COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Agenda for Committee Meeting 16th January 2016, Hellifield Village Institute, 9:30am

(1) Apologies for absence

(2) Acceptance of minutes from the September Committee meeting (these have already been through the one month review process before making public on the website).

(3) Any matters arising from the September Committee meeting?

(4) Officer's reports (will be made available approx one week before meeting)

a. Chairman's report – Roy Holmes
b. Secretary's report – Matt Ewles
c. Treasurer's report – Glenn Jones/Pete Bann
d. Conservation Officer's report – Kay Easton
e. Training Officer's report – Dan Irving
f. Access Officer's report – Johnny Latimer

(5) Meets Secretary's reports (will be made available approx one week before meeting)

(6) Draft constitutional amendments for individual caver representation

As agreed at the September meeting, the CNCC Constitution team (Matt Ewles, Kay Easton, Ric and Pat Halliwell) have been working together to draft constitutional amendments to enable the CNCC Committee to include a representative for individual (non-club) cavers.

The document was circulated to the Committee by email on 12th November and is now available to download on the CNCC website as a supporting document for this meeting.

In this meeting we should:

(A) Discuss the document, and raise any concerns/questions

(B) Make any necessary changes to address concerns brought to the meeting

(C) Identify if there is a Committee club willing to propose and second this document ahead of the AGM in their capacity as a full member club

(D) Take a vote to assess the level of Committee support (full members will appreciate knowing whether this has the backing of their outgoing Committee)

(7) Engaging with external bodies and individuals regarding cave access

At the end of November I was contacted by the Lancashire Local Access Forum (LLAF) to appeal to the CNCC to allow access for individual cavers. I replied promptly to explain that it is not the CNCC who disallow this (and to explain that actually we specifically changed our constitution to ensure that this was not the case), but that it was the wording of the access agreements. I explained that a process of revisiting these was underway, with agreement of the CNCC Committee to extend access to individual cavers wherever this was possible.

The LLAF asked if their letter could be shared with the CNCC Committee (see Appendix 1).

Subsequently, I received emails from Tim Allen commenting on the lack of engagement of the CNCC with organisations such as the LLAF and the Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum.

Tim and I have had a number of similar discussions over the past few years, in which he has expressed concerns about the pace of progress on matters such as individual caver representation, interaction with these external organisations and revisiting our historic access agreements particularly at Leck and Casterton Fell to see if access can be improved.

I agree that the pace of progress has not been as fast as we would have liked, but it is not for lack of trying. Over the past six months, we have made efforts to improve the access in two areas: Langcliffe Estate has yielded very little success. This has been discussed at the last few Committee meetings. On Johnny's recommendation, I have written to the Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum (with who Tim helped us to establish contact) to enlist their help with dealing with this landowner.

For Casterton Fell, I wrote to the land agents several months ago to ask that they to consider more open access, or a meeting with me to discuss this at their offices, but as yet I have received no reply despite Johnny having made further enquiries about this with them.

This highlights that when dealing with landowners the biggest challenge is actually getting their time and attention. It is understandable that access for cavers is far lower down on their priority list than it is ours, and the CNCC currently lacks the resource to push harder than we already do.

Following a recent discussion between Johnny and I (and in response to a discussion between Johnny and Tim), we believe that it is time to put the sometimes acrimonious relationship that the CNCC and Tim have had over the last several years behind us, and try to work more closely together. The CNCC struggles for time and resource to push for greater access; but, Tim regularly attends all meetings of local access forums and has many contacts through the National Parks. Fundamentally we want the same thing: increased access for all cavers. The main area that Tim and the CNCC have differed in the past is perhaps the approach taken by each towards achieving this.

It is mine and Johnny's belief that to continue to drive forward the access improvements we have seen over the last few years, we should ask Tim for his involvement and help.

The suggestion we put to the Committee is to ask Tim to take a co-opted role within the CNCC (Assistant Access Officer or Access Representative). In this role he would have the backing of the

CNCC to assist Johnny to help improve the relationship between the CNCC and the various local access forums, and bring to our attention more opportunities to improve access, which Johnny can then work with Tim to take advantage of or bring to the attention of the CNCC Committee.

Clearly there has been a turbulent history between Tim and the CNCC, however, there seems little to be gained in allowing this to block a potential opportunity. Tim has already demonstrated dedication to many aspects of Northern Caving and we believe that his knowledge, contacts, time, passion, and also position as the BCA CRoW liaison can be harnessed positively within the CNCC, meaning that a significant amount stands to be gained for cave access across the north of England.

I have spoken with Tim, and he would, if asked by the CNCC Committee, be willing to work with us. We feel that this is the right thing to do for Northern Cavers and it would be greatly appreciated if the CNCC Committee would consider this suggestion.

Matt Ewles and Johnny Latimer

(8) CNCC Position on the BCA campaign over CRoW

Some time ago (May 2014) the CNCC Committee voted to support seeking clarification on whether CRoW applied to caving. The answer has been that, in the eyes of the relevant authorities (DEFRA) it does not. Since then, the BCA poll showed support for actions to try to change this position.

There is a strong body of opinion that Parliament always intended the Act to apply to activities such as caving, and therefore BCA sees no need to seek change to the existing law. Instead, the BCA are campaigning to change DEFRA's interpretation of the CRoW Act and its application to caving.

To facilitate this, the BCA has appointed a CRoW liaison officer to work the campaign with the assistance of the executive and other officers. Regular reports will be made to Council meetings.

Three independent people have now asked me whether the CNCC supports the BCA campaign. This is a very different question to that answered last May. A discussion at this Committee meeting would be good to try to answer this question.

Matt Ewles

(9) Date and time of next meeting

Annual General Meeting 5th March 2016, 10am, Hellifield Village Institute.

Suggested provisional Committee meeting dates (to be confirmed at the AGM):

Saturday 4th June 2016 (Committee)
Saturday 10th September 2016 (Committee)
Saturday 14th January 2017 (Committee)
Saturday 11th March 2017 (AGM)

(10) Any other business?

Appendix 1: Letter to CNCC Committee from Lancashire Local Access Forum

Lancashire Local Access Forum

Matt Ewles
Secretary
Council

Phone: 01772 534284
Fax:
Email: Joanne.mills@lancashire.gov.uk

Your ref: { FORMTEXT }
Our ref: LLAF/JM
Date: 17 November 2015

Dear Mr Ewles

Caving Access in Lancashire

The Lancashire Local Access Forum has recently been made aware that caving access is very varied and permits to access caves are only issued to recognised caving clubs by your organisation and not to individual cavers. This restriction on access for individual cavers concerned members of the Forum. As CNCC is the access controlling body, the Forum is asking if consideration could be given to a review of the Council's current access arrangements which could lead to individual cavers being issued with permits.

The Forum would be grateful if this could be brought to the attention of the Council of Northern Caving Club Committee.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Mills
Secretary to the Lancashire Local Access Forum