



**Minutes of BCA Council Meeting held on Saturday, 10 January 2015
at My Big Meeting Room, Pinvin, Worcestershire**

Present:

Andy Eavis (AE)	BCA Chairman
Damian Weare (DW)	BCA Secretary
Paul Ibberson (PI)	BCA Treasurer
Nigel Ball (NB)	BCA Training Officer
Nick Williams (NW)	BCA Equipment & Techniques Officer
Les Williams (LW)	BCA Publications & Information Officer / 2016 Convenor
Jenny Potts (JP)	DCA Rep., BCA CRoW Working Party
Dave Tyson (DT)	Cambrian Rep.
David Jean (DJe)	DCUC Rep.
James Begley (JB)	CSCC Rep.
Stephan Nantynczuk (SN)	ACI Rep.
Idris Williams (IW)	ASCT Rep.
Steve Holding (SH)	NAMHO Rep.
Duncan Price (DP)	CDG Rep.
Thomas Starnes (TS)	CHECC Rep.
Bernie Woodley (BW)	Individual Member Rep. 1
Henry Rockliff (HR)	Individual Member Rep. 2
Matt Wire (MW)	Individual Member Rep. 3
Hellie Brooke (HB)	BCA Youth & Development
Bob Mehew (BM)	BCA Rope-Testing
<i>Robin Weare (RW)</i>	<i>Observer</i>
<i>John Hine (JH)</i>	<i>Observer</i>
<i>Tim Allen (TA)</i>	<i>Observer</i>
<i>John Carter (JC)</i>	<i>Observer - UKMCDE</i>
<i>Mark Vaughan (MV)</i>	<i>Observer - UKMCDE</i>
<i>Sasha Paramel (SP)</i>	<i>Observer - UKMCDE</i>
<i>Paul Marvin (PM)</i>	<i>Observer - UKMCDE</i>

The meeting commenced at 10:34am.

1. Chairman's Welcome

AE welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Emma Porter, Chris Jewell, Kristian Brook, Ged Champion, David Cooke, Alan Finch, Boyd Potts and Andrew Hinde.

3. Applications for Club Membership

DW: GJ reports that the *Tower Wood Caving Club* and *UK Mine/Cave Diving & Exploration* have provided the correct paperwork and payment to become BCA Member Clubs. Normally ratification at this meeting is a rubber-stamping exercise. However some concerns have been

raised about the UK Mine/Cave Diving & Exploration, specifically because they are promoting diving outside of the CDG framework.

Proposal: ***to accept the Tower Wood Caving Club as a Member Club.***

Prop: HR Sec: HB *agreed unanimously.*

NW: Historically the requirement for diving members to be CDG members arose out of our insurer's concerns that diving represented a higher-level of risk in terms of member-to-member claims and was, therefore, only insurable within the framework of a rigorous training scheme, such as that provided by the CDG. At the time their process and paperwork were passed to the insurers and accepted on this basis. This remains the case, but NW has checked and they are willing to allow for membership outside of CDG, still honouring the cover provided by the policy but specifically excluding diving. Inevitably there is not a totally clear answer as to exactly what they are willing to cover and, as with any insurance, this is really only likely to be resolved definitively in the event of a claim. BCA has a problem because insurers want to see risk mitigation for high-risk activities and we cannot currently do this with UKMCDE.

BM: One of the things we did during BCA's inception was to exhibit the CDG training manual to the insurers. Therefore there is a potential route for acceptance of other clubs.

JC: We have a rigorous training regime based on how the rest of the world operates. The rest of the world use IANTD or TDI certification. In this respect the CDG is different. The Health & Safety Executive have been through us carefully.

NW: If what you do is purely amateur, then it cannot involve HSE. That you mention the HSE rings alarm bells, because we need you to be amateur.

JC: We are.

NW: Then we will either need documentation to take to the insurers showing your training regime. Or, if this is not desirable or possible, then UKMCDE can join and be insured only for its non-diving activities.

AE: We presume that the reason for the application today is that you do not want to join the CDG.

JC: Correct.

AE: Perhaps we could hear from the CDG.

DP: *Read out a prepared statement:*

Since 2003-4, the CDG has worked in conjunction with the BCA to provide a level of documented assurance towards risk to our underwriter that has allowed us to obtain insurance for cave diving. Initially, the BCA PL policy placed certain restrictions on the cover available for cave diving and CDG members paid an enhanced premium. The situation today is that CDG members pay the same premium as cavers and enjoy similar benefits. The BCA's position has been only to offer cave diving insurance cover to CDG members on the basis the Group's de facto status as governing body for this activity. Individual cavers who have sought to obtain BCA PL cover for cave diving have been turned down.

The UKMC have recently applied to join the BCA. Whilst many of the UKMC are very proficient technical divers, many have no caving background and are relatively inexperienced in UK sump diving. The concern of the CDG is for the safety of all UK cave divers both within and outside of the Group. The CDG is looking at ways to involve as many members of the UKMC to ensure that they benefit from over 70 years of experience that the CDG can offer. Whereas the CDG has a multi-layer approach to education including learning by generations of experience through the Incident Reporting system, the UKMC simply has not been formed long enough to offer this level of education. This exposes them to a greater level of risk than through membership of the CDG and we would like to address this through closer ties between

the CDG and the UKMC. Insuring any new group with an unproven organisational risk assurance program could have a dramatic effect on the insurance position.

It should be noted that it has not been requirement to be an experienced caver to join the CDG since 2003. Beginning in 2013, all applicants for membership must hold a basic diving qualification. The criteria for CDG membership are not onerous and members of the UKMC already have a “head start” so to speak. Several UKMC members are also now members of the CDG.

Whilst the CDG wants to be as inclusive as possible and supports the UKMC in its activities, the Group is not yet in a position to endorse its approach to UK sump diving. Bringing this organisation into the BCA might be a good thing but insuring its members for UK cave diving is not. If UKMC wishes to obtain commensurate insurance benefits for its members as those enjoyed by the CDG then it should provide comparable evidence to the BCA’s underwriters in order to allay any concerns about exposing them to additional risk. In order to avoid any conflict of interests, the CDG cannot take part in this. The same applies to any other cave diving organisation that approaches the BCA in the future.

It should also be made clear to any organisation seeking to join the BCA PL scheme that does not cover any commercial activities such as paid-for instruction or guiding.

An ideal outcome would be to incorporate the UKMC into the CDG so that we could all share best practice appropriate to UK cave diving and present a unified approach, not only for insurance purposes, but also in the interests of conservation and access.

LW: CDG is a Constituent Body of BCA and has different rights from a club. We need to remember this.

MV: The CDG was set up to bring dry cavers into cave diving. We work the other way with divers moving to caving. A member has recently tried to join the Somerset section but he was stopped because he did not have enough caving experience.

DP: It was actually because his application did not have a seconder.

MV: We are more than happy to work with BCA and CDG so that there can be movement from one side to the other.

