cavers and potential new cavers to our main website and also the trycaving site. However the offer has been clarified as for a banner on the BCA section of the forum only and this is likely to attract far less traffic. We are also being asked for additional money each time we update the banner advert. Are we still happy to advertise on these terms? TA: BCA needs to engage with its membership. The key to attracting people will be making regular use of the section of the forum. This will then attract them to the sites. As far as the trycaving site is concerned, Chris Hunter has looked at it and decided it needs considerable work. JB: We decided to allocate £360 as a trial for one year and then to decide on whether this is value for money at the end of this time. Nothing seems to have changed. TA: UKCaving does not need the £30 a month. DW: Had seen part of the reason for us advertising as supporting the site for the benefit of cavers in general. This is apparently not needed. If we do not spend the money, we can still do everything we do currently on the site apart from having a banner ad. Is therefore reluctant to spend the money for little apparent benefit. SH: We made the decision last meeting and should continue with it.

Action 164 (Report on VAT & Eurospeleo):

DW: The key is ensuring BCA and Eurospeleo are entirely separate organisations. As this is the case, there is nothing to worry about.

Action 165 (Eurospeleo loan Return): *complete*

Action 166 (Administrative Assistant to Exec. Advert): *ongoing*

DT: Objects to RW's comment that Cambrian has been taken over by Drws Cefn diggers. RW is incorrect. DT has never been there. Ian Adams has had one trip. Does not know whether Martin Laverty has dug there. Stuart might have radiolocated the entrance, but that is the extent of it.

RW: Accepts DT's assurances.

RW: The OFD Management Committee was delighted to receive a letter from Richard Hill asking for a meeting about professional caving.

Officers' Reports

6. Chairman *(written report previously circulated)*

First of all, I must apologise for my non-attendance at this council meeting for the second meeting running I am absent and I wholeheartedly apologise. I will go out of my way not to miss any more in the future. I am on a cruise around Africa repaying my long-suffering wife for accepting that I spend an awful lot of time away on caving business of one form or another. I should also like to thank Nick Williams for chairing this meeting.

Clearly there is a lot going on in the British caving world and many BCA officers are working hard at progressing matters on a number of fronts. I would emphasise that we all should remember that we are here to promote and help caves and caving within Britain and not get involved with unnecessary political agendas or personal power struggles.

From my point of view picking up various matters from the number of meetings I have attended and the minutes of the last

council meeting, it would seem to me that Eurospeleo 2016 is progressing well, although there is a great deal to do. Les Williams, as the main coordinator, needs help and I am pleased that Damian Weare has agreed to give Les a regional hand being geographically closer to the venue.

There is a 2016 meeting on 23rd January. Although I will not be present in person, I am hoping that the cruise ship we are on will have reasonable internet access and I will be able to keep a track on what is happening, maybe not live but soon after. Nick Williams and I met our insurance company and had a very positive meeting with most issues being resolved to our satisfaction. We felt that certainly we have a helpful understanding from the insurance company who have a great deal of experience in the outdoor field. Further work will progress to look into a better situation regarding expedition insurance. With the demise of Speleology, it is pleasing to see the newsletter edited by Robin Weare goes from strength to strength – many thanks. Please can everybody help Robin with material for the newsletter?

As we no longer have Speleology magazine we should also offer our support to *Descent*, an excellent British publication rivalling any other caving magazine anywhere in the world. I intend when I am back in the UK to progress this line of thinking. The Training Committee is going through an interesting period with some rationalising and stream-lining going on. I leave Nigel Ball to report the details to the council meeting.

The strong lesson we must learn from the Bear Grylls' programme is to be very, very wary as far as TV and the media in general are concerned. Specifically anything to do with Bear Grylls should be avoided.

The Right to Roam situation is progressing, with Tim Allen continuing to push for clarification of the existing law. As Tim stated in his last council report, there is no attempt at changing the existing CROW Act, simply at getting clarification of its meaning in respect to caving. Clearly, the existing interpretation is extremely ambiguous and needs better clarification. Ultimately we may need a change in the law but that would be a next step, which would certainly be democratically discussed by BCA. Whatever the law says we must be mindful of the fact that we are very grateful to many land owners and access controlling bodies for helping us to enjoy the caves of Britain and we must continue the good relationship we have. We must consider carefully the actions we take and look to the future.

There was a meeting between UK Mine/Cave Diving & Exploration and the Cave Diving Group attended by myself and Nick Williams, BCA's Insurance Officer. In my opinion the UK Mine/Cave Diving & Exploration is more aligned to diving than caving, and if they want the benefits of BCA membership, they should join the CDG. Indeed this is what appears to be happening. Ultimately the UK Mine/Cave Diving & Exploration personnel could well bring a considerable amount of different expertise into British cave diving which should be to the benefit of all.

The situation with regard to the Secretariat of the BCA continues to be critical and I am hopeful this can be resolved in the not too distant future. Damian has done a wonderful job for the last 8 years; we need to replace him with somebody similar and clearly the possibility of a paid employee helping with the secretarial work is a good one.

I hope you have a very good meeting, I will be somewhere on the high seas between Portugal and Madeira at the time of this meeting, probably on very rough high seas, so you could well be in a better place than me.

With a promise to try and avoid missing council meetings in the future!

Andy Eavis

DW: Suggest we discuss *Descent* and publications in general under P&I.

NW: Is CDG happy with where we are currently?

BS: Yes, we are now all in the same position.

GM: Bear Grylls' programme will be aired again next week.

TA: We need to be realistic here. He has recently been involved in a programme with Barack Obama. He is clearly extremely popular and unlikely to be interested in criticism from us.

SN: What does AE mean when he says we should be wary of the media? There seems to be something he is not saying here.

NW: Suggests we discuss this under the Secretary's report.

The remainder of the Chairman's Report was accepted without discussion.

7. Secretary (written report previously circulated)

“Britain's Biggest Adventures” Statement: The October meeting asked Executive to write and disseminate a statement on “Britain's Biggest Adventures”. The final statement is as follows:

Caving is an exciting, challenging and rewarding sport suitable for most fitness levels and giving the average person the opportunity to see things that few others have experienced. We are extremely lucky to have world-class caves on our doorstep and anything that might encourage newcomers to try the sport, or that simply improves public awareness of what is beneath our feet, is to be encouraged.

Unfortunately the recent ITV series “Britain's Biggest Adventures” falls badly short of the mark. Not only was Bear Grylls, the show's presenter, very poorly equipped, but he also apparently set off underground knowing that water levels were very high and likely to rise further.

By its nature caving has its hazards, but enjoyed responsibly has a superb safety record. Every week across the UK hundreds of people venture underground for the first time and for some of these a lifelong passion is awoken. The British Caving Association would like to take the opportunity to encourage everyone to experience the unique

underground environment for themselves, but to do so with due care and common sense.

This was appended to a covering letter sent to ITV, the production company itself and the Scout Association. It was also posted on the BCA website, as well as UKCaving and the newsletter. I received an acknowledgement from the Scout Association and a letter from ITV which looks remarkably familiar to the standard statement other individuals have received. Needless to say there is no acknowledgement of error.

Party Weekend: *This will be held on Mendip in conjunction with Dig Fest. I have yet to confirm arrangements with CSCC, but will do so shortly. We have now booked the Rotary Centre in Castleton for the 2017 AGM weekend from 9th-11th June 2017.*

Potential Disciplinary Action: *Following an enquiry, BCA's wider Executive has decided to take the matter no further. As the matter relates to individuals, this is all I am able to say.*

Replacement Secretary: *I have posted an "advert" on UKCaving. I await a flood of responses!*

Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) Changes: *I have now received a response from HMRC to my letter about CASC changes. This is in Appendix 1. Following this I hosted a web-based meeting between (via our new WebEx account) affected Clubs. Most have concluded they are likely to be requesting deregistration by HMRC. This is a real shame but highlights the (unintended?) consequences of legislative changes on small organisations, such as caving clubs.*

Damian Weare

BS: Dealing with the media is very difficult. We have found over the years of working with them at Gaping Gill that it is very hard to say no to a production team that has its own agenda.

