

Minutes of NCA Training Committee held on 26th July 2003 at the Staffs CC
S&S Club at 10.30 a.m.

Present	Idris Williams	NCA Training Officer
	Steve Tomalin	Forest of Dean
	Jenny Potts	Speleoscene
	Eric Hoole	CCC
	Graham Mollard	NCP
	Mat Robbins	DCA
	Dave Edwards	NCA TTASP

1. Apologies.

Received from Steve Holding, Tom Redfern, Ian James in advance. Paul Ramsden, John Cliffe, and Nigel Atkins at the meeting.

2. Minutes of meeting 5th April 2003.

The minutes were agreed as being a correct record.

3. Matters arising from the minutes.

Risk Participation Statement. IW had received an email the previous night from PR.

Unfortunately he had not had the time to study it. In view of this and PR not being present it was agreed to leave this item until the next meeting.

Advice to cavers. I W confirmed that he had been to see Des Marshall and had collected a lot of information that had been amassed in the past when Des had commenced to write the "Langmuir" of caving. IW suggested that a small sub group, of volunteers, be formed to look into this information with a view to publishing (probably via the website and associated paper copy in a ring binder) a series of advices for cavers on techniques, personal equipment and related matters. The committee felt that one person on a contract would better serve this function, however, it would be necessary to advertise the job widely and then consult to agree the form and style of publication. In terms of budget costs it was clear that it would be an open ended project, but would certainly need £4-5,000 to set up and run for the first year. Some discussion followed about possible formats and publishers. In conclusion it was agreed to put the project on hold until NCA's financial situation was clear.

Action:- IW to determine if funds would be available.

Minimum Impact Caving Code. IW reported that he had had a discussion with Elsie Little (NCA Conservation and Access Officer) regarding the issue of party size recommended. They had come to the conclusion, as this recommendation was subject to a Cave Conservation Plan, that Award Holders should draw up conservation plans for the Caves/routes being used. These Plans would take account of the particular

needs and fragility of that cave/routes. The plan could specify areas not to be entered by led parties and precautions to be taken at specific points. The committee agreed that this approach offered a sensible way forward and Award Holders should be advised accordingly.

Child Protection Policy. IW reported that he had suggested some alterations to this NCA policy to avoid possible conflict with Award Holders commitments to the bodies that they were working with. Dave Judson NCA Legal Officer has responded with the following proposal to be added as an introduction to the current Policy:-

"This Child Protection Policy document and the accompanying Guidance Notes are issued strictly for the guidance of the voluntary sector, caving and mining clubs and societies and individual members which constitute the main membership of the Association. Members and organisations controlled by Local Authorities and private sector organisations are expected to have their own guidance and working rules and arrangements which are entirely their own responsibility for developing, administering and updating within the legal framework."

It was suggested that as "voluntary sector" is a commonly used expression to differentiate Local Authority Youth Groups from those run by volunteers e.g. Scouts, Guides, Youth clubs etc. the following slight amendment be made:-
Delete "sector," in line 2. Insert ", voluntary sector youth groups" after Authorities in line 4.

The committee expressed satisfaction with this proposal, which left the Policy in place intact, for recreational caving and avoided the inevitable conflicts which Award Holders would have encountered.

I.W. mentioned that Dave Judson had commented that the policy needed amendment to incorporate vulnerable adults.

Report Back from National Coordinating Panel. G.M. remarked that he had not yet got the minutes out from the meeting on 6th June but hoped to get these out shortly. He also mentioned that it could present difficulties if NCP and Training Committee were to be held on the same week (as was due to happen in September). It was agreed to attempt to avoid this in future.

Location of SRT training kits. No progress had been made in tracking down the original ones. The new ones bought at the end of last year were still in Bob Mehew's possession.

Action:- I.W. to ask Bob to send the new ones to John Cliffe. I.W. to continue

investigating the whereabouts of the original ones.

4. Scout Association Authorisation Scheme.

I.W. Tabled an "email" received from Mick Day, (NCA Chairman), in which he pointed out the need, if negotiations are to be meaningful, for some ground to be given, possibly in the form of a temporary relaxation. He stated that if there was a failure in the current negotiations it could encourage the establishment of parallel schemes with less onerous standards threatening the future of the development of the NCA schemes.

I.W. pointed out that these negotiations had been going on for 18 months involving 2 Training Officers and one acting Training Officers and we needed to make a positive and definite response to the Scout Association. Ian James (Scout Association Headquarters Caving Advisor) could not be with us today but would attend the next meeting. He continued by summarising the position to date, which essentially was, that following a meeting between Ian James, Dave Edwards, Dave Ridout and IW. Dave Edwards had produced his first draft statement. This was discussed at the last Training Committee and subsequently by "email" culminating in the 14 point summary. Since then NCP had discussed the matter and this resulted in Dave Edwards' second draft statement.

The committee considered again in detail the 14 point summary (1-4 are introductory

words) and it was apparent that the following points were agreed:-

5. That over 18 members of the Scout Association be offered a framework of advice similar to that offered to University Clubs.
6. That Scout Authorisation for Mine Exploration should only be granted to persons holding the appropriate LCMLA or CIC award.
10. With the use of LCMLA training as a basis of Scout Cave Leader training, at Level or 2 as appropriate.

