

Minutes of BCA Council Meeting held on Sunday 11 June 2017 at the Rotary Centre, Castleton

Present

A Eavis	AE	Chair
S Brookes	SB	Secretary
R Weare	RW	Acting Treasurer
A Hinde	AH	Conservation & Access
B Mehew	BM	Legal & Insurance
L Williams	LW	Publications & Information
N Ball	NB	Training
D Cooke	DC	IT Working Group
G Mollard	GM	Qualifications Management Committee
S France	SF	CCC
T Starnes	TS	CHECC
A Butcher	AB	CSCC
J Potts	JP	DCA
S Natynczuk	SN	ACI
T Radmall	TR	ASCT
I Williams	IW	Individual Member Rep.
T Allen	TA	CRoW Liaison Officer
D Tyson	DT	Observer
R Eavis	RE	Observer
W Whalley	WW	Observer
W Burn	WB	Observer

The meeting commenced at 14:11

1. Chairman's Welcome

AE welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Peter Hall, Richard Vooght, Alan Finch, David Jean, David Gibson, Boyd Potts, Nigel Atkins, Hellie Adams, Mark Richardson, Nick Williams, Bernie

3. Minutes of the last Council Meeting

TR stated he had made some corrections with LB on the Any Other Business from last time and confirmed he was now happy with them. TA noted he was omitted from the attendance list. DC stated he had a few issues with some technical parts which he accepted were difficult to minute. He had circulated his suggested corrections. BM proposed that these be incorporated into the draft and that the draft be recirculated for acceptance at the October meeting. The proposal was accepted without comment.

4. Matters Arising from Council Meeting

Action log.

SB went through updates:

Action 36 (Manual of Operations) SB reported he had updated the manual and incorporated comments made at the March Council meeting. A copy was circulated around the meeting. He noted that substantive changes that affect how BCA runs, must gain approval of BCA Council, and subsequently the AGM, before being made.

ACTION: Ongoing work, Secretary to update/report back at future meetings

Action 151 (Investigation Social Media) SB reported that BCA now has a Facebook presence. DC clarified that it had been created and things will be posted but there is nobody in control of it. An administrator needed to be appointed, possibly the Secretary.

ACTION: Secretary to consider control of Facebook site

GM asked if there is a policy for social media. DC confirmed he will be producing one.

ACTION: DC to draft a Social Media policy for BCA

Action 176 (Training – Article on new training programme for publication in BCA area of descent) SB reported he had not received anything yet. GM stated that something has been written by (Phil Baker) trainer and he understood it had gone out. SB not received so GM will get it to SB for next meeting.

ACTION: GM to obtain copy of Phil Baker's training program and forward to Secretary
(Post meeting note – the article had been sent direct to Descent.)

Action 179 (Circulation of updated council membership list) SB noted it had been circulated. A new version will be updated and circulated again following this meeting.

ACTION: Secretary to issue new Council membership list

Action 186 (Additional BCA Information Leaflets) Ongoing

ACTION: BM to produce leaflet on Digging

Action 194 (Secretary and NW to liaise with Glenn regarding approval of Club/Group member and provide Council with more information) This has been dealt with. Information will be collected and a process is in place that it will be circulated to council when a request is received.

CLOSED

Action 195 (Review of Child Protection Policy) BM report indicated that no comments so proposed the action be closed. The proposal was accepted without comment.

CLOSED

Action 198 (Training Database) SB proposed it be closed as it was an item on the agenda. The proposal was accepted without comment.

CLOSED

Action 199 (Proposed QMC /Training Disciplinary Policy) SB noted this was one part of the QMC proposals. He suggested it was left open.

ACTION: Secretary to include training disciplinary policy in Manual of Operations

Action 200 (Understanding Constitutional Changes) SB noted that a document had been produced for the AGM

CLOSED

Action 201 (Presenting Constitutional Amendments Prior to AGM) SB noted that this had been done.

CLOSED

Action 202 (Finance Committee to review restrictions on BCA funding of Regional Council newsletters.) RW reported that discussions had been held and no changes were considered to be needed.

CLOSED

Action 203 (CRoW Report to become sub-section of conservation and Access and not a report item in its own right) SB reported that this had been done.