DP: CDG is not really one body. We do have a central committee but below that everything is split into autonomous individual sections. This is a bit like the situation with “dry” clubs on Mendip. If someone is looking to join a club but their face doesn’t fit, they find a different club with a different philosophy. Within the CDG the various Sections are quite different and people join the one that fits them. It is not as geographical as the names imply. There really isn’t any barrier to joining and certainly lack of caving experience is not a reason for refusal. CDG could simply set up another Section within it to accommodate UKCMDE if that would help.

AE: Is that a solution?

JC: We’d like to be independent.

DP: The only central requirement is CDG’s qualifications.

MV: The issue is that they are not recognised outside of the UK. If we want to dive in France, our CDG cards are not acceptable.

DP: That is not true in my experience.

NW: It is certainly the case that to rent kit in some places, the CDG card will not be accepted.

MV: At Divers Alert Network they stipulate certain training and do not accept CDG.

DP: Certainly one of our members had an incident elsewhere and was covered under one of their policies.

JC: The vast majority of our diving in the UK is in flooded mines and not SRT-based or cave based. The lack of cave experience is, therefore, less relevant.

- DP: Reiterates that the CDG does not refuse to accept people on the basis of insufficient caving experience.
- HB: The UKMDE seem to want autonomy which is exactly the same as with all our non-diving clubs around the UK.
- LW: The Constituent Body for cave diving is the CDG, as recognised by BCA. We cannot, therefore, have another Body in competition.
- DW: There is a parallel with the ASCT. They are the overarching representative body but there are still individual member clubs of BCA who are Scout caving teams.
- BM: Understand you have applied for Club Membership, rather than Constituent Body membership. However, if you became a group within CDG, then you would presumably need to streamline all your training arrangements. It would seem to make sense that you get together and consider each other's training documentation. Is CDG willing to open its documentation to others?
- DP: They are copyright to CDG but are freely available to others via the CDG shop.
- BM: For the record we should make clear that CDG members did not pay "an enhanced premium" as stated in DP's statement, but instead paid BCA an increased contribution to the overall cost of the policy. This is important because BCA cannot, and does not, sell insurance, but instead purchases a policy for its whole membership and then charges a fee for membership that reflects the costs of different parts of the policy.
- SH: Believe you are not members of NAMHO despite spending most of your time in mines. Recognises that some aspects of diving in mines are different from diving in caves. Were you to be setting yourselves up as a second diving Constituent Body, then we would oppose this in the same way as someone seeking to set up a second Mining Constituent Body. However, you are applying simply as a club and we should treat it as this. There is surely some way forward in talking to CDG about working within their current structure.
- DP: Agrees. It has been pointed out that CDG has traditionally taken a back seat with NCA and BCA and looking forward should probably take a greater interest.
- HR: Are there actually significant differences between the methods you use for going diving?
- JC: We train slightly differently but we all meet in the same place at the end. We are all trained to a very high level. Overseas many will teach buddy diving and back-mounting because these are appropriate to their sumps. However because of the specific limitations of UK caves the CDG teach solo diving, side-mounting etc. Despite this, there are lots of mines where buddy diving is appropriate.
- NW: How many members do you have?
- JC: 27, all active.
- NW: For comparison purposes, there are about 150 CDG members. Believes that the greater issue here is probably with the CDG, rather than UKMDE. BCA probably needs to make the challenge to CDG about whether they still merit the level of exclusivity that they enjoy. Certainly BCA needs to tell CDG that they need to accept everyone if they still wish to be the Constituent Body for diving.
- DP: NW's analysis is historical. That was because when it was formed there was very limited equipment. It is no longer like that. 10 years ago we dropped the requirement to be a caver and 3 years ago we required diving qualifications. Personally I would have liked to have seen these guys join the CDG, rather than go down the path they have chosen.
- TA: Could UKMDE explain why they wish to join BCA?
- JC: For representation and for the dry parts. We already have the insurance we need for the diving side and are not necessarily interested in that.

Proposal: *that UK Mine/Cave Diving Exploration be accepted as a Member Club of BCA, but on the understanding that their diving activities will not be covered by our Third-Party insurance scheme.*

Prop: DP Sec: LW agreed unanimously.

Note: The meeting was generally supportive of UKMCDE's desire to be fully recognised for all its activities and UKMCDE agreed to go away and liaise with the CDG before returning with suggestions that will be acceptable to our insurers to allow their diving activities to be covered.

4. Minutes of the last Council Meeting on 11 October 2014 (previously circulated)

Proposal: *to accept the amended Minutes from 11 October 2014 as a true record*

Prop: BW, 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 54 (Liaise with SUI): *In progress. It appears there may need to be some action fairly soon.*

Action 83 (Produce Asset Register): *nearly there.*

Action 115 (Summary of Landowner Insurance Benefits) *Removed from Log - the feeling is that it is superseded by Regional Council documentation.*

Action 116 (Weil's Disease Leaflet) *Ongoing. JP: the original cards were given to farmers and doctors to keep which was very useful from a publicity point of view. BM: Still has some cards with NCA's name on them. HB: Social Media is the way to advertise and will sort it out. DT: A card is better than a leaflet. Updated Action: HB to liaise with interested parties and Executive and arrange for a new card to be produced, as well as advertise it via social media. BM to consider whether the existing website documentation may need updating.*

Action 139 (Sports & Recreational Alliance Membership) *PI questioned the dramatic increases in rates. We have now been allocated to the lowest rate band.*

Action 140 (Euro Speleo Forum & BCRA) *Completed.*

Action 141 (TC & Video Conferencing) *NW has some suggestions and will liaise with PI, NB and DC.*

Action 142 (The Future of Speleology) *Ongoing.*

Officers' Reports

6. Chairman (written report previously circulated)

As Chairman I have thought long and hard over the attitude I should adopt to recent results of the CROW poll. It's tempting to think that a comparatively small majority in favour of CROW applying to caves is the worst possible outcome of the poll. However, there is an entirely different way of looking at it:

If CROW does apply to caves, potentially cavers will have a much bigger say in how access and conservation are controlled. That could be very good for caves and cavers providing it is organised and administered very well. That is our challenge, and that is coupled with the challenge that if we are going to fit in with our membership's wishes (or within the majority of our membership's wishes), we have to get 70% of our individual members and 70% of group members in favour of

changing the Constitution. So as I see it, BCA council has to put forward a robust proposal for improving access and conservation with CROW applying to caves. If we can do that and convince our individual members and club members that is the situation, I think we can improve the whole position with cave conservation and access.

In the right circumstances it must be correct for caves to be administered by people who love, understand and use the fantastic resource of caves in Britain.

I was interested to watch a BCRA online debate on CROW and they came out in favour and look forward to being part of cave conservation in a very direct manner.

Talking of BCRA, there are some major changes happening within the hierarchy and I do wish the very best for Dave Checkley and thank him enormously for the excellent work he has done over the years he has spent as Chairman of the BCRA. I hope he will continue to push and ultimately be successful with the grant application to do further digitisation of the archives.

The debate on CROW has thrown up several interesting issues. One has been the British institutional and public attitude towards caving and I have realised that if we want to convince the general public, political figures etc that caving is a worthwhile occupation, we still have a lot of work to do. We must be mindful that what we often consider as reasonable risks and enjoyable undertakings are often interpreted by the general public as being completely ridiculous. We should be mindful of public perception if we want to be successful in lifting the negative attitude towards caves and caving.

