

'Acting' BCA Training Officer Report June 2018

BCA Training Committee

Looking back at the last 12 months, myself and a small group of dedicated regional training officers have kept training committee afloat with regular meetings and numerous conversations by phone and email. We have flown the flag for BCA and introduced a fresh input into club training. A big thank you goes to Nick Williams who sets up these meetings on web ex and 'coaches' us on how to keep us on line. Without Nick's help in the last 12 months, we would not have been able to achieve this with such ease, thanks Nick. The Training Committee is now 15 people strong with representation from equipment specialists and cave rescue. We are also providing SRT training to the standard required for entry into the BCA qualifications.

The work of this committee has become all things training in BCA now apart from the qualifications themselves, which is QMC.

The BCA Training Solution

This is quite simple: - **LEAVE EVERYTHING EXACTLY AS IT IS AND STOP MESSING WITH IT!**

Everything was working fine until after the AGM last year when things got changed and arguments started. This is all down to individuals changing things to meet their own agendas, without transparency or democracy. The result of this is that BCA was not told the truth about certain and important changes.

December 2016, the QMC chair and the training officer very abruptly 'abandoned' the training committee leaving myself and one other to pick up the pieces. This is all in the minutes. At this time, BCA sort of had 2 training officers in place, the one signing into the June 2017 BCA AGM (the traditional, National training officer) that moved over to the QMC and my temporary 'convenor' of the training committee. If it wasn't for myself sorting this out, training committee would have folded instantly as no one else was interested, however I have always been there to help BCA.

At the 2016 AGM Nigel Ball was reappointed as the training officer, nothing had changed and he continued with QMC in this role. I was fine with this and happily continued to run training committee concentrating on recreational caving as like many of us in BCA, we trusted our officers to work with integrity, honour in a professional way. However, The training officer role was 'removed' from QMC almost as soon as QMC got started.

At the October BCA council meeting, the chair of QMC informed everyone that the 'Training officer' did NOT have a role on QMC, this is in the minutes. The chair of QMC also reported from QMC about more changes to be made, however, as training committee now had members in it from QMC, I was fully aware of what QMC was doing and I knew that these changes were in fact the opposite of what QMC wanted. The chair of BCA brought me in at this point to clarify what QMC was actually doing. The day after this meeting I had QMC members phoning me for clarification and they were not happy with what the chair had reported as they were not the proposals of QMC at all. Following this meeting, I was also contacted by members of council who were also concerned.

In January 2018 after the chair of QMC had stood down, members of BCA council and QMC worked very hard with me to establish what had gone wrong. It was at this point when the truth about the training officer role became clear. You can imagine how concerned we all were to find out what had been done.

It has taken me 5 months of dedication to BCA and a promise to the chair of BCA that I would work with what we have in place and I have finally done it. We now have a good working solution and the only confusion out there up to the last QMC meeting was the role of training officer on the QMC which was only confirmed to them only 2 weeks ago.

Proposal: BCA Training Committee

Leave everything as it is and do not mess with it anymore. This is a dedicated group of volunteers working hard on behalf of BCA. They have unanimously confirmed that they **DO NOT** like the change in title to include the word 'recreational' so a vote for any more changes is a vote against this committee.

Actions that were voted on at BCA Council meeting Saturday January 6th 2018

- To fully support the working of the BCA Training Committee

To propose any changes to training committee without any consultation with them is in breach of what was agreed in January. Training committee should be reporting to BCA what brilliant work they have and are doing, not being told what to do by people not involved.

Maybe you should vote for 'Professional' Training Committee as they are providing training at a professional level. Training is Training.

BCA has an opportunity here to launch training to the masses as it should be done. BCA Training Officer should be the person to head this up and co ordinate these training activities. We are waiting for BCA to vote in a full training officer and give training committee their full support and I urge you to do so before enthusiastic volunteers lose interest and vote with their feet.

Proposal: *BCA Training Officer*

Leave the BCA Training Officer as it is and do not mess with it anymore. I have worked really hard on behalf of BCA to establish what was working before and get things back on track, which is working now. The word 'recreational' is already in place as the training committee rep on QMC so a vote for any more changes will cause even more confusion. You will see that the training officer has been working hard promoting both the training committee and the QMC during the caving club talks, LC/MLA and CIC updates, cave rescue workshops and with retailers and manufacturers alike. This is your 'National Training Officer' and you are free to do whatever you decide to do with it.

