

**APRIL 13, 2019**



**COUNCIL MINUTES**

CUTNALL GREEN MEMORIAL HALL, WR9 ONE

## PRESENT

Name	Initial	Role	Voting?
Les Williams	LW	Chair and Acting P&I Officer	Yes
Howard Jones	HJ	Insurance Manager/Acting Treasurer	Yes
Robin Weare	RW	Acting Secretary	Yes
Nigel Atkins	NA	Training Officer	Yes
Andrew Hinde	AH	Conservation & Access Officer	Yes
Stuart France	SF	CCC Rep	Yes
Tim Allen	TA	CNCC Rep	Yes
Alan Butcher	AB	CSCC Rep	Yes
Jenny Potts	JP	DCA Rep	Yes
David Jean	DJ	DCUC Rep	Yes
Richard Vooght	RV	WPCST Rep	Yes
Stephan Natynczuk	SN	ACI Rep	Yes
Tony Radmall	TR	ASCT Rep	Yes
Steve Holding	SH	NAMHO Rep	Yes
David Botcherby	DB	CHECC Rep	Yes
David Cooke	DC	Club Rep/Registry/ITWP Convenor/Webmaster	Yes
Bernie Woodley	BW	Club Rep	Yes
Idris Williams	IW	Club Rep	Yes
John Hine	JH	Club Rep	Yes
Louise Baddeley	LB	Individual Rep	Yes
Andrew McLeod	AM	Individual Rep	Yes
Andy Eavis	AE	Media Liaison/UIS Rep	No
Hellie Adams	HA	Vision Group Convenor	No
Juliet Parker-Smith	JPS	QMC Chair	No
Wendy Williams	WW	Membership Administrator	No
Matt Ewles	ME	Minute Taker	No
Wayne Sheldon	WS	Observer	No
Gethin Thomas	GT	Observer/ Radon Group Convenor*	No
Gary Douthwaite	GD	Observer	No

\* appointed during meeting (see item 7)

### 1. Chair's Welcome

LW opened the meeting at 10:30am and RW provided housekeeping information on the venue.

### 2. Apologies

RW read out the list of apologies that had been submitted in advance: Ged Campion, David Rose, Chris Boardman, Mark Sims, Will Burn and Rostam Namaghi. There was an intention for Mark, Will and Rostam to have joined by Webex, but technical issues were preventing this.

### 3. Minutes of the Last Council Meeting (12/01/2019).

The minutes were progressed to a vote: 14 for, 1, 4 abstentions. Minutes accepted. TA declared on record his vote against accepting the minutes. **Action; Finalise minutes (RW)**

### 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Last Council Meeting

RW went through the actions from the previous meeting:

- CO2 matter remains ongoing. **Action: carried forward**
- No Standing Committee had updated content on website. **Action: carried forward**
- Regarding the SUI matter; after consulting with insurers, suggestions have been made to SUI which they will discuss at their next AGM.
- Regarding links to regional council accounts: the BCA Finance page now has a note that regional accounts are located on their own websites with links to each regional account website.
- All other actions are for discussion later in the meeting.

### 5. Applications for Membership

- RW explained the CHECC situation; although they have been recognised as a constituent body for many years (and have always voted as such) there is no recognition of this in any minutes; this needs to be put right today. A vote was taken in favour of officially recognising CHECC as a constitutionally accepted constituent body of the BCA: 19 votes for, 0 against, 1 abstention.
- The ASCT (Scouts) constituent body has been replaced by the NCSASU (National Caving Scout Active Support Unit). RW confirmed that he has seen their constitution, and a vote can be taken on whether to accept NCSASU as the official constitutionally accepted constituent body replacement for ASCT: 19 votes for, 0 against, 1 abstention.
- Three clubs have applied for membership: Cardiff University Caving and Canyoning Club, Swansea Speleo Society and South East Subterranean Club. WW confirmed that they have all provided constitutions. All three were voted upon together: 20 votes for (unanimous)

**Outcome summary: CHECC is now officially confirmed in these minutes as being a constitutionally accepted constituent body of the BCA, NCSASC replaces ASCT as a constituent body, and the three clubs above are accepted for BCA membership.**

### 6. Chair (Les Williams)

- TA felt that people must recognise that the BCA hasn't got a good image at the moment and that there is a perception that some BCA procedures are being used to undermine motions that individuals do not personally support. TA asked what LW and the wider Council were going to do to stop this happening in future. Does LW have any comments on this as Chairman? LW said that his aim was to keep meetings moving forward and positive and that it was down to individual members of the BCA Council to 'play nice', emphasising that everyone was here to further the interests of the BCA and work for cavers.
- DC expressed concern that there is quite a lot for new Officers to get a grip on, and asked whether we should create an induction document? There was general agreement, but LW

commented that this requires someone to take ownership of this responsibility.