The excellent work that Damian Weare has done towards setting up the recent poll has thrown up a number of issues with things like membership data being inaccurate and clearly this is something we need to address coupled with an acceptable internet database of all our members.

We could be a much more democratic organisation if we could communicate more efficiently with our membership. Postal ballots have to be a very expensive thing of the past.

Since the last council meeting, we have had a couple of meetings in connection with the 2016 European Conference and an agreement with Dalesbridge should be signed shortly which will enable the advertising and organisation to move ahead. Many thanks for the work done by a number of people so far on this and many thanks for the enormous amount of work that is going to be required in the next 18 months or so to implement the best ever European Conference.

BCA's Publications continue to be a problem, and I'm delighted that Robin Weare is willing to assist. I also hope we can bring out a much awaited Speleology quite soon and work towards an improved publication experience in the future.

Andy Eavis

AE: Suggests we discuss CRoW later under Item 9.

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

7. Secretary (written report previously circulated)

Annual General Meeting & Party Weekend: *We had originally arranged to hold this in conjunction with BCRC, but there are significant clashes between the BCRC dates and other key events which means we will need an alternative plan. Work is being done on this in the background, but it looks as if we will need to stick to our traditional timing of 12-14 June at a venue still to be confirmed.*

Constitutionally this must be confirmed and published 18 weeks prior to the event, which gives us until the end of January to sort it out ... keep an eye on the website for details.

CRoW Poll

a) Mechanics: *The CRoW Poll was carried out following, as closely as possible, the instructions from the October Council Meeting.*

A number of options were explored including: dealing with everything in house; using an external company for external postage, but dealing with the returns internally; passing the whole poll to an external organisation to process on our behalf. In the end the latter was chosen because the additional cost was relatively small, but brought significant benefits in terms of transparency and reduced demands on our limited number of volunteers. We have yet to receive an invoice for the poll, but I expect it to be under £4,500 or below 75p per member. This is slightly above the figure quoted in the letter than accompanied the poll because of a higher-than-anticipated percentage of return. This is, of course, a good thing.

All members, both Individual and Group were polled, with the only exception being a small number of Associate Members, who constitutionally do not have voting rights. The deadline of 18 December was the latest possible to ensure results were available in sufficient time for this meeting; the Christmas/New Year period obviously made this rather sooner than would have been the case at a different time of year. Documentation was intended to be sent out according to the Electoral Reform Services' suggestion of the appropriate balance between giving members time to reply before the deadline and giving them too much time so that they put off replying and forget or lose their voting papers. In practice this was delayed by a couple of days as ERS refused to accept a chunk of our membership data due to inaccuracies in the addresses provided by Clubs .. more of this below. Most still had nearly 3 weeks to reply from receipt, although of course overseas addresses were virtually guaranteed to miss any deadline.

We were offered the option of members voting online by ERS but this attracted a flat fee of £600, regardless of how many adopted this method. Given the cost of return postage, this needed about 1,500 people to vote by this method to be cost effective. It was felt this could not be guaranteed and we, therefore, elected to "play safe".

b) CRoW Poll – what we've learnt: *A number of points have arisen during the poll:*

1) The resolution from the October meeting, while apparently clear at the time, did leave a number of unclear issues for Executive to decide, including exactly who should have a vote, what to do about multiple votes to one person, and how the votes should be counted. All of these became controversial during the voting process and, while it is quite properly the role of Executive to act on behalf of Council outside meetings, more generally Council may like to reflect on how decisions made off-the-cuff at meetings are not necessarily the best thought-through.

2) The addresses we hold for our membership are often not sufficiently accurate for effective use. I ended up spending about 15 hours tidying up the data into a format that was eventually acceptable to the Electoral Reform Services. Many of the issues seemed very petty to me. For example, the inclusion of a space after a postcode was unacceptable, as was having anything addressed to anyone other than a named individual (so Club names had to go as the first line of the address), all missing postcodes had to be manually looked up, unacceptable characters had to be altered, split Irish postcodes and towns had to be rejoined e.g. Dublin 18, ... the list goes on and on. Frustratingly none of these problems were explained. I was simply given a long list of addresses that had failed their "data check". Any address that did not meet their criteria would not be sent a voting paper. I have subsequently liaised with Glenn Jones and David Gibson to try to sort out these issues for 2015.

Once this was sorted, there was also the issue of us holding the wrong addresses. Of course this is quite likely given that we liaise with the majority of our membership via their Club. Of all the enquiries I received, the majority were down to the Club not passing on an address change. However a substantial number we are down to one of:

- a) the member not telling their club about their change of address, in some cases for 2 or 3 years;
- b) the club taking the money off their member(s) for BCA membership, but never actually passing this on to us!;
- c) Direct Members giving us their old address themselves!!

Of the fifty or so queries I received about “missing” voting papers, I only know of three people (2 at the same address) whose papers were posted to the correct address, but who did not receive them.

3) There are large numbers (>100 I suspect) of duplicate members in our membership lists ... basically people who pay and join two, three or even four times ... usually as CIMs through different Clubs, but sometimes also as a DIM and then subsequently as a CIM. Sometimes we have the same address from each of their Clubs, sometimes we have different addresses. One member joined four times through the same club in the same year! I elected to send these people only one voting paper.

4) It has been suggested to me that a Club that is also an Access-Controlling Body should have received two votes. I suspect the confusion has arisen because it is possible to join BCA as either a Club or an Access Body, but these are not necessarily mutually exclusive entities. It is, for example, possible to be a Club which also controls access and pay a higher membership fee to reflect their greater insurance risk. In this case they are one Group Member who happens to pay a higher rate, rather than two separate members. I would like Council’s confirmation that this is the correct interpretation.

c) CRoW Poll – Result & Way Forward: *The result is included in Appendix 1 and has been published on the BCA website. Although it is clearly possible to interpret the results in different ways (with most of these having appeared on UKCaving at some point since publication!), I think it is clear to most that there is a substantial majority in favour of BCA campaigning for CRoW to apply to going underground. The paperwork accompanying the voting papers made clear that, in this situation, we would now:*

- *continue our dialogue with DEFRA, NE and NRW, including seeking advice on successfully limiting access to our most fragile sites or to sites which might represent a danger to the public;*
- *consult with landowners and open communication with the Countryside Land and Business Association;*
- *seek further legal opinion to support our case;*
- *liaise with other like-minded organisations, such as the BMC and the BCU;*
- *continue to explore ways to effectively protect our more fragile sites;*
- *seek to change Section 4.6 of our Constitution at the June 2015 Annual General Meeting;*
- *work with Regional Councils, affected landowners and Access-Controlling Bodies to ease the transition;*
- *lobby MPs and other persons of influence to push for CRoW to apply to going underground.*

We need to decide how we are going to manage this. Specifically which aspects of the above should be handled by which of our Standing Committees and what, if anything, we wish to manage ourselves as Council. I think the one thing that is clear is that we have a very fine line to tread ... there are those who now expect BCA to virtually instantly move mountains and for whom nothing less will be acceptable, while there are others who argue we can and should do nothing until we have amended our Constitution. Personally I see section 4.6 of our Constitution as preventing us from doing the final bullet point at present, but I am comfortable that the rest are appropriate before constitutional change, although sometimes in somewhat limit ways.

