

Minutes of NCA Training Committee held on 21st December 2002 at the Staffs CC S&S Club at 10.30 a.m.

Present     Bob Mehew (NCA Treasurer /Acting Training Officer)  
              Idris Williams (NCA Training Officer Proposed.  
              Nigel Atkins (DCA)  
              Steve Holding (NAMHO)  
              Paul Ramsden (CNCC)  
              Chips Rafferty (BCRA)  
              Eric Hoole (Cambrian CC)  
              Tom Redfern (invited ACI)  
              Steve Tomalin (FoD)  
              John Cliffe (co-opted)

Apologies   Andy Sparrow (CSCC)

1. Introductions   Bob Mehew explained the current position regarding the post of Training Officer, Alan Butcher had been a last minute surprise nomination to the role last January with Graham Mollard having volunteered act as chairman and secretary of the National Co-ordinating Panel and Paul Ramsden volunteering to do the same for the Cave Instructor Panel. Alan Butcher had since resigned from the post and Idris Williams had been persuaded to take it on. In the interim Bob stated that he had stepped in to cover the post until Idris could be formally elected. Bob explained that the Training Committee was the major spending part of the NCA and that in the past few years he had in his Treasurer's capacity had difficulty in ensuring that the budget was spent. Idris then gave a brief outline of his caving experience.

2. Introduction of committee members   The members of the committee then introduced themselves and the organisations that they represented. Paul Ramsden stated that he was unhappy about the way the Training committee had operated recently with a general lack of co-ordination in decision making, feedback and delegation. Idris expressed the hope that he would be able to improve things.

3. Minutes of previous meetings   There were no minutes available from the last meeting held on 6 April 2002.

4. Actions from previous meetings   The lack of effective communication between the Training committee and the Panels was felt to have caused a lot of confusion. It was for example not certain whether Paul Ramsden and Graham Mollard had been confirmed in their roles in respect of the panels. The meeting confirmed Paul in his role as Chairman/Secretary of the CIC Panel and instructed Idris to write to Graham Mollard confirming his role as Chairman/Secretary of NCP.

Action IW to write to P Ramsden to confirm Training Committee had agreed to him being Chair / Secretary for the CIC Panel and to G Mollard to confirm Training Committee had agreed to him being Chair / Secretary for NCP.

5. Report on Business and decisions made in 2002

A) NCA 4 Year Development Plan   Bob introduced this and stated that he had put most of the activity into the first year due to uncertainties with the BCRA merger etc. It was pointed out that the Committee had not had time last year to provide a viable input. As it was a rolling 4 year plan there was the opportunity to revisit this and it should be scheduled for Spring /Early Summer.

Action IW to ensure discussion on plans for Training Committee be discussed by early summer.

Bob went on to explain that the Training Budget was around £27,000 per year of which the two Service Contracts accounted for some £20,000 of this and the LCMLA/CIC schemes another £5,000 leaving about £2,000 available for "recreational" caver training. In the report targets were given for numbers of participants in the LCMLA & CIC schemes. The committee was unsure if these were achievable in view of the alternative AALA accepted approach of CICs giving site specific approval which could be acting against recruitment into the LCMLA scheme. The committee were of the opinion that the views of the employers of award holders should be sought to check if the schemes met their needs during the year.

B) LCMLA The new Handbook was introduced and circulated. As part of the 4 year plan, it was intended to facilitate the shake down of the scheme by noting any comments and views on the published document and giving consideration to them.

C) CIC The Handbook for this was to be split into 2 parts, a confidential part containing sample question papers and a separate part for use by Candidates. Launch of this had been delayed until Feb 2003 due to the task of getting the LCMLA handbook out. The committee did not accept that there should be a confidential part and asked that the text be revised so that both parts could be issued to all.

D) Handbook Costs The committee agreed after some discussion that the handbooks should be issued to candidates at registration. It was agreed that the fees should be raised by £5 to cover the cost of the handbook and be reviewed at the next meeting.

E) ACI It was intended that the new Association of Caving Instructors was to become a full member of the NCA but this could not happen until the next AGM. Meanwhile Tom Redfern was an invited rep.

6. Scout Association Authorisation Idris outlined the proposed new scheme as it had been developed so far. In brief the revised scheme would require "Form Cave" holders (persons authorized to take Scouts underground) to have completed LCMLA training to appropriate level and checks on their suitability for leading young people would be carried out. They would then be assessed by a Scout Assessor, and if found suitable would be granted permission for named caves/mines (or named routes in caves/mines). The assessment would normally include an underground trip with a group in the most severe site requested. The assessor would hold a LCMLA to the level being assessed and will have undergone an assessors course.