- TA wanted to see greater consistency in the application of BCA procedures.
- NA disagreed about the BCA not having a good image; he felt that certain people with agendas, or some people lying are spoiling things, although he hoped that those individuals weren't here anymore. He felt that the training side of the BCA was brilliant.
- LW felt that everyone involved believed they are genuinely doing the right things for caving, and that we're all here for the same reason.
- AE expressed concern that we were at risk of making everything too serious, saying that many people used to enjoy coming to Council meetings, but less so now. HA disagreed with this and said that it is important to be serious, as we must get this right for the sake of British caving. She felt that the Council do great things, but we need to be better at letting cavers know about this. She hoped that as part of the new vision, we can move on from some of the historic 'mud slinging' that has happened in the past.
- AH emphasised that when there are difficult decisions to be made, sometimes it is hard to keep everything nice and non-serious. He understood TA's concerns about procedures needing to be adhered to consistently.

## 7. Acting Secretary (Robin Weare)

- RW's report included that the Executive were suggesting that the October Council meeting should be a proper trial of a remote meeting. TA said that the Executive had appointed him to look into this and he felt that a true remote meeting will not work for the October meeting where there will be new Officers and a packed agenda. He suggested focusing instead on making the meeting remotely accessible, rather than fully remote, as per the last meeting at Spanset in January. Once we've sorted that out then we can perhaps look towards creating regional hubs for people to join from.
- TA said that he'd heard no feedback from the Executive following the January meeting; RW said that the executive had waited for action from TA, and in absence of this, the suggestion in his report was made. This got a little heated and LW called for some calm.
- TA clarified that his original suggestion was not to have a fully remote meeting, but to enable remote access to a physical meeting; the two being very different.
- LW asked for thoughts on what this meeting wanted to happen; SH felt the fully remote approach would be too confusing and what TA was suggesting was better; we should task TA with looking into this. DC felt we needed to clearly identify who now owns this issue. SH felt this lies with TA as the Council had tasked him with this in the first place, but AH disagreed, saying that now TA has demonstrated the capabilities and provided a list of providers to the Executive, it was now the job of the Executive to pick a venue/provider and go with it.
- TA offered to put a report in after this meeting with suggestions on the way forward. **Action: TA to report on this and put forward recommendations to Executive on way forward.**

- LW asked who was in support of TA's way forward (i.e. a physical meeting but with the opportunity for people to remotely join). There was no vote but strong agreement.
- Regarding Standing Committee Terms of Reference, RW confirmed he has received these from all Standing Committees, so this is progressing well.
- Regarding the website, RW emphasised that he has put in a lot of work into updating the content of the website. He emphasised that the website content is not the responsibility of the Webmaster, but lies with the Council Officers, many of who are not keeping their own areas up to date. LW emphasised that the individual convenors need to take responsibility for this and to talk to DC for more information on how to do this. **Action: All convenors review website content and update as required. Consult DC for assistance.**
- Regarding the matter of club membership, RW stressed that there are 25 clubs who have a category of membership where there is no requirement for their members to be BCA members. This is often used by outdoor clubs, scouts, or clubs where only a small number of their total membership go caving (e.g. multi-disciplinary clubs). RW read out a list of these 25 clubs. He noted that a club in which all their members are DIMs should not appear on this list.
- RW highlighted that the basic problem here is that the BCA cannot sell insurance; it can only give it as a membership benefit. There are high penalties if we are found to be selling insurance. By these 25 clubs not having insurance it suggests that the insurance is in fact not a benefit of membership and we must be selling it. RW/HJ have been working to change this.
- IW felt it was all about how we define membership, citing that clubs such as his would stop functioning if the option to join BCA without insurance for members wasn't available, as only a small number of their members are cavers and people won't pay more.
- RW suggested that asking these 25 clubs to become associate members could solve the problem. He has looked at the constitution and there is no impediment to this. SH agreed that this seems like a possible way forward.
- AB commented that we are talking here about clubs who specifically don't want insurance. TA asked if we could just ask them to opt out of receiving this benefit, but it was confirmed that this couldn't be accompanied by a reduction in cost as this would present us as selling insurance. AB asked if instead we could ask other clubs to opt-into insurance. RW rejected all such suggestions as insurance can only be a mandatory benefit of membership to avoid 'selling' it. Opting in and opting out cannot be possible.
- AM suggested we get in touch with these clubs and ask them about it; DC suggested we could offer them associate membership. LW expressed concern that as the insurance company has advised that we are acting illegally, we need to show action to address this now.
- RW felt the most important thing to do in the short term would be to get rid of the category of membership that makes it look like we are selling insurance. A decision on this is therefore needed before the 2020 membership renewals start.