Club Membership Requirements: *I have recently been in discussion with a potential new member club about our requirements for club membership. At present they are (from our website):*

A club wishing to apply for club membership of the British Caving Association should be aware that the guidelines used by BCA to determine suitability for club membership are:

- *the club has a major aim or objective that is in support of the sport of caving, mine exploration, cave science, cave & mine conservation or caver training.*
- *the club consists primarily of individual members (BCA would normally expect there to be at least 4 members).*
- *the club annually elects at least two officers.*
- *the club is controlled by its members.*

To demonstrate these points the club should submit a copy of its constitution which will, typically, include:

- *a statement of the aims of the club.*
- *provision for holding general meetings together with mention of a quorum and of voting fractions required to pass motions and amend the constitution.*
- *a system for election of at least two officers.*

The club in question feels it meets the spirit of some of our requirements, but not the specific way in which we detail them. Specifically they do not want to elect any officers, instead preferring to allow every member to have an equal say in every matter and all being invited to their online “meetings” which take place whenever a member decides to start one. They have asked Council to rule on whether or not this is acceptable.

Club Membership for non-CDG Diving Clubs: *we have received an application for membership, and associated insurance, from the UK Mine/Cave Diving Exploration (UKMCDE). Our rules currently only permit members to be covered under our insurance policy for diving activities if they join us through the Cave Diving Group (CDG). On that basis UKMCDE have been told that if they are accepted as members, our insurance will not cover them for diving activities. Indeed recent negotiations with insurers by Nick Williams have made it clear that our insurers consider cave diving is only insurable within a framework of a rigorous training package, such as that offered by the CDG.*

This begs the question of whether we should be accepting membership at all of any organisation that promotes cave diving to its members outside the realms of the CDG. In addition to this moral dilemma Nick Williams raises a further concern, namely that doing so “potentially ‘breaks the promise’ we make to landowners when negotiating access agreements since the lack of cover will mean no landowner indemnity either.” He continues that in his view “it’s hard to see how we can do anything other than say we won’t accept membership applications from clubs which promote diving [outside of the CDG].”

I have invited both the CDG and the UKMCDE to attend the meeting and help our decision making.

UKCaving Presence: *The new owners of the UKCaving website have approached me pointing out that the site is the best place to gain the attention of British cavers and asking if we would like to have a part in the site. They have suggested a locked section of the forum for us to place news and information together with links to our own website. They would then have a separate section for forum members to discuss items / raise BCA issues.*

For the benefit of Council Members who do not use the site, it is an online “discussion” forum (i.e. you type your views) which can be read by non-members or members alike. Only members can contribute to the discussions and typically this is a fairly small number of often vocal characters. Council Members who post regularly include Damian Weare, Les Williams, Jenny Potts, Bob Mehew, Nick Williams and David Cooke. Currently I post things formally (i.e. put my BCA position underneath my post) when I see fit.

There is no reason why we cannot simply continue as we do currently and post randomly in the Caving section of the forum. However personally I think Tim’s suggestion is a good idea. As with anything we publish anywhere, we will need to be very careful about who posts and what it says. I seek Council’s views on this.

The owners also raise the issue of whether BCA would wish to spend any of its advertising budget on UKCaving in the future. One thing that may be relevant is that the owners say they intend the site to cover costs and beyond that any “profit” will be directed back to caving via a grant for caving projects. I suspect this is not an issue on which Council needs to make a formal decision, but anyone seeking to spend money on advertising in the future may also wish to consider this route.

Damian Weare

AGM Weekend

DW: Is pleased to announce that AGM weekend will now be from 12-14 June and held in conjunction with BCRC, who will largely be organising it on our behalf. Considerable thanks are due to BCRC for being willing to reschedule the event to fit around us and to Paul Taylor, in particular, who is the local organiser who is making everything happen. We will now be liaising closely with Paul and BCRC and offering whatever support we can. Specifically would like to see BCA now underwriting the event, rather than the two local Rescue Teams who are currently doing so. **Action 143: AE to liaise with BCRC over AGM weekend.**

RW: It is also possible, but unlikely, that there may be some additional costs arising from moving the weekend. It would be good to think that BCA also covers these if they arise.

Proposal: ***that BCA offer to underwrite the joint BCA/BCRC weekend from 24-14 June and also to cover any additional costs arising from altering the original dates.***

Prop: LW Sec: JP *agreed unanimously*

CRoW Poll

DW: Feedback from members has been generally very positive about the fact that we chose to carry out the poll and about the way it was conducted. Perhaps one of the best outcomes was that a substantial number of members now realise they are actually members of BCA.

DT: Was surprised that the turnout was low.

HR: The turnout was higher than the various polling companies we talked to had said was normal. It is also higher than some recent UK elections.

DW: We also need to remember that the addresses we hold for a number of members are wrong. Also a considerable number of members are really interested in mining and most people seem to believe that CRoW will not affect these.

Club / ACB Query

DW: Can the meeting confirm that my response to the member is correct.

NW: Yes, those clubs who are ACBs only join once.

Club Membership Requirements

LW: It is not unreasonable that we ask for specific things and there are plenty of ways of including them without them necessarily being onerous on the club.

HR: If nothing else we need a named contact from within the Club.

The meeting concluded that the club be advised that they do need to include a clause on electing two officials in their constitution and DW should suggest some suitable wording.

UKCaving Presence

TA: Is the new owner of the site. As a bit of background UKCaving has over 3,000 registered users, and 700 unique user views per day with each viewer spending an average of 6.5 minutes per day on the site and looking at an average of 5 pages while they do it. Previously it was owned by climbers and it was run in conjunction with a climbing site, but without any real interest in the caving side. This has now changed and the hope is that it will move from strength to strength. TA is proposing that we have an Announcements Section with a suggestion that it be locked to prevent the announcements descending into an argument. Users can then start a new thread to discuss the announcements if they wish and the hope would be that someone from BCA would be able to respond to queries if they arise.

DW: DC sends his apologies, but has some reservations in his Website report. Specifically he would like to see our website being our primary means of sharing information. This does not preclude posting elsewhere but this should be as well as our own website, rather than instead. He also warns about the dangers of us failing to live up to expectations by not managing to post regularly.

HB: It can be difficult for us to comment as an Organisation as we only meet 4 times a year. Therefore moving beyond the agreed initial statement can be tricky.

NW: Would like to think that Officers can speak autonomously in the knowledge that they are answerable to the next meeting for their actions.

JP: Has asked DCA about UKCaving and the Officers are pretty much unanimously in favour of its use. If we are posting on behalf of DCA, we make it factual and sign it with our official DCA title. We are the happy to accept comments on the post. When we post as individuals, we do so without our official post at the bottom.

TA: The problem with allowing comments is that the original post tends to be lost at the top.

HB: TA is correct. If people want to discuss an announcement, then they will start their own topic anyway. We do not want to stop people commenting.

HR: Feels we should accept the offer but that we should draw up some guidelines for posting first.

NW: Is the site looking to make money?

TA: We have costs to cover, but beyond that, if we have any spare income, we are interested in setting up a system of 'UKCaving grants', perhaps for digging.

HR: Maybe we should have an official BCA account so there is no confusion between official and personal postings.

LW: Dual accounts could be a problem here, but this can almost certainly be solved by the forum software. If we do start doing this, we need to ensure we publish all our communication by this means as many people will no longer look elsewhere.

Action 144: DW to liaise with UKCaving owners to agree a system for BCA's use of UKCaving and then implement it.

HB: Thanks to TA. It is good to see members coming to the meeting and getting involved.

Club Data Collection Query

DW: Since writing the report a query has arisen from a member and they have specifically requested that Council resolve on it. Specifically the person in question is concerned that we are not collecting enough information on our Member Clubs and specifically in the case of the recent poll that the voting paperwork was posted to the Treasurer of his Club, rather than him as

Secretary. DW has explained that BCA currently holds the contact details for whoever in a club liaises with us from the point of view of membership. This is typically either the Secretary or the Treasurer. A few clubs also choose to submit a further address for publications to be sent to.

HB: The Club's contact should be whoever they delegate. We should not be forcing Clubs to give us a number of people.

SH: Looking forward we might need to ballot for Constitutional Amendments. Maybe, therefore, we should be reiterating the opportunity for them to restate someone else as their contact if they feel it appropriate.

HB: Can we look at the wording on the form?

The meeting resolved that it would be wrong of BCA to dictate to Clubs who they should be providing as their contact but that if a club wishes to name more than one contact, we will make every effort to accommodate this.

8. Treasurer (written report previously circulated)

The last couple of months have been relatively quiet from a financial point of view. The main issue has been the CRoW ballot, along with other Executive matters which I expect to be covered in other reports. Other than that, day to day matters have been kept ticking over and are largely up to date. Cash flow has been adequate to cover expenditure without recourse to the main deposit funds, although this may change as we have the main insurance premium to pay in January. A final decision will be based on the timing of subscription receipts and the premium invoice due date.

Regional Caving Council funding for 2013 has been processed (with the exception of CSCC which needs a little further discussion), although the formal minutes remain a loose end which I hope to tie up shortly. The tax return was completed within the required timescale, 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 2014 as soon as possible.

Other than the above, I have very little to report. My main focus for the next couple of months will clearly be the preparation of the 2014 Accounts as quickly and efficiently as possible and to keep on top of other matters at the same time. After that it will be time to take stock of what needs doing in preparation for a handover in the summer.

Paul Ibberson

The Treasurer's Report was accepted without discussion.

9. Conservation & Access

Publications Review: *At the last council meeting I indicated that I would provide a draft update of BCA publications for this meeting. After discussions at C&A committee (22 Nov 2014) it was discovered that this is going to be a lengthy process involving wide consultation, before coming back to Council. However, one of the main problems is whether or not the BCA is bound by the old NCA policy statements included within the NCA Cave Conservation Handbook.*

The C&A committee is minded to establish a 3 tier set of self-consistent documents to describe BCA's Cave Conservation strategy. These would be:

1 A code of less than 6 "rules";

2 A set of "guidelines" that expand and explain the code;

3 A Cave Conservation Handbook.

Drafts of these documents will be reviewed at the next C&A meeting.

CRoW Section 26 Directions: *Most regional CC's have presented a list of cave sites which they feel would benefit from Section 26 or Section 25 Directions under the relevant section of the CRoW Act.*

Regional Round Up: *A full list of recent C&A activities across the regions is logged in the C&A meeting minutes on the BCA website.*

Andrew Hinde

9a. CRoW Working Party

Now that the results of the BCA "CRoW Poll" are in, it becomes the responsibility of BCA Council to take forward the matter of access to caves on land covered by the Countryside and Rights of Way legislation, as indicated in the statements accompanying the voting paper.

I would suggest that the CRoW Working Party still has a useful role to play in supporting the BCA Conservation and Access Committee by continuing its work on the database recording the status of caves in terms of their position in relation to Access Land, SSSI/SAM status, current access situation and special conservation requirements. A national overview of where we are at currently in this respect should play a part in our planning for the future.

Jenny Potts

CRoW - the Way Forward

AE: It is vital that we move forward with a unified, joined up and organised approach. It is clear that our membership wishes us to push for CRoW to apply to going underground. We clearly need to amend our Constitution, but there is a question about when.

JB: Until we are in a position where CRoW definitely applies to caves, we are fine.

DW: If it is determined that the current law actually includes caving, then there is no problem with our current Constitution as the law of the land takes precedent over a Constitution anyway. The problem arises the moment we seek to want the law to be changed, as that will be campaigning against landowners having the ultimate say. Section 4.6 says that this is a guiding principle of the Organisation and one, therefore, that we should not work against. Therefore, the point at which we are seeking to change the law, is the point at which we have to amend our Constitution.

JP: Agreed. At the moment we are seeking an interpretation of the law because we believe it is being interpreted wrongly. If we find out that the law does not apply to going underground and we wish to seek to have it changed, then we need to change our Constitution.

BM: Item 3.3 of the Constitution allows us to act as a negotiating body which seems to give us the right to do so. It seems sensible that a small group of people be charged with bringing forward a set of proposals before the next meeting which can then be taken to the AGM. The Constitution also makes clear that a General Meeting shall be the final interpreter of the Constitution. Therefore, if the General Meeting decides 4.6 does not prevent us from campaigning for a change, then that is fine.

DJ: Are we referring here to CRoW applying to going caving or to going underground?

SH: It is important to be clear. A lot of our members are mine historians and they have not seen any of the debate surrounding CRoW. The feeling is that CRoW does not succeed existing legislation and therefore does not apply to mines. However lots of our members will need some guidance if we want to succeed with a constitutional change.

RW: It would worry me if we have a Constitution that says landowners' views are paramount and then we decide to interpret it a different way. We should be totally open and would like to see a vote. RW voted against in the poll but would vote for a change of the Constitution because that

is obviously what members want.

JP: One of the things we should do, as well as clarifying the position on natural caves, is to clarify it with mines too. Large areas of the Peak District are actually Scheduled Monuments and this may well give protection. Many mines intersect with natural caves and some of these mines are not necessarily very important, but they do provide access to some excellent caves. There is an argument that mines that have an intrinsic interest in themselves should be protected, but we would not want to tread on mine historians' toes.

AE: Is trying to avoid too much discussion about mines because there is a view among the public that those who go down caves are mad, but those who go down mines are even madder. We may well need non-cavers' support along the way if CRoW is going to be shown to apply to caving and, therefore, it may be preferable not to think too hard about mines at this stage.

NW: If you are going to think about changing the Constitution, then we should consider the fact that we should perhaps become a Company Limited by Guarantee.