SN: Are we recommending that we do not get involved with media? After all BCA has its own Media-Liaison Officer.

NW: No, but we need to be very cautious. What is certain is that any production team will have its own agenda.

IW: Could we give general advice as an Association to anyone working with the media?

DT: If nothing else surely any contract should include a get-out clause, if you are unhappy with what is taking place.

NW: In an ideal world, but this is unlikely to be achieved. It is most definitely not a relationship of equals.

MB: Surely the Media-Liaison Officer could produce a set of guidelines.

GM: It is intended to include some guidance to Award Holders in the Schemes' codes of conduct.

AH: Has worked with TV-related companies on a number of occasions, but this has always been without payment. In this situation you can walk away.

NB: The Training Committee was unhappy about BCA's response.

DW: What exactly does Training Committee want us to do?

GM: It was not robust enough.

JP: It is definitely worth thinking about whether we can do anything to reduce the chances of something like the Bear Grylls' programme from happening again. Hopefully to an extent we have done this anyway through the publicity that has gone around the caving world following this incident.

IW: Could we have a draft contract for all potential Technical Experts?

NW: This is probably not viable. You are very unlikely to convince the production teams to accept it.

Disciplinary Process

GM: Before the current policy, when Training Officer GM was able to suspend people more or less as he saw fit. This is no longer the case and TC feels it should be.

DW: Considers this unacceptable.

NW: Is it a concern that we appear to have a closed Disciplinary Process? There are clearly lessons we can learn from situations and not being able to talk about them afterwards surely hinders this.

DW: We have generally chosen to protect the individuals concerned.

NW: There is clearly a conflict between our interests as an Association and the interests of the individual.

Action 167: Training Committee to produce a section for the LCMLA and CIC Handbooks on how to deal with the media.

Party Weekend

SH: Attendance at the AGM last year was no better than at AGMs before the introduction of party weekends. If we want a well-attended AGM, then that is probably not the right approach.

NW: You may not be successful every year, but we have certainly attracted a good number of newcomers to Council in recent years.

RN: Is now involved only as a result of the new format.

RW: Last year it probably wasn't ideal to set the AGM against a rescue practice.

DW: Has always seen that the real purpose of the Party Weekends as to raise BCA's profile among its members, rather than to attract people to the AGM itself. In this respect having our AGM over the same weekend as an event that already attracts several hundred cavers can only be positive.

JP: The Derbyshire and Yorkshire weekends were not really backing on top of another event and there was better attendance.

- TA: Would it be better to try to co-ordinate with the organisers so that there is nothing alongside the other event. CHECC manage to have a fantastic turn-out at their AGM without any of the traditional formality and while still giving people the chance to talk.
- RN: Unfortunately if you have something more contentious such as CRoW and 200 people in the room, it would be very difficult.

The remainder of the Secretary's Report was accepted without discussion.

8. Treasurer (written report previously circulated)

Over the last couple of months, as well as the usual day-to-day administration and preparation for the end of the financial year, the main issue has once more been related to the banks. Our online banking was suspended without notice on account of BCA not having returned a Customer Identity Validation form... which we had never actually received! As is always the case, this proved to be something of a chore which necessitated the reconfirmation in triplicate of matters of which they are already fully aware. The issue is now resolved, but as a consequence, the new bank mandates had to be put on hold; trying to do two things at once with the same financial institution just looked to be far too risky.

On a more positive note, we have now started to move forward with the transfer of some responsibilities to our Assistant Treasurer and this is beginning to help significantly as we move into 2016.

Cash flow has been adequate to cover expenditure without recourse to the main deposit funds. At the time of writing, it looks as though that will remain the case when we have to pay the main insurance premium in mid January.

Regional Caving Council funding for 2014 has been processed, although the formal minutes are still to be finalised. This I expect to tidy up shortly. The tax return was completed within the required timescale, with no net payment due, so our next statutory obligation will be the preparation of the annual Accounts. This will be taking place over the next 2-3 months and as usual I ask Council members to advise any outstanding expenditure pertaining to 2015 as soon as possible.

Other than the above, I have little else to report. The main focus for the next couple of months will clearly be the preparation of the 2015 Accounts as quickly and efficiently as possible and to keep on top of other matters at the same time.

Paul Ibberson

The Treasurer's Report was accepted without discussion.

9. Conservation & Access (written report previously circulated)

Conservation Codes: *The text of the revised documents remains unchanged since the last council meeting. I hope to have a professional quality pdf/poster available before the next meeting.*

CRoW: *I would like to congratulate our CRoW Liaison Officer for delivering a successful Caving PR visit to GG Main Chamber via Bar Pot. The difficulty of safely escorting three novice politicians on a serious caving expedition was probably less difficult than actually getting the event in their diaries on an agreed date. Quite a remarkable achievement.*

Funding Cave Conservation: *The CNCC have joined forces with Natural England and the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust to undertake cave conservation tasks as part of the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership (a Heritage Lottery Funded project with a budget of £2million). In effect the CNCC contributed £2000.00 and secured total funding equivalent to £30 000.00 for cave conservation projects. The CNCC can now tackle jobs that had previously been too costly. <http://www.ydmt.org/idlps-about>*

Natural England can no longer be relied upon to finance this work directly, so partnership work on a "Landscape Scale" is a productive way forward.

Drws Cefn Access Mediation: *I have lost the confidence of the CCC representative. I await official written confirmation that my services as a mediator are no longer required by CCC.*

Andrew Hinde

AH: The fact that there has been no further communication on the draft Codes probably indicates that people are broadly happy with their content and we can now proceed further. After acquiring photos, perhaps via UKCaving, the next stage will be to produce a smart final version. Although the intention is for them to be largely available as downloadable pdfs, some paper copies will need to be produced for distribution at Eurospeleo. TA deserves our congratulations for his hard work in progressing CRoW. The cave conservation funding project is a potential opportunity for other regions. However it shows how important it is to put together Heritage Lottery Fund bids in conjunction with professionals. Getting involved with other partners is very helpful and this may be a useful avenue for others, such as the Peak District. We are very lucky to have the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Fund in the Dales and they may well be able to put others in touch with similar organisations in their area. At the CNCC between 20 and 40 volunteers take part in cave conservation projects and this time can be used as a significant amount of match funding. Previously the CNCC was failing to fund the bigger conservation projects, such as those

involving asbestos in shakeholes. Thanks to the new funding we can use professionals to assist with such jobs. It takes a long time to process such applications, but there is a real opportunity for all of us. The quantity of work involved should definitely not be underestimated, though.

NW: Spending £30k upfront can present significant cash-flow difficulties. How will this be handled?

AH: This is not an issue here. CNCC simply needs to produce its match funding.

NW: A local Nature Reserve has a landfill aggregate levy grant, but all works have to be paid for in advance and reclaimed.

DW: The same was true with recent YSS grants.

SH: Would really like to know what the Drws Cefn landowner actually thinks.

TA: David Rose spoke to the landowner and he produced an agreed statement with the landowner which was published on the UKCaving forum.

NW: Drws Cefn is outside BCA's remit.

DT: Cambrian CC is very grateful to AH for his efforts. As an individual, there is no denying that Stuart France is very unhappy following his Freedom of Information request but that has nothing to do with Cambrian CC. DT will formally write to AH.

BM: Do you have a budget for printing things for EuroSpeleo?

AH: We are only talking about a few hundred fold-up sheets. Will speak to RW.

Action 168: AH to liaise with RW, PI and LW over the printing of some conservation handouts for Eurospeleo 2016.

9a. CRoW Working Party (written report previously circulated)

Since the last Council meeting I have spent a month caving abroad, never the less I been able to spend time on the BCA campaign. I have tried very hard to conduct myself within acceptable parameters and I hope this report meets with Council approval.

Actions from the 10th October Council meeting

1. Concerns had been raised by NAMHO over how CRoW may affect access to mines. I liaised with NAMHO and conducted some further research with the assistance of Bob Mehew and was able to send them a letter to put in front of their next meeting. It is hoped that the letter would alleviate some of the concerns mine enthusiasts held over CRoW. The letter is here:

I appreciate that caves and mines are different and that cavers and mine explorers may hold different interests in the underground spaces we enter. We also share a lot of common interests where cavers visit old mines and mine explorers go caving. This is notably demonstrated with NAMHO being a constituent body of the British Caving Association.