CLOSED

Action 204 (Picture Editor) DC said has approached individuals but still looking for a picture editor. However DC agreed to take on the role if nobody else can be found.

CLOSED

Action 205 (Placing of BCA Newsletters on UIS Caving, Karst Information Portal) RW had passed on the decision that council made and told the relevant people how to get it and advise if hadn't worked.

CLOSED

Action 206 (Weil's Disease Card typo) SB had informed BM.

CLOSED

Action 207 (BCA Webservice -Way Forward)

ACTION: IT Working Group to discuss and report back

Action 208 (Secretary to table 'Clarification on BCA Position on promoting access for just BCA members or for BCA members and others' as discussion under matters arising at next meeting.)

RW suggested that this should be an agenda item. AE suggested it should come up under TA's which would probably go under any other business. JP suggested it should be an agenda item for the next meeting. SB stated that thought it would properly be brought up under matters arising as it sits as an action.

TA has circulated a paper, see Annex 1. TA commented that it isn't clear if the BCA constitution is there to represent all cavers or just its own membership. The CNCC constitution states it represents member clubs and all Northern cavers. AE commented that most organisations represent members. RW adding that as a membership organisation if anyone wants to be represented by it then they should join. BM raised the point that non members do not contribute towards insurance cover of ACBs and landowners.

JP asked if this was a requirement of landowners. TA stated that it was not for landowners linked to CNCC. JP noted that DCA covered any caver and not just members +and that the only restriction is where land owners place a restriction.

LW read out part of Section 4.6 of the current constitution (*see Annex 1*) and noted that it makes a reference to all responsible cavers – not just members.

TR noted that most scout teams are member clubs of BCA but with their insurance via the Scout Association which is better than the BCA's. TA suggested a national governing body of a sport should cover all persons who participate in that sport. AE noted that Section 3.1 of the constitution (*see Annex 1*) suggested BCA's focus should be on its members and on encouraging more people to join BCA. LW noted that Section 4.6 was not limited to members but he conceded it did require a definition of responsible cavers.

SH noted that there was a need to ensure land owners had confidence in BCA's insurance cover. LW responded that Insurance was not relevant; membership of BCA gave insurance between members. BM noted that land owners were also covered. TA commented that he had attended a meeting between N Williams and the Brokers when the Brokers had stated that the land owner was covered for all persons visiting the cave and not just members. SH asked about the extent of cover between member to non member as members of his club had concerns about letting non members on their trips. BM suggested he spoke with N Williams. (*Post meeting note – Q&A 86 of the Insurance FAQ sheet addresses this topic.*)

SB summarised the debate so far that Section 4.6 did cover all cavers. DC asked if this has answered TA's question. TA indicated it did in that access should be granted as freely as possible. AH noted that Access Controlling Bodies should also be seeking to obtain access as broadly as possible. TA

noted that the question arose during renegotiation of several access agreements and CNCC were concerned whether they were meeting BCA's wishes. Because many of the caves under CNCC's access agreements were not gated, there was a question of policing entrances to stop pirating and another covering whether negotiated access agreements should cover persons or clubs who were not members of CNCC or BCA. AE said that given BCA's constitution "*such access should be obtained and granted as freely as possible for all responsible cavers*" was interpreted by the meeting as meaning all responsible cavers, then it was for CNCC to negotiate for access as widely as possible subject to the landowner's wishes.

CLOSED

5. Creation of a working group to manage the professional training scheme, provisionally designated Qualifications Management Committee, and setting the membership and terms of reference of that working group.

AE noted that the AGM had passed on this topic for Council to deal with. RW sought details. GM noted a paper on the set up of the Qualifications Management Committee (QMC) had been made available to the meeting, see Annex 2.

RW went onto to express a concern over the probability of professional cavers ruling over setting fees for work which they would personally benefit from. He noted that the two non professional members could be out voted by the rest of the committee who would be professional cavers. He considered this to be a serious 'corporate governance' issue. AE suggested that if the two non professional members felt that this situation had arisen, then they could bring the topic to Council's attention and perhaps even be given a right of veto. GM noted accepted that this could be a way forward.

GM went on to express concerns over the potential for political problems where recreational cavers objected to something professional cavers were proposing to do, similar to that which had arisen in the past. LW noted that the constitution provided for a way to resolve such difficulties.

RW expressed another concern over Trainer / Assessors 'dictating' work. GM pointed out that the candidate selected both his trainer and assessor to gain the award or certificate so there was no input from the Trainer / Assessor. In response to a query about the allocation of revalidation workshops, GM noted that these were now called Updates. GM did not see a problem in that given there were some 43 Trainer / Assessors and that they took it in turns to undertake Update workshops on a regional basis.

LW asked who would appoint the two non professional representatives. GM indicated that they would be named by Council but have knowledge of either Equipment or Conservation & Access matters.

RW proposed that the QMC be set up as a BCA Working Party as per the document submitted (see Annex 2) subject to a review after 6 months. BM suggested that the Terms of Reference be reviewed at the same time so as to allow the Training Committee to review and revise its terms in the light of the setting up of QMC.

AE asked if there were any objections to setting QMC up as a working party and using the document as terms of reference. No objections were raised.

Action 209 The Chair of QMC WP to report to the January 2018 Council meeting with a revised Terms of Reference.

6. Report of advisory group producing Training database specification

AE stated that a lot of work has been done on the training database proposals and read NW's statement, see Annex 3. It is down to 2 different companies and want executive to be given authority to make that decision.

LW proposed that the Executive be given to make a decision between the two companies based on a unanimous agreement. TR seconded.

SN commented that he had been impressed by the rigorous work which had been done so far.

RW noted that he had previously expressed concern over the financial position of Training Committee which was dominated by professional training schemes. In 2016 the Training sub account had made a loss of £1286. He noted that there had been a revision to the fees being charged within the schemes at the start of the year and he had done some work on this year's accounts to see what impact the rise was having. He was pleased to announce that to date the sub account had a surplus of £1232 and the projection was that it might achieve a surplus at the end of the year of around £2000. It seemed likely that the sub account would easily break even for 2017. GM accepted the validity of the concern but felt the rise in fees plus the natural cycle of revalidations was sufficient to restore the financial situation to a healthy situation. GM added that there will be another income stream had just started.

The proposal was agreed with no one against it.

7. Appointment of non-elected positions:

(a) Working Group Convenors

1. IT
DC standing. RW proposed. TR seconded.

2. Cave Registry
DC standing. RW proposed. TR seconded.

3. Qualifications Management
GM standing. LW proposed. JP seconded.

The proposals were accepted without comment.

(b) Council Appointments

1. Media-Liaison
AE agreed to stand LW proposed. TR seconded.

2. Youth & Development
RN suggested that a Youth & Development working group set up with Rostam Namaghi as Chair. He suggested Will Burn, Rob Eavis and Mark Richardson be members. It was proposed that the group come back with a proposal on terms of

reference for the next meeting. SB suggested that the group should also co-opt a female member. RW proposed formation of the working group. LW seconded.

The post was left vacant.

3. UIS rep
AE standing. RW proposed. LW seconded.

4. FSE rep
GC standing. RW proposed. LW seconded.

5. Caving Library Rep
JP standing. RW proposed. IW seconded.

6. CRoW Liaison Officer
TA standing. RW proposed. JP seconded.

The proposals were accepted without comment.

(c) Committee Appointments

1. L&I Committee: Child Protection
BM agreed to act as Child Protection Officer. TR proposed. RW seconded.

2. P&I Committee: Newsletter Editor, Webmaster, Web Services
Newsletter Editor: RW stated that he would do next one but then was standing down. LW emphasised this was an important function. He asked that suggestions be given to him. RW volunteered to provide information on the role. Webmaster DC as acting; will see if can find someone. Web services. DC standing. LW proposed. TA seconded.

3. E&T Committee: Rope-Testing
BM standing. RW proposed. LW seconded.

The proposals were accepted without comment.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Training Officer

NB announced his resignation as Chair of Training Committee. SB stated he had received a letter from Nigel Atkins confirming his offer to cover the position, a role he had been performing on behalf of NB for a while. JP proposed. TA seconded. The proposal was accepted without comment.

RW noted that given the QMC working party, Training Committee was only focused on recreational caver training. AB noted that the current role of Training was more than just funding recreational caver training and the cross over needed sorting out. IW asked if the Training Officer's role would cut across QMC. GM stated that the post did not have a role on QMC. AE suggested that the Terms of reference for Training Committee needed a review. AB agreed that this was required as well as an overview of both sides. BM suggested that Council should review both sets of Terms of Reference from Training Committee and QMC. GM accepted the suggestion. RW noted that Training

Committee was a Standing Committee under the constitution whilst QMC was only a working party. AB expressed concern that this was a major step in splitting the function.

Action 210 The Chair of Training Committee to report to the January 2018 Council meeting with a revised Terms of Reference.

Action 211 Council to review Terms of Reference of both Training Committee and QMC to ensure appropriate coverage of training.

8.2 Secretary

SB stated that he as standing down from the office.

AE confirmed that NW has volunteered to stand as Acting Secretary.

GM proposed. LW seconded.

AE proposed to co-opt BM onto the Executive so as to be able to share the work load between more people. A question was raised if this was in line with the constitution and what the role would be. RW stated that Section 6.14 did allow Council to appoint extra persons to the Executive.

LW proposed. GM seconded.

The proposals were accepted without comment.

8.3 Treasurer

RW accepted he would continue in post for a further 6 months as acting Treasurer.

BM proposed. LW seconded. The proposal was accepted without comment.

8.4 QMC appointments by Council

GM noted that Council needed to appoint 2 members. Currently NW held one post and he, GM would like a second appointed with knowledge of conservation an access matters. A discussion was held on if NW was eligible and LW stated that as long as NW staying involved in E&T then he saw no reason why it would not be OK to appoint him. AH stated that happy to help where he could but he would only be able to attend WebEx based meetings and that need there could be problems on giving advice regarding access specific caves. RW stated that an important part of the role is to report back to council on any problems.

Council agreed to proposing NW subject to his agreement. LW proposed and GC seconded. *(Post meeting note NW accepted the nomination.)*

AH was proposed as a member.

LW proposed. JP seconded.

The proposals were accepted without comment.

8.5 Postal Ballot

BM stated that there are 2 postal ballots to organise. He sought Council's opinion on the use of the web to conduct an online ballot assuming it was possible to organise a means and whether material can be sent out with the ballot paper urging members to provide their email addresses. LW stated that the constitution allows this anyway. JP enquired if the Electoral Reform Society were to be

involved and expressed a preference that they should not. AE agreed that he would not be involved in conducting the ballot. TA expressed a concern that without an independent invigilator, there was a serious potential for complaints over the conduct of the ballot. JP asked if the auditor could be used but BM pointed out she had expressed a wish to withdraw from the role.

DC stated he had found a free company who could conduct an online ballot. He also saw a need to separate the in house process of sending out the votes from receiving them together it a returning officer invigilating the count process to ensure the integrity of the process.

DC also raised the question as to whether BCA could use the email addresses it already had of the 70+% of membership. GM expressed a view that BCA could use those addresses. AB stated that CSCC had debated the point and were not against internet voting. However, CSCC were concerned about how the constitution change is voiced to ensure independence and fairness along with a robustness of the process.

LW noted that there were separate ballots for individual and group members. IW asked what would happen if one group voted against. LW noted that the eventuality was covered by the constitution.

AE suggested that the ballot was left to the Executive. This was accepted without comment.

8.6 Age Demographic report of BCA membership

TA presented his report, see Annex 4. He stated that the age collation has been an interesting exercise and gives a heads up for the future of what is coming. He had the data looked at by a statistician who commented that the sample size was adequate but there was no feel for whether the returns were biased in one direction or another. TA concluded that the evidence suggested BCA needed to boost 20 and 30 age brackets by 40% to maintain standing.

AE noted that he felt that many people were coming back to caving after they had brought their family up and hence would be older. TA suggested the report supported the need for the Youth & Development working group which SN reinforced. JP commented that her experiences were in line with AE's observation. TR noted that younger people were likely to use on line shops and go without club involvement and hence be less visible. GM observed that a massive number of children did get exposed to caves via outdoor activity centres which BCA were not tapping into. An observation was made that child protection issues inhibited child membership of clubs.