- DB suggested we could fix this by abolishing club membership completely at the AGM. RW recommended that there may be an easier fix to deal with the immediate problem.
- HA recommended that we write to all clubs now and then decide before the AGM; she asked whether we have time to do this. HJ confirmed we have got the time, but suggested we go for a compromise; to review this and contact these 25 clubs over the coming six weeks. If no suitable resolution is found by the end of this, they will default to being associate members. HA said she agrees with this way forward. LB put forward a slightly amended suggestion to contact these clubs and inform them that they have been made associate members, but that we are reviewing this as an ongoing matter. AB put forward the suggestion to (A) Advise clubs of the issue with their membership, (B) aim to achieve a resolution by the time of the AGM, (C) If no resolution can be found, associate membership would be enacted as a 'backstop'.
- RW disagreed with these courses of action, suggesting that there is no need to address this by the AGM, only by the start of next year's renewals. He felt we should contact the clubs now and inform them that next year they can apply only for full or associate membership. LW added to this by suggesting that we should (A) suspend new membership without insurance as a member benefit, and (B) contact affected clubs and discuss a way forward before the start of membership renewal.
- IW asked whether we needed to find out what insurance these clubs do have to cover their access to caves; LW felt this was not for the BCA to concern itself with.
- AH said that surely the only things these clubs have to lose by moving to associate membership is a vote at General Meetings, which wouldn't matter anyway if we are looking to abolish the two-house voting system (referencing a proposal submitted to the AGM by ME).
- DC felt that the Associate Membership fee should be reviewed so as not to disadvantage the clubs that are compelled to become Associate members.
- SF asked whether we could see how other organisations deal with this e.g. BMC?
- LW asked if everyone was happy with his way forward? There was no vote on this course of action, but there was no disagreement. **Action: Suspend issuing of membership with no insurance as a member benefit and contact the clubs who currently have this class of membership to discuss a way forward for next year (Executive).**
- Regarding the Radon Working Group report; all proposals outlined in report proposed by RW, seconded by AH and received 20 votes in support (unanimous). **Decision: Radon working group created with Gethin Thomas as Convenor and with terms of reference being to update the radon leaflet to reflect current legislation.**
- Regarding Council advice on access for under 18's, HA asked whether the BCA has issued advice that under 18's shouldn't go caving; LW confirmed no, this is fake news; we have a safeguarding Officer who has worked hard to put together lots of advice on how to take under 18's caving and the BCA Council hasn't done or said anything to contradict this.
- There was then some discussion on the Executive recommendation not to publish the legal

advice as outlined in the Secretary report.

**The meeting was adjourned for five minutes at this point (11:55) and reconvened at 12:00.**

- A vote was taken on whether to support the Executive recommendation not to publish the legal advice: 20 votes in support (unanimous).
- DB asked whether there is anything we can publish on this; RW confirmed yes, the three bullet point summary from his report.
- DC emphasised that this advice was sought to resolve a specific issue; we should be careful in application of this advice to other situations.
- RW has received an email from the Charterhouse Caving Company to confirm that they have returned to their previous policy of allowing 16-18-year olds into their caves, however, in response to a question from DB, RW confirmed that under 16's are still not allowed.
- At this point it was noted that the last sentence of the Secretary report under 'Constitutionally established national bodies' contained a further proposal to declare that all CHECC votes as a constituent body in the past are declared valid: Proposed RW, seconded TR, 20 votes for (unanimous)
- TA asked RW whether the procedure for submitting AGM motions has changed, citing that RW was now asking for hard copies of proposals to be submitted, wet-signed by the proposer. RW confirmed that he has not changed his mind on this. JP commented that historically a proposal must meet the deadline and must have a seconder within the deadline. LW felt we should be accepting proposals by email but that they should have two signatures.
- ME read out the section of the constitution regarding this, emphasising that this states the minimum requirements as being for the proposal to be submitted to the Secretary by midnight on the day of the Council meeting preceding the AGM. ME said it says nothing on what format this takes (electronic or paper), nothing about needing a seconder, and nothing about needing signatures. ME felt we should be working on what the constitution says, and not making up additional rules or requirements beyond what the constitution requires.
- LB felt we should take this discussion as feedback and address the constitution accordingly. DC suggested it might be easier to put the requirements in the Manual of Operations.
- ME reiterated his earlier point, saying that the BCA has 6000+ members all of who are entitled to put forward a proposal to the AGM, and all of who he believed would look to the constitution for the requirements on doing this. He did not feel people should also have to digest the Manual of Operations too, so this information should not be in the Manual of Operations instead. He raised the matter of what if someone goes away from this meeting and decides to put a proposal in before midnight; they might be able to fulfil all the requirements of the constitution, but are we really going to reject this because of some unpublished additional requirements that seem to be at the discretion of the Secretary? He felt that the bare minimum requirements set out in the constitution should be the only requirements for submitting a proposal, and if the BCA want additional requirements, then they also need to be stated in the constitution.

- AB said he has worked in local Government and doesn't feel putting conditions for such things in the constitution is right as it gets too complex. He said that precedent from previous meetings should be sufficient to justify requirements not set forward in the constitution. He felt that RW was right to try to formalise the process. TA agreed but felt that communication of such additional requirements should not come so last minute.
- LW asked if we are happy to accept motions that are put forward to the AGM according to the constitution (i.e. no additional unpublished requirements): For 8, against 5, abstentions 6. LW declared that he expects all non-seconded proposals to be seconded before any discussion.

