

Conservation & Access Officer Report to BCA AGM June 2019

Report to October 2018 Council meeting

Natural England consultation on SSSI bye laws.

The Conservation and Access committee have produced and submitted a response to this consultation which may be found in the appendix. The main objective of this exercise is to have the BCA recognised as an appropriate consultee in relation to Sites of Special Scientific Interest. We alerted NE to some areas where their proposals might infringe on “normal caving activity” if taken literally. But in general there was support for the bye laws in their attempt to deal with repeated low level anti- social behaviour on designated sites.

Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines Leaflets.

I have ordered another print run of 2000 leaflets at a cost of £212.00 plus VAT. Unfortunately they did not arrive in time for Hidden Earth. They will hopefully be ready for distribution at the Council Meeting for anyone who would like to take some back to their regional club huts and hostelrys.

Andrew Hinde
C&A Convenor September 2018.

Report to Jan 2019 Council Meeting

Nothing to report.

Report to April 2019 Council Meeting

C&A Standing Committee Terms of Reference

The C&A committee has agreed (via e mail discussions) a draft of its Terms of Reference as required by the BCA Manual of Operations. This is with the BCA Secretary and will be put to the AGM. It is reproduced here.

- To produce guidelines and promotional materials to encourage conservation of underground environments;
- to assist regional councils when requested;
- to campaign nationally to encourage conservation and improved access in line with BCA policy and constitution; and

- to undertake other conservation or access related work as may be agreed by the committee.

C&A Standing Committee Standing Orders.

The C&A committee will shortly begin the process of adding to the standing orders for standing committees (approved by the 2012 AGM.) This project will be led by the next C&A Convenor with assistance from the C&A Committee. It may even be ready by the time of the AGM in June (It does not require ratification from an AGM)

Team Access meeting.

The BCA C&A Committee were represented at this meeting by Louise Baddeley and Tim Allen. Their report follows.

Report on the ‘Team Access Meeting’ hosted by British Canoeing at their offices at the National Water Sports centre, Nottingham.

This invitation came about through the work of the BCA CRoW group in developing relationships with other similar outdoor organisations. It is hoped that these meetings will take over where the Access Forum run by the Sports & Recreation Alliance left off some years ago.

The meeting included attendees from British Canoeing, BMC, Ramblers, British Horse Society, Sport & Recreation Alliance, Wildlife & Countryside Link. Attending for BCA were Tim Allen (standing in for Andrew Hinde) and Louise Baddeley. The aim of the meeting was; to share current priorities; to expose common threats and opportunities; to identify potential for future joint work; to share experience and knowledge.

Each NGO introduced their organisation and spoke of current priorities and projects. BCA was made very welcome but it was clear we were the minnow organisation amongst much larger friends. We were the only volunteer representatives present and consequently our limited resources meant we were unable to offer much scope in return. Representatives of all the other organisations were professionals in their fields. Our aim was to listen and learn and continue to develop relationships which can only benefit British Caving going forward.

The first session focused on the Agricultural Bill and was presented by Dan Pescod of WCL. With the UK leaving the EU Common Agricultural Policy the Agriculture Bill is intended to replace it. We are promised a greener Brexit with payments to farmers and landowners in future being for ‘public goods’ which include access to the countryside. At the heart of the Bill is ELMS, the Environment Land Management System which the government will develop to deliver the new approach. At present the Bill is in the long grass awaiting the report stage and the outcomes of Brexit itself. For the last year some of those present had spent their entire time lobbying, consulting and working on proposals towards the new Bill. One of the big sticking points was

how to value public access in terms of payments. British Caving can clearly benefit here but we are reliant on much better resourced organisations to press the case. The second agenda item was on the Environmental Bill which was again presented by Dan. The Bill will set out environmental standards to replace those used to make policy in the EU. The government's stated ambition is to leave the natural world in a better condition than it found it in. The Bill will supposedly place into law the long term ambition of the 25 year environmental plan. The Bill seemed to be a long way off yet. It may well improve protections to the underground environment but equally could enhance threats to access. One to watch. It was very noticeable that all the other organisation were 'greening'. The BMC will be plastic free by the end of the year. British Canoeing have tied their new access campaign into cleaning up our waterways, with all organisations striding to be more environmentally friendly. The third item was a briefing by Ryan McCulloch of the SRA on Brexit and Sport. His briefing focused on the difficulties sports and activities might face in the event of a no deal. It was pretty depressing with no good news at all. Louise has since posted on Ukcaving details of the likely problems which could affect cavers (ahead of March 29th). Copied below.

