



Conservation & Access Committee

Convened by Louise Baddeley
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Committee Meeting via Webex, 16th July 2019, 7.30pm Minutes

| Attendance | | | | |
|--|-----------------|----------|--------|-----------|
| Participant | Name | Initials | Voting | Rep. sent |
| Convenor | Louise Baddeley | LB | Yes | |
| Cambrian Caving Council | Stuart France | SF | Yes | |
| Council of Northern Caving Clubs | Tim Allen | TA | Yes | Yes x 2 |
| Council of Southern Caving Clubs | Graham Price | GP | Yes | Yes |
| Derbyshire Caving Association | Wayne Sheldon | WS | Yes | Yes |
| Devon & Cornwall Underground Council | Kieran Ryan | KR | Yes | |
| William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust | Not Present | | | |
| Association of Caving Instructors | Not Present | | | |
| National Scout Active Support Unit | Not Present | | | |
| British Cave Research Association | Not Present | | | |
| National Assn. of Mining History Organisations | Not Present | | | Yes |
| Council of Higher Education Caving Clubs | David Botcherby | DB | Yes | |
| Cave Diving Group | Not Present | | | |
| British Cave Rescue Council | Not Present | | | |
| Forest of Dean Cons. & Access Group | Not Present | | | |
| Radon Working Party Rep. (Bob Mehew) | Not Present | | | Yes |
| BCA CRoW W.P. Convenor | Not Present | | | |
| Recorder (BCA Ind. Member) | Jenny Potts | JP | | |
| Observer (Charterhouse Caving Committee) | Linda Wilson | LW | | |
| Observer (Cheddar Caving Club) | Judy Durber | JD | | |
| Observer (BCA Ind. Member) | Andy Eavis | AE | | |
| Observer (BCA Ind. Member) | Andrew McLeod | AM | | |
| CSCC (David Cooke) | Not Present | | | Yes |
| NWCC (Dewi Lloyd) | Not Present | | | Yes |
| CNCC (Kay Easton) | Not Present | | | Yes |

1. Convenor’s welcome

LB established all who were linked to the meeting so we were able to start at 19:45. (SF & LW were linked by phone.) She welcomed everyone and confirmed those who are attending, who they represent and thanked all those who had sent in reports.

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from: Kay Easton (CNCC), Tony Radmall (NSASU), Chris Boardman (ACI), John Hine (NAMHO), Dewi Lloyd (NWCC), Bob Mehew (Radon W.P.)

3. Matters arising

That the Minutes of C&A Meeting of 6 Feb. 2018 be accepted. Prop. TA, Sec. LW.
Agreed unanimously.

There were no matters arising.

4. Appointment of co-opted committee members

See item 9.1.

5. Reports

a. Convenor *(No written report)*

LB had not sent a Convenor's Report as she is new in the post and felt it more important to listen to members' views for this first meeting..

b. Regional councils

i. CNCC *(See attached written reports from Tim Allen Kay Easton)*

TA had nothing to add to his report other than that there is positive movement re. Leck Fell access following a meeting on Monday 15th July.

ii. CSCC *(See attached written reports from Graham Price & Dave Cooke)*

a. GP had sent an updated version of the report presented to the CSCC AGM in May and had no further comments to make on it.

b. Dave Cooke had sent in a report mostly concerning the CNCC funding proposal so it was agreed to defer discussion on his report to item 8. GP explained there were discussions pending re. the Cheddar and Longleat access agreements.

iii. DCA *(See attached written report from Wayne Sheldon)*

WS emphasised DCA's need for more volunteers to help with practical work. He also mentioned that DCA was struggling for funding but it had been indicated that there is a possibility of receiving some from BCA if a proposal is put to the BCA Treasurer.

iv. DCUC *(No written report)*

v. Cambrian CC *(No written report)*

c. Constituent bodies

i. CHECC *(No written report)*

ii. NAMHO *(See attached written report from John Hine)*

iii. NSASU *(No written report)*

iv. ACI *(No written report)*

v. BCRA *(No written report)*

vi. BCRC *(No written report)*

vii. CDG *(No written report)*

viii. WPCST *(No written report)*

d. Other reports

i. CRoW liaison *(No written report)*

ii. Radon working group *(See attached written report from Bob Mehew)*

6. Case reviews

LB had put these three items on the agenda for possible discussion as they seem to be issues which have raised concern nationally.

a. Charterhouse Caving Company Ltd (CCC Ltd.)