DC noted the data did not show any trend with time. TA responded that he had covered the point in his first paragraph but agreed that the year of birth should continue to be monitored. LW noted NCA had collected this data. BM stated it had only collected ethnicity data. SF commented that given membership numbers were issued in a chronological order, it should be possible to work out year of joining and year of leaving and thus sort out a time trend. He volunteered to undertake the analysis.

Concern was expressed about the Data Protection Act but it was noted that many organisations did collect such information. BM noted that the year of birth data could be anonymised and suggested the task of getting anonymised data to SF be given to the Executive. The meeting greed to this suggestion and also that BCA should continue to press for year of birth data.

Action 212 Executive to organise passing of suitably anonymised data on year of birth together with year of joining and year of leaving to SF for analysis.

8.7 New to Caving

TA commented that because what had been reported in the March Council minutes did not make much sense to him, he had following SB's suggestion, written a brief report, see Annex 5. He reported that the web site would go live within a week or so and invited BCA to make use of it.

DC asked why the site had been produced outside of BCA. TA noted that BCA had failed to update the 'Try Caving' website for over 5 years. He suggested that more could be done by individuals uninhibited by committees. LW proposed the invitation be remitted to Publications and Information Committee for a view and report back to the next Council meeting.

Action 213 P&I to consider whether BCA could make use of the 'New to Caving' web site and report back to Council's October meeting.

9. Date, Time & Place of next meetings

BCA Annual General Meeting – 10th June, 2018 Venue TBC

BCA Council Meetings – 7th October 2017, 6th January 2018, 14th April 2018 at The Red Lion Inn Alvechurch

Meeting declared closed at 16:09

Annex 1

Action 208 – matters arising, June 2017 Council meeting.

BCA to clarify its position on whether it wishes Access Controlling Bodies to restrict access to BCA members only.

Background.

In my role as CNCC Access Representative and now CNCC Access Officer I was tasked with renegotiating outdated access agreements in the Yorkshire dales area. These agreements cover access to hundreds of cave entrances and 150km of cave passages including some of our longest and most iconic caves. The agreements are generally with a major landowner.

In all the agreements the access is restricted to members of BCA. Why?

It has taken some time to find the answer to this question. I consulted with other outdoor organisations such as British Canoeing and the BMC to see what was normal outside caving. I looked into landowner insurance liabilities and competence concerns and determined neither was solved by these restrictions.

I probed the landowners for their explanation and the best reply I had was, “we thought that was what you wanted”. Some within CNCC also felt that it was supporting BCA if access was restricted to members only. However, CNCC are obliged to represent not just member clubs but also all northern cavers. We must consider that not all cavers will be members of BCA, just like not all climbers are members of BMC and not all... etc, etc.

It is not clear from the BCA constitution whether BCA is there to represent all cavers or only its membership. It would be interesting to have this clarified too.

My experience has shown that some landowners at least, did not wish to restrict access in this way themselves. They were only doing what they thought cavers wanted.

I guess the BCA should consider the following parts of their constitution,

3.1 To support members of the Association in obtaining, ensuring, maintaining and encouraging the development of access arrangements at national, regional and club level.

4.6 Where caving bodies have control of access delegated to them by the owners, such access should be obtained and granted as freely as possible for all responsible cavers.

My question is about the position the BCA would wish ACBs to take on access. Does BCA want an ACB to restrict access to BCA members only or would they prefer ACBs, where they are able, to make access available to all cavers, members and non-members alike?

Tim Allen
June 2017

Annex 2

GM QMC paper

Proposed changes to the organisation and administration of the B.C.A. award schemes following the agreed meeting with two Council members.

Over quite a long period of time the National Co-ordinating Panel (NCP) have been looking at ways of improving its own efficiency within the BCA award schemes and improving its relationship with the BCA Council. The norm of Training Committee members from Regional Councils have been represented by professional cavers except for CSCC. The professional cavers have always had two views on decisions to be made: a professional approach and a recreational approach. Frequently the professional view point supersedes the recreational view point. Much conversation and debate has taken place and at long last decisions have been made. These points were voted upon by the NCP and were passed unanimously. From there they were passed on to the BCA Training Committee where they were also voted on and passed with only one representative voting against it. This decision would reflect the bottom up structure of BCA.