I have done everything I have been asked to do and more. I am now drained of all enthusiasm. I have been lied to, shouted down, accused of not understanding the system, told to 'push off' and had to undergo some difficult conversations with my friends in QMC. If this is how BCA officers are to be treated by trying to do their job, I want no more of it. All I have ever asked for is to have those brackets removed from my title. If I am to be the last of the 'National Training Officers' then I have been proud to represent BCA in this way.

BCA Training Grants

We have had more applications for training grants than ever since the word has been out that training committee is looking after recreational cavers. We now have 5 approved training events for 2018 already confirmed. This is a potential spend of up to £1,250 so far (max £250 for each event). Having been involved with training committee for decades, I can assure BCA that the grants are taken very seriously and have supported very well organised and run training events all over the uk.

Training committee looked into BCA events to be set up by regional training officers in the future and grants now support these. This way, more BCA members get access to the workshops in all regions and will get to meet the BCA training officer, other committee members face to face and receive top level training.

BCA Coaching Scheme – potential for

In DCA, there are no clashes of opinions, just shared experience. Over the last 12 months I have shared the DCA scheme with caving clubs out of our region with a view of moving this forward nationally. There has not been any negativity at all to this, only positive feedback. It is a coaching scheme for DCA cavers and concentrates on training the trainers as well as club members through workshops and training courses run by club members themselves assisted and mentored by myself, a BCA trainer and assessor for all the BCA schemes of which I have over 25 years of experience.

There is a comment going around about qualifications being introduced for recreational cavers. This is not true! We have introduced a competency for personal SRT in the DCA scheme, which is driven by the caving club members. What we now do in TC is support BCA members, not tell them what to do. Any developments in this scheme are direct results from feedback by BCA members using it.

BCA Training Officer

For years, BCA Training Officer as a title is something to be proud of. It is not just a position, it is (or should be seen as) an honour to represent cavers in the UK.

BCA training officer is and should be the 'go to person' to answer all of those enjoyable questions about what do we do, what do we use, how do we do this etc.. We do this in DCA and most of the DCA member caving clubs work alongside with an agreed syllabus of training, which was passed around Training Committee in February 2017.

Actions that were voted on at BCA Council meeting Saturday January 6th 2018

- 1) - To fully support the working of the BCA Training Committee
- 2) - To increase funding to the BCA Training Committee
- 3) - To support the BCA Training Committee in exploring the opportunity to create a BCA Coaching Scheme for recreational caving.
- 4) - To support BCA events to be set up by regional training officers in the future.
- 5) - To support the BCA Training Committee in co-option of additional members to the training committee is an avenue which will be utilised whenever it can be.
- 6) - GM QMC paper. Members that will make up the BCA-QMC include 'The Training Officer'.

I have known that the training officer is a member of QMC since January 2018, however it has taken until the May QMC meeting for this to be confirmed to them. This is 5 months of work I have done working with QMC members that will not get recognised until the next meeting. I have been accused of not understanding the new system however the opposite is true, I am fully aware of what has gone on and what is in place.

QMC meetings

I signed into the QMC meeting on Monday February 26th 2018 as BCA training officer (acting) as discussed and voted on unanimously at the January 2018 BCA council meeting. Training Officer (acting) was a title I was offered by BCA council and is the position I was in at both BCA council meetings that I have attended. At the start of the meeting I wanted to update the QMC with what I had learned and input a lot of the work that I had done but my report was not discussed as it was not on their agenda. I felt very uncomfortable there to the point that I got up and informed them that I would go but the QMC members present asked me to stay. This was a really nice thing for them to do and I am grateful to them for doing this as it felt like someone was trying to 'throw the training officer' out.

In the absence of my input, they went on to discuss someone from training committee having a position on the QMC which is a positive step forward as the training committee would have a voice on the QMC and the QMC can talk directly to training committee. This position from the training committee was duly voted in as a full voting member of the QMC. This bridge has now been firmly put in place, which is a brilliant step forward for BCA but had nothing to do with why I was there.