Last year the BCA ran a poll of its entire membership asking whether it should campaign for the Countryside and Rights of Way Act to apply to going underground. This was returned with a clear majority for it to do so and I am now spearheading that campaign.

NAMHO members will understand that the CROW Act only applies to entrances on 'access land'. They will also know that the Mines and Quarries Act and the Mines Regulations 2014 place a duty on the owners to prevent accidental entry into mines by members of the public.

The CRoW Act, "does not entitle a person to enter or be on any land, or do anything on any land, in contravention of any prohibition contained in or having effect under any enactment, other than an enactment contained in a local or private Act."

Neither the Mines and Quarries Act nor the Mines Regulations are local or private acts. Thus CRoW does not 'override' either. In addition CRoW provides that restrictions may be put in place where there are specific concerns over conservation or public safety issues.

The BCA wishes to establish the broad principle that the CRoW Act applies to caving. There will undoubtedly be some grey areas, such as where mines intersect caves and where caves intersect mines. The finer detail can be debated once the broad principle is agreed. I hope that NAMHO members, and mining enthusiasts in general, will be able to support the BCA campaign. Thank you.

Tim Allen

BCA CRoW Liaison officer

October 2015

2. I have continued my research into the value of caving to our rural economies with some progress. This is opportune as on 28 October, David Rutley, MP and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Mountaineering, managed to secure a Westminster Hall debate on the 'economic value of outdoor recreation'. This lobbying has benefited all outdoor interests and managed to get outdoor recreation firmly written into the new 'Strategy for Sport'. (see <http://tinyurl.com/qd3o3ck>).

This focusses more on the benefits of physical activity rather than just sport, where the well-being of participants is valued as much as sporting success. Amongst other factors the strategy will need to bring together government departments such as Health, Sport, Local Government and Environment. This is far too big an issue to be covered in this report but there are great opportunities here for caving, significantly the timing of the BCA access campaign over the next few years. As for the value of caving to our rural economies I have focussed on the northern caving region. Here, preliminary study of fact and estimate show a value between £3-4million per year (excluding commercial businesses such as outdoor shops and show caves). Extrapolated across all caving regions it is easy to see that this would amount to £10million per year and have a significant effect on the specific areas frequented by cavers.

- 3. I have also looked into offering advice to our Access Controlling Bodies on the Defra interpretation of CRoW. I liaised with Glenn Jones on timing so that the advice could be sent out with renewals. This did not leave me enough time especially as the idea has developed. Having spoken with our access group and members of the exec it has been suggested that this should be expanded to include advice on; section 26 restriction, bats, the BCA campaign, reassurances to landowners and their liability. I hope to work on this with colleagues in time for the next Council meeting, although it has been suggested to issue the final guidance through C&A.*

Ongoing Work

- 1. I have continued with my efforts to gather wide-ranging support for BCA's position on CRoW. This has involved contacting other outdoor affiliated bodies and lobbying MP's and the authorities. In addition to the access campaign I have also used the opportunity to promote caving and encourage a more positive image of our sport. This has been welcomed and embraced by all I have met.*
- 2. As a caver local to the Yorkshire Dales I have, over the last few years, attended a number of meetings of both the Yorkshire Dales and Lancashire Local Access Forums (LAF) in order to boost the profile of caving in my area and to highlight various local access issues. The LAF is the statutory consulting body set up under the CRoW Act and comprises an equal mix of landowners, business interests and outdoor groups. It would be this body that government consults over any access issues so it is important to explain our case to these forums where possible. My attendance at the LAF and the issues I have raised have been warmly received and has led to the opportunity to take the issue to the wider national LAF. I now intend to follow this up in my role as BCA CRoW Officer.*
- 3. I have continued to liaise with other outdoor groups as indicated in my previous report. All have been supportive. I have had some conversations with David Rutley MP in his role as chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Mountaineering and with the BMC as the group's secretary. This has all been very positive and has led to me being invited to attend a meeting with outdoor access specialists, which I shall attend in London next month. This contact also helped me to organise the VIP caving trip mentioned below.*
- 4. I also met with my local MP, Julian Smith where we discussed promoting the value of caving to the local area, some local access issues and the wider BCA campaign. As a government whip Mr Smith cannot get involved in the campaign directly but has offered to write to the Secretary of State on our behalf. Council will remember that senior conservative MP, David Davis, also wrote to the Secretary of State on our behalf. His advice as an experienced politician was to keep doing what we are doing, by gathering support and not going away. By chance a caving colleague and supporter of the BCA campaign met the Secretary of State at a social event. He was able to brief her first hand on our campaign. This contact will hopefully stand us in good stead for the future.*
- 5. With the help of colleagues I organised a VIP caving trip to Gaping Ghyll in the Yorkshire Dales. The trip had two purposes, one to demonstrate the positive benefits of caving to both the participants and the local community, and the second to discuss the issues surrounding CRoW and caver access. Our VIPs had a great day out and were very helpful and supportive of BCA. The press release below explains the trip in more detail:*

MPS VISIT BRITAIN'S BIGGEST CAVERN, SUPPORTING CAMPAIGN FOR OPEN ACCESS TO CAVE SYSTEMS Clapham, North Yorkshire, 30 December 2015

TWO Conservative MPs and a leading QC have paid a visit to Britain's highest waterfall – the mighty cascade that tumbles down the 365-foot entrance shaft of Gaping Ghyll in Ingleborough in North Yorkshire.

The two politicians, former Shadow Home Secretary David Davis, MP for Howden and Haltemprice, and David Rutley, who sits for Macclesfield, entered the cave via Bar Pot, a 'back door' to the 8-mile long system that is safe even during heavy rain.

The party were joined by Richard Toon, Chairman of the Lancashire Local Access Forum and supported by experienced local cavers. Before setting off for the cave the team enjoyed a tour of the Cave Rescue Organisation headquarters based in the village of Clapham, recognising the volunteer service who had recently been on stand-by for the wide spread flooding in the region.

To reach the cathedral-sized Main Chamber – Britain's biggest – that contains the waterfall, they had to descend two vertical pitches of 55ft and 110ft, using lightweight caving ladders and lifelines. Beyond lay hundreds of feet of crawling and stooping passageway leading to the Chamber, where they and their companions enjoyed a festive snack of Christmas cake and hot coffee.

One purpose of the trip, led by Ingleton rope access specialist and veteran cave explorer Tim Allen, was to experience first-hand the positive benefits of caving both for participants and the wider community.

Another was to give support to a campaign by the British Caving Association (BCA) which Mr Allen is organising to extend access rights to caves. At present, the government's Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) claims the 'right to roam' granted to walkers, climbers and other outdoor enthusiasts under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 does not cover caves. Some landowners have refused cavers' permission to descend systems on their land entirely, while others have imposed onerous restrictions.

Also taking part in the trip, held on 28 December, was leading public law QC Dinah Rose, who described the experience as 'a really brilliant and memorable day'. She has already written a formal, legal opinion for the BCA, which says that Defra's position is not only illogical, but misinterprets the Act. Her opinion says there is no evidence that excluding caves from the law's scope reflects the will of Parliament when it was debated.

In fact, Defra, and the agency it funds, Natural England, claim that cavers do have a right to cross open access land to cave entrances, and to descend them – but only as far as the point where daylight ceases to penetrate. 'In legal terms,' Ms Rose said, 'this is simply perverse, and it could well be open to a challenge in court'.

However, Mr Allen stressed that the BCA hoped to win its campaign by persuasion. He added that caving was a large and growing source of income in rural areas, which benefited the economy while causing no damage to the environment.

Having regained the surface, the two MPs agreed. Mr Davis said: 'The trip was a fascinating experience, and it was really great to see Britain's highest waterfall thundering down from a circle of daylight above – it was especially impressive after so much rain. It's clear to me that caving has nothing but a positive impact, both on its exponents and the communities where the sport takes place.

'I cannot see for the life of me why Defra is taking the wholly illogical stance of denying that caves are covered by the open access freedoms granted by the CROW Act.'

Mr Rutley said: 'It was truly a memorable day out, and the Main Chamber and waterfall are just an incredible spectacle. We are fortunate to have an active population of cavers in the UK, which has a hugely beneficial economic impact on areas where there are caves. I look forward to working closely with cavers in future, as part of my wider efforts to get people off the sofa and to promote outdoor activities, and to show why access to caves should be recognised under the CROW Act.'

6. *I have kept myself informed of the on-going access dispute at Drws Cefn/Ogof Draenen. Without wishing to make any comment on the dispute itself the situation has escalated to a point where the outcome may have wider implications and possible impact on the BCA. I am certainly no expert in law but my observations are as follows; The entrance to Drws Cefn is on access land as defined by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. As such, and in view of other legislation such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, there are procedures which need to be followed by local authority and landowners. It is my understanding that any citizen or NGO may challenge the lawfulness of a decision or action made by a public body by the Judicial Review process and that is what seems to be happening here. There are strict time limits which affect Judicial Review and the solicitor's letter referred to in this case may just be part of the pre-action protocol. The review takes place before a judge in the Administrative Court and is concerned only that the correct procedures have been followed rather than that the decision was correct. It is possible to apply to the court for a Cost Protection Order, but normally the loser bears all the costs. There is also the risk that the case may be won but the public body may make the same decision again so long as they do so in a lawful way. In my view a decision has yet to be made which can be challenged by Judicial Review. I suggest the BCA continue as it is whilst keeping an eye on any future developments.*
7. *At the beginning of December I participated in a WebEx online meeting with members of the BCA exec and access team. I brought everyone up to date with the campaign. The secretary may wish to report further on this meeting.*
8. *The following 'strap lines' have been suggested by various members which summarise the BCA campaign. They all state pretty much the same thing. Do Council agree with the summary?*

We are – Campaigning to change DEFRA's interpretation of the CROW Act and its application to caving to reflect what we believe was Parliament's original intention.

We are - Campaigning to change the DEFRA guidance on how CROW applies to caving, within the existing law, as we believe parliament intended.

This is - BCA's campaign to confirm existing access rights under CROW do cover caving.

This is - BCA's campaign to confirm that existing access rights under CROW do cover caving – as Parliament always intended.

I look forward to attending the meeting and answering any questions Council members may have.

Tim Allen

TA: Has contacted a lot of different people and across the board they have been very welcoming and supportive of what we are asking. They are also very interested in promoting caving in general too. There are people who are against what TA is doing on behalf of BCA, as evidenced on UKCaving and social media. However the majority of feedback has been very positive.

- SH: The NAMHO letter was appreciated as it clarified things. It has just been published in the recent newsletter. NAMHO is probably fairly neutral but wants to ensure there are no misinterpretations as far as mines are concerned.
- TA: The Minister of Sport was at the recent Parliamentary debate on the 'economic value of outdoor recreation' and pretty much every speaker said that outdoor recreation is fantastic – key reasons being promoting physical and mental well-being and the money it puts into the economy. Outdoor recreation is now a key feature of the Strategy for Sport, which is very useful as it means a number of government departments are now involved in promoting sport.
- GM: Might we see the Government encouraging Sport England to reinstate our grant funding?
- TA: This is as good a time as any. Talking to instructors, we estimate 70,000 individuals are taken on instructor-led caving trips in the Dales annually. Despite this the majority of those involved in Yorkshire tourism do not seem to appreciate this. For example the gentleman who brought the Tour de France to Yorkshire was surprised that caving might draw people to the National Park.
- DT: The Welsh government seems to have realised and is really involved in pushing the benefits. Active cavers probably make up a tiny proportion of the UK population. In Wales we receive a small grant from the Sports Council which we use for training and the like.
- TA: The trip for MPs was a great opportunity to promote caving more widely. It began with breakfast in the New Inn, followed by a visit to the CRO depot, and during the walk up to Gaping Gill there was a chance meeting with CNCC Access Officer, Johnny Latimer, and a number of other interesting people. This helped give the VIPs a wider view of caving.
- AH: A key factor in CNCC securing its cave conservation funding was the uniqueness of the limestone environment in the Dales.
- TA: The £10m figure has been extrapolated by taking the figure for the Dales and expanding it across the country.
- NW: Similar figures might bring benefits to clubs with huts in pushing for reductions in rates.
- TA: It would be great if we could find someone who is looking to take this on as a proper project and produce more accurate figures.

Advice to Access-Controlling Bodies

- TA: Spoke to Glenn Jones but it has been suggested that BCA offers advice on a number of different areas at the same time.
- AH: The C&A Committee might be able to do some work on bats.
- JB: As you know, a number of people are against CRoW applying to caves. In the Mendips, there are caves with access restrictions and whenever discussions are held locally, the response is that Section 26 doesn't apply because caving isn't included. Therefore protection needs to be in place before caving is included.
- BM: There is already guidance from Natural England which provides more than sufficient information on how to proceed. It is possible that this has not been communicated to CSCC clubs.
- JB: Upper Flood is particularly in need of protection.
- TA: Most of Upper Flood is not under Access Land, so the legislation would not apply. Is aware the CSCC is concerned about a couple of caves, but would like the CSCC to look at what CRoW means more widely. Appreciates that the issue in the Mendips is different from that in the Dales and parts of Wales, but it would be helpful if they looked at the wider picture.
- JB: If you show you are attempting to address people's concerns about conservation, and make an effort to publicise this, it will help.
- TA: A colleague met Liz Truss, Minister for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, at the Daily Mail Christmas party and had a good chat about the caving issue. Her comment was that the Conservative Party was the party of deregulation. Despite people having writing to her Department about CRoW, she - as Minister - was unaware of this. It would be good to have a ministerial meeting and also another approach to DEFRA to discuss some of the difficulties they have with answering some of the more technical questions we have asked. They have not really laid out their side of the case and it would be nice to pursue this. The current strategy is to gather a broad level of support from other organisations and MPs and then to return to DEFRA. Has attended a meeting involving a number of access specialists from other Bodies and the Sport and Recreation Alliance and hopes to gain their support.
- BM: We need a slight change to our current advice about bats and caving. The fact that a bat is present does not, by default, mean we cannot go underground.
- JP: Local bat groups in Derbyshire seem quite relaxed. Cavers being present does not necessarily mean bats will be harmed.
- DT: In Wales Stuart France has been battling with people in the southern offices who see it as being a much greater issue than the northern bat group. The north has written to the south and suggested there is no problem.

TA: Has spoken to Julian Smith recently and he said he will take every opportunity where appropriate at Westminster to push caving. TA is incurring expenses, such as breakfast for the MPs. He is going to London for the forthcoming meeting and will be attending some National meetings with local, supportive Chairs of Local Access Forums. He is wondering about expenses for these too.

DW: BCA always seeks to reimburse reasonable and necessary expense. Each Committee has a budget. It is simply a matter of talking to PI and AH and negotiating a budget.

TA: Can BCA's logo be used?

DW: Yes, but it would be appropriate to run any accompanying wording past either AH or DW first.

RW: A 2016 budget exists and has been approved. There is currently nothing in it allocated to CRoW. We would probably, therefore, need formal Council approval for a change to the budget. However it is perfectly possible.

Proposal: ***this meeting is happy to support spending on CRoW and TA should liaise with PI to finalise details.***

Prop: DW Sec: AH *agreed unanimously*

Action 169: TA to put a proposal for spending on CRoW to PI for approval.

TA: Can we please confirm we are happy with TA's work so far?

DW: Anything that is not specifically brought up during these discussions is considered to have been accepted. However it may be useful to make a formal proposal on this occasion.

Proposal: ***that the meeting approves TA's report.***

Prop: DW Sec: JP *agreed unanimously*

NW: Our insurers have confirmed that "the public liability insurance does cover the activities of BCA award scheme holders and non-members accessing sites for leisure purposes".

GM: Professional access has now been granted to Agen Allwedd and Craig a Ffynnon.

The remainder of the Conservation & Access Reports was accepted without discussion.