It was suggested a long time ago at Training Committee, that LCML and CIC would be run by the relevant panels and their decisions would not be interfered with by Training Committee. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Significant, positive changes within the schemes have been regularly blocked by Training Committee as being seen often as a possibility of losing income for Training Committee members.

The decisions that were passed at both panels/committee will have the following impact. The name of NCP should change to the British Caving Association Qualifications Management Committee (BCA-QMC). This newly titled organisation will be self governing within the BCA and it will have its own code of conduct and discipline process for BCA qualified people with either Local Cave and Mine leader or Cave Instructor Awards.

The members that will make up the BCA-QMC is as follows

Two named representatives from BCA Council - they are recreational cavers who do not hold BCA awards

- o One named rep from Council should have involvement with equipment and techniques so that they can make direct input to QMC from their field of knowledge
- o One named rep from Council should have involvement with access and conservation to help any conflict between recreational and professional use of cave system.

One Area Liaisons Officer from each of the LCML regions. That is Northern, Derbyshire, North Wales, South Wales and Southern. 5 in total.

One representative from CIC Panel

- The Training Officer

Additional people can be invited for a fixed term if a focus is needed in a particular direction

The two recreational cavers from Council would strengthen QMC's links to Council and also ensure continuity between Council and QMC. These two people, along with the Professional Training Officer will report back to Exec and Council.

The chair of QMC should be voted in by all QMC vote holders

The role of the Training Committee should change so that it can concentrate on the organisation and support of recreational training with an additional Training Officer to deliver that. This person's role will also include the allocation of training grants that are applied for from BCA caving clubs.

All of the above will not change the influence of Councils its two representatives will always be in direct contact with Council, Executive or both

Training will still be available to recreational cavers if they so desire it but in a less formal basis than the qualification route.

QMC will run its own code of conduct and disciplinary process to ensure that the BCA schemes have credibility and it is not undermined in any way. The above would be relevant to anyone holding a BCA qualification.

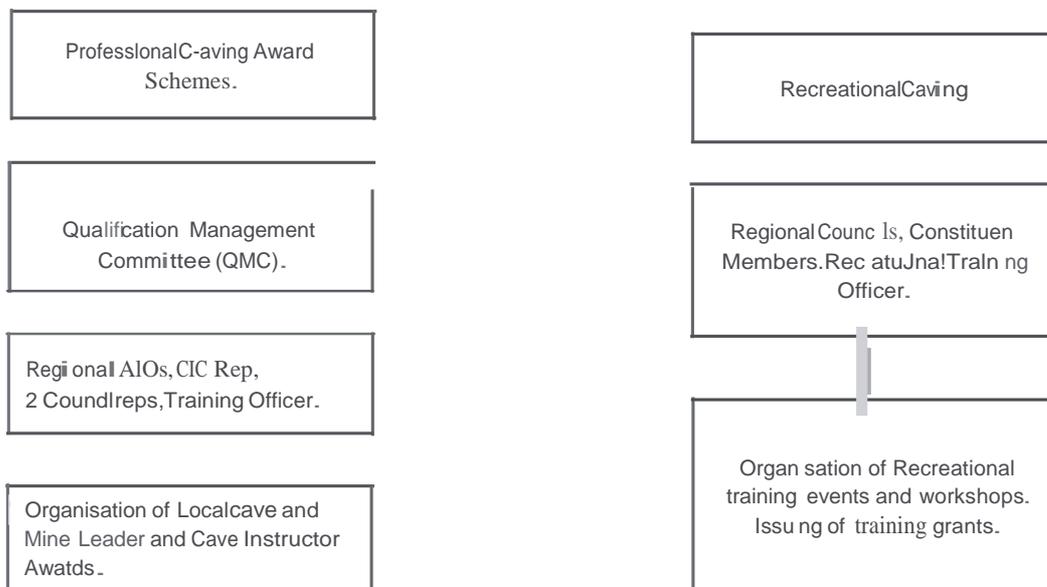
The QMC has no agenda to try and impose, in any way, a code of conduct or disciplinary processes on recreational cavers as this is the responsibility of Regional Councils/dubs. The QMC just wishes to ensure the BCA schemes of LCML and CIC move forward with the times and have an established level of parity across the UK with panel's idiosyncrasies acknowledged and accepted within the schemes.