DP: Understands that bathing in non-tidal waters is not covered by CRoW. There are some diving sites that begin with a submerged section at daylight. Presumably, therefore, this would mean these sites are excluded.

BM: On mines, existing legislation has been much simplified with new documents coming from the HSE which seem to make things much clearer. As for the bathing question, it is quite clear under footpath laws that it is alright to cross a stream to get from one side to the other. This implies that while you could not come out of the cave and wash off your suit, as that would be bathing, moving through the water to get somewhere is acceptable.

TA: The key issue seems to be getting a specific activity accepted under CRoW. Once it is the questionable parts also tend to be allowed. There was, for example, not too much concern over which aspects of climbing were allowed, once the basic principle had been accepted.

HR: If we are going to do anything to the Constitution, doing it all in one go is a good idea.

LW: We were given a mandate to go ahead and do the things that we said we would do. We need to do it. We said we need to attempt to change the Constitution in 2015. If you are going to delay this, we need to come up with a good reason to our members as to why.

HB: If we are going to do something, we need to do it in the most financially viable way possible.

BM: Would like a report in advance of the meeting to allow people to consider what is being proposed.

Proposal: *that Council authorises Exec to co-opt persons as it sees fit to implement the set of bullet points for action following the yes vote and to report back to the March meeting in good time.*

Prop: LW Sec: JP agreed with abstentions

Action 145: AE, DW, PI to co-opt persons as seen fit to implement the CRoW bullet points and report back to the March meeting in good time.

Action 146: DW to communicate with members via the newssheets and explain how we are proceeding in relation to CRoW.

TA: BCA has previously stated that it has been guided in the advice from Natural England and DEFRA that CRoW does not apply to caving. In the Minutes of 11 October AE said that Natural England has also concluded you can descend caves as far as the limit of daylight. A number of individuals have also received the same advice. Does Council accept that view?

AE: Yes.

TA: The reason for asking is that TA wants CNCC to accept it as well but they say they will be guided by BCA.

SH: Does this conflict with the Constitution?

DW: No, because the law has been shown to say differently and that takes precedent over our Constitution.

IW: Is this interpretation not ridiculous? How does it help anyone?

DW: It is, but it is the Natural England/DEFRA interpretation and that is what we need to accept.

TA: It seems to be a small step in the right direction.

AE: What we do not need at this stage is conflict with landowners. Whatever we do, we need show sensitivity to landowners.

TA: Recently attended a meeting of the National Dales Park Authority and asked why there are closed seasons on certain fells that apply only to cavers. Their obviously researched answer was that they could see absolutely no justification and they wrote to the CNCC offering their help and support to renegotiate such access arrangements. There is now no closed season on the Allotment or Fountains Fell. In fact further to this the Fountains Fell permit system has been removed following a direct request from a caver on CNCC's behalf. Dinah Rose, the QC who wrote an opinion on CRoW, also went caving over Christmas and is reported to be even clearer in her mind now that CRoW applies to caving.

10. Equipment & Techniques

NW: Nothing to report to the meeting today.

Rope-Testing

Nothing to report.

Bob Mehew

11. Training

Both the Cave Instructor Panel (CIC Panel) and National Coordinating Panel (NCP) meetings are taking place after this Council meeting, so I am not able to report anything substantial from them back to Council, other than the most recent statistics from the BCA award schemes.

Local Cave Leader Level Enrolments: 33

Local Cave Leader Level 1 Assessments: 13

Local Cave Leader Level 2 Assessments: 5

Local Cave Leader Level 1 Revalidations: 9

Local Cave Leader Level 2 Revalidations: 6

Local Cave Leader Level 1 Core Skills Reassessment (CSR): 3

Local Cave Leader Level 2 Core Skills Reassessment (CSR): 1

Cave Instructor Registrations: 8

Cave Instructor Assessments: 1

Cave Instructor Revalidations: 6

Current Award Holders

Local Cave Leader Level 1: 474

Local Cave Leader Level 2: 249

Cave Instructor Certificate: 79

The Training Officer has been approached by two organisations, making queries about what BCA can offer to young cavers. Stimulated by this, a member of the NCP has volunteered to give some thought about developing an accreditation scheme for children who spend time exploring caves.

Nigel Ball

NB: LCMLA revalidations for 2014 are down by about £6,000 but this will almost certainly go in the

opposite direction in 2015 as people who didn't revalidate in 2014 do so in 2015.
The remainder of the Training Officer's Report was accepted without discussion.

12. Publications & Information

a. Webmaster

Damian mentions in his report the ukCaving Forum's offer to host BCA news and information. We do have our own website and that should remain the primary place to post BCA news and information. That doesn't prevent items being reposted to ukCaving with links back to our own website. The idea of a BCA section could be worth trying but it should be open to all. If it is locked so that only Council Members can post it will be deadly dull with none of the discussion that Forums are all about. We need to be careful that we don't create a new channel of communication with the expectation that it will be regularly updated only to find we don't have the resources to do that. For several years now we have had our own Forum with a private section for each BCA Committee. Please contact me if you want to make use of them.

David Cooke

b. Web Services

Business as usual. There have been no reported unscheduled outages. We are hosting a couple of new sites but that is match by a couple of sites leaving.

David Cooke

c. Handbook (position vacant - no report)

d. Newsletter

This position is officially vacant but, following the last Council Meeting Robin Weare volunteered to take on the role, but in a somewhat amended form so that a quarterly news update be published on our website and, hopefully by e-mail in the near future. This avoids the inevitable delays brought by paper-based publication, reaches a far wider audience and removes the need for time to be spent on layout and formatting. The first of these updates appeared online at the end of October with future updates planned to follow the Council Meetings i.e. the end of January, mid-April, the start of July and the end of October.

This meeting needs to consider Robin's offer and, if felt appropriate, formally appoint him. I suggest the title be amended to News Editor to better reflect the new role.

Damian Weare

e. Speleology

Speleology is still a high priority for me, and I understand BCA's concerns. However, I am rather disappointed that there has been no follow-up with me, regarding the discussion that took place at the last BCA Council meeting in October. I hope to supplement this brief report with a further note to Damian before the Council meeting.

David Gibson

LW: Robin Weare has produced an excellent newsletter and we should thank him.

RW: Is offering to take on the newssheet well aware that little content is likely to be provided.

Therefore in accepting the offer, Council members need to be aware that either they write content themselves or it will be written for them.

Proposal: ***that Robin Weare be appointed as News Editor.***

Prop: LW Sec: HR *agreed unanimously*

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

13. Legal & Insurance

a. Insurance Manager

Members of Council will be aware that I had expressed my wish to relinquish the role of PL Scheme Manager in time for someone else to handle the renewal of the insurance for 2015, but after the only person who had expressed an interest in this post withdrew, I found myself once again holding this particular ball.

Things seem to have changed in the insurance business since the difficult days of 2003 and by the end of November we had several firms chasing our business. I issued a challenge to those interested that they should review the information available on our web site and make us an offer which they felt matched or exceeded our existing cover. Following correspondence, we eventually ended up with offers of insurance from the existing insurers (Zurich, via brokers Anderson Ashcroft), from Perkins Slade (the BMC's insurer, who have been after BCA's business for decades) and newcomers Endsleigh Insurance.