This was followed by a discussion on the title of this representative from the training committee and they wanted to change this to be the 'recreational training officer'. I stopped the meeting voting on this I was concerned for 3 reasons:

- 1 - It is not in the QMC's remit to change BCA officers role titles. Things like this have to be done properly.
- 2 – The title of BCA training officer has always been associated with the training committee and the BCA award schemes in the past. (Appendix 1) It is deeply embedded into all of the BCA award schemes and everybody in BCA recognises it as a main point of contact for training in the BCA.
- 3 – A couple of members **BEFORE** the start of the meeting explained to me that they were told that training officer was gone from the QMC and a role of 'vice chair' was in discussion to fill that gap. They welcomed me back when I explained to them what had gone on. What I took back to training committee was their wish to change the title of the training committee rep to something like 'recreational training officer' or 'sports recreational training officer' which is what they proposed and tried to vote on but I think this will still cause confusion to many people as any title with the words training officer in it points to QMC and CIC as this is the title of the role that is in print on everything out there in the award schemes. At the April training committee, Kevin West stepped into this role and the members agreed to honour the proposal by QMC to give this position the title of 'Recreational Training Officer'. QMC now has BCA Training Officer - which could be in the role as Vice chair as before and 'Recreational Training Officer' - the Training Committee rep. (Appendix 2) I did not have any involvement with this as my position is to listen and support people.

Suggestion: Establish the Training Officer into the post of Vice Chair of QMC

Since the AGM last year, the chair of QMC has taken on most of the duties that the training officer had. If BCA wish to have the training officer involved in QMC, the newly appointed BCA Training Officer would work closely with the new Chair of QMC and agree together what they can and would like to take on. This would help the chair of QMC to concentrate on what he/she needs to do. BCA putting the Training Officer into the role of Vice Chair of QMC establishes what most of us thought was in place after the AGM last year.

What the current BCA Training Officer (acting) has achieved whilst being in the post:

Professional:

- Listened to what BCA asked and delivered a workable solution to Training Committee and QMC within what is set up at the moment
- Visited caving clubs on their evening meets to run workshops/talks in 'All Things SRT' looking at standards for both recreational and professional level which is the same now thanks to the hard work of BCA training committee.
- Visited a DCRO cave rescue training session promoting the hard work of BCA training in both TC and QMC
- Raised funds for cave rescue by donating any donations with the recent BCA training officer talks to caving clubs

- Arranged personal discounts for cave rescue members from reputable suppliers
- Taken delivery of donated SRT equipment from 3 main caving equipment retailers to add to the BCA pool of SRT equipment to be used by all BCA members
- Arranged a discount deal for BCA to buy in new SRT harnesses etc at trade
- Looked into all the confusion relating to BCA training which took 5 months and hundreds of emails, phone calls and some personal meetings
- Highlighted to removal of TO from QMC and got it reinstated
- Listened to concerns from trainer and assessors in the award schemes and assured them that things were now being dealt with
- Had in depth discussions with fellow members of QMC in problem solving and coming up with proposals
- Made input to 2 LC/MLA regional panels and offered help with dealing with any confusion in BCA training
- Attended and made input/received valuable feedback from 2 LC/MLA updates
- Attended and made input/received valuable feedback from a CIC update
- Clarified any confusion arising from the QMC/TC split to all that have made contact
- Ran a BCA/CNCC training event in the Yorkshire Dales, the first of BCA's National events
- Spoken in depth with manufacturers regarding training related matters with equipment
- Produced statements with regard to training at a professional level
- Obtained permits for CIC trainers and assessors as a member of the CIC panel

Recreational:

- Continued to chair training committee meetings
- Allocated training grants together with the TC
- Set up BCA National Training events together with the TC
- Reported to BCA council meetings personally or sent in a report (April 2018)
- Doubled the training grant
- Promoted recreational training guidelines to caving clubs and BCA members

What the BCA Training Officer could offer in the future:

- Continue to work as above
- Offer a talk to the Caving Conference on all Training in the BCA
- Work in partnership with the QMC and define the training officers role/work as vice chair
- Continue to produce a basic set of best practice guidelines for BCA together with the TC
- Offer advice and help to clubs in recruiting new members
- Continue to develop policies regarding the use of equipment for all cavers at all levels together with the TC and members of the Equipment committee
- Promote BCA training
- Develop the BCA Equality Policy
- Develop training for the under 18's

I would like to end by thanking a few people who have been very supportive through these last few difficult months. Robin Weare is without doubt one of BCA's biggest assets. Without him, I could not have done things professionally and in line with BCA policy. I also wish to thank Nick Williams for supporting TC in setting up our meetings, without him we would have really struggled and Andy Eavis who I have had some meaty discussions with but has kept me on track to get me to come up with a workable solution for BCA training. Thank you to Andrew Hinde who inspired me to write up this report instead of a resignation letter to explain what has gone on and what I have had to endure.

I also wish to thank all of the past training officers and a lot of you BCA council members for your wisdom and advice in looking at the BCA training concerns. I know a few of you have had many emails to and fro but it was needed to clear up what was a real mess.

