



**Minutes of BCA Council Meeting held on Saturday, 11 October 2014
at My Big Meeting Room, Pinvin, Worcestershire**

Present:

Andy Eavis (AE)	BCA Chairman
Damian Weare (DW)	BCA Secretary
Andrew Hinde (AH)	BCA Conservation & Access Officer
David Judson (DJu)	BCA Legal & Insurance Officer
Les Williams (LW)	BCA Publications & Information Officer / 2016 Convenor
Dave Tyson (DT)	Cambrian Rep.
James Begley (JB)	CSCC Rep.
Jenny Potts (JP)	DCA Rep.
David Jean (DJe)	DCUC Rep.
Stephan Nantynczuk (SN)	ACI Rep.
Hellie Brook (HB)	CHECC Rep. / BCA Youth & Development
John Hine (JH)	NAMHO Rep.
Dave Warne (DW)	WPCST Rep.
David Cooke (DC)	Club Rep. 1/ BCA Cave-Registry / Webmaster / Web Services / IT Working Group
Bernie Woodley (BW)	Individual Member Rep. 1
Henry Rockliff (HR)	Individual Member Rep. 2
Kristian Brook (KB)	Individual Member Rep. 3
Bob Mehew (BM)	BCA Rope-Testing
Richard Vooght (RV)	<i>Observer</i>
Matt Wire (MW)	<i>Observer</i>
Robin Weare (RW)	<i>Observer</i>

The meeting commenced at 10:35am.

1. Chairman's Welcome

AE welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Ged Champion, Paul Ibberson, Nigel Ball, Steve Holding, Idris Williams, Nick Williams, Alan Finch, Glenn Jones, Boyd Potts, Dave Checkley.

3. Applications for Group Membership

St. Cuthberts Minery Reserve and Deep Dark Dirty Wet Holes Caving Club have provided the correct paperwork and payment to become BCA Group Members.

Proposal: *to accept the St. Cuthberts Minery Reserve and Deep Dark Dirty Wet Holes Caving Club as Group Members.*
Prop: LW, Sec: JB *agreed unanimously.*

4. Minutes of the last Council Meeting on 15 June 2014 (previously circulated)

Proposal: *to accept the Minutes from 15 June 2014 as a true record*
Prop: JP, Sec: DC *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.*

Action 83 (Produce Asset Register): *In progress - nearly complete, ready for next meeting.*

Action 115 (Summary of Landowner Insurance Benefits): *Ongoing.*

Action 116 (Weil's Disease leaflet): *Ongoing*

Officers' Reports

6. Chairman

At the Conservation & Access Meeting in August it was suggested that I should have a meeting with Natural England. I met with Paul Johnson, Principal Specialist Statutory Access for Natural England, and Richard Hepburn, DEFRA Senior Executive, on Monday 8 September at the DEFRA offices in Bristol.

The meeting was held in private, with no official minutes or notes taken. It was a very friendly meeting and a number of ideas came from it.

It is clear that the current interpretation of the CRoW Act relating to caving comes from the wording of "open-air recreation". In addition there is concern about the effect more access to caves would have on landowners.

Since the meeting I have spoken with many members of the British Caving Association. From these discussions it seems to me that we have a number of things we should do. First of all, if we are to do anything as an Organisation towards changing CRoW we will have to change our Constitution, so that the rights of the landowner are not sacrosanct if the law says differently. To do this, we would need a Special General Meeting and a poll of our members. This would have the effect of showing whether there is a majority of cavers in favour of CRoW applying to caves, and the time interval involved in setting this up would give everybody an opportunity to have their say.

In addition it would be prudent to start reviewing what we should do as an Organisation to help preserve our caves and cavers if CRoW does apply to caves.

Examples of what could be done are:

- a. Conservation training for cavers*
- b. Track marking and underground taping or formations*
- c. Some degree of access control, either physically or by a trust system*
- d. Cave leader groups etc.*

We should also investigate the interaction of SSSI status and CRoW to see what could be done to protect particularly delicate or beautiful caves.

It is also clear that a further legal opinion could be sought in addition to those that have been obtained from Dinah Rose and Linda Wilson.

Landowners should be approached and canvassed on their opinions, and other factors such as implications on our insurance scheme investigated.

It was notable that both Paul and Richard agreed to further meetings, either on a formal or informal basis. They were certainly open to discussion but are not changing their mind at present. It seemed at the meeting that it would be advantageous to all concerned if further correspondence be channelled through the National Body rather than going directly to the officers.

In addition to these CRoW matters I should like to take the opportunity of thanking everybody very sincerely for helping with the organisation of the AGM weekend. Many people put in an enormous amount of effort to make it successful particularly Damian Weare, Les Williams, Ian 'Slug' Gregory, David Cooke and Dave Checkley and his BCRA team.

I look forward to next year's where I hope it will be somewhere down south, but more about that later.

Andy Eavis

AE: CRoW is referred to in a number of reports, so for neatness it will be taken later under the Conservation & Access heading. Hidden Earth was apparently excellent and, as usual, LW and his team deserve our thanks.

LW: Next year's Hidden Earth will be at Churchill School from 25-27 September.

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

7. Secretary

AGM / Party Weekend: *Although numbers were lower than expected, the weekend generally seemed to go well. I should like to echo Andy's thanks to some amazing people, without whom there would not have been an event. The biggest drawback was probably financial, due largely to the higher venue costs than in 2013. This is something we need to look at carefully for future events.*

The 2015 event will be a joint event with BCRC and held at the Dean Field Studies Centre in the Forest of Dean on 19-21 June. It should be an excellent event, including a probable Saturday evening event in Clearwell Caves, so please put dates in diaries now!

CRoW: *Andy's report mentions his recent meeting with Natural England and DEFRA at the behest of the C&A Committee's August meeting. He also reports on some possible routes forward.*

Andy and I have discussed this at length in the last couple of months. It is clear to us that CRoW is a highly divisive issue among our members and one on which many have long-considered and strong views. It is also clear that there are a substantial

number of members who would like to see BCA pushing for caving to be included under CRoW legislation, but that there are others who are strongly opposed to this.

BCA's constitution contains a set of Guiding Principles, one of which states that "the owners and tenants of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access." We have taken the view that this precludes us from seeking to take away this right from landowners by pushing for open access via the CRoW legislation. However we are also mindful that a large number of members seem to wish for this to happen.

Because of the strength of feeling on both sides, and the importance of the issue to our members, we feel a clear yes/no-style referendum of all our members is probably called for. Back in 2010 we changed our constitution to allow electronic voting and have begun collecting members' e-mail addresses. To date we have about 45% of our members' e-mails. However, even making use of these, with 6,000 members any referendum is going to be costly.

Since a "yes" response will then require a change of our Constitution as outlined above, and this also requires a full poll of members, we are of the view that the most sensible solution is to carry through the processes necessary for a Constitutional Change and make absolutely clear to members that the resulting postal poll is really a poll for or against BCA pushing for caving to be covered by CRoW.

Therefore we would like to propose that Council call a Special General Meeting for an agreed date in February with the sole Agenda item being that the first sentence of item 4.6 of the Constitution be amended to read: "That the owners and tenants of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access, **except where there is, or BCA is campaigning for, a legal right of access.**"

If the necessary majority is achieved (i.e. 70% in favour in both the Individual and Group votes) then this will be taken as a clear message from the membership that they wish BCA to campaign actively for CRoW to cover caving and no further voting will be necessary.

Membership Restructuring: CRoW has taken our attention somewhat away from this ongoing job. However it is now very much back on my radar and work will continue. The principle remains that nothing will be introduced unless everything is already in place for it to work smoothly. We have a working system and will not be making changes unless the new system is an improvement!

Guidelines for Technical Advisors: I have been asked by Training Committee to circulate their proposed "Guidelines for Technical Advisors" document for approval by Council prior to publication. It has been circulated well in advance of the meeting.

Damian Weare

DW: There now appears to be a three-way clash of dates with the proposed AGM weekend, and it seems we may need to move the date. Unfortunately this cannot be confirmed at the moment. Apologies to all for any confusion. CRoW will be taken under Conservation & Access. Nigel Ball has asked for the Guidelines for Technical Advisors document to be withdrawn temporarily following a number of e-mail queries he would like to consider first.

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

8. Treasurer

Unfortunately I must begin this report by passing on my apologies for non-attendance. However, I believe that the major discussion points (such as they are) can be addressed in advance.

Generally speaking, the summer has been one of keeping on top of day-to-day expenses and cash matters. Significant "loose ends" relating to investment opportunities remain loose ends in that the options that exist are of such marginal added value that frankly it is hard to justify the effort required to pursue them.

On a more controllable level, with regard to a Budget for 2015 and specifically the level of subscription fees to be levied, I am of the view that the current structure adequately represents the appropriate charges. At this time, the costs/income equation is sufficiently balanced that, given the background review which is taking place anyway, the fees for 2015 should remain at 2014 levels. (Note that a more detailed outlook on 2015 finances will be available for the January Council meeting).

The other main item I need to clear is the 2013 Regional Council funding. This is now a priority and I expect to make payments by the end of October.

One issue which I must bring to Council's attention is the proposed subscription levy for the Sport and Recreation Alliance. This was £75 plus VAT in 2011/12; when it was increased by 66.7% in 2012/13 I raised the issue with Council and it was felt that our continued involvement was desirable despite the ridiculous fee increase. For 2013/14, a more modest (but still greater than inflation) increase of 4% was applied and duly paid. For 2014/15, S&RA have issued, without notification or discussion as far as I am aware, a new subscription invoice which represents an increase of 23%. Admittedly the total value is not huge, but the level of increase is clearly determined by someone who is not subject to Real World pressures. In my view the increase is completely without justification and I specifically request that Council authorise me to offer to pay 2013/14 levels of subscription but no more.

Other than that, my main focus over the next couple of months will be to maintain routine functions and attempt to lay some foundations for moving things forward on a number of “back office” matters which hopefully will help to streamline things into 2015.

Paul Ibberson

2015 Membership Fees

HR: Where are we with our insurance premium? Is there a chance of a price rise this year?

DW: The renewal comes some time in December and is unknown until then. There has been a “deal” to maintain the price for a number of years, but DW cannot recall where we are with this currently. We have sufficient reserves to absorb a price rise should one occur, so it seems logical to ignore this in any discussion of fees for 2015.

Proposal: *that the subscription fees for 2015 remain unchanged from 2014 rates.*

Prop: PI, Sec: DW *agreed unanimously*

Sport & Recreation Alliance

DC: Do we know what other Bodies think about the increase?

DW: Mick spoke in favour of us continuing our membership two years ago when there was a substantial rise.

LW: We should express our concerns and ask how they are justifying their increases.

AE: The cost is minimal. We should probably pay it.

JP: Do we know who our official representative is? They tend to liaise with their named individual, so it would make sense for us to be clear on who this is. They used to have an Outdoor Pursuits division.

HB: Do we have someone who might be able to attend their meetings?

Action 139: PI to consider the benefits of SRA membership, make a decision on membership payments and report to the January 2015 Council Meeting accordingly.

The remainder of the Treasurer’s Report was accepted without discussion.

9. Conservation & Access

Since the last meeting I have represented BCA at the Eurospeleo Forum- Baille Herculane, Romania. (22-24 August 2014). I gave a presentation to the European Cave Protection Symposium (see below) and attended the ECPC committee meeting. There are clearly some difficulties in coordinating principals and procedures across dozens of different countries which are at different evolutionary stages of conservation management and education. However, there were plenty of useful examples of practical conservation measures displayed in the poster salon and via presentations. The ECPC is starved of people prepared to undertake officer posts in these austere times. I was offered and declined a co-option onto the ECPC executive.

The cost of flights and transfers were met by Natural England. I will be making a claim from BCA to meet accommodation costs. I would encourage BCA to send Conservation Officers from other RCCs to present at future events. I feel that the British experience of conservation is of value to ECPC.

I have contacted a few people to help with the review of Conservation Codes and the Conservation Handbook. I will report to the next C&A committee with some draft proposals.

The CRoW and Caving debate has generated a huge amount of correspondence in my inbox. I apologise if I have kept anyone waiting too long for a response. The e-mails I have received on the subject have all been civil, well considered, and useful contributions.

I would like to thank the CRoW working group for undertaking a huge amount of work on behalf of BCA and the C&A Committee. I commend their report to Council.

Title of presentation

British Cave and Karst Conservation.

(How a £5000 investment in Cavers delivered a £2.0M HLF grant for Landscape Scale Conservation)

Author Name A (1), **Andrew Hinde. (BCA Conservation Officer and Cave Conservation Adviser at Natural England)**

Author Name B (2), Author Name C (3) *

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(2) Institutional address of Author B and email address

(3) Institutional address of Author C and email address

* please underline presenting author name

Please type abstract text here. The text should not exceed 2000 characters (Times New Roman, 12) without spaces. Graphics and tables are not accepted.

The UK has a small, yet incredibly diverse, speleological resource. The conservation of this finite resource requires the cooperation of speleologists, national environmental protection bodies and local communities. In the UK this partnership approach has delivered remarkable results in both conservation projects and communities embracing their underground heritage. The experience and knowledge of speleologists/cavers is the single most important asset and driver of progress in cave conservation. With minimal financial assistance the UK caving community has made a huge impact on statutory bodies with their imaginative approach which places conservation at the core of all branches of modern cave exploration. In the world of environmental protection nobody gives greater “value for money” than cave conservation volunteers.

Keywords (ad about five key words in alphabetical order, separated by commas). ***communities, conservation, volunteers, statutory bodies,***

Andrew Hinde

AH: The Romanian event did not have many presentations on conservation, but there were several on cave science. In fact it was much more like a Cave Science Symposium than a conference. Given this, there is probably a lot to be gained by BCRA from wider contact with European partners. Attended a meeting of the European Cave Protection Symposium and its aims are definitely laudable. However everyone is at different stages and can lead to bickering at times. There was, for example, concern from the Belgians at what we are doing in the UK.

AE: This is quite surprising given the extent of the damage to some of their caves.

DJu: It would be sensible for BCRA to be involved and suggests AH liaises with David Gibson.

AE: This can be discussed at tomorrow's BCRA meeting.

Action 140: AE and DJu to bring the EuroSpeleo Forum to the attention of BCRA and suggest someone may wish to attend in future.

CRoW Working Party Report

Work continues on the database recording the status of caves: whether on access land, any legal protection (SSSI, SAM, NNR, etc.), caver interest (national, regional, etc.), type of access (restricted, open freely, etc.) and special conservation or scientific interest. We have some information from every caving region, thanks to volunteers, and now have at least an indication of the status of around 4500 caves and mines in England and possibly another 1700 in Wales. So far some 2700 entrances appear to be on access land and, of these, only around 20 altogether actually have a locked gate. The database is still incomplete and a great deal of work still remains to be done before we have a totally comprehensive picture.

“CRoW Access Land” status is proving not to be as simple as at first believed, there being complications with some “designated” access land and possibly even with some common land, where restrictions have been placed on the type of access allowed. (This is particularly important in the Forest of Dean where the Forestry Commission has designated land.) There are even problems in working out where, exactly, the boundaries of areas of access land lie in relation to certain caves. There are also uncertainties relating to the details of a few of the SSSIs which include caves.

Three of the Working Group members (JP, BM and TA) set up a display at Hidden Earth to illustrate the current situation. There were leaflets available for cavers to take away with more detailed information on legal issues, the “open air” recreation definition, the numbers of caves affected, conservation issues, etc. (It appears that some 200 copies of the leaflet were taken, some as batches to pass around a club, and the text can also be downloaded from <http://tinyurl.com/pro-CRoW-caving-01>.) The leaflet included a link to download a set of detailed documents relating to CRoW and caves (<http://tinyurl.com/pro-CRoW-caving>). A number of cavers were keen to discuss the issues with us and most were surprised to learn that, considering the large number of caves on access land, only around 20 altogether in

- AH: We had a C&A meeting in August, with a remarkable number of the same faces present then as now. It was a very positive meeting with some very useful contributions from individuals on both sides of the debate. The Committee asked AE to make approach Natural England for a meeting. He has done this but it is clear we may wish to develop a clear policy in the near future. We may either decide to let things drift along quietly or alternatively to make positive steps in favour of CRoW applying to caving.
- AE: It is clear that Natural England are very clear that they don't know quite how to interpret the CRoW Act and are confused by the mixed feelings coming out of the caving world. They have also concluded that you can descend caves as far as daylight, but this is clearly quite confusing. Should BCA wish to contest this, we have concluded that we first need to amend our Constitution. The current situation is outlined in DW's report to this meeting.
- DW: Apologises to AE for suggesting in his report that he and DW were in agreement. However a discussion while travelling to the meeting made clear that the possible approaches are complex and there is a lot to be gained by a full, considered discussion by this meeting.
- LW: Does not believe that the current Constitution should prevent us from campaigning.
- DW: If we have a Guiding Principle in our Constitution, then that surely should be paramount in the way we operate. Currently it says "That the owners and tenants of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access." To have this as a Guiding Principle and then start fighting for this not to be the case, is surely going against our Constitution.
- LW: Why not simply remove the whole clause, then?
- AE: This would pass an unfortunate message to non-CRoW landowners. DW's proposed amendment would, therefore, be preferable, but missing out the bit about campaigning.
- DW: Feels that, if we are going to be pushing for a change to the interpretation of the law, then we need that wording or similar. Otherwise we could be seen to be in breach of our Constitution for pushing for landowners to lose the absolute right to grant or withhold access.
- AE: Is happy that if this intention were made clear in the proposed vote, this would be acceptable without actually including the wording.
- DC: 2 separate votes would make the whole thing easier. We can see already that the wording of a proposed change to the constitution is contentious. To then combine this with a vote on whether or not we should push for CRoW to apply to caving would risk giving an unclear decision on members' wishes on CRoW.
- HB: One clear question on CRoW and caving with a clear Yes/No choice is the way we should go.
- DT: The average caver would like a clear vote that is not tied in with the Constitution in any way.
- DW: We have concluded that before BCA can push for CRoW to apply to caving, there will need to be an amendment to the Constitution which itself requires a full poll of members. There are considerable cost implications behind running two votes and this is one of the main reasons behind the proposal to combine the two. However if the meeting is happy that the cost can be justified, we can clearly have a separate set of votes.
- BM: A General Meeting is empowered to decide on the interpretation of the Constitution. Could we, therefore, have an SGM to debate whether the Constitution prohibits us from using our right of law?
- AE: This could become complex and put off decision making. If the meeting decided we did need to amend the Constitution, we would then need another General Meeting to do so.
- BM: It would be possible to put forward an amendment to a proposal at the meeting.
- HB: Having two votes is too complicated.
- AE: Can we defer this discussion to the next C&A meeting?
- DW: Would be very reluctant to do so. The AGM deferred decisions to the C&A Committee which has now met and in effect deferred discussion to Council. For Council to then defer it again is simply stalling. Our members do not want this.
- JP: It is clear that the interpretation of the law will not be changed unless BCA says it wants to it be. We therefore need a definitive vote of our members on this. However we do not want discussion surrounding this to hijack the important work of the C&A Committee. It needs to be left alone to deal with the consequences of any change, rather than to get bogged down in constitutional amendments. The only way to get the firm view is to go to an SGM and get a clear vote.
- DW: If we wish to canvas our members on CRoW and caving, there appear to be three possible solutions. We either have an SGM and a debate on CRoW and a motion stating that the Constitution allows us to push for CRoW to cover caving. Or we have a poll on CRoW followed by a further one amending the Constitution. Or we have a single poll pulling together the necessary amendments to the Constitution and whether or not CRoW should apply

- to caving.
- DC: Could we not just take the following proposal, which avoids the need for two ballots, to an SGM. It is proposed that the following be added to the Constitution: “notwithstanding item 4.6 of the Constitution, BCA is given the power to campaign for a legal right of access under CRoW.”
- DT: The question should be simple, such as “Do you think that CRoW should apply to caving?”. The constitutional changes can then be left for later. Our members are not interested in constitutional amendments which should not be muddled in with the basic principles.
- BM: DC’s suggestion puts us in danger of changing the Constitution without changing the Constitution. Would suggest an SGM with a 3-part motion: 1) That section 4.6 of the Constitution is interpreted as not applying if there is a reasonable legal opinion that there is a general right of access. 2) That the meeting agrees to campaign for CRoW to apply to caving. 3) That BCA polls its members to see whether it is in favour.
- DC: The Constitution says Council can interpret it as it wishes pending endorsement by the next General Meeting.
- LW: The guiding principle 4.6 is simply a state of legal fact and has no further meaning.
- DC: But it wouldn’t need to be in the Constitution if that were the case.
- LW: The motion should be that subject to Section 26 being shown to be workable, we would like BCA to push for CRoW to cover caving.
- BM: One cave is covered by Section 26. Kirk Gill Cave is on restricted access land and the entrance is covered by the restriction. The purpose of the restriction is that the area of land provides a water supply.
- DW: You mean that the one use of section 26 relating to caves has led to a total ban on caving.
- BM: Yes. However you can access the cave via another entrance.
- LW: But that restriction is an accident of location, rather than for reasons of cave conservation, is it not?
- AE: We need a vote and it seems the meeting wants it to be separate from any constitutional change vote. The question should be along the lines of: “Do you believe we should be actively campaigning for CRoW to apply to caving?” The accompanying notes then need to say what we will do and that we will only campaign if we can ensure the necessary protections for caves are in place.
- BM: BCA needs to invite both camps to produce a campaigning document.
- MW: We should simply explain BCA’s position (e.g. we won’t do anything without Section 26 applying) and what will happen either way following the vote.
- BM: NE could ban access under the rights afforded by CRoW. However that would not stop the landowner granting access by another means.
- DW: We seem to be moving towards a vote on CRoW and caving. If so, there are three questions relating to this: 1) When and how should be it conducted? 2) What supporting documentation will be included? 3) What is the actual question? We appear to be deciding against providing arguments for and against CRoW applying to caving, and instead providing a statement of what BCA will do either way following the vote.

After a lot of discussion, including whether to run a poll using e-mail addresses where available and postal addresses where not, it was concluded that setting up a secure system to enable an e-mail vote was not feasible in the short term. The following proposal was therefore agreed. It was also agreed that the documentation would include some preamble on the mechanics of the poll, plus a summary of the current position to be decided by Executive and a statement of what BCA in the event of a “yes” or a “no” response to the poll.

Proposal: That Executive commission a full postal poll of the membership, asking the following question: “Should BCA, on your behalf, campaign for The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) to apply to going underground?” bearing in mind where possible the importance of the security of the poll and the desire to have an outcome by January’s Council Meeting. Prop: AH Sec: LW agreed unanimously

- BM: Will we allow camps to put documents on the BCA website?
- DW: We have decided to provide no supporting documentation, so this seems inappropriate.
- BM: Should we allow debate on our forum?
- DW: Yes. That is different in that it is clearly individuals putting their views.
- AH: Can we confirm that we are doing nothing on section 4.6 of the Constitution until the outcome of the poll.
- AE: Yes.

The remainder of the Conservation & Access report was accepted without discussion.

10. Equipment & Techniques

- BM: There has been little progress since the last meeting. The next meeting is on 2 November.

Rope-Testing

11. Training

The summer of 2014 appears to have been a relatively quiet time compared to previous years. What follows are the statistics for the BCA schemes for June, July and August 2014. September is not included because the month has not ended at the time of this report being written.

Local Cave and Mine Leader Award

Registrations	26
Level 1 assessments	6
Level 2 assessments	5
Level 1 revalidations	5
Level 2 revalidations	3
Level 1 Core-Skills reassessments	2
Current number of award holders: Level 1 = 477, Level 2 = 239	

Cave Instructor Certificate

Registrations	3
Assessments	0
Revalidations	2
Current number of award holders: 80	
LCMLA financial balance from January-August 2014	£785
CIC financial balance from January-August 2014	£405

The Training Committee have designed and produced a leaflet promoting the availability of training grants for BCA member clubs. 1,000 have been printed. Hopefully this will raise club awareness and therefore increase the demand.

The Training Officer has been researching into the development of video conferencing for meetings that are held on behalf of BCA. The company that has responded most positively is Polycom. It has been suggested that a series of nodes be set up around the UK and delegates go to their nearest for meetings. It will cost approximately £200 per node for hardware, i.e. webcam and microphone and £2000 per year for the software and license. This would reduce the amount of travel, travel expenses and time for people attending meeting. It was also suggested at Training Committee that not all meetings be held through video conferencing and it was important to hold at least one meeting per year where people met face to face.

The Training Officer has responded to the request from Council for Training Committee to review its current structure. This was done by putting together a diagram of the current structure of Training Committee membership and making suggestions about how efficiency could be improved. This included subdividing Training Committee into two parts, recreational and awards based, with each section being empowered to make its own decisions. This was discussed and at least one representative felt that this should not be done.

Reports from Regional Councils were received at the last Training Committee meeting demonstrating that their training events held had been generally successful. Some had been technical, such as SRT, whilst others had been ecological i.e. bats. There was also evidence of planning for future events.

The Training Officer, at the request of the Training Committee, has started the process of moderation / quality assurance, within training courses and assessments held on behalf of BCA. The initial observation made resulted in some very positive feedback to the provider.

The introduction of an award scheme of children's participation in caving is continuing and a member of the NCP has volunteered to spend time planning and generally developing a model for this.

A member of Training Committee expressed a desire to report a near miss situation that had occurred. This developed further to the point where a discussion developed about having a process for reporting near misses so that everyone could learn from them. There was some concern about this because it may be used as a topic for the ridicule of individuals.

The Training Committee reiterated their desire for a member of BCA Executive, i.e. the Chairman, to discuss the issues of award holders being members of BCA and general issues regarding access to caves.

Nigel Ball, October 2014

Video Conferencing

DC: There are various solutions to video conferencing that may well be cheaper, including Skype and Google Hangouts. The IT Working Party should be asked to look at this.

DW: The CIC Panel has been meeting via the internet for a while now. It does not appear to need this level of infrastructure to do so. PI has reported that he is willing to look at this.

Action 141: DC to liaise with NB and PI to consider Training Committee's request for video conferencing funding.

Sub-dividing the TC

DW: NB's scheme is not included in his report, but has been explained to DW. The current structure is an overarching Training Committee with responsibility for all aspects of the professional schemes plus recreational-caver training. To make this easier it has two sub-Committees which deal with the two professional schemes, the Cave Instructor Certificate and the Local Cave & Mine Leader Award. These report to the Training Committee for final ratification of decisions, but deal with the day-to-day running of the Schemes. NB's proposal is to split the Training Committee into two. One part deals with the professional schemes and has autonomy from BCA's existing structures with executive control by the Panel itself. The other part deals with recreational caving and follows BCA's existing structure.

HB: This is a terrible thing and will deepen the rift between professional and recreational training even further. This will not help British Caving.

HR: The Training Committee does not currently spend much time discussing recreational caving or representing it. If the Committees were split, there may well be better attendance at TC.

LW: That is partly because nobody sends any representatives who are not professional cavers.

SN: We should give NB the chance to bring his scheme to a further Council Meeting himself. It definitely has some merit.

AE: Definitely.

JP: Training Committee has just produced a leaflet on recreational caver training grants.

LW: Notes that the leaflet has not been past the Publications & Information Committee.

DW: It came to DW for proof-reading, DW made some comments to the Training Officer, including how it was to be funded and whether it was in fact the best way to deal with the problem, and it appears to have been published without further consultation.

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

12. Publications & Information

LW: Has nothing to report beyond the individual reports.

a. Webmaster

At the moment it seems that only Damian and Mary are updating the website. I would ask the Officers to review their sections of the website and dive in and update it where needed. I'm happy to offer training and advice on how to do that. It really isn't that difficult.

David Cooke, October 2014

b. Web Services

There have been no reported unscheduled outages

The current on-going task is to upgrade the versions of php, mysql and apache on the server so that they remain current. This can cause compatibility issues with the hosted websites and therefore needs to be carefully managed to reduce any possible pain.

David Cooke, October 2014

c. Newsletter

DW: The previous postholder took on the role largely on the understanding that he was going to collate the news he was provided with. It is clear that this is not going to happen, particularly if there are delays in publication. Any future postholder needs to be ready to produce their own content, not simply cut and paste what is provided by others.

d. Handbook

DW: Stepped down after 8 editions so time could be dedicated instead to the website content, which is often out of date.

e. Speleology

Speleology 20 was originally scheduled for April. Although it clearly takes a lot of time to produce, and I have a lot of things to do, the real reason for the delay is probably just that once I took my eye off the ball, it wandered away somewhere else and I just "forgot". Now that Hidden Earth is out of the way, I can return to Speleology.

David Gibson, October 2014

LW: What is clear is that it is impossible to publish anything without the efforts of a tiny number of people. When those people run out of time, we have nothing. What is the point in Speleology? It is very expensive and we need to solve the problems with its publication.

AH: We are hanging on to a platform that is no longer relevant. Any other organisation would have a website. Descent is published bi-monthly, Speleology may have a future if Descent stopped tomorrow, but until then it is an expensive luxury.

LW: Wonders what would it cost to send a copy of Descent to all our members?

AE: That is fine, but it does leave all your eggs in one basket. If the current Descent editor were to retire, we would have nothing.

HR: Is that not the point where BCA might decide to buy the business and bring it in house? At present we are bringing everything in house.

HB: Speleology makes us look bad, is costing money and needs a solution.

Action 142: LW and AE to look at the future of Speleology.

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

13. Legal & Insurance

DJu: Nothing to report.

a. Insurance Manager

DJu: Nothing to report.

Other Reports

14. Youth & Development

The leaflets have now been printed and copies will be brought to the meeting. Unfortunately the TryCaving website still needs considerable work.

Hellie Brooke, October 2014

HB: 2,000 leaflets have been printed and are available for distribution. The CHECC AGM is in November and HB will be standing down as CHECC Chair.

15. Membership Administrator

Membership to 17 October 2014

DIMs 440 (caving), 49 (non-caving), 3 (CIM Plus), 6 (BCRA Honorary), 1 (BCA Honorary) (includes 260 BCRA members and 22 student members) (Total DIM's = 499)

CIMs 3909 (caving), 919 (non-caving), 558 student / U18) (Total CIM's = 5286)

Clubs: 169

Associates: 4

Access Bodies: 8

New Groups: The following groups have supplied the correct paperwork and payment to become BCA Group members: St. Cuthberts Minery Reserve and Deep Dark Dirty Wet Holes Caving Club.

Glenn Jones

HB: Who are the Associates?

DW: They are a small number of usually companies with an interest in caving. They pay us a fee for associate membership and receive our publications but do not have a vote.

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

16. 2016 Working Party

LW: Carried out a straw poll at the Hidden Earth opening ceremony and about half the audience said they would be coming to 2016. There will hopefully be a lot more to report on after a planning meeting in November.

17. Cave Registry

Nothing to report.

David Cooke, October 2014

The Cave Registry Report was accepted without further discussion.

18. IT Working Party

Last October I reported "Once we have collected a member's email address we need to provide a system that will allow them to update it and any associated information such as permission to include them on a BCA mailing list. This is best done via the website by giving the member a secure account where they can login to update their details. A key feature must be that the members will manage their own details. The only additional work for the Membership Administrator would be to pass on a spreadsheet containing the membership numbers, name and email address. I can provide such a contact management system since I wrote a remarkably similar one for work."

I have installed a test version of the above for review and comment. Assuming a favourable reception I expect to make the

system live shortly.

The email system is a prerequisite to an online voting service. Online voting will save BCA significant postal cost. Given that an imminent poll of our members is likely, this is now my priority.

David Cooke, October 2014

DW: Is aware that DC is currently liaising with David Gibson.

HB: How is the e-mail signup initiated?

DC: At renewal via the Membership Administrator.

The remainder of the IT Report was accepted without further discussion.

19. International Representative

The major thing that seems to have been discussed in International Caving politics recently is the International Anthem that the International Union of Speleology is going to use. I am pleased I am no longer involved in that type of bureaucracy.

There is however a meeting immediately before the Council Meeting in Melbourne Australia, which is the International Karst Research Group where UIS matters will be discussed. This will be followed a month later by a meeting in Sydney where the Annual Bureau meeting of the UIS will take place in conjunction with the two yearly meeting of the International Show Caves Association. I will be attending both these meetings. The main one is soon after the October Council Meeting and I will report back to the next Council meeting in the New Year.

Various things have been happening in Europe including the Conservation Meeting attended by Andrew Hinde and the new President of the European Federation, Ged Campion. I look forward to reading their reports.

Andy Eavis, October 2014

a. FSE

The last FSE General Assembly Meeting (GAM) was held in Baile Herculane on 23 August (Romania) during the 9th EuroSpeleo Forum, organized by the Federatia Romana de Speologie (FRS). The information below is a brief synopsis of the meeting.

It was reported at the GAM that as usual the FSE Bureau has been extremely busy during this period. With more and more countries wanting to join the FSE our population of cavers has increased. In order to aid communication a Facebook page of the FSE has been established. The page has received over ten thousand visitors so far and proved itself invaluable during the accident in the German Riesending Cave which received high profile on media all around the world. The page (<http://www.facebook.com/eurospeleo>) which is updated on a nearly daily basis, can be visited without registering with Facebook. With regard to the rescue operation itself the high professional standard of European cave rescue was definitely proven by conducting one of the most difficult rescue operations that have been carried out. At the GAM sincere thanks went to the Italian, Swiss, Croatian, Austrian and German cave rescue experts who have made this success possible and to the many other European cave rescue organisations who offered their assistance to the Germans.

A proposal to introduce a new rule in Article 12a of the FSE Statute making it obligatory for non-delegate candidates for a Bureau post to submit a written agreement from their national federation to support their personal applications was hotly debated. The proposal was finally approved by 14 votes in favour, 5 abstentions and 1 vote against. Following this decision Olivier Vidal (General Secretary of FSE) resigned from his post.

There are therefore two vacancies on the bureau, General Secretary & Vice Secretary. The existing bureau members are sharing the workload until suitable candidates are found to occupy the positions.

The website www.eurospeleo.eu has had a complete upgrade after the previous web master's departure. Grotto Centre, a European cave registry group have contributed significantly.

The next Euro Speleo Magazine will be published this month. The Editor Mihaela Micula (Romania) is doing an excellent job of putting this together.

A representative of the FSE (Ernst Geyer) attended 1st International Geosciences Congress 2014 in Tehran & Hamadan, Iran in February. It was attended by approximately 150 foreign scientists and experts. Cavers from South Korea, Pakistan, Italy, France, Poland, Turkey & Austria attended.

Cave Rescue matters: European Cave Rescue Committee (ECRC) chair, Christian Dodelin reported from the meeting on cave rescue during the EuroSpeleo Forum. Thirty cave rescue experts participated in that meeting. A charter of 6 points was approved at that meeting. It includes e.g. establishing guidelines for cross-border rescue operations, which it is intended will be presented at the GAM 2015 in Italy. Closer links between ECRC and the national federations are to be established. The ECRC chair outlined that the ECRA (European Cave Rescue Association) does not consist of cavers but mostly mountaineers and the fire service. The German FSE delegate argued that ECRC and ECRA should be brought together - the 2015 cave rescue meeting in Switzerland could be a good opportunity to start with that (ECRA participation was confirmed).

The latest General Assembly of UIS has decided to introduce the new status of "Associated Organisations" in the UIS statute.

FSE has recently applied for this membership status in the UIS and the application will be dealt with in November. The application doesn't entail financial contributions to the UIS. It would allow FSE to participate in UIS meetings as an observer without voting rights.

Dr. Friedrich Oedel from the Austrian show cave Eisriesenwelt announced the creation of a contact group that in the future may organise workshops and participate in EuroSpeleo Forums. Dr. Oedel will submit a concept paper which will be distributed to all FE delegates/federations

Regarding the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) important matters around cave protection were discussed in a separate forum. Andrew Hinde attended the event and will provide a separate report.

Organisation of EuroSpeleo events over next 3 years:

2015: (29th May - 2nd June) in Pertosa-Auletta (Salerno), Italy.

2016: (13th – 20th August) in Ingleton, Yorkshire Dales, UK

2017: to be determined

2018: (date to be determined) in Ebensee, Oberösterreich, Austria.

Ged Campion, October 2014

LW: Does BCA intend to do anything relating to funding the rescue in Peru?

AE: It is unclear at the moment whether the expedition members actually had any insurance.

HB: Should we be reminding people of the importance of appropriate insurance for overseas trips?

The remainder of the International Reports was accepted without discussion.

20. Media-Liaison

Not much to report. I fielded one enquiry regarding the 'new' biggest chamber in the world and assisted Holby City with questions regarding caving for an upcoming episode (making BCA £70 in the process).

Chris Jewell, October 2014

The Media-Liaison Report was accepted without discussion.

21. British Caving Library Report

Cataloguing the collections: work continues on re-cataloguing the entire contents of the Library; the Library on-line catalogue reflects the progress with this.

UK periodicals: so far, of the 330 runs of UK periodicals, over 30% of the sets have been catalogued in detail for every single item contained.

Foreign Periodicals: all the foreign periodicals on our list of 55 exchanges with BCRA publications are now catalogued plus the majority of other foreign periodicals.

Books: new items are added to the catalogue as they come in.

Surveys & Maps: work is now well in hand with the help of volunteers.

CD's DVD's, etc.: these are gradually being catalogued as they arrive.

Photographic material: some has been catalogued and scanned and is on the BCRA Archives website; we need an expert volunteer to help deal with the remainder of the very large collection.

All the areas of the Library collections are growing, mainly through donations, including a sizeable amount of archive material.

Enquiries: We will report annual figures on numbers of enquiries and visitors at each BCA AGM; there have been over 90 so far during 2014. The Librarian's Facebook page now has over 400 followers, including many cavers from abroad, and the number is increasing.

Archives: The BCRA Simpson Archives held at BGS have not yet been digitised but BCRA is in the final stages of seeking a Heritage Lottery Grant to do this.

BCA, NCA and BCRA Archives: We have a large collection of past NCA and BCA documentation and it is intended that the Library will in future keep paper copies of Constitutions and Minutes and supporting reports from all meetings of BCA, BCA Council and all BCA Special Committees. I also intend to work back and ensure we have complete paper files of all such previous BCA and NCA documentation. We already have paper copies of all BCRA Minutes, etc. and constitutions of the subsidiaries such as UKCCEF, Ghar Parau Foundation, etc.

Jenny Potts, October 2014

AE: Where are we with BCRA's lottery grant?

JP: Dave Checkley is resubmitting the grant and, therefore, gathering resubmitted letters of support to reflect the new date of submission. It now looks as if we have the job spec for someone to do the work if the grant is successful. There will doubtless be an update at tomorrow's BCRA meeting.

The remainder of the Library Report was accepted without discussion.

22. Date, Time & Place of next meeting

The next Council Meeting will take place on Saturday, 11th January 2015 at My Big Meeting Room, Pinvin, Worcestershire.

23. Any Other Business

a) Officers' Reports and Communication

Work on CRoW has revealed that several Officers failed to inform both NCA and BCA Council of substantial changes in direction of the work they were dealing with from previously agreed positions. In addition, no records have been handed on from one post holder to another.

It is proposed that a condition of keeping an Officer's post is to provide not only a report of their work over the period since the last Council meeting as specified in the Manual of Operations Council / Meeting Procedures / Written Reports but also to supply a copy of any significant documents and e-mails plus all written letters issued under the title of the Officer's role in that period to BCA's Secretary for the archives. The Officer should also make a supporting judgement on whether any item should be forwarded to Council. If they fail to do so, then BCA's position is that their work does not represent BCA. Additionally paper copies of all Minutes of BCA AGMs, Council Meetings, Meetings of Committees, and other official documents issued by BCA or its officers, should be deposited at the British Caving Library immediately after they are approved by the appropriate meeting.

Council's agreement is sought to add this to the Manual of Operations as a new heading under General / Archives.

Bob Mehew & Jenny Potts, October 2014

- BM: It is significant that even today an Officer has failed to report a significant piece of work they have done. This is further evidence of the need for the Manual of Operations to be amended.
- DW: As a general principle DW is always against anything which places further demands on already over-burdened volunteers. However, in this case the balance between the extra demands and the benefits is a good one. However, DW would like to suggest amending the final sentence of the second paragraph to "*Additionally paper copies of all Minutes of BCA AGMs, Council Meetings, Meetings of Committees, and other official documents issued by BCA or its officers, should be forwarded to the Secretary for archiving. This is currently done by depositing them at the British Caving Library after approval by the appropriate meeting.*" This makes clear exactly whose responsibility it is and what processes should be used.
- AH: Could we clarify what we mean by "significant e-mails"?
- DW: That is going to be the difficulty. In reality if people are unsure, they should ask the Secretary for advice. In time this will probably iron itself out.
- BM: We need to be very careful that Officers publish things following a formal process in future.
- DW: Is the problem not in part when people publish things that are personal comments but they include their BCA position at the base of the document, thus implying to the casual reader that it is a BCA-approved document?
- BM: Does not see this as a problem. Is happy to publish documents with "BCA Rope Test Officer" on the bottom that are personal opinions.
- DW: Finds this concerning.
- JP: We used to require that everything that is published be approved by a meeting.
- DC: Emails posted to the council mailing list are automatically archived by the server and seen by the Secretary thus would satisfy the proposal for emails.

The meeting accepted BM's wording with the amendment by DW.

b) Individual Member Representatives

- DW: We currently have a vacancy on Council for an Individual Member Representative. This was held by Matt Wire prior to the AGM, but he was unable to attend and was not able to answer a phone call from the meeting about whether or not he was willing to stand. Matt has done some excellent work for Council over the last 12 months and it would be good to have him back on board.

Proposal: ***That Matt Wire be co-opted to Council as an Individual Member Representative.***

Prop: DW Sec: JB *agreed unanimously*

c) IGM Minutes

- DW: Has just been contacted by someone who is unhappy that their name and home town are included in a list appended to the back of the Inaugural General Meeting minutes on our website. It seems the minutes included a list of all Group, DIM and CIM members. As a temporary measure the document has been altered so only the first few pages appear. Is the meeting happy for me to make this permanent or is anyone aware of a need to have a list of who were formally accepted as members?

BM: Can't recall why we did this.

DC: If it only contains names and home towns, it is probably perfectly acceptable for us to keep it.

The meeting agreed the list had no real purpose and could be removed from the downloadable document.

d) So You Want to Go Caving Leaflet

Proposal: *That the So You Want to go Caving Leaflet be approved for publication.*

Prop: JP, Sec: HB agreed unanimously

Action Log (as at June 2014)

No. Action by ... Details of Action

36 DW Put together a Manual of Operations

54 NW & DJu Liaise with SUI with a view to helping them streamline their insurance situation.

October 2011

83 PI Produce an Asset Register and liaise with NW/EP over the total replacement value of our insured equipment.

October 2012

115 DJu Put together a summary for landowners of the insurance benefits relating to BCA access agreements.

June 2014

116 LW To look at costs of producing a leaflet on Weil's Disease, liaise with printers and then report to the October Council Meeting.

October 2014

139 PI To consider the benefits of SRA membership, make a decision on membership payments and report to the January 2015 Council Meeting accordingly.

140 AE, DJu To bring the EuroSpeleo Forum to the attention of BCRA and suggest someone may wish to attend in future.

141 DC, PI and NB To consider Training Committee's request for video conferencing funding.

142 AE, LW To look at the future of Speleology.