Despite feeling significant loyalty to Anderson Ashcroft we finally decided to move the business to Perkins Slade. This was for a number of reasons, the main ones being:

- Slight price advantage: a few hundred pounds cheaper than Anderson Ashcroft, rising to potentially a couple of thousand if we increase the limit of indemnity to £10m;*
- Per head pricing model which will better protect us against future changes in membership numbers;*
- Single insurer for the full £5m cover;*
- Easy and low cost increase in limit of indemnity should we decide that £5m is no longer sufficient;*
- Marginally improved cover, including Directors and Officer's cover which provides better protection for libel/slander and financial mismanagement;*
- Significantly lower excess than the previous policy (although note that essentially this was matched by Anderson Ashcroft in the negotiations);*
- Better cover for pollution incidents (although, again, this was matched by Anderson Ashcroft);*
- Better alignment with the BCAs' professionals scheme which is already provided by Perkins Slade;*
- No-cost inclusion of landowner/occupier's indemnity for clubs/ACB's with significant land lease/ownership;*
- Easy availability of a property policy for clubs with huts;*
- Better backup/support to Members in respect of queries and information about the policy.*

I would like to place on record my thanks to our previous broker, Anderson Ashcroft in Preston, and in particular, their principal John Anderson who made a very good fist of retaining the business in a field which is not their specialism, and who has accepted our decision to take the business elsewhere with good grace. It was a very close decision and I would thoroughly recommend anyone looking for commercial cover to contact Anderson Ashcroft for a quote, but in the end it was clear that the best interests of British cavers will be served by moving the business to Perkins Slade who specialise in the field of sports governing body cover. Thanks also to Endsleigh Insurance who also made a serious effort to win the business.

I would also like to thank Pete Mellors of DCA who assisted me by attending the meetings with the

potential insurers and helped to ensure we got the best deal.

On a final point it's worth noting that it became pretty clear early in the discussions that the work done in 2003/2004 to establish the BCA as one-member one-vote organisation with a clear identification of each individual member helped immensely with our credibility when it came to negotiating with the insurers. Furthermore, work done on training by the Cave Diving Group and the Explosives User Group figured highly in the insurers' perceptions of caving as an acceptable risk. It's a nice change to find that cavers are now seen as good business in the insurance world and we used this to our advantage and gained a much better deal for cavers as a result.

Nick Williams

NW: There is an inaccuracy in the written report – it seems we do not have a single insurer for the £5m cover - the first £2 million is with Brit Insurance, the excess layer is via AIG which happens to be the same people who were insuring us before. We are in the fortunate position of being desirable to the insurance industry for once and we made the most of it. The key issues in favour of Perkins Slade are that we are now with a group of people who are similar to us, such as BMC and 300 other Sports Governing Bodies. It is also likely that we will still be covered in the future following a claim, which was unlikely with the other policy. We now also enjoy better cover if you happen to be a club which owns land. Perkins Slade will also deal with the day-to-day enquiries about what is covered and this will reduce NW's workload. Fairly soon we will need to make a decision about moving to £10 million. To do so would cost us £5,300 a year. We are already spending £40k on insurance and NW believes we should not let the insurance industry dictate to us how we do things.

LW: Hidden Earth was once asked for £20million. We seem to be in an insurance spiral. We fairly recently went up from £2m to £5m of cover and things seem to be escalating yet again.

NW: CRoW is unlikely to have much of an impact on how insurers view the risks and, therefore, the level of their premiums. That is not to say that there is no benefit to landowners under CRoW. In fact quite the opposite, but the costs of premiums are unlikely to be affected because there aren't likely to have been any claims originating from that area anyway.

JP: Stuart France has had difficulties with NRW over £5m.

TA: Has asked whether it might be possible for a landowner to dedicate caving as a recreation that would come under CRoW? The answer is that there are some restrictions, such as paragliding, horse riding, and it seems that a landowner is able to ease these under CRoW but as caving is not in the list of restrictions, it cannot be dedicated.

NW: The excess will be £2,500 for claims involving diving or explosives, but aside from this there will be no excess.

DP: Who would bear the excess?

NW: BCA.

LW: Does this mean Council now has money available that was formerly in the insurance excess fund?

PI: Possibly.

NW: We are also hoping to look at a club huts policy, but in the meantime anyone renewing their hut policies should probably talk to Perkins Slade, as they have some pretty competitive policies.

LW: Are Perkins Slade interested in expedition travel policies?

NW: They are but we have not had any discussions on this yet. BCA might wish to consider whether the pot of money that used to be needed for the insurance policy excess might be dedicated to this.

Other Reports

14. Youth & Development

HB: CHECC took place in November, together with a CRoW debate which was filmed and placed on YouTube. Many thanks to the two contributors. CHECC even had a cake-baking competition this year with a significant number of entries. The website needs some work and this will be done when time allows.

Tom: CHECC had about 250 attendees, 170 of whom were at the AGM. Southern CHECC will be on 13-15 March and Northern CHECC will be a week later on 20-22 March.

15. Membership Administrator (*written report previously circulated*)

BCA Membership to 31st December 2014

DIMs 469 (caving), 56 (non-caving), 3 (CIM Plus), 6 (BCRA Honorary), 1 (BCA Honorary) (including 271 BCRA members and 25 student members) (Total DIM's = 535)

CIMs 3969 (caving), 932 (non-caving), 644 student / U18) (Total CIM's = 5545)

Clubs: 170

Associates: 4

Access Bodies: 8

902 new membership numbers were issued in 2014 (13918 - 14820)

***New Clubs:** The following clubs have supplied the correct paperwork and payments in order to become BCA member clubs: Tower Wood Caving Club and UK Mine/Cave Diving & Exploration.*

Additionally, we have received a further request from a club which I understand will be discussed at the Council Meeting.

***2015 Membership Renewal Processes:** As of 2nd January 2015 the following have been processed and posted: DIMs: 173, Groups: 50, CIMs: 566.*

Glenn Jones

The Membership Administrator's Report was accepted without discussion.

16. 2016

LW: We are just about to sign the contract with the venue. Alongside this the 2016 Treasurer will need £5k to pay our deposit. Everything looks very positive and the event promises to be excellent with support from all angles.

Proposal: ***that a further £5,000 be loaned to the 2016 bank account to cover a venue deposit.***

Prop: JB Sec: HR *agreed unanimously*

Action 147: PI to transfer £5k to the 2016 account.

17. Cave Registry

Nothing to report.

David Cooke

18. IT Working Party

Since the last meeting I have put quite a bit of work into the on-line members' contact management system. I have enhanced it to include more details such as the member address. This will allow members to check the details we hold on them and give them the chance to correct any mistakes. Hopefully that will reduce the issues the Secretary mentioned in his report. In loading the live data I have come across a structural issue - the membership number isn't unique, it can legitimately appear more than once in the file. I have a solution to but it has delayed the launch of the system.

DW: Has been discussing the need for an IT meeting in the foreseeable future. DC has indicated he will be organising one.