LW stated access has now been restored for 16-18 year olds.

JD stated that she believes that the current access now requires a ratio of 2:1 for adults and 16-18 year olds, therefore with a maximum group size of 6 the adult:child ratio would be 4:2. This therefore is not a restoration of the previous access agreement. JD is under the impression that GP is in discussion with the BCA safeguarding officer and with Chris Binding, regarding this ratio (so LB will add this to the action list). JD would like feedback on this new arrangement from GP and the CCC Ltd committee, directors and secretary.

There will be further discussion between LB, JD and GP outside this meeting. DB said he is not 100% happy with current position re. CCC Ltd. but does not want to discuss this further at this point. TA noted that this has been raised at national level already, so a satisfactory resolution is important because this is seen as a national issue. LB noted that at least some degree of access has been restored for 16-18 year olds. GP is of the opinion that this should not be made a national issue and CCC Ltd. are used to working with Somerset Wildlife Trust. SF said that in his view this is a situation where cave management committees, such as the PDCMG and Charterhouse, do not appear to be improving access for the wider caving community but are falling in line with restrictive agreements rather than these being re-negotiated. LW said that this particular issue appears to be BCA stepping in without being invited by the access controlling body. SF said he thought that, if the local access controlling body appears not to be promoting BCA's view re. access, then BCA is bound to step in on a national basis.

b. Ogof Draenen

SF said he understands that PDCMG Committee is now aiming to hold an EGM later in 2019. A previous meeting of PDCMG had voted to close the additional entrances but this may now have to be re-considered in the light of what is currently happening. There are hopes that there will be a way forward. JD says she appreciates all the hard work going on in talking to people.

LB noted that the July 2019 Cambrian NL mentions changes in working with NRW re. access to caves. SF explained that NRW is changing the way it works and this will affect how it deals with different local areas. It appears that NRW may be backing away from working with Cave Management Groups (CMGs) in Wales. However, they had constructed a number of cave gates of the type currently used for OFD Top Entrance and have already handed these over to some CMGs. The Welsh Government has been looking to open up the CRoW legislation to allow further groups to benefit from CRoW access; various proposals have been put forward and this appears to be going ahead, although not all of the proposals are going ahead unopposed. It is suggested there may be expert working groups and meetings of sub-committees whereby specialist interests, such as caving, can put forward their views. This is an opportunity for caving to put forward a plea to be included in CRoW access for Wales.

c. Minera (See attached written report from Dewi Lloyd)

DL's report explained the current position re. Minera and gives the 3 possible options being considered, part of the problem being the insurance cover of £10m being asked for. LB invited opinions from the Committee on the three options outlined in the report.

JD said that the insurance for Longleat and Cheddar may be increased to a requirement for £10m cover. GP is not quite sure what the situation is at present and whether this is going to go ahead.

WS noted that Staffs Wildlife Trust had wanted £5m cover for mines in Manifold Valley at a time when BCA's cover was £2m. DCA had not been able to obtain access until the BCA cover generally was raised to £5m.

SF is of the opinion that, if BCA is to pay for the top-up cover for a club or ACB, there should be a reform to allow better access for all cavers, so there ought to be a chance for a discussion with N.Wales W.T. about improved access for Minera. TA agrees with SF that, if higher insurance cover is to be required by a particular ACB or club, then there should be a possibility of re-negotiating better access. Both SF and TA were of the opinion that the best step for Minera was to try to re-negotiate access rather than increase the liability cover. It was noted that, as soon as a precedent is set for the higher level of cover, all landowners are likely to follow this but it seems likely that the requirement for £10m cover generally will come anyway at some time in the future.

LB said she wanted to try to get an idea of what was involved in the Minera issue to see whether any help was wanted. SF noted that BMC have now had an insurance claim and are likely to be in some financial difficulty because of the size of the excess which they are required to pay.

20:50 - LW left the meeting at this point.