## 7.1 Insurance Manager (Howard Jones)

- Regarding insurance for caving instructors, the insurer realised that they are undercharging and have pulled out from renewing all insurance. HJ has been unable to find an alternative at the same price (most are about double), and so this is unresolved at present. HJ apologised for this, although TA felt no apology was needed as HJ was just reporting the facts. HJ felt there will be a resolution, but it is likely to be more expensive. JPS said that the biggest issue here had been the sudden pull-out of the insurer without contacting anyone. Had HJ not contacted everyone to inform them of this, they wouldn't have known their insurance had not renewed, and they would have been working without any insurance. She thanked HJ for his diligence.
- HJ said that upon handover of the Insurance Manager role from Nick Williams, he had met with their insurers to discuss what we currently don't cover. Two areas were mentioned:
- Firstly, personal accident (Death and Disability); see report. HJ asked if we want to consider offering this to our members as part of the membership benefit. If so, how do we budget for this? TA felt that we shouldn't be offering this, asking whether we really want another insurance related benefit to offer members, especially as the cost could escalate in future years. AE said he has spoken to lots of younger people who are in favour of this.
- DB asked if we should be taking this to the AGM to ask opinions? RW felt it would be better if people could go out and ask their clubs/members to feed back to the October Council meeting. DB expressed concern that anything that could lead to an increase in membership fees would need to be ratified at an AGM or it could prove very controversial. AH suggested asking the regional councils to put it out for discussion. LW suggested that we could put it to the AGM but not as a proposal; instead to gather opinion and perhaps an indicative vote that Council could later implement.
- SF wanted to know more about the excesses, limits etc of the policy, so that we had clarity on exactly what the specifics are. HJ said that all the details he has are in his report. ME asked if there is a policy document from the insurers; HJ confirmed that there isn't.

**Action: Regional Councils, Constituent Bodies & Council Members discuss with clubs & individual members and provide feedback to Insurance Manager.**

- Regarding expedition insurance (see report): AE and HJ have been exploring a solution to this with the insurers. An underwriter has been found to insure expeditions (the same company that



underwrites the BMC policy), and HJ/AE are happy that they understand exactly what they are agreeing to insure (i.e. caving specific matters). Regarding the proposed solution put forward in HJ report, LW asked whether this is something we want to be associated to? If we deliver this via the BCA, what do we get from this other than doing something good for cavers? HJ said that we may receive a low/no claims rebate, but this would need to go elsewhere rather than to the BCA to avoid anything suggesting that we are selling insurance or making any money from it.

- LW asked about the price; HJ confirmed that it would be about the same price as other insurers (e.g. Dogtag) but greater confidence that this will cover all aspects of overseas/expedition caving.
- TA said he would support this, although there were questions as to how many cavers will actually benefit; although he did say that most cavers do go on overseas trips or expeditions at some point during their caving career. HJ felt that anyone going on two or more trips each year would benefit from looking at annual cover.
- DB asked what the policy covers: HJ confirmed it covered all adventure activities including biking, caving, climbing and skiing, however at the moment it would not cover cave diving; more discussions would be needed to see this added to the policy in due course.
- HA felt we should accept this, with a note that any rebates should go to Ghar Parou.
- AM asked what the single rescue limit currently was; HJ confirmed that it is £100,000 per person who needs rescuing; however, he is pushing to raise this to £150,000.
- HJ emphasised that this policy is an excellent starting point, and in time it can evolve. He expected that in five years' time we will have an excellent policy.
- LW moved matters to a vote on the 'Decisions for BCA' at the end of HJ's report. These were proposed by HJ; the seconder was either not present or not recorded in error; however, there were 20 votes (unanimous) in support of associating the BCA to the new scheme and underwriting a potential £5000 contribution. **Action: HJ to progress this.**

## 7.2 Membership Administrator (Wendy Williams)

No questions

**The meeting broke for lunch at this point (13:00) and reconvened at 14:00.**

## 7.3 Training and QMC Terms of Reference (Alan Butcher)

- Regarding the BCA Serious Incident Policy, a draft has been included in AB's report. JP asked if we can approve this in principle, however, RW pointed out that the Manual of Operations requires that a policy must be approved by Council before going for approval at an AGM. JP asked if we only approve in principle, does this not allow minor amendments to be made before the AGM agenda is sent out? LW said no, because as of midnight tonight the document as it stands must go to the AGM and we cannot amend further. RW agreed with this. LW felt there isn't anything particularly contentious in there and we should approve. JP agreed.