10. Equipment & Techniques (written report previously circulated)

A meeting was held on 15 November 2015 using the web conferencing facility with 'nodes' in Derbyshire and on Mendip. This proved to be extremely effective and the saving in travel costs for this one meeting was a substantial proportion of the annual Webex subscription cost. A report has been provided to Dave Cooke on the experience.

A new resin has now been accepted for use when placing anchors. Work on the use of anchors in several types of rock in Devon was considered and awaits final acceptance. The committee also agreed to the use of the current BP anchor in North Wales in the tested slate types.

Discussion took place on loose anchors and work is in hand to consider previous reports as well as assessing the current situation. Early information suggests the problem is not linked to one type of resin. It was also noted that the anchor is held in by both a chemical bonding between anchor and resin as well as a mechanical bond between the shape of the anchor and the resin cast surrounding it. Experience in removing anchors indicates that the mechanical bond requires a lot of force to extract the anchor so a reported 'loose' anchor (movement / flexing of more than 1mm) is not considered to be an immediate life-threatening situation. Covers are expected to check every anchor before use and also use back up anchors to cope with a single failure.

Work is being planned to see if BP anchors can be extracted without undue impact on the rock location. Current experience of simply pulling the anchor out is making over 50% of the locations unreuseable. This is clearly poor conservation.

Consideration is also being given to including a limit for the maximum extraction force in the BCA anchor specification to avoid loss of location.

There has been no significant work on rope.

Nick Williams

NW: Thanks to BM, who has put in a lot of work on E&T's behalf, reducing NW's workload considerably.

The remainder of the Equipment & Techniques reports was accepted without discussion.

11. Training (written report previously circulated)

Data on Qualifications (September to November 2015)

	Registrations	Assessments	Revalidations
LCMLA Level 1	22	14	3
LCMLA Level 2		2	2
CIC	2	1	1

Current BCA award holders

Local Cave and Mine Leaders: Level 1 - 479, Level 2 – 260, Cave Instructor Certificate: 84

Financial situations with the schemes

Local Cave and Mine Award: £293

Cave Instructor Certificate: £935

The National Coordinating Panel for the Local Cave and Mine Leader Award has now got a Chair. For the last two years no one has been willing to stand and NCP members have rotated around representing NCP at Training Committee meetings. As Training Officer I am very pleased with this change.

At the last NCP meeting there were a number of agenda items that led to decisions being made about the structure of the award schemes within BCA, their management functionality, the legal position regarding disciplinary actions and the code of conduct for approved Trainers/Assessors.

It was felt unanimously that the BCA response to the Bear Grylls programme including caving in The Yorkshire Dales in flooding conditions had been profoundly weak and non-specific.

The issue of the BCA discipline procedure was discussed and it was stated that it was felt that it was not fit for purpose and a new version was shown that had been approved by solicitors.

A discussion took place regarding the structure of Training Committee and an idea was put forward that separated the whole of the BCA awards schemes from Training Committee so that they stood independently and they would be managed by members of the NCP and CIC Panel. This new organisation would be called the British Caving Association Qualifications Management Committee (BCAQMC). It would not be part of Training Committee and therefore not answerable to it. Training Committee would continue but would only be linked to recreational caving and an extra Training Officer would need to be appointed to organise it. The distribution of training grants would be organised through this section. It was felt that there should still be a link between BCA Council and BCAQMC and Council should send a representative to BCAQMC meetings, but the representative should not be a BCA Trainer/Assessor within the award schemes. The whole of this idea of restructure was agreed totally by all present at the meeting.

New Trainer/Assessors for the Local Cave and Mine Leader are now appointed centrally, approved by Training Committee previously, and not by the individual Panels around the U.K. It was suggested that the appointment process should be similar to how CIC Trainer/Assessors are appointed.

A new Trainer/Assessor for the LCML scheme has been approved by NCP for the north of England.

The above points were also discussed at Training Committee: the first meeting to be held through Skype. All were passed through a voting process. It was felt that to action these changes, it may require a change in the BCA's constitution at the next A.G.M.

An issue raised at Training Committee was Trainer/Assessors using social media, such as Facebook, and making personal comments about the schemes in a negative and/or bullying way. It was felt that this should be stopped and written in to the Trainer/Assessor agreement and general code of conduct.

Reports were received at Training Committee from some Regional Councils. DCA stated that a few resin anchors have been removed from Giant's Hole and replaced by new ones. CCC announced that a bat walk would be taking place and a surveying course. There were no reports from CSCC, CNCC or DCUC.

Two training grants have been applied for since the previous Training Committee meeting and they were both accepted.

Nigel Ball

NB: Skype worked quite well for the last Training Committee with some technical fallout on occasions. There were no representatives from CSCC, CNCC or DCUC.

JB: Understands that the CSCC has attended over the last year.

NB: Once. The new Training Officer also tried to attend a meeting but traffic was difficult and he turned around.

NB: The figures in the report show that the schemes are progressing well. The recent NCP meeting was held at the Library. Graham Mollard, as Northern Panel ALO, is now Chair of National Co-ordinating Panel (NCP).

GM: The Disciplinary Procedure was also discussed and a proposed alternative procedure has been put together. This has been discussed with criminal and civil solicitors. A copy will be sent to DW.

NB: The vast majority of time at Training Committee is spent discussing professional-scheme issues. Council asked Training Committee to consider its structure some time ago. Since then people have thought about it and a proposal was made to NCP that the CIC and LCMLA be administered by a separate body. Training Committee would continue to deal with recreational training and a separate committee would be set up that would deal with the professional scheme only. This was discussed at TC and was carried 4 to 1 in favour of bringing it to Council. It would not be a fundamental part of BCA, but would operate independently. Known as BCA Qualifications Management Committee, it would be made up of the Area Liaison Officers and CIC Panel members plus any other experts co-opted. We did not want to break away from BCA, so would like a member of Council to attend and maintain the link. We do not want that person to be a Trainer-Assessor.

DJe: DCUC did not send a report, but a year ago the personal dealing with training switched and BCA was informed.

However notifications are still going to Roger King. How do we access funding for a bolting course?

DW: That is the Equipment & Techniques Committee' remit.

[IW submitted a written response, shown below, to the Training Officer's Report]

It is good to see this proposal written down to give one an opportunity to think about it.

Unfortunately it was presented to the last Training Committee not as an agenda item but as part of a verbal report.

The sound quality on the Skype system used was very poor & my internet connection dropped out a few times so it was difficult to understand what was being proposed and what the ramifications & motivation behind it were.

I felt that Training Committee could not deal effectively with this, which clearly involved substantial changes in the way BCA operates and that reps should consult with their bodies to get a mandate before approving this. I therefore asked for a vote on it but was amazed to find that the two regional council representatives present were able to vote in favour. (This was the first vote at Training Committee during the 15 years that I have been involved.)

Some aspects of this proposal give rise for concern.

Currently Training Committee is a BCA committee and each BCA Constituent Body is represented (if they turn up).

The day to day running of the schemes is carried out by NCP & CIC Panel who are formed only from those involved.

These Panels report to Training Committee who approve (sometimes with amendments) their proposals so the final decision is within the "democratic" set up of BCA and covered by BCA Insurance. This proposal would take the Schemes outside both this democracy and insurance.

Concern 1: *If the reporting arrangements for this Management Committee are to be direct to Council it will be necessary for Council to discuss, amend & approve its proposals. Can Council take on this additional work and are the representatives at Council sufficiently knowledgeable about the schemes to do this work effectively?*

Concern 2: *BCA is to send a representative to this Committee but it is not spelt out if this rep is to have a veto, have a vote or to be an observer.*

Concern 3: *If this Committee is not answerable to Training Committee or Council how can it call itself British Caving Association Qualifications Management Committee, and how are its deliberations to be insured?*

In conclusion I fear this is another blow driving the wedge between the Professional & Recreational side of caving which we should be seeking to bring together.

When I was arm-twisted by Mick Day to be NCA Training Officer he told me that it was important for NCA to deal with the awards if only to stop any move to make all cavers have them.