7. Documents for review

a. Minimal impact caving guidelines (additional materials)

LB has spoken to Andrew Hinde about updating this - in particular it needs to be headed by the new BCA logo.

b. Cave Conservation Handbook (CCH)

LB has been looking at the CCH, which was produced as a printed book by NCA in 1997. There are still a few copies available of the original CCH; the Cave Conservation Policy document is the first section of the CCH. GP said he has the original files from the production of the CCH so it would be possible to put it on the BCA website as a downloadable version because of archive interest.

SF suggested that it would be appropriate now to have an updated and improved version of the original CCH, printed in full colour and including practical suggestions. It was generally agreed that parts of the 1997 version are seen as inappropriate in the light of modern thinking. LB is looking to get together a small group to work on a revised and updated version of the CCH and would welcome offers of help from interested people.

c. SSSI monitoring forms

Generally felt that this a regional matter - there is no national standard format. It seems unlikely that NE will require them to be updated so this is felt to be an issue for the regions.

8. CNCC regional funding proposal *(See attached written reports from Tim Allen and David Cooke)*

TA clarified the background to this draft proposal which aims to see more of BCA's funding spent on conservation and access.

AE suggested that the funding had always been there in the past and, if a request is made for it then the funding should be available now.

GP explained that a CSCC view is put forward in the report sent by Dave Cooke. (See item 5.b.ii.b)

TA noted that you have to go to a committee to obtain funding and it seems more reasonable for C&A requests for funding to go the C&A Committee rather than the Finance Committee. He feels that the new BCA Treasurer would prefer to have decisions about specific spending to be made by the Special Committee concerned rather than the Finance Committee, with the Treasurer giving the final approval, subject to the funding being available within BCA.

WS, on behalf of DCA, said he totally agreed with TA and AE that it should be the C&A Committee which decides on C&A funding.

TA suggested that regional practice may be different according to the local situations so there may be different priorities on what funding is needed.

LB felt that we should take a vote on the CNCC proposal and confirmed who are the voting members of the Committee: only Regional and CB representatives have a vote, LB has a casting vote if required.

SF considers that BCA Finance Committee should be deciding on major policy issues; Special Committees should be able to ask for specific funding for their own purposes, provided that there is the money in the overall budget.

GP would like there to be a decision on what what sort of procedure should apply in putting forward claims for regional C&A work. LB agreed that there should be guidelines. GP felt he could not vote either for or against the proposal because he had not had sufficient time to discuss it with CSCC members.

To support the Draft CNCC proposal: In favour 4, Against 0, Abstentions 2.

Passed

9. AOB

9.1 Appointments of Co-opted Committee Members.

LB noted that she had omitted to deal with item 4 on the agenda. She proposed:

That Dave Rose should be a co-opted member of this committee. All in favour.
Unanimous.

9.2 C&A Vision.

Noted that Hellie Adams is convenor of the Working Group on BCA Vision for the future and LB is part of this Working Group.

9.3 Thanks

TA thanked LB for chairing this meeting and felt it has gone well.

9.4 Future Meetings.

TA suggested that in future we should try to ensure that all members can link in properly and perhaps Webex may not be the best facility to do this. He suggested that maybe Skype might be better as other people have experience of this. We would look into this before the next meeting.

Meeting ended: 21:24

***Jenny Potts,
Recorder***

Appended to these Minutes and forming part of them are the following reports:

- Item 5.b.i Access officer summary for the CNCC area. C&A meeting July 2019
- Item 5.b.ii.a Conservation & Access Report to CSCC AGM 18 May 2019
- Item 5.b.ii.b CSCC Report to BCA C&A Meeting 16th July 2019
- Item 5.b.iii DCA report for the Conservation and Access Meeting - 16th July 2019
- Item 5.c.ii NAMHO Report to BCA C & A Meeting, 16-7-19
- Item 5.d.ii Radon Working Group Report. C&A Committee meeting, Tuesday 16th July 2019
- Item 6.c Minera - Note to BCA C&A July 2019
- Item 8 Draft CNCC regional funding proposal – June 2019
- Addnl. Report CNCC Conservation Officer’s Report July 2019 (Not given at the meeting as it had gone astray en route.)