- TA asked how such a policy should be enforced and what should be the repercussions for anyone who doesn't go via the Executive. This may be difficult to enforce in situations where the media approach from many angles (e.g. the Thai rescue). LW felt that we can't stop this, but by having a policy at least it will help prevent occurrences of this not going via the Executive, and it provides a point of reference for individuals as to why they cannot comment independently. AB also commented that by having a policy, it allows us to demonstrate why something someone has said independently isn't necessarily the opinion of the BCA.
- AB emphasised that we don't want the QMC and Training Committee saying different things, hence why the BCA Secretary/Executive has been put down as a central point to coordinate the response.
- AM asked whether this policy was just for the QMC/Training Committee, or whether it is for the broader BCA. Similarly, TA asked whether we were referring specifically to incidents that occur in instructed caving. AB said no, but there tends to be less media attention to incidents that occur on recreational (non-commercial) trips. The media are more likely to be interested in incidents that occur on instructed caving events (e.g. Manchester Hole), hence why this is a QMC/Training Committee focussed policy rather than a broader BCA policy.
- JPS felt the policy was useful as it provided a defined route through which to pass media requests.
- TR proposed acceptance of the policy; JP seconded; 18 votes for, 1 against, 1 abstention  
**Action: Draft policy to be submitted for approval by AGM**
- RW proposed the terms of reference for the QMC (Appendix 1B) and role of the QMC (Appendix 3), seconded by NA, 19 votes for, none against, 1 abstention. **Action: Add this information to Manual of Operations**
- Regarding the BCA Training Committee Terms of Reference (Appendix 1A) and scope and purpose (Appendix 2), as the Training Committee is a Standing Committee, these need to be approved by an AGM rather than by Council. **Action: Submit to AGM for approval**

#### **7.4 Safeguarding Officer (Chris Boardman)**

CB absent so RW went through the report. LW asked if we want to go through each policy (7.4.1, ex-offenders, 7.4.2, DBS, 7.4.3, bullying) individually or approve all three; the latter was decided. The three policies received 19 votes in favour, none against and 1 abstention. They will progress to the AGM for approval. RW mentioned that we already have a grievance and disciplinary policy but he feels that they are overdue for review. It was agreed that they be reviewed by the Safeguarding Officer and the next Secretary in time for any changes to be considered at the 2020 AGM. **Action: Safeguarding Officer and Secretary to review both policies after the AGM and report to Council.**

#### **8. Acting Treasurer (Howard Jones)**

- HJ felt that the 1.5% interest that the ~250K invested in medium term deposits is earning was not a good return, and asked if the Council wished to invest it in a higher risk approach that

could earn a lot more (the risk being that it will earn nothing, but no risk to the actual sum of money invested). LW asked if this ties up the funds long-term; HJ confirmed that yes, it ties the funds up for five years. NA asked for HJ's recommendation. HJ felt that if we were a company we'd be 'nuts' to stick with the status quo, but we are a voluntary organisation.

- TA said he had no objections to HJ's suggestion but expressed that his main concern was the large amount of money the BCA has and the inability to agree a way to spend it. He would like to see longer term initiatives to spend money or reduce membership rates.
- HJ felt we are very lucky to have a growing membership and so much money in the bank, and we shouldn't be sitting on top of such a large amount of money. RW commented that much of the current surplus is due to the various Standing Committees not spending their allowances.
- DB raised the matter of two loans of kit to two university clubs and proposed that these loans are 'written off' and the equipment transferred to ownership of those clubs. LW expressed some concern that there could be more new university clubs coming; DB said there were none on the immediate horizon. LW was concerned we might send a message of 'join up and get free kit'. The cost of the kit loaned was £1500 and £1650. DB's proposal was seconded by TA, and received 17 votes for, 2 against and 1 abstention. **Action: DB inform the two clubs.**
- Regarding HJ's suggestion to put money into a higher return rate (and higher risk) account; this was proposed by JP, seconded by NA, and received 19 votes for, none against, 1 abstention. **Action: HJ progress transfer of funds to higher return rate account as per his report.**
- Returning to the matter of the kit loan, DC raised concerns that just giving away money 'on the fly' wasn't a good idea and it should be more properly budgeted and advertised as an allowance. He also expressed concerns that the figures paint an incorrect picture of the amount of money we have available to spend, suggesting the actual amount is closer to £70000.
- SF said that no company can keep trading based on historic assets. It has to be in new people and training them is essential. He suggested that the money for the kit (~£3150) is nothing in the grand scheme of things and felt this expenditure was an excellent first step; he felt that we can't just do nothing; we are all getting older and not being replaced. The BCA can't physically take people caving but we can facilitate this. RW commented that agreeing to buy this kit in the first place was the first step; now we are several steps further down the line.
- AB said he doesn't oppose writing this loan off but believed we should be budgeting for this in the future. SN agreed and said there is a risk of creating a future expectation of the same, which we may not always be in the same position to support.
- DB believed that writing this loan off created more goodwill than just reducing subs by 50p per person for one year (the approximate equivalent).
- AB suggested that the Finance Committee consider options for future use of surplus funding to support expeditions and university clubs so that it is spent in a targeted way. HJ said he will take this on board and come back with some potential ways forward. **Action: HJ work with Finance Committee to come up with suggestions for us of BCA surplus funds.**

- Proposed BCA Funding of Regional Councils (Adopted April 2019) – See reports. HJ said that this document has been agreed unanimously by the Finance Committee. A vote was taken on whether to accept this; 18 votes for, none against, 2 abstentions. **Action: Publish revised funding rules on website (HJ)**

## **9. Conservation and Access Standing Committee (Andrew Hinde)**

LW thanked AH for his work as C&A convenor. There were no questions on the report.