The following points were no longer agreed:-

7. With the principle of in house authorisation for Scout caving leaders.
8. With the programme for the Scout Assessors Course.
9. With the proposal for Scout Assessors to observe NCA Assessors as part of their training.

The following points were still not agreed:-

11. One day's assessment with a group is adequate.
12. With Scout Authorisations being valid for up to 5 years.
13. With the principle of SRT being instructed by Scout Authorised Leaders unless they hold CIC.
14. With the principle of Scout Assessors assessing Cave Leaders to an equal level to the level, which they hold qualifications.

In summary the committee were not in favour of there being any compromise on the NCA scheme.

G.M. then read from notes from the NCP meeting 6th June. He detailed D.E.'s introduction in which he stated that, whilst the Scouts were not obliged to use any outside qualification, consequently, there was no leverage to force them into the NCA schemes, although many Scout Leaders had followed this route. In an ideal world, the Scouts would use the NCA schemes, however, this would be unrealistic. The proposed Scout scheme formed a welcome step forward from the impasse of 10years ago. What was proposed would not be a competitor to the LCMLA but would use the LCMLA training as its' basis and would be solely applicable to Scouts. Opinion at NCP had been against NCA accepting any scheme less than that already available. The alternatives were for NCA to wash their hands of the Scout scheme or to endorse the advice for consenting adults, the use of full NCA award status for Mine Exploration and welcome the use of LCMLA training. The problem came with assessment, NCA could suggest the use of CIC holders rather than doing it within house, but would not endorse this although it fell in line with the suggestions for site-specific assessments.

I.W. Queried how this CIC assessment would operate, would this be at Scout HQ, regional or County level? The committee felt unable to discuss this, as that would be second-guessing the recommendations of the CIC.

G.M continues to say that it should be remembered that NCA wished to move this matter forward as much as The Scout Association, and the NCA needs to have some influence with The Scout Association to ensure good practice prevails.

The reasons behind this stance were:- 1.) A desire not to see the existing NCA schemes watered down. 2.) A fear that the endorsement of a scheme, involving lower standards, could set a precedent for other organisations. 3.) A fear that NCA could become legally responsible for the actions of Scout Assessors that it had trained to a lower standard than its' own assessors.

In conclusion it was felt that the NCA could recommend that the site-specific guidance could be used as a basis for the approval of in house assessment.

A discussion followed an the possible legal/insurance implications of the NCA being involved in an assessment scheme, for the Scouts, and it was pointed out that unlike the NCA a CIC would have professional insurance cover. Additionally there were the ethical implications involved in approving a scheme seen as being less onerous and robust than LCMLA, which hitherto had been seen as a minimum standard.

I.W. suggested that a time-limited approval could be given, with an agreed time scale for moving to the situation whereby all Scout Caving Leaders conformed to LCMLA/CIC requirements. The committee were generally not in favour of this, foreseeing complications if the time limits were not met and the constant need to monitor the development of the scheme.

In conclusion the Committee took the stance that they would recommend that the NCA endorse the sections of the Scout scheme which agreed with LCMLA/CIC and suggest that the Scout Association engage a CIC, as technical advisor, to make recommendations about the rest of the scheme, particularly in respect of matters of cave leader assessment. This procedure would be generally in accordance with the site-specific format, previously agreed for in house assessments. It was suggested that NCA could set up training workshops for Scout Caving Leaders in SRT or other matters.

Action IW to arrange a meeting with Ian James involving DE and himself to explore the way forward with this matter based on DE's document that had resulted from the NCP discussions.

5. Proposal for Compulsory BCA membership for Award Holders.

I.W. Commented that he had received a lot of "emails" from Award holders all against this proposal. Many of the comments referred to the British Canoe Union which was, as far as known, the only other National Governing body to adopt this approach. Many canoe Instructors had allowed their BCU Awards to lapse due to the expense of this membership, it was felt that this would also happen in caving particularly in view of the current approach of AALA which was not insisting on full LCMLA for activity centre cave leaders. The BCU was not held in high regard due to this policy, which was perceived purely as a money-raising scheme. I.W. also said he found it difficult to form an opinion on this with no idea about the costs or likely benefits of individual membership.

J.P. Was unable to help with the cost aspect, however, the benefits would include a newsletter and access to public liability insurance. There were doubts expressed regarding the insurance aspect, it was unlikely to include professional cover, and there was also a feeling that underwriters would be very wary of including professional covers even whilst undertaking recreational caving.

G.M. reported that this had been debated at NCP. The feeling was very much against this proposal due to the BCU analogy; however, if it were necessary to get the BCA onto a secure financial footing they would support the cost of a year's individual subscription being incorporated into the LMCLA registration fee. If the individual membership provided reasonable benefits then no doubt Award Holders would

continue. He also stated that if the insurance services were similar to those offered by the British Mountaineering Council then this proposal would be seen in a much more positive light.