The IT Report was accepted without further discussion.

19. International

As mentioned in my last report to the council meeting in October, I attended both international meetings in Australia at the beginning and end of October.

The science meeting in Melbourne was the 3 yearly meeting of the International Karst Research Organisation. This was like the previous meeting, a very high-powered limestone research conference with many of the international experts attending. A notable, partial absence was the United States of America which had conflicting conferences, which was a great shame, but the rest of the world was well represented.

There is clearly some wonderful cave science going on. Much ancient history of the planet is being unravelled from within caves and it is interesting that the dated ages of caves is ever increasing, taking this history back to unbelievable times. For example, materials from a cave in Australia have been dated as being stationary in situ for nearly 300 million years. Clearly, there is an enormous amount more to do on this type of work.

The meeting in Sydney at the end of October was much more politically orientated and was largely concerned with the International Union of Speleology holding the 2017 International Congress in Sydney. We were very well looked after by the Australians who generally have things well in hand, with many people being delegated to many posts, and major important decisions having been made as necessary at this time. My only personal concern is, it would be nice to see substantial, committed, high quality, Australian organisers strongly supporting an individual as their overall leader. We will see how it develops going forward but overall the meetings were very productive and gave the feeling that it will be a magnificent conference in the summer of 2017 in Sydney.

Many fantastic caving and science trips were discussed, as pre- and post-congress excursions. There will be a tremendous opportunities for cavers to visit areas of Australia - little known and little visited.

Incidentally, for anybody who is particularly adventurous, next to the conference venue, a brand new freefall parachuting centre has opened with its vertical wind tunnel, giving the opportunity for ground-level, freefall experience!!!

Please can everybody continue saving for their trip to Australia?

Andy Eavis

a. FSE

There is very little to report. The next General Assembly Meeting (GAM) will be held between 29th May - 2nd June 2015 in Pertosa-Auletta (Salerno), Italy.

Work is on going to recruit a new general secretary following the departure of Olivier Vidal in August last year. A Candidate for the position of vice secretary has been identified and all being well, will be voted in at the GAM.

Ged Campion

The International Reports were accepted without discussion.

20. Media-Liaison

I am unlikely to make the council meeting so please accept my apologies for absence. My very short report is that over the last few months the only enquiry of note I have received is from the producers of Holby City who are in the process of filming a caving related episode. I have been advising them on story lines and content (or at least doing my best to persuade them how unlikely or impossible some of their ideas are) and BCA has received some small monetary benefit in relation to this.

Chris Jewell

HR: The BCA Media Officer has been thanked in a recent book about maps.

TA: 2016 could be a very positive and useful way of attracting the media.

The remainder of the Media-Liaison Report was accepted without discussion.

21. British Caving Library Report

The Collections: Work continues on re-cataloguing the entire contents of the Library, as detailed in my October Report; the Library on-line catalogue reflects the progress in all areas. The Library collections continue to grow, through donations (including a sizeable amount of archive material), and also through BCRA journal exchanges with foreign caving bodies and purchases of publications recommended to us. Any duplicate publications surplus to our requirements are passed on to other caving libraries if possible or, as “Lucky Dip” items at Hidden Earth providing cash donations to spend on new books.

Enquiries: We will report annual figures on numbers of enquiries and visitors at each BCA AGM; there have been an increasing number during 2014, from both Britain and abroad. The number of followers for the Librarian’s Facebook page continues to increase.

Planning for the Future: The initial Library Business Plan, agreed in 2009, ran until the end of 2014 and we are looking to produce a new plan for at least the next 5 years with BCRA managing the Library on behalf of British Caving. Costs have been kept down because of generous donations of computer equipment from interested cavers and the acquisition of much of our library furniture free of charge from other libraries or offices where it was surplus to requirements. Despite this, what has been achieved in those 5 years far outstrips that initial Plan: we are now running a full-scale Library and Information service with increasing use of online facilities and doing it with just one paid part-time Librarian plus a group of committed volunteers.

Jenny Potts

The Library Report was accepted without discussion.

22. Date, Time & Place of next meeting

The next Council Meeting will take place on Saturday 28 March 2014 at My Big Meeting Room, Pinvin, Worcestershire.

23. Any Other Business

a) BCRA: Dave Checkley has stepped down as chairman of BCRA with effect from 31 December 2014. BCRA Council will elect a new chairman at our meeting in March, when we will also appoint a new representative to BCA Council. We will be making a public announcement on these matters in due course but in the meantime I would request that any BCA Council matters that require an input from BCRA be directed to myself, as Secretary. I will then liaise with our President, John Gunn, and other post holders as appropriate to the matter.

David Gibson

Insurance FAQs

BM: Should we be removing the FAQs from the website?

NW: Information on the previous policy has now been removed. The FAQs will now be handed by Perkins Slade, but they seem to broadly agree with the existing ones, so they have been left on the website for the time being.

The meeting closed at 3.05pm.

Action Log (as at January 2015)

No.	Action by ...	Details of Action
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36	DW	Put together a Manual of Operations
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54	NW & DJu	Liaise with SUI with a view to helping them streamline their insurance situation.
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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 / BM	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 decided if it needs updating.
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October 2014

141	NW, DC, PI and NB	To consider Training Committee's request for video conferencing funding.
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142	AE, LW	To look at the future of Speleology.
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January 2015

143	AE	To liaise with BCRC over the AGM weekend.
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144	DW	To liaise with UKCaving owners to agree a system for BCA's use of UKCaving and then implement it.
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145	AE, PI, DW, AH	To co-opt persons as seen fit to implement the CRoW bullet points and report back to the March meeting in good time.
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146	DW	To communicate with members via the newsheets and explain how we are proceeding in relation to CRoW.
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147	PI	To transfer £5k to the 2016 bank account.
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Appendix: Results of CRoW Poll



19th December 2014

BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION

CONSULTATIVE BALLOT 2014

Our report of voting for the above ballot, which closed yesterday at noon, is as follows:

Question:

Should BCA, on your behalf, campaign for The Countryside and Rights of Way Act to apply to going underground?

Number of eligible voters:	6,085
Total number of votes cast:	2,270
Turnout:	37.3%
Number of votes found to be invalid:	4
Total number of valid votes to be counted:	2,266

Result

Number voting YES	1,402	(61.9% of the valid vote)
Number voting NO	864	(38.1% of the valid vote)
TOTAL	2,266	(100% of the valid vote)

Electoral Reform Services can confirm that, as far as reasonably practicable, every person whose name appeared on the electoral roll supplied to us for the purpose of the ballot:-

- was sent the details of the ballot and
- if they chose to participate in the ballot, had their vote fairly and accurately recorded.

All voting material will be stored for twelve months.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adrian Wilkins".

Adrian Wilkins
Senior Consultant

The Election Centre, 33 Clarendon Road, London N8 0NW
Tel: 020 8365 8909 | Fax: 020 8365 8587
www.electoralreform.co.uk | enquiries@electoralreform.co.uk

Electoral Reform Services Limited | Registered No. 2263092 | Registered Office: 33 Clarendon Road, London N8 0NW