Idris Williams

IW: This proposal was brought up in a verbal report during a Skype meeting, where IW had difficulty hearing GM. As a result it was difficult to fully appreciate what was being proposed. Furthermore there was no notification in advance of what was being discussed. This was the first time during IW's involvement that TC held a vote. Could NB please run through who was at the meeting and who voted, as IW believes the vote was really 1 against vs 2 in favour? IW voted against and wonders if the RCC reps really had a mandate from their Councils to vote for it. Could Nick also please clarify the insurance side of things?

NW: We do not insure people who are earning a living from their caving activities. It is our expectation they will hold their own personal insurance. Insurance does not really figure in all this, as there are ways to make insurance fit whatever is decided as the appropriate structure. It is, clear, though that the proposal is a major change and will require some considerable thought. It is worth nothing that the current TC has focused almost exclusively on professional schemes.

BM: Disagrees.

NW: We are advised that there is an issue with the current TC and recreational representation.

MB: What do Award Holders want?

GM: Once Award Holders receive their qualification, they have no real involvement in the schemes.

SH: Has occasionally attended TC as one of the few non-qualification holders. Regional Council tend to send Award Holders and this makes it difficult. There are profound implications for the Organisation in what is being proposed. We need to understand the link with BCA. What is proposed is a Constituent Body, not a Committee. If you are going to take such a decision then it is important to give representatives time to digest the information.

NB: Yes, we are proposing a Constituent Body.

GM: We had two options, becoming a separate entity or remaining within BCA. We want the latter, hence the decision to ask for a Council Representative. Both Schemes need rewriting and this is being done in a very different way from the current arrangements. We cannot take the next two years to debate this issue and need to move forward.

BM: What is clear is that you need to think in terms of 2017 if any change requires constitutional change. You will need 70% agreement in two electoral 'houses' and you are unlikely to achieve this at the moment. There will need to be much more information as to the benefits behind this.

JP: The DCA representative on TC regularly attends but has never ever reported back to DCA on any aspect of TC. He does organise recreational training for DCA members but never discusses qualifications with DCA. This is probably

because he does not feel it has anything to do with Regional Councils. He has probably already made the separation in his own mind between recreational and professional. This is not a criticism of him, but he is wearing two hats. We need to be much clearer about what you are doing, the way you are doing it and how you are going to have sufficient representation. DCA has links with PICA. This helps is stay in line with local access rules.

GM: That sort of issue is discussed at Panel Meetings.

JP: Is not against it, but you will need to be very clear in how it is going to help recreational caving.

MB: MB will communicate this back to CNCC next weekend but is unaware of the detail and background.

BM: Communication takes time and is hard work.

GM: It was on the Agenda.

NB: Why is it going to affect Clubs?

BM: Because they have a vote and they may well seek to ensure that professionals are under the control of the recreational cavers.

DW: You need to talk to DW about what you want. He can then advise on how to make it happen as efficiently as possible.

NW: It is quite likely that we do not need Constitutional Changes for what you are seeking, but we need much more detail to be sure.

TA: Both sides can help each other, but at present neither side is doing this terribly effectively.

GM: We have offered multiple recreational caving training opportunities, but there has been very little take up.

RN: There were good reasons for this with CHECC. In general the recreational side of caving is very concerned about the paperwork required for professional caving being required in recreational caving too.

TA: Coming from an industrial background, clubs need to find a way to make use of professional caving. Do you have any idea how you could obtain figures on the total number of led trips?

GM: It would have been easier some time ago, but there are now more private providers.

NW: It is clear that there is insufficient paperwork for Council to make some kind of decision at this meeting. We need greater clarity for the next meeting.

Action 170: NB and GM to put together a detailed proposal document on the way forward for Training Committee, in good time for the Council Meeting on 9 April.

The remainder of the Training Report was accepted without discussion.

12. Publications & Information *(written report previously circulated)*

I was actioned to report to Council on a proposed roadmap for publications.

I have been consulting on this and feel that as we stand there are no direct BCA publications, in as much as everything we do is electronic and published via the web site.

I realise this point came about due to the demise of Speleology and it is for BCA to decide if they wish a published paper presence in the world. If we are to be electronic only then there is very little that needs doing on our publication policy, just continue providing the handbook and newsletter information via the web site.

However, if Council decides that BCA should have a wider presence than the internet, or even a wider presence on the internet, then we need to decide how to achieve this.

From my point of view there are a few routes we can follow, depending on what is required:

- 1. Following the demise of Speleology BCA could launch a new caving magazine for its members.*
- 2. BCA could "buy" space in an existing magazine and employ a copy editor to chase up news and articles for inclusion in an existing publication.*
- 3. BCA could provide much more content via the web and employ a copy editor to collate articles and news for the web site.*
- 4. Do nothing more than currently.*

Option 1: *From my point of view is a non starter. There really isn't the room in the caving market place for two magazines.*

There also appears to be no will within the caving community to produce copy or to edit and produce such a magazine. It appears difficult to engage editors even when they are to be paid.

Option 2: *There is already a relatively successful commercial magazine in the UK market place and BCA could enter into some form of commercial arrangement with them to promote BCA and to publish news and articles on our behalf.*

Option 3: *is also a possible route but will be dependent on finding a person to carry this forward.*

Option 4: *I have always been quite concerned about the tangible benefits that BCA is seen to provide to its members. We used to provide a Handbook, a somewhat intermittent newsletter and also an intermittent Speleology (although it was badged as a BCRA publication). We now have electronic Handbook, electronic Newsletter and no Speleology. Apart from the website we are just an insurance salesman to most cavers (I know we don't sell insurance!). I do feel we should be providing more tangible member benefits and so I favour a commercial arrangement with an existing magazine as a way forward.*

My view is that as BCA had already underwritten Speleology and also attempted to pay a copy editor that we should look at option 2 as a possible route to remaining in the mainstream caving press.

Les Williams

AH: Disagrees with LW's recommendation, as members would then be expected to purchase a copy of Descent every two

months to get our information. A better option is to improve our presence online.

DW: We already support a number of ventures in the interests of cavers as a whole, including the Caving Library, Ghar Parau and the UK Caving forum. There is little doubt that caving should have a quality magazine and we owe it to our members, and cavers in general, to ensure one remains. At the moment this is Descent.

TA: We might have concerns over editorial control. We could continue to allow Descent to publish information on our behalf without making it our official publication.

BM: Descent offers a means of getting to some of our members, and non-members we would otherwise not reach. We currently have a small number of e-mail newsletter recipients.

JB: Given that BCA has no publications, do we still need to have a P&I Officer?

DW: Would take the view that the Information side of the role is still crucial. We need to manage the way we share information about our activities and liaise with our membership.

TA: Does not see that there is anything wrong with the content in the new newsletters. The key is finding someone to help RW jazz it up a bit in much the same way as the Cambrian and CNCC newsletters are currently produced.

RW: When editing the Cambrian newsletter, RW had an informal working arrangement with Descent that we share things from each other's publications where relevant.

RW: The newsletter is set up at present to be very quick, ensuring news is current and relevant. This was the basis on which RW agreed to produce it and the current format is as far as RW can take it.

MB: The discussion earlier was about advertising on the UKCaving forum. Sees no reason why we could not do the same in Descent if felt appropriate.

TA: Descent's content generally has little relevance to newcomers to the sport. Other specialist publications often offer something specifically for the beginner.

NW: It seems we have no objection to spending money based on a firm plan, but that is currently missing.

Proposal: ***In light of our decision to spend money on online media, there is no reason why we shouldn't spread this to other forms of media.***

Prop: NW Sec: IW agreed unanimously

Action 171: LW and/or AE to speak to Descent over possible collaboration.

a. Webmaster (written report circulated)

I reported at the last meeting that Chris Hunter would review the TryCaving.org.uk website to decide upon the best course of action to take it forward. He has concluded it will need redeveloping and that will take more time than he has available. A different strategy is required. I have some ideas which I will discuss with Chris and bring to a future meeting.

Regarding paying for advertising on ukCaving, I am against it. Why pay for something that we currently get free and would continue to get free? BCA has its own forum that is run entirely by voluntary effort. To pay a third party for the same thing undermines the voluntary ethos of BCA. Before proceeding we should see the audience figures (Google Analytics) for ukCaving to help judge whether it is money well spent.