The QMC has no intention to approach land owners and introduce a charging system for access to caves.

We acknowledge that this may take some time but we need a commitment to the change at least in principle.

We have modified our initial requests so that BCA can have more of a positive link to its qualifications at Council level.

LI s cA cO un c n . . .



Annex 3

TC Database proposal: Update for Council meeting 11 June 2017

We have made good progress with evaluating the available options for the TC database, but Council rightly requested the proposal to be accompanied with a credible budget for the Training Committee so they could understand the financial commitment concerned. The TC finances are complex and it has proven impossible to do the necessary analysis and prepare a credible budget, supported by evidence and the explanation which Council would expect, in the time available before today's meeting. Rather than ask Council to yet again discuss this on the a basis of incomplete information, we propose to that the final decision be made by the Executive , on the basis that the training budget can be shown to become at least cash-neutral over a five year period.

Nick Williams

9 June 2017

Annex 4

Age demographic report of BCA membership to June 2017 Council Meeting

It is of concern that there appear to be less active cavers about. It is noticeable in the once hotspot areas of the Yorkshire Dales for instance. BCA pointed to the relative consistency of annual membership renewals, so what could be happening here? Perhaps the membership is ageing and becoming less active. If older members leave and are not replaced by sufficient numbers of younger cavers this can have consequences for BCA in achieving less income and fewer 'human' resources to take on the roles of running the organisation. I suggested BCA collect 'date of birth' data at membership renewal to find the age demographic of the current membership. Council decided it could only ask for 'year of birth' (YOB) on a voluntary basis. That data has been passed on to me and with some input from a retired statistician I am able to offer the following report.

2270 members returned credible YOB data out of a total of 4942. A small number of entries were removed from the sample which gave ages over life expectancy or were not actually a YOB.

The sample size is adequate. The question is whether it is representative of the membership. There may be age bias in whether members chose to respond to the request for YOB. Never the less it is all we have to go on.

There are considerably more members in their 50s than in their 20s and 30s.

The median age is 49 – nearly half the membership is 50 or over.

18% of the membership is over 65.

The BCA has an 'old' population. Overall BCA membership numbers are likely to fall unless 20 and 30 year olds can be increased by around 40%.

Tim Allen
June 2017

Annex 5

New to caving

Information for the June 2017 BCA council meeting

Under the Publications and Information heading at the last council meeting I announced my involvement in a website aimed at those who may be new to caving. The recorded minutes were rather garbled and the BCA secretary suggested put together a short report to explain.

The BCA cannot do everything. It has limited resources and busy people. British caving needs to have a channel of information for people who are looking to take up the sport. Try Caving was good whilst it lasted but it became hopelessly out of date. Me and Jane have therefore set up our own modern site called 'new to caving'. It has been professionally designed and developed with a lot of hard work and input from us and it is about to go live.

You might consider this as a private sector development in caving, run not-for-profit but with advertising to cover some of the costs. This sort of approach can be highly successful. A good example can be seen with the ukcaving forum. The BCA has its own forum which has been little used in ten years. Contrast that with the information resource and discussion forum of the private ukcaving which sees between 700 and 1000 unique views per day.

The important thing is that we have a good quality, well-functioning information resource for people who are interested in caving and we should not get too hung up on who provides it.

The draft version of the new site has been sent out to a wide variety of cavers (and non-cavers) for comment. All responses have been enthusiastic and positive. Over the coming year we will promote the site to non-cavers by setting up links with National Parks, tourist and outdoor organisations. We are now involved with an enlarged caving presence at the Kendal Mountain Festival and we hope to promote the site there too.

My recommendation to the Publications and Web team, and to BCA council is that they use our site to promote caving. Direct any new links to the 'new to caving' site and redirect old links from Try Caving to there or risk wasting valuable resources on duplication. Take the opportunity to place BCA's limited time and IT resources into its core products as suggested in Matt Wire's report to the last council meeting.

It might be worth tying this report into a wider discussion including the age demographic problems of the BCA and other barriers to participation in caving.

Tim Allen
June 2017