J.P. mentioned that one of the major problems for the insurance negotiators was determining how many cavers actually existed. This was due to multiple club membership and the large numbers of inactive cavers keeping their club membership going.

I.W. Pointed out that the current funding arrangements were such that the majority of the cost of running the Awards was born by Sports Council grants. A sum of around £5000 p.a. was taken from the income generated by fees to support Conservation and Access. Consequently Award holders were contributing to the overall finance of NCA.

In conclusion the committee were of the opinion that they would support the NCP suggestion of first year BCA membership incorporated into Award Scheme registration, but were generally not in favour of agreeing to compulsory membership, certainly not until the cost/benefit situation was clearer.

6. Trainer/Assessor disciplinary matter and other Confidential Matters.

7. NCA 4year Development Plan.

I.W. suggested that the only 2 items that could be added to the previous plan for future years were. A). To extend the Training for Club Trainers as being done by Nigel in Derbyshire to the other Areas. B). To develop a form of advice to cavers either as a book or as a series of leaflets.

He also commented that since the grants were under threat a 4 year plan could well be irrelevant.

The matter of SRT training was also raised. At present it looked very unlikely that we would grant aid 3or4 this year. Spending allocations were on target to conform to the budget.

Action IW to draft a proposal for circulation before the next meeting.

8. Training Grants.

a). Report on grant applications received.

I.W. tabled a spreadsheet detailing the current position. Since the last meeting he had promised £70 to Imperial College for expedition rescue training as both the application and the event fell between meetings. The Committee endorsed this.

Applications had been received from Devon SS for a First Aid Course (This was not a Health & Safety orientated course, although IW commented that it seemed very expensive for only 12 participants.) £350. Also, from DCA for £170 for self-rescue.

The Committee approved these. This leaves £155 of the budget unallocated with an expected application from BCRA for SRT at Hidden Earth.

b). Resolution to pay grants for training completed.

JP Queried the inclusion of the DCA grant in this as it had already been paid.

IW

explained that the treasurer had refused to pay the others as the committee had not

resolved to pay them. However the committee had not resolved to pay the DCA grant

either.

The Committee approved the resolution as circulated.

c). Resolution to authorise the Training Officer to deal with training grants.

IW explained that under the current system an applicant could have to wait up to 3or4

months between application and the promise of the grant. A similar delay could occur

between a report on the satisfactory completion of the Training and payment. He thought that this was unfair and, since applications were often only made a

couple of

weeks before the event, would lead to the refusal of perfectly viable grant applications

due to lack of notice. He saw no reason why he could not be granted authority to authorise grants and their payment provided they followed the guidelines and

fell

within budget. At each Training Committee meeting the Training Officer would report on the progress of these applications.

The Committee approved the resolution as circulated.

The spread of Training Grants more equitably around the regions was discussed.

This

year a large proportion of the available funds were being allocated within Derbyshire.

This was solely due to lack of applications from other areas. There was a need for

training especially for club training officers in the other regions.

Action:- Regional Council reps. to promote this in their regions.

9. Council of Higher Education Caving clubs draft advice.

The draft produced by CHECC was discussed and was agreed to provide suitable advice for these clubs. Before adopting as NCA advice it was suggested that the word

competent replace more experienced in the section on rigger's knowledge and that the

whole document needed rearranging to incorporate the separate sources of advice into one.

Action:- Training Officer

10. Any Other Business.

Some matters arose as a result of the discussions about BCA membership.

I.W. Enquired if there were any ways in which NCA could keep in touch with Award Holders to keep them up to date with developments. For example it would be useful to

ensure that they all got to see a copy of the Training Bulletin.

J.P. Pointed out that there was a high cost involved in maintaining a circulation list.

People tended to change address (mail & email) very frequently and it was a logistical

nightmare to keep up with these.

The committee could not think of a way to improve communications with Award Holders.

I.W. Asked if there would be any advantage for relations between "recreational" and

"professional" caving if the PICA model were copied in other areas.

The general feeling was that PICA had arisen due to a severe access problem coupled

with the need for people to work together on the mines inspection front. Whilst there

were no known problems in other areas there was no need for this and in any event

the success of PICA had spread to other regions by word of mouth.

G.M. Brought up the subject of traverse lines in LMCLA. NCP had discussed this and had come up with a form of wording which should be incorporated into the handbook at the first review. The use of securely anchored traverse lines where the

result of a slip would not leave the traverser dangling in space or trapped in fast water

could be added to the Level 1 syllabus.

I.W. Queried if this would apply to wire rope traverses such as Ogof Ffynnon Ddu 1

Escape route or a few mines. It was generally agreed that it would apply to these but

individual cases would need to be looked at by Area Panels.

The committee agreed the form of wording proposed by NCP and that it should be incorporated in the handbook at the next review.

G.M. Brought up the case of the few remaining Trainer/assessors who for historical or

NCA need for their specialist knowledge but did not hold CIC awards. Since individual persons were mentioned this is minuted in the confidential section.

11. Dates of next meetings.

27th September and 20th December were previously agreed all at 10.00 a.m. at Stafford. 3rd April 2004 was agreed as the next after that.