David Cooke

NW: We confirmed the decision to pay UKCaving earlier in the meeting, so there is no need to revisit it.

b. Web Services (written report circulated)

In the last quarter there was one outage of half an hour caused by an equipment fault at one of our ISP suppliers giving an approximate up time of 99.98%. Otherwise everything continues as normal, carrying out the routine tasks with the odd support question to resolve.

David Cooke

c. Newsletter (written report previously circulated)

As well as appearing on the website the October newsletter was distributed as an e-mail attachment to those who have agreed to receive it. Thanks are due to Cooke for setting up the system and making it happen.

I'm hoping to finalise the next newsletter during the last week of January and would ask for contributions to reach me by Sunday 24th.

Robin Weare

DT: Would like to know how many of our club's members have signed up to the email newsletter. Is this something that we could share in an anonymised format?

DW: Believes that in general only about 10% of our membership has signed up to receive email newsletters. We have substantially more email addresses, but the members have not yet opted in to receiving newsletters.

NW: Considers the current position silly. Sooner or later we should just send something to all members and deal with the consequences afterwards.

The remainder of the Publications & Information Reports were accepted without discussion.

13. Legal & Insurance

a. Insurance Manager (written report previously circulated)

Andy Eavis and I held a meeting with Richard Doubleday and Alan Brown of Perkins Slade on 15 December 2016. Key points from the meeting include:

- Generally we are happy with the service provided by PS although we have been disappointed with the hut insurance scheme. PS agreed to investigate this.
- The policy cost remains unchanged from 2015 although the actual premium will rise due to the increase in IPT introduced in the government's Autumn Statement. We have also been promised a 10% discount from January 2017 (subject to there being no claims).
- PS and the insurers do not currently have a clear view of the landowning/occupying liabilities of the BCA and its members. This will be the subject of an exercise in early 2016 when we will contact all clubs, ACBs and RCCs and other CB's to confirm what access agreements, leases and property ownership the membership hold. Cover for such arrangements is unaffected in the meanwhile, and this is not expected to impact on the premium.
- Issues such as the bolting programme, Eurospeleo 2016 and the level of indemnity for the use of explosives were discussed, with positive outcomes.
- PS will look at whether they can offer a bespoke expedition rescue/repatriation policy.
- A key area of concern related to cover for pollution arising from the activity of members (for example, the release of contaminated mine waters). I will be working with NAMHO and others on this in the coming months.

Overall the meeting was very positive and I am comfortable that the decision to move the policy to PS at the end of 2014 was correct.

Nick Williams

The remainder of the Legal & Insurance Reports were accepted without discussion.

Other Reports

14. Youth & Development

RN: The following has not been checked with the CHECC Chairman, as he is away at present. There have been two Higher Education caving clubs that have needed some support this year. One club was suspended by its Union, we believe for failing to submit paperwork on time. This led to an email from the Union to BCA querying the scope of our qualifications. We understand BCA's response resulted in the club being reinstated, but communication with the club has proved difficult. The club has been invited to Northern CHECC and it is hopefully they will attend. A second club has needed support with training issues and they have been put in touch with another local club for support. Transport is currently proving an issue here, but RN is hopeful the issue can be resolved. In terms of other work, RN will no longer be pushing people to adopt a caving club. There are a myriad of reasons for this. RN is also working with ASCT over a potential document to help people set up a Scout Caving club. It would be nice to see a 'train the trainers' document too.

Rostam Namaghi

15. Membership Administrator (written report previously circulated)

DIMs: 502 (caving), 47 (non-caving), 5 (CIM Plus), 6 (BCRA Honorary), (including 281 BCRA members and 38 student members) (Total DIMs = 560)

CIMs: 4084 (caving), 921 (non-caving), 498 student / U18) (Total CIMs = 5,503)

Clubs: 179

Associates: 6

Access Bodies: 10

1016 new membership numbers were issued in 2015 (14,821 – 15,837) This includes 179 numbers for groups in preparation for entry in the on-line system. The group membership number is being printed on the (white) group card.

New Clubs: The following clubs have supplied the correct paperwork and payment in order to become BCA member clubs: Hagg Farm Caving Club (used to be Hagg Farm OEC).

Admin: Following the implementation of BCA's on-line services and the consequent number crunching by David Cooke and David Gibson, a number of duplicate or incorrect membership numbers and email and postal address formatting issues have been identified and a significant amount of time has been spent in the later months of 2015 correcting these in time for the 2016 renewal process. The group renewal emails that went out in early December included a cut of that clubs membership with corrected membership numbers (where necessary) and hopefully, this will be a one off exercise.

Smartstamp: The Royal Mail on-line postage option closed on December 31st and I am looking at options which include a franking machine.

2016 Membership Renewal Processes: As of today (5 January 2016) the following have been processed and posted: DIMs: 216, Groups: 20, CIMs: 104.

Glenn Jones

The remainder of the Membership Administrator's Report was accepted without discussion.

16. 2016 Working Party

Nothing much further to report except that plans are progressing and there is a planning meeting to be held on the 23rd of January.

Les Williams

AH: Contacted LW a while back about considering an open day ticket for at least one of the days of the event.

DW: This is no problem. They will be available every day of the event on the door.

AH: Also contacted LW suggesting that one of the days be nominated a 'Family Day' – AH is prepared to organise some child-centred events to tie in with this and it would be hoped that local-community interest can be generated in this way.

NW: Has anybody booked the BCA cave?

DW: Believes so, but will check.

TA: Is there a master plan?

DW: Yes. The fundamentals of the event are now in place and the organising team is working on the details, which will be the subject of the meeting on 23 January. Perhaps the largest outstanding issue is the arrangements for Trade and Club Stands and this is the subject of a number of the emails DW receives.

JP: Would like to have a Club Stand.

TA: If you are not publicising the nature of the event, then it is difficult to sell the event to traders. There is, for example, no information currently available on how the days will be structured and whether or not there will be anything taking place on site to keep the delegates and encourage them to spend with the traders.

DW: This is noted. There will be one lecture hall running pretty much throughout the day Monday to Friday with a Salle 3D film marking to transition to evening entertainments. As such there will be plenty to keep people on site, although clearly a considerable number will wish to take advantage of the pre-rigged caves.

The remainder of the 2016 Report was accepted without discussion.

17. Cave Registry

Nothing new to report for the last quarter.

David Cooke

18. IT Working Party

There have been three WebEx video conference meetings to date (E&T, CASC and CRoW). Whilst not perfect they have been judged a reasonable success. I believe the CRoW meeting had some problems with the quality of the lines to Ingleton. I'm grateful for the report that Bob Mehew provided which showed a saving of over £250 for the E&T meeting alone.

There is still quite a bit of training to be done and also quite a bit of work identifying who can join a meeting from home verses those who need to travel to a hub site and the best locations for the hubs.

Before selecting the WebEx service I reviewed several other services available, including the free services. I assessed them for price, features, ease of use, stability, etc. I also ask Council Members to let me know of any services they would recommend. To date no one has recommended any other service for me to consider. The problem with the free services is that what they offer keeps changing and after a while is no longer free. I do not want to have to hop between suppliers because there is a significant human cost in frustration and time wasted learning a new system.

David Cooke

NW: We have already saved in the E&T Meeting more than the WebEx cost.

The remainder of the IT Report was accepted without further discussion.

19. International Representative

The major International Union of Speleology event that has taken place since the last council meeting was the Transkarst meeting in China. This was under the auspices of the Asian region of the UIS which is a new regional organisation, and this was its second meeting. It took place between the 4th and 9th November and was very good, well attended and sets the standard for such regional meetings around the world in future.

There are now three active regional bodies under the UIS auspices, being the Federation of Latin American countries based in

Central America, the European Federation – FSE, and this new Asian Federation. It's highly likely that more will be set up into the future, which providing they accept coordination by the International Union of Speleology seems a very positive step forward.