## **10. Youth and Development Standing Committee (Rostam Namaghi)**

No report submitted and no representative present at meeting.

## **11. Equipment and Techniques Standing Committee (Mark Sims)**

No representative present at the meeting. No questions on report.

### **11.1 Rope Test Officer (Bob Mehew)**

- Regarding points 1 and 2 (i.e. regarding use of toothed ascenders in lifelining/belaying), it was raised that the Equipment and Techniques (E&T) Committee had been asked their thoughts on this recommendation and had suggested that a warning about this is not sent to cavers as it relates to use of equipment outside of its intended use. JPS disagreed and felt we should be making a statement that this is bad practice.
- GT commented that Petzl did advocate this technique several years ago, and so it is presented as being an acceptable approach in lots of historic literature, hence this is an issue. He felt that this information/warning needed to be shared and wasn't sure that the E&T had the full picture when making their comments. The manufacturer of the equipment has not responded with any statement to say that this is not acceptable technique, hence JPS's comment that a statement about this was needed for the wider caving community. GT confirmed that issuing this warning wouldn't be going against any current manufacturer recommendations.
- LW asked for confirmation that GT was happy to take ownership of this matter. Confirmed. LW asked what the best way was forward on this. GT felt that a simple notice be issued which is accessible to all cavers (e.g. Descent). JPS added that we can't just sit on this information, because if there is an incident, and we haven't acted, we would be in trouble.
- LW called for a vote on whether to accept the six recommendations in the report, however RW expressed concern that this would be over-ruling the E&T's thoughts.
- At this point TA was able to get Mark Sims (MS, E&T convenor) on the phone and on loudspeaker. TA asked MS to elaborate on the E&T reservations. MS confirmed that he had collected E&T responses and sent them back earlier this week, but there was not total agreement and he felt that this was still under discussion. LW explained the situation and asked MS if we should approve the six recommendations in the report? MS expressed surprise to see these six recommendations in the report and didn't realise this was going to BCA Council yet; he felt it required further discussion. LW explained that the QMC want to press ahead but the E&T don't. MS apologised but said he wasn't aware the QMC were so keen to press ahead with this. LW suggested that this is sent back to GT/BM/NA and the E&T to come to a consensus in the

next week or so, and then to pass this onto the Executive. **Action: GT/BM/NA/E&T come to consensus on this within ~1 week of this meeting and feed back to the Executive on agreed course of action.**

## 12. Training Officer (Nigel Atkins)

A short report had been submitted ahead of the meeting. NA handed out a printed copy of a further report to all attendees (included in the updated reports document). Matters raised:

- TA asked whether the Training Committee (TC) clarify in their Terms of Reference what training they consider themselves to cover; would health and safety training for the CNCC conservation volunteers be covered? NA said that there are some concerns about the TC funding first aid training as it is a qualification.
- AH added to this, saying that he would appreciate clarification of such expenses (certified first aid courses for conservation volunteers) should be claimed under the C&A or TC budget; AH expressed a preference for the TC budget. IW felt that to achieve this the rules may need to be changed as they currently prevent the recreational caving grant being used for funding a certified course.

## 13. Acting Publications and Information Officer (Les Williams)

No questions on the report but TA emphasised that lots of people have asked Jane Allen to come back to the role. As such, she has put forward a proposal to the AGM that would see the P&I abolished as a Standing Committee and replaced by an Executive position, therefore the Terms of Reference may end up being overtaken at the AGM in June.

### 13.1 Media Liaison Officer (Andy Eavis)

AE advised that he is standing down after the AGM; TA said that he would be happy to take this on. RW clarified that this position is appointed by Council on recommendation of the P&I Committee after the AGM.

