

British Caving Association
Conservation and Access Committee
4th June 2005 ...(Notes replacing lost minute record)

The minutes of this meeting have been lost, hopefully temporarily and this record has been made from memory from the agenda, which does survive.

Attending....

Peter Claughton, George Price, John Hine, Maurice Febry, Dave Webb, David Judson, Linda Wilson, Elsie Little.

Finance...

A request was made for officers to bring forward estimates/receipts for works needing funding within the Regions.

Recent Court Judgements as Effecting Access...

Attention was drawn to the Hamstead and Tomlinson judgements and copies disseminated. These both demonstrate a change in emphasis as regards liability and put the onus more firmly on the person doing the activity rather than a landowner who has behaved reasonably in the face of his responsibilities.

National Trust Matters....

We continued to follow up the updating of a protocol for cave and mine access on National Trust properties that was begun at a meeting with a number of their personnel from around the country and was held in Birmingham.

The old protocol was very much out of date and was corrected in considerable detail and a suggested alternative sent to Jo Burgon of the NT.(copy attached)

National Conservation Codes...

The group had previously re-drafted a short Conservation Code which has been adopted by Council. We had hoped to begin the fusing of the other 2 codes (MICC and Ethical Caving Code) into a single, more user friendly format but were unable to do so because of the time needed for the NT documentation. This matter will be carried forward to the next meeting.

AOB..

None recalled.

Date of next meeting... to be arranged.

The National Trust

(in conjunction with British Caving Association comprising British Cave Research Association, National Association of Mining History Organisations, the William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust Ltd, Cambrian Caving Council, Council of Northern Caving Clubs, Council of Southern Caving Clubs, Derbyshire Caving Association, Devon and Cornwall Underground Council.)

Guidance

Underground Exploration

Natural caves, historic mines, underground watercourses and tunnels are fragile environments and could be seriously damaged or have important items removed. This damage May result from recreation and other land uses and is often irreversible. It is important that the underground environment on National Trust land is monitored with the help of the caving community and taking into account all land uses and interests.

Guiding Principles

- 1 The fundamental assumption will be that access should be granted to underground sites, subject to area, regional or national strategies as appropriate.
- 2 The National Trust will work with B.C.A. to monitor and review the conservation of underground sites on its land.
- 3 Regular consultations should be set up with the user groups in the regions with a view to ensuring effective conservation.

Good Practice

- * Respect the integrity of the underground environment including its external and internal features.
- * Promote the B.C.A. Cave Conservation Policy
- * Prepare a conservation strategy for each main Cave/mine area with the appropriate regional caving council, local clubs and landowners working in partnership with the National Trust Regional Officers.
- * Maintain close liaison to monitor and revise the local conservation strategy.
- * Encourage clubs to participate in conservation plans.
- * If consultations indicate the necessity consider grilling or gating the entrances to the underground environment for health and safety reasons, to protect both the site and the public. When doing this, attention must be

given to preserving the archaeological integrity of the site and with reference to the Batworkers' Manual.

- * Tape routes as necessary and also protect with tapes delicate features of general or scientific interest especially those described in any Conservation/Management Document.
- * For commercial/educational or otherwise instructed groups stipulate as a condition of access the appropriate leadership qualification(eg BCA Cave Instructors Certificate).
- * Digging and use of explosives should be for pre-agreed research or rescue purposes only.
- * Access agreements for popular sites should be negotiated with BCA/NAMHO affiliated groups.

Monitoring of the site

It is suggested that data be collected regularly to check on disturbance, particularly at cave entrance areas. At the surface National Trust workers or volunteers could perform the duty but underground volunteers from BCA/NAMHO could work in partnership to produce effective records.

Possible negative impacts

Disturbance to the archaeological and historic content.

Damage to formations and artefacts or their removal.

Litter.

Disturbance to bats and other fauna.

Health and Safety implications.

Possible positive impacts

Improved scientific study and records.

Improved knowledge of underground systems of passages and water courses.

More people knowing the detail of the need for protection and therefore better equipped to help protect.

Less likelihood of trespass and its potential for damage.

Access to the scientific sector of BCA.

Contacts and liaison

British Caving Association on www.british-caving.org . This site will contain up to date information on all Officers and details of all Regional Councils contacts as well as those of member organisations.

Legislation, codes and agreements

Current laws must be adhered to.

Attention must be paid to the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and to the offence of wilfully disturbing bats or badgers, destroying birds' nests or eggs, damaging limestone pavement.

Please refer also to duties under....

The Mines and Quarries Act (1954)

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..... (Other relevant documents to be listed nearer the time)

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The Annual Handbook of the BCA will give up to date information for explorers of the underground of any updates in the law.

References

BCA Handbook

BCA Conservation codes

BCA Website www.british-caving.org

NAMHO Guidelines on.....

NAMHO Website