The final item introduced British Canoeing's new access campaign titled Clear Access Clear Waters. This is a new initiative which links access to waterways with cleaning up the waterways. It is an impressive strategy with big names, glossy brochures and plenty of lobbying. Even so there are conflicts with other users and the likelihood of success is difficult to gauge. The discussion looked at campaigning ideas and advice from round the table which was very useful and also how best to train, encourage and mobilize volunteers.

As volunteers ourselves, Louise and I both felt it well worth the effort to attend. The group hope to schedule further meetings later in the year and invite other organisations. I hope BCA C&A will continue to engage with the group.

Tim Allen

27th February 2019

Appendix 1

Informative post on Ukcaving aimed at disseminating the SRA advice ahead of 29th March.

I apologise for introducing the B-word to what I'm sure is an otherwise lovely carefree evening for everyone...

Last Wednesday me and Badlad attended a meeting in Nottingham with the aim of elucidating how Brexit may effect outdoor sports, on behalf of the BCA Conservation and Access Officer. This was well attended by other governing bodies including the Ramblers, British Canoeing, the BMC, the Sport and Recreation Alliance and Wildlife and Countryside Link as well as the BCA. Aside from discussing and bemoaning other aspects of Brexit and British politics in general during the course of the meeting, one of the main discussions focused on how Brexit might affect travel to EU countries to carry out our sports. As I'm sure many cavers will be travelling to Europe in the coming months (whether this is to cave, climb, ski or just lie on a beach) I thought it might be useful to provide a summary of the discussion, which was headed by a representative of the Sports and Recreation Alliance.

The following applies from 29th March in the case of a no-deal Brexit:

- To travel to EU countries you must have a passport valid for 6 months or more from the date of your return. If you do not have this when leaving the UK you will not be allowed to leave the country.

- Pre-planned internal European flights by UK airlines may not operate, even if you have bought a ticket. E.g. a British Airways flight from Frankfurt to Madrid will not operate.
- Pre-planned internal UK flights by European airlines may not operate, even if you have bought a ticket. E.g. a Ryanair flight from Glasgow to London will not operate.
- In order to drive a UK car in an EU country, you will be required to apply to the home office for a 'green card' to prove you have valid insurance. It may already be too late to do this due to the application time required, if you plan on driving immediately after the 29th March. E.g. taking the ferry or Eurostar to Calais with your own car.
- Your freedom to transport sporting equipment across the border from UK to EU countries will depend on the countries you are travelling to - it is advisable to check the import rules of any countries you are travelling to before you travel.
- Sporting insurance may vary country to country requiring you to take out multiple policies if you plan on crossing country borders between EU countries during a trip. E.g. a ski trip crossing borders between France and Switzerland may require two insurance policies to ensure you're covered at all times during your trip.

In the case of a deal being accepted ready for EU withdrawal on 29th March

There will be a transition period so nothing will change immediately. However over time some of the above stipulations may come to apply, especially the rules about driving in the EU, transporting sporting equipment, and insurance.

This information was given by the Sport and Recreation Alliance and I have done my best to report it accurately. However if you are planning on travelling to Europe on or after 29th March it is probably worth going to their website to get more info. They have also created a podcast: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/241221/929407-episode-2-brexit>

Additionally, we all know what a shambles British politics is at the minute, so all of this is completely subject to change depending on deal/no deal/no brexit/general election etc etc etc.

...and lets just not think about the Irish border...

Louise Baddeley - SUSS/BCA

I have nothing further to report

Andrew Hinde
BCA C&A Convenor
April 2019.