### 13.2 Newsletter Editor (David Rose)

- LB asked if there was a reason we don't email out the newsletter to all members? LW said that GDPR specifies that we can't do this, but LB disagreed that this was a good reason. DC felt that the newsletter constituted 'marketing' and as such, permission would be required to send the newsletter to our members. ME said that the CNCC had recently published guidance to clubs on GDPR and suggested Legitimate Interest should allow us to email anything to our members that they would reasonably expect to receive as part of membership of an organisation, and he felt that receiving news about that organisation would be easily covered by this. LB suggested that we talk to more people about this. SF felt the situation was ridiculous, citing several much larger organisations who send out newsletters without specific consent to do so. JP suggested we just provide an 'unsubscribe' button on the email. LW suggested we investigate this further, and LB volunteered to do research ahead of the next Council meeting.
- AH felt that we'd been here before and agreed to 'take it on the chin' and send the newsletter out. ME said we should just be sending it out to all members for who we have email addresses, and it shouldn't require opt-in as it was covered by legitimate interest. TA emphasised that if

we've got this wrong then the worst that will happen will be a slap on the wrist and a request to discontinue. A proposal was thus formulated:

***“The BCA will send it’s newsletter out to all member’s we have email addresses for, who haven’t explicitly said not to, and include an opt-out in the email”.***

Votes: For 18, against 1 (DC asked specifically that his vote against be minuted and attributed to him), 1 abstention. **Action: Enact proposal for future newsletters.**

*[Post-meeting note: a member has contacted the Information Commissioner’s Office and supplied copies of the last three newsletters. Advice received from the ICO has been forwarded to the Acting Secretary. That advice is that these newsletters contain material which would be classified as marketing.]* **Above action suspended pending further clarification.**

### **13.3 Webmaster (David Cooke)**

A report had not been submitted ahead of the meeting therefore DC handed out a printed copy to all attendees (included in the updated reports document). Matters raised:

- DC feels that some people think he is trying to be obstructive and expressed frustration that people haven’t talked to him about what they want from the website. He concluded from the P&I meeting last week that people want the background image on the website to be removed and menus updated, and more white space. He felt that we should be seeking to keep the existing website and just update the content, as it would otherwise be wasteful.
- AH asked about some spam emails he has received; DC felt it isn’t coming from within BCA.
- SF raised some concerns about security of BCA webservices (see CCC report), relating to a confidential email going to someone it shouldn’t have. DC said that the complaint was that "at least one Cambrian email was sent by the BCA server to unauthorised recipients" and the unauthorised recipient was the former Cambrian webmaster. Emails were sent because the subsequent webmaster had failed to take the former webmaster off the circulation list. The new webmaster (SF) realised because his email to the circulation list had been bounced. DC said the reason his email was bounced was because of the very poor reputation of the server that SF sent his email from. The graphs in Appendix 1 were shown to the meeting. The first (figure 1) shows the reputation of the SF's server, it is only 48%, it has been as low as 20%. In comparison the BCA server (figure 2) has an excellent reputation of 97%.
- A lengthy and quite heated debate followed in which DC defended the security/performance of BCA servers, but SF disagreed. No outcome.

### **14. QMC (Juliet Parker-Smith)**

JPS talked through her report; no specific actions/matters arising.

### **15. CRoW Working Group (David Rose)**

No questions.

## **16. Vision Working Group (Hellie Adams)**

HA had left the meeting at this point, but TA emphasised that the vision group isn't there to discuss every minor change. He emphasised the data in the questionnaire and felt it raised some interesting points. TA felt the Vision Group was progressing well. DC asked whether a weekend seminar could work to help matters progress faster; LW suggested the idea is presented to HA for consideration.

**Action: LW contact HA and put forward suggestion of weekend seminar.**

## **17. Cave Registry Working Group (David Cooke)**

No questions. LW clarified that this isn't a working group.

## **18. IT Working Group (David Cooke) (including 18.1, Web Services)**

- DC asked about a sub-group to discuss GDPR. RW felt this was a good idea and suggested it is something the next Secretary could set up post-AGM. DC appealed for someone from QMC/TC to get involved in this.
- Regarding online voting, DC felt there is nothing standing in the way of implementing online voting now and asked if people are happy for him to get on with it; no objections.

## **19. British Caving Library (Jenny Potts)**

No questions.

## **20. UIS Representative's Report (Andy Eavis)**

No questions.

## **21. FSE Report (Ged Campion)**

No questions, however, it was emphasised that a new vice-delegate would be needed from BCA, to be appointed at the Council meeting after the AGM.

## **22. Cambrian Caving Council (Stuart France)**

SF confirmed that the Welsh Government have recently announced improvements to leisure activities access. There are plans to reform the CRoW Act in Wales, including provision for many activities. SF has been asked to write to inform them what cavers want and felt this is an excellent opportunity to push for open access under CRoW. SF confirmed that this is for information purposes only; no action required from BCA at the moment.

## **23. Other Matters: Appointments (including 23.1, 23.2, 23.3)**

LW appointed AGM Chairman, ME appointed AGM Recorder, Mick Day put forward by Council to AGM as Honorary President (13 votes for, 0 against, 3 abstentions).

## **24. Online Voting (Will Burn)**

Will Burn was not present at the meeting. DC asked whether Will was planning to come forward with some proposals. RW said that this was his understanding, so we are still waiting. DC said he is only dealing with the technical aspects of implementing online voting and not the political aspects.

