

## **For Election as Council Chair for 3 years (2024-2027)**

Rostam Namaghi (10644)

Proposed by Josh White (14859)

Seconded by Jonathan Lester (17140)

### **Election Statement**

My name's Rostam and I'm running for chair. I've been heavily involved in caving for 15 years, having started with Sheffield University (SUSS). I was lucky enough to have come through following a group of very inspiring cavers who had fought with the union to keep the club in existence. When it came to my time at the helm we'd had a few poor years of recruitment and we had to change the way we did things, lent on the Alumni, the TSG and many other cavers.

We were lucky. I realised this after talking to other clubs and hearing their similar problems. I thought I had useful advice to give and so I joined the BCA Council as the Youth and Development Officer. It wasn't possible to do everything myself and so a working group was formed. I brought in some brilliant people, such as Josh White and Will Whalley. Over 5 years we helped start 4 new caving clubs, lobbied on behalf of the scouts and student clubs, made membership free to the under 18s and helped provide training and networking opportunities that helped CHECC grow.

I went on to serve a further 2 years in Publications and Information, wanting to develop the services that BCA could offer its members and more importantly track and manage our demographic data.

This brings me to my main focus in volunteering - we have a golden legacy. Where we've got to took a lot of work, a lot of physical, financial and emotional investment over many years. We now have maybe a third of the cavers than we did in the 1980s. It's not just bricks and mortar either, think of the impacts of Ghar Parau has had in developing expeditions, of the BCRA or the Cave Research Electronics Group's impact in developing knowledge of caves and caving, it then hurts to think of struggles with recruitment and finding the right younger volunteers. There's a coming demographic cliff and it needs some proactive effort to manage.

I stood for Chair 3 years ago because the position I was put in made it impossible for me to continue, which reflects a continuing dysfunction still at the heart of BCA. Large numbers of posts remain unfilled, minutes often take months to a year to be published and there is very poor communication with the membership. As critical as I am, I don't think this is an issue with any one person, and it will take more than one person and more than one term to fix. I am standing again because I think I can bring the people in and put the procedures in place. We have good volunteers wanting to step up.

The potential of BCA is huge, we've got a tight knit community and a large centralised funding pot. Where we've not quite taken the next step is looking after and developing our volunteers, which is my main strength and why I think I'd be good for the role as Chair. We need to bring back clear procedure at meetings, communicate more with the membership and be far more transparent. We need to focus on helping our members be what they can be by proactively supporting our clubs, sharing what works and helping bolstering organisations in need of more volunteers.

We can make changes and the future is really bright, there are so many enthusiastic cavers coming through and so many passionate cavers that want to pass on what they've learned.