Thanks and best wishes go to all on QMC which has been a struggle as this is where all the confusion sat with my role being messed with, however, none of us were to blame and I wish you all success, you are doing a great job.

Whatever the outcome of the AGM, I would like to thank every BCA member for their support and enthusiasm they have shown me as BCA Training Officer (acting).

Best wishes
Nige

Nigel Atkins
BCA Training Officer (Acting)
30/05/18

Appendix 1 BCA Training Officer

We need to tie this training officer business down once and for all. BCA wanted someone not involved with the professional schemes. I personally can't see any credibility in this position unless we take it seriously and move forward:

BCA Training Officer Terms of Reference

BCA Training Officers Duties 2017:

The post is a voluntary position and is filled by election every three years. The Training Officer sits on BCA Council, the QMC and reports the work of the Training Committee to Council. Normally LCMLA and CIC candidates have little reason to contact the Training Officer other than to lodge an appeal.

To deal with applications for exemptions from formal assessment, to arbitrate and make decisions regarding reassessments, technical and procedural queries and to resolve disputes relating to individual candidates.

To oversee the disciplinary process but play no part in the investigation stage.

The Training Officer is responsible for ensuring the training schemes are maintained and generally promote the development of training in all areas of caving in the BCA.

Then training officer is the contact for all training activities of the BCA. For any enquiries relating to specific topics, the BCA training officer will direct these to the appropriate contacts.

To authorise all award certificates and sign all Cave Instructor Certificates before they are issued.

To operate as Line Manager for the Training Administrator

To liaise and build relationships with the recreational side of caver training and support the work of the BCA training committee

NOTE: *Since the AGM last year, the chair of QMC has taken on most of the duties above leaving nothing for the training officer. If BCA wish to have the training officer involved in QMC, I suggest the newly appointed BCA Training Officer works closely with the new Chair of QMC and agree together what they can and would like to take on.*

Essential qualities

Must be completely open to all training needs and practices undertaken around the country and not impart personal preferences – This is (or should be) a highly respected position in BCA, someone in this position with their own agenda will undermine the hard work that training committee has been doing in the past

Must have interpersonal skills to the level of communicating in an open and friendly manner to all who contact them in their position – This position can seen by many cavers their second point of contact with BCA (after Mary & membership)

Must be able to coordinate and possibly chair BCA training committee meetings – the future success of the training committee relies on this

Must be able to communicate with all fellow training committee members – this person must be able to talk, at times in depth, with regional training officers and other training committee members – on various subjects

Must be able to communicate with club training officers – this person must be able to discuss items with club training officers with an clear understanding of current training needs and issues

Must have a proven track record of involvement in recreational training – this position to have any weight within the recreational side of caving needs someone who has been involved at the top level of club training

Must have enough time to give to this position – this position is not to be taken lightly as a 'title' of BCA Training Officer! The real work needs to be done, voluntarily, in between the meetings

Must attend **ALL** training committee meetings – this position is not to be taken lightly as a 'title' of BCA Training Officer! These meeting are important as the results will be shared to hopefully every recreational caver in the UK either as an individual member or through their clubs.. and maybe even further

Ideal qualities

To be a current CIC holder – without this, where is the proof of technical ability in order to share and discuss technical issues with fellow cavers

To be aware if not involved with the professional schemes – there are clear differences in techniques being taught at professional and club level, it is important that we know these and understand them to be able to offer advice to recreational cavers

To have been involved with BCA training committee in the past – proves dedication to the cause, nuff said

To be a current regional training officer or have been open in the past – as above!

Have a clear understanding of training and practices undertaken around the country, standards and contacts – without this, the question arises why someone wants this position?

Nige, Nigel Atkins, DCA Training Officer, 20/02/17
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Appendix 2
BCA Recreational Training Officer
Terms of Reference

BCA Recreational Training Officer's Duties:

To attend all QMC meeting as rep for the BCA Training Committee.

To support the work of the BCA Training Officer (National Training Officer)

Essential qualities

Must have interpersonal skills to the level of communicating in an open and friendly manner to all who contact them in their position

Must have be able to communicate with all fellow training committee members – this person must be able to talk, at times in depth, with regional training officers and other training committee members on various subjects

Must have enough time to give to this position

Must attend **ALL** training committee meetings – Theses meeting are important as the results will be shared to hopefully every recreational caver in the UK either as an individual member or through their clubs.. and maybe even further

Ideal qualities

To have been involved with BCA training committee in the past

To be a current regional training officer or have been one in the past

Have a clear understanding of the BCA recreational coaching guidelines

To be a current club training officer or have been one in the past