## **25. Proposal by DCA Representative (Jenny Potts)**

The proposal on the agenda had been withdrawn by JP as the matter had been dealt with ahead of the meeting. It was not discussed.

## **26. Any Other Business**

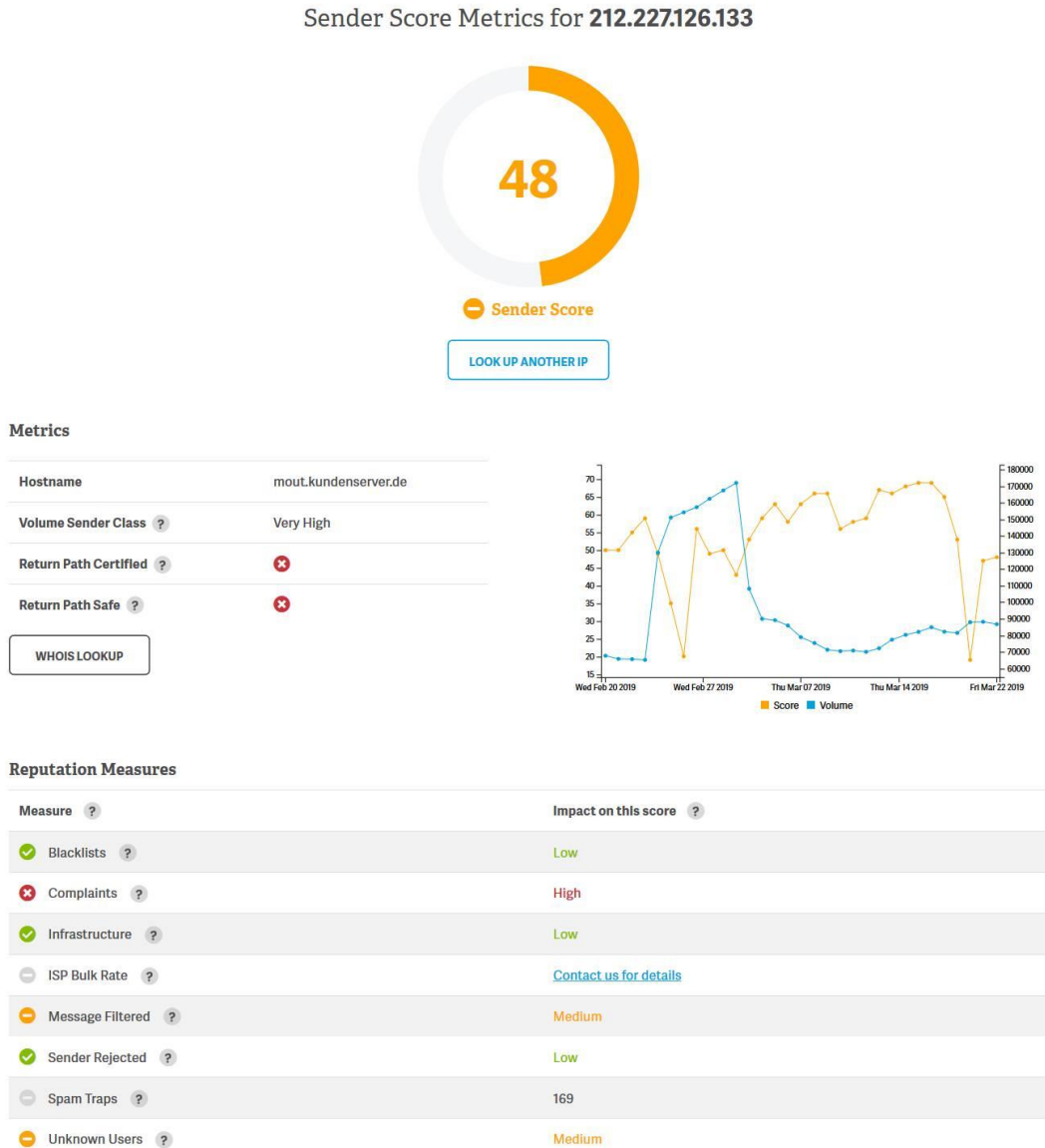
LB said that Mountain Rescue in England and Wales are changing the type of charity that they are, and as such are removing some cave rescue groups as they don't fulfil their membership competencies – they need to cover fell rescue too, which some cave rescue organisations do not (e.g. DCRO). This will restrict the ability of these cave rescue organisations to administer some restricted drugs. This is less of an issue for organisations such as UWFRA, CRO etc as they also perform fell rescue so they can remain a member of Mountain Rescue. There is currently some lobbying from the BCRC to prevent cave-only rescue organisations being dropped from Mountain Rescue. LB felt Council should be aware of this.

Meeting closed 16:52pm



## Appendix 1

**Figure 1:** Statistics showing SF's server performance as presented by DC to the meeting.



**Figure 2:** Statistics showing BCA server performance as presented by DC to the meeting.

