

## **Background.**

Following information that BCA Council were seeking funding bids to reduce a large surplus BCRA prepared a request for funding which was discussed at the 12 October BCA Council. Based on the minutes and reports received from persons present it is apparent that there were misunderstandings on both sides. Following a series of emails with BCA Officers and discussion on BCRA Council the BCRA are submitting this revised bid together with a very brief history of BCA-BCRA relations and a summary of how BCRA is currently funded.

## **BCA-BCRA relations**

BCRA was founded in 1974 by the merger of the CRG and BSA. At the time it was the only national body offering membership to individuals as well as to clubs. However, the recognised national body was the National Caving Association (NCA). In the June 2004 BCRA newsletter Nick Williams, then the BCRA Secretary, wrote:

*“On 1 January this year [2004], the new British Caving Association (BCA) finally came into existence. This is the body which will take over the national body functions of NCA and BCRA and eventually develop into the single unified national body which has been talked about for so long.*

*The relationship between BCA and BCRA will have to change fundamentally in order for the new body to work, and to protect the long term interests of BCRA in supporting cave science. BCRA will in essence become a subset of BCA, and **persons wishing to joining BCRA will have to first become members of BCA.***

*I realise that to some people this will come as a complete anathema, but I am convinced that this change, which is absolutely central to the re-structuring of the two organisations into a single, effective national body for caving, **is essential for the longer term good of sport caving and cave science in the UK.***

*Under these arrangements, **BCRA can be viewed as a sub-committee of BCA which concentrates its efforts on supporting cave science by channelling grant funding and facilitating publication through its journal and occasional publications”***

[Bold emphasis by the authors of this note. Anyone interested in caving history should read the June 2004 newsletter, the June 2005 newsletter and, most easily available, "Speleology" issue 5].

One consequence of this was that many BCRA overseas members, and quite a number of academics in GB, left BCRA as they saw no benefit in being members of BCA. Despite this BCRA has continued to accept the argument that even karst scientists who never go caving but want to join BCRA ought to be BCA members (and to pay their BCA insurance), in order that cave access is maintained. This has been to the benefit of BCA and it is sad that there seems to be a view amongst some that there is no value in the BCA - BCRA relationship.

Since 2004 the relationship between BCA and BCRA has become more distant, but the Chair of BCA has always been a de facto member of BCRA Council. It also remains the case that:

- *The BCRA is a UK registered charity, and a constituent body of the British Caving Association, **undertaking charitable activities on behalf of BCA.***
- *BCRA's object is to promote the study of caves and associated phenomena. It attains this object by issuing grants in support of cave & karst research; by encouraging original exploration (both in the UK and on expeditions overseas); by collecting and publishing speleological information; maintaining a library; and organising educational and scientific conferences and meetings.*

[These are taken directly from the BCRA web site: [bcra.org.uk](http://bcra.org.uk)].

BCA officers have recently suggested that in future BCA and BCRA should become effectively one organisation, with BCRA as a sub-committee of the BCA. However, the latter phrase reflects the present situation in that, as per the quote from Nick Williams:

*"BCRA can be **viewed** as a sub-committee of BCA which concentrates its efforts on supporting cave science by channelling grant funding and facilitating publication through its journal and occasional publications".*

It is not possible to form a single organisation because BCRA is a charity and as such legally has to remain self-governed with independent accounts and trustees. However, a closer relationship between BCA and BCRA than has been the case in recent years is likely to be mutually beneficial.

## **BCRA funding**

In simple terms the BCRA funding stream can be divided into two, capital and revenue.

The capital ('reserves') was derived from a small number of very generous bequests by cavers. Historically the capital has been used to fund grants via the Cave Science and Technology Research Fund (CSTRF). More recently capital has been used to establish the British Cave Monitoring Centre (BCMC). Both are described in more detail below. It has also been necessary to use some capital to support publishing activities, for example the two new books on the Caves and Karst of the Yorkshire Dales. A further £20,921 of 'BCRA' capital is tied up in the UK Cave Conservation Emergency Fund which is administered by BCRA on behalf of UK cavers (see <http://bcra.org.uk/ukccef/>). BCRA also administers the British Caving Library which is largely funded by generous grants from BCA but also receives some direct funding from BCRA.

The revenue is mostly derived from membership fees, which fund the production of Cave & Karst Science and other essential costs of running the Association. As noted above, it has been necessary to use some capital to support the editorial costs of C&KS and our Review but in terms of printing and mailing, we aim to break even on these items. (The cost of our sending free copies of the Review to caving clubs has resulted in a small loss, which will be offset by our recent increase in fees). Other revenue comes from meetings and publications sales. We aim for both of these activities to be cost-neutral although, with publications, capital may have to be used for an initial investment. BCRA also administers 'Hidden Earth' (HE), the UK's premier national caving conference, but HE is run by a team of volunteers who advise BCRA Council where they wish to see any surplus allocated.

## **Co-Funding requested from BCA**

As noted above, the main uses of BCRA capital are to fund the Cave Science and Technology Research Fund (CSTRF) and the British Cave Monitoring Centre (BCMC). Both these initiatives are aimed at helping cavers set up science based projects both in the UK and overseas.

CSTRF. The Cave Science and Technology Research Fund was launched in 2005 when BCRA council agreed to allocate £5,000/year from 2006 onwards. In 2018 Council agreed to extend the fund for a further five year period to 2024. Between 2006 and 2018 there were 82 applications for funding with a total of £131,176 requested. 58 grants were made totalling £62,880. Applicants have ranged from cavers who have no academic background but would like funds for a wide variety of projects, for example to date bones found in a cave or to undertake water tracing experiments, through to scientists who want to undertake a specific piece of cave-related research. One area that we wish to support further is expedition science. In the past many caving expeditions undertook important scientific research alongside sporting caving but more recently there has been a paucity of expedition science. BCRA are currently working with GPF to promote more expedition research, and to encourage caving expeditions with a wider remit, rather than focussing solely on sport caving and exploration. The idea is to use the funds to help train the next generation of expedition cavers and cave scientists, and by doing so raise the profile of UK expeditions. To this effect, a GPF expedition training weekend, supported by BCRA, will take place in 2020. BCRA would like to expand the use of the CSTRF to offer grants for expedition science but cannot justify a further draw-down of capital. Hence, we are submitting this **application to BCA to 'match-fund' the BCRA contribution of £5,000 per annum to CSTRF over the period 2020 - 2024 inclusive and to consider a long-term commitment to supporting cave research**. BCRA would work with GPF to ensure that at least £2,500 per annum is allocated to expedition science.

BCMC. The British Cave Monitoring Centre at Poole's Cavern was launched in 2018 as a joint initiative between the BCRA and the Buxton Civic Association both of whom committed £3,000 in the first year and £1,000/year thereafter subject to a review after five years. A generous donation of over £7,500 of equipment from Tinytag plus valuable technical support means that we now have what is probably the best equipped monitoring centre of any of the world's national caving associations. The aim is to encourage cavers with an interest in science and technology, and scientists with an interest in caves, to set-up their own experiments in the cave making use of the baseline data, which will be made freely accessible online. We also aim to use the baseline data to promote an interest in caves within schools, colleges and universities and see this as an important means by which we can increase interest in, and the profile of, British caves and caving. In order to fulfil these aims, and to enhance the existing monitoring facility and outreach activities, we are submitting this **application to BCA to 'match-fund' the BCRA contribution of £1,000 per annum over the period 2020 - 2024 inclusive**. This will enable us to purchase additional sensors and widen the appeal of the Centre to both cavers and the wider public.

John Gunn (BCRA Chairman) on behalf of BCRA Council