The other major UIS effort is still focused on the International Congress in Sydney in July 2017. It would appear that everything in that connection is going forward satisfactorily with a comprehensive report being presented to the meeting in China.

Andy Eavis

a. FSE

Since the last Council Meeting in October there has been no FSE Bureau or General Assembly Meetings. The last Bureau meeting and GAM took place on Saturday 30th May 2015 in Pertosa – Auletta in Italy at the Euro Speleo Forum hosted by the 22nd National Italian Congress.

Although not a European event, the FSE was represented at the 2nd Asian Transkarst Conference in Lichuan, Hubei (China) and the Asian Union of Speleology (AUS) was founded on 6th November 2015. Two FSE bureau members attended along with Asian delegates from South Korea, China, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Iran, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, Lebanon and Indonesia.

The FSE will be publishing a newsletter at the end of this month and from then on twice each year.

The FSE is working actively with the organisers of Eurospeleo 2016 to make this a resounding success. Henk Goutier, vice delegate from the Netherlands, will help me with foreign liaison matters.

Timetable of EuroSpeleo events over next 3 years that involve the FSE

European Congress 2016 will be in the Yorkshire Dales, UK (hosting the ES Forum).

ES Forum 2017 Dryanovo, Central North Bulgaria, northern slopes of the Balkan Mountain

(The next UIS Congress will be in Sydney in 2017)

ES Forum 2018 will be in Sazkammergut, Upper-Austria.

Ged Campion

The International Reports were accepted without discussion.

20. Media-Liaison

Nothing to report.

Hellie Adams

21. British Caving Library Report

1. The John Beck Legacy & Reorganisation

A major reorganisation of the space and shelving at BCL is taking place in order for us to be able to house the John Beck Legacy. As it was necessary to remove all publications, surveys, etc. from the house in Eyam, formerly owned by John Beck and Doug Nash, at short notice in October, BCRA Council approved the lease of 250 sq. ft. of storage in a facility at Wirksworth for 6 months, until April 2016. Nine volunteers undertook the move and the publications have had to be stored temporarily in archive boxes and on some shelving we were able to take with us.

It was agreed to pass to specialist mining historical material, including the Nellie Kirkham legacy, to Peak District Mines Historical Society so this has been put in a separate room at the storage facility. PDMHS have now begun to pass on original mining documents to the Derbyshire Records Office for specialist conservation and storage, where they will be available to the public. They will retain other mining-related publications in their own Library, accessible to cavers and mining historians. The first item already moved to BCL is an 8-drawer map chest full of cave and mine surveys, maps and aerial photos of the Peak District - this is just as John left it and we now have to catalogue the contents. Also transferred to BCL is John's AI format printer with spare ink and paper rolls, ready to print surveys as soon as we have the software and files stored on John's hard drive, which is shortly to be passed on to us.

Remaining at the storage facility together with all the publications are a second 5-drawer map chest containing maps, surveys and prints; the contents of two specialised storage cabinets comprising 600 rolled maps and surveys plus a further four tea-chest-sized boxes holding several hundred more rolled large format surveys and maps. None of these appear to have been catalogued and we believe the total will eventually amount to well over 1,000 surveys, maps, etc.

We have Doug Nash's computer, which holds his catalogue of the publications (books, periodicals, etc.), amounting to some 2,800 items, which will give us some help in sorting these ready for transfer to BCL. This material will have to be sorted at the storage facility it before it can be moved on to the Library but it is clear that there is some duplication of items we already have so, in due course, we hope to be able to make these duplicates available to other caving libraries.

The one map chest, some shelving and a few publications have already been moved to new positions at BCL, some more recently donated shelving has been installed and we now intend to buy another complete shelving unit. Once that has been installed and some more shelf units transferred from the storage facility, our storage at BCL will increase from approximately 200 m of shelving to over 250 m, which is probably the maximum we can accommodate. (For comparison, the original BCRA

Library occupied approximately 70 m of shelving at the Matlock Local Studies Library.)

2. Enquiries, Visits & Donations

Enquiries continue to arrive at BCL from both the UK and abroad and the Librarian's prompt response in answering these, often by supplying scans by email, is appreciated. (A summary of these will be provided in our report to the BCA AGM.) Thanks often come in the form of donations of publications and surveys to the Library. More people and organisations are donating items to the Library: books, club publications and expedition reports and an increasing number of people visit - either to consult publications, to donate items or even just to drink our coffee and have a chat. As always, we continue to pass on duplicate items to other caving libraries.

3. The "Public Face" of the Library

The Librarian runs a Facebook page with 700 followers from both the UK and abroad, which received 1,000 hits over Christmas. We exchange BCRA publications with more than 40 foreign libraries, so there is a steady inflow of foreign publications. We have an increasing web presence, both the online catalogue (set up and maintained by Martin Laverly), the Audio Archive and the BCRA Archive, (both set up and maintained by John Gardner). John is in the process of setting up a Caving Archives Register which will go live on the website later this year. The Library is also used for meetings: BCRA Council and BCA Training Committee currently use it but it could also be used by other groups who need a meeting space which will accommodate up to 12 people.

Jenny Potts

IW: Is there a danger we will run out of space?

JP: Possibly, but JP has her eye on another office in the same building and has first refusal on it.

The Library Report was accepted without discussion.

22. Date, Time & Place of next meeting

The next Council Meeting will take place on Saturday 9 April 2016 at The Red Lion, Alvechurch.

23. Any Other Business

TA: The Constitution seems to have a few contradictions in it. It seems to be difficult to change things. In promoting ourselves to other Bodies, the latest buzz-word seems to be 'well-being'. In light of the difficulty in changing the Constitution, it would perhaps be beneficial to have a modern "mission statement", such as 'BCA recognises the value of the social, economic and health benefits of caving as one of the many outdoor activities'.

SN: That's not really BCA's mission statement, is it? It's not what we are for?

NW: Suggest we make use of our website for such things.

Action 172: TA to produce a draft form of words to express the benefits of caving in terms that will appeal to Government Bodies.

The meeting closed at 3.47pm.

Action Log (as at January 2016)

No.	Action by ...	Details of Action
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36	DW	Put together a Manual of Operations
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October 2011

83	PI	Produce an Asset Register and liaise with NW/EP over the total replacement value of our insured equipment.
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June 2014

116	HB	HB to liaise with interested parties and Executive and arrange for a new Weil's disease card to be produced, as well as advertise it via social media. BM to review the existing website documentation and decide if it needs updating. Updated Mar 15: HB to investigate card printing and distribution.
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March 2015

150	HB, NB	To liaise with Joel Corrigan to find a way to support future events financially.
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151	HB, DW, DC	To investigate using social media more effectively. Update Jan. '16: HB and DW have liaised and produced a protocol. This now needs firming up and discussing with DC.
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June 2015

155	PI	To amend signatories on BCA's accounts.
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October 2015

- 157 **PI, NW, RW** To set up new auto-enrolment pension fund for BCA's employees. **Update Jan '16:** Not required until 2017. Will be actioned in mid-2016.
- 158 **AH** To liaise with HA and LW over planned C&A documents.
- 160 **TA** To produce some suggested wording for advice to ACBs and liaise with Glenn Jones for it to be passed to ACBs at renewal in January. **Update Jan '16:** This will include other useful advice as well and will probably be distributed in conjunction with C&A Committee.
- 163 **DW** To liaise with UKCaving owners regarding their offer of advertising.
- 166 **AE, PI, DW & NW** To advertise the paid post of Administrative Assistant to Executive.

January 2016

- 167 **NB** Training Committee to produce a section for the LCMLA and CIC Handbooks on how to deal with the media.
- 168 **AH** To liaise with RW, PI and LW over the printing of some conservation handouts for Eurospeleo 2016.
- 169 **TA** to put a proposal for spending on CRoW to PI for approval.
- 170 **NB / Graham Mollard** to put together a detailed proposal document on the proposed way forward for Training Committee in good time for the Council Meeting on 9 April.
- 171 **LW and/or AE** to speak to Descent over possible collaboration.
- 172 **TA** to produce a draft form of words to express the benefits of caving in terms that will appeal to Government Bodies.

Appendix 1: HMRC Response to CASC Letter