Several items still need to be addressed at this stage e.g. over 18's, mines and SRT. The Scout Association had asked the NCA both for comments and to set up the Assessors course in a similar way that Plas-y-Brennin had for Hill-walking assessors. The Scout Association had not appreciated that the CIC trainer/assessors scheme did not include assessment training. A meeting at Bob Mehew's house the previous week had cleared the air of various misconceptions and Ian James would, following the next Meeting of his group in early February, come back to us with an outline of the Assessors course.

Both Paul Ramsden and Chips Rafferty offered their assistance in negotiations with the Scout Association should it become necessary.

7. Universities During 2001 and 2002, several University Caving Clubs had had problems with University / Union Safety Officers and had got together to hold a seminar to discuss their way forward. One thing that had become apparent was that the NCA advice to University Clubs was now out of date. The NCA had made a grant from training funds towards the training element of the seminar in 2002 in place of the intention to organise one itself which had not come about. It was noted that there was an intention to hold a similar seminar in 2003. It was agreed that in principle a grant should be made but no sum be considered pending receiving further details.

8. Identification of issues that the Committee needs to Address Concern was expressed by the committee that undue emphasis was being placed on "professional" caving and that there was a need to extend or adapt the current training schemes to "recreational" caving. Comment was made about using a different title from professional and recreational to describe the two groups. Concern was also expressed about the reluctance of cavers in general to formalisation of training.

- A) Provision of support for Club trainers and recreational cavers.
- B) Maintenance of the LCMLA and CIC schemes via the panels.
- C) Negotiations with the Scout Association to develop an authorisation scheme acceptable to both parties.
- D) Continued support to University Clubs.

9. Grants for 2003 There seemed to have been a lot of problems with the allocation of grant money in 2002. Nigel Atkins on behalf of DCA in particular felt that money initially promised in the early part of the year had later proved to be not forthcoming. It was not clear how or why this had happened but the following measures were agreed to prevent confusion this year.

- A) Applications were to be dealt with on a strictly first come first.
- B) Bodies who had expressed a interest in grants this year were to be contacted to submit full details as soon as possible. (University Seminar, Mendip First Aid and DCRO.) Action Idris.
- C) Idris Williams to contact Descent to advertise the availability of grants.
- D) The application from DCA for £600 for the joint DCA / NCA event was approved as full details were provided at the meeting.
- E) A sum of £200 was to be held in reserve for the University Seminar subject to receipt of details.
- F) The budget for the year was to be £2000.

10. Date of next Meeting Bearing in mind Andy Sparrow's comment that his inability to attend the meeting due to it being held on a Saturday, Idris asked what the feeling of the committee was for midweek meetings. The general feeling was that weekends were more convenient for the majority.

The date was agreed as Saturday April 5th 10.30 a.m. at the Stafford CC Staff Club.

11. Any other Business

- A) Risk Participation Statement Paul Ramsden raised this issue which had been partly discussed before. Paul was asked to liaise with the Legal and Insurance Officer

Action PR liaise with L&I Officer over an update of the Risk Participation Statement

B) Maintenance of Gear Paul Ramsden noted that the Petzl CD ROM provided advice on gear maintenance, as did IRATA. Bob Mehew noted various other sources of similar advice. Paul was asked to provide extracts to Idris for consideration. Bob noted that this may be a topic for Equipment Committee rather than Training.

Action PR supply IW with extracts of gear maintenance advice.

C) Minimum Impact Caving Code Paul Ramsden noted his watching brief on this issue. Bob Mehew explained that the Conservation and Access Committee had not been active so nothing had happened. Paul agreed to keep his watching brief.

D) Child Protection Policy Bob Mehew noted a complication with the NCA policy which had been identified in the run up to the issue of the LCMLA handbook. Action was being taken to try and resolve it, but in the mean time, he would brief Idris.

E) Powers of Training Technical Advice Service Provider Bob Mehew noted that the NCP meeting on 15 March 2002 had agreed to the following statement "NCP agreed that TTASP can make decisions on the basis of precedent and provide clarification and interpretation of the scheme to the TASP. However, TTASP should seek confirmation of proposed decisions setting new precedent with NCP Chair. NCP Chair may refer to NCP any proposals which are considered to need debate. In the absence of NCP Chair, the TO may be consulted for a decision." Training Committee endorsed the statement. It was noted that the CIC Handbook would require some revision to include the principle of this statement.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm.