

# COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

## British Caving Association

### **Agenda for Annual General Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> March 2022, Hellifield Institute, 10:00am**

*Note: Due to a secretarial error this Agenda was published after the constitutional deadline of 6 weeks ahead of the AGM.*

**Reminder: Representatives will not be permitted to vote during the meeting, unless the Secretary has received authentication identifying the individual as the accepted voting representative of the club. This can be in the form of a letter signed by a club officer, or an email from an official club officer's account. This should be provided electronically to the Secretary in advance of the meeting.**

- 1) Apologies for absence.
- 2) Applications for full membership:

One application for full membership has been received this year:

- a. Peak Caving Club
  - i. Proposed by Yorkshire Subterranean Society
  - ii. Seconded by Craven Pothole Club

A representative of the club has been invited to the meeting to answer questions. A vote on whether to accept them as a full member will be held. If successful, this new member will gain immediate voting rights for agenda item 3 onwards.

- 3) Acceptance of minutes from the 2021 AGM (draft available on website).

4) Any matters arising or updates on action items from the 2021 AGM.

**Reminder of action items from 2021 AGM (with update in red where status known):**

Individual(s)	Action item
Josh Y	Finalise 2020 AGM Minutes <b>Done</b>
Mark R	Report back to the committee regarding IC anchor testing in rocks other than limestone. <b>Done, see reports for June 2021 meeting.</b>
Gary D	Work with TC to incorporate the dye tracing database into the CNCC's web hosting.
Josh Y	Update the constitution with the agreed amendments. <b>Done</b>
Ian P	Re-draft his proposal regarding retrospectively adding anchors to the CNCC list of approved anchors. <b>Ongoing.</b>
Anchor Installer Team	Arrange a meeting to discuss the anchoring of Diccan Pot. <b>Done.</b>

5) Officer reports Reports (to be online approximately one week before the meeting).

- i. Chairman's report
- ii. Secretary's report
- iii. Conservation Officer's report
- iv. Training Officer's report
- v. Any other reports received

6) Election of CNCC Committee for the year 2022-2023

The CNCC requires between 10-14 clubs to comprise the Committee. All full member clubs were asked to provide notification of their intention to stand for Committee by the 29th January deadline (a requirement of the constitution). Notifications are shown in **Appendix A** along with supporting statements. No application has been received for the Individual Caver (IC) Representative.

7) Election of CNCC Officers for the year 2022-2023

- a. Chair
- b. Secretary
- c. Treasurer
- d. Conservation Officer
- e. Access Officer
- f. Training Officer

Notifications are shown in **Appendix B** along with statements.

## 8) Access to Birks Fell Cave and the impact of changes to BCA's Public Liability Insurance

Item submitted by Matt Ewles:

Last summer, I volunteered, with support of the Committee, to look into access to Birks Fell Cave, one of our few remaining caves on CRoW access land which is subject to a restrictive permit system. I was able to engage in friendly discussions with the National Trust who seemed amenable in principle to a Memorandum of Understanding similar to that at Langcliffe Hall Estate, which allows open access on some basic, unrestrictive understandings.

One of these understandings was that the National Trust would be indemnified for incidents arising via the BCA's insurance policy, something that was essential to them. Full details can be found in my reports and the agenda for recent Committee meetings.

Unfortunately, since summer, it has come to light that the BCA have discontinued to offer comprehensive landowner liability cover as part of their policy UNLESS the visiting caver is a BCA member (or is with a BCA member, or has two years of very undefined caving experience). The BCA have been extremely quiet about these changes; despite the fact that they no doubt affect arrangements across the country.

This means we can no longer offer landowners blanket guarantees about their indemnity as we have in the past when they have entered into agreements with us. After discussion at the January Committee meeting, a decision was made for CNCC to move away from offering liability cover to landowners as part of any new access agreements, as the availability of this on any level seems uncertain for the future.

Consequently I contacted National Trust in January to say that we can no longer offer this, and furthermore as of end of March, we would no longer be supporting the existing permit system. I made it clear that there are two choices; they either allow the existing permit system to lapse, and accept, or offer no resistance to open access caving at Birks Fell Cave, which is on, and accessed via public rights of way and CRoW access land; or that we can offer them a Memorandum of Understanding, but with no offer of indemnification.

The only way to offer them indemnification would be to limit the scope of the Memorandum of Understanding to cavers which fit BCA's requirements (the conditions and scope of which are likely to change again in the near future); This latter option goes against a decision made several years ago for the CNCC to stand for access for all cavers, not just BCA members, and there was little appetite to go against this at the January Committee meeting, particularly for a cave on CRoW Access land.

So far, one month on, National Trust have not replied. Thus, as things stand, the Birks Fell Cave permit-based access agreement will expire at the end of March, after which time CNCC will advise cavers that no permission is required providing the route of approach is via public footpaths and access land (as it is, when approached from Buckden). If National Trust do reply accepting a revised Memorandum of Understanding with no guarantee of liability indemnification, we will offer then this.

I must add that National Trust have been nothing but helpful throughout my discussions with them. They have understood our position and have made no efforts to push back against what we have discussed.

I feel it is worth this Annual General Meeting being made aware of this course of action, and to provide an opportunity for any questions, concerns or objections to be raised before the final course of action is taken.

This AGM should also be aware that we have access agreements at two other sites which are affected by the changes to BCA's insurance; the Langcliffe Hall Estate Memorandum of Understanding offers open access to several sites on Penyghent and Penyghent Gill, on condition of BCA having liability insurance for the landowner for any visitor to the cave. This can no longer be honoured and needs renegotiating as a matter of urgency. Secondly, Excalibur Pot offers liability insurance to the landowner but without restriction to who can be given a permit. This has been resolved for now by reverting back to only issuing permits to BCA members. Other sites where the landowner is offered indemnification as part of an agreement include Bowland, Fairy Holes, Mongo Gill and Robinson's Pot, however, as these access agreements already limit access to BCA members, there are no immediate issues here as the landowner will remain covered, although if BCA's landowner liability cover deteriorates further, these areas too may be affected.

None of the caves on the online booking system carry any formal written agreements and no assurances about liability were made.

#### 9) Dates for the coming year.

Suggested dates for 2022-2023 meetings are presented below for discussion (and if necessary, revision).

Committee Meetings:	Saturday 11th June 2022, 09:30am
	Saturday 29th October 2022, 09:30am
	Saturday 14th January 2023, 09:30am

Annual General Meeting:	Saturday 11th March 2023, 10:00am
-------------------------	-----------------------------------

#### 10) Any other business?

## Appendix A: Committee Elections

The 2021-2022 Committee and their figures for Committee meeting attendance:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Meetings with voting reps present (out of 3)</u>
Bradford Pothole Club	3
Craven Pothole Club	3
Earby Pothole Club	2
Grampian Speleological Group	3
Kendal Caving Club	2
Northern Boggarts	3
Northern Pennine Club	3
Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club	3
University of Leeds Speleological Society	3
White Rose Pothole Club	3
York Caving Club	2
Yorkshire Subterranean Society	2
York University Cave and Pothole Club	3

Clubs which have provided notification to stand for CNCC Committee in 2022-2023

(Listed in chronological order of notification receipt, earliest to latest, total = 13)

Re-standing:	Grampian Speleological Group
Re-standing:	Earby Pothole Club
Re-standing:	York Caving Club
Re-standing:	Bradford Pothole Club
Re-standing:	York University Cave and Pothole Club
Re-standing:	University of Leeds Speleological Association
Re-standing:	Northern Boggarts
Re-standing:	Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club
Re-standing:	Northern Pennine Club
Re-standing:	White Rose Pothole Club
Re-standing:	Yorkshire Subterranean Society
Re-standing:	Kendal Caving Club
Re-standing:	Craven Pothole Club

Therefore, we have 13 applicants and 14 available positions. We need to appoint at least 10 of these applicants to form a Committee.

No applicant has come forward for the Committee position of Individual Caver (IC) representative.

## Appendix A (continued): Statements from clubs standing for Committee

**Grampian Speleological Group:** I set out my stall for continuing on the CNCC committee as the sole representative for Scottish cavers, to 'put my oar in' if/when matters arise that affect them, and also to assist in furthering the general aims of the CNCC, which I support whole-heartedly.

**Earby Pothole Club:** The Earby Pothole Club is amongst the oldest caving clubs in the UK. Founded in 1945 we have had a long association with and have actively supported the CNCC since its inception.

Mainly active in the Northern Region, although small, we have been involved in many successful digging projects, cave archaeological finds and conservation work with members taking part in numerous overseas expeditions.

Many members are also members of other caving clubs in the UK.

We would wish to continue this active support of the CNCC by continuing our position on the Committee.

**York Caving Club:** We remain a small but extremely active club, around 30 members, the majority of who are regular cavers. We are underground regularly in the Yorkshire Dales, Northern Dales and regularly dig in the North York Moors, and we have good links with a number of like-minded clubs in these areas. We would be extremely happy to put our name to offering support and advice to the CNCC for another year.

**Bradford Pothole Club:** As a long-established club, having a presence in the caving community in our 89th year and with a membership of around 300 we consistently see former cavers returning to the sport as well as introducing new people. We are not only one of the largest clubs in the country but also have a very active caving membership both above and below water, not only in the Dales, but also have members involved in exploration in other parts of the UK as well as taking part in a number of foreign expeditions every year.

As a club we have been involved with the CNCC from the outset and have a number of members involved in cave conservation projects as well as with Natural England.

The club arranges caving meets every other weekend which are open to both members and guests and provide visiting cavers whether from university clubs or other established clubs accommodation with a warm welcome and also provide local knowledge as well.

We provide an interface between cavers and the general public through our activities at our annual Gaping Gill meet by providing access to the system either via a winch directly into the main chamber and by rigging the major routes in to the system for visiting cavers to use.

We support a number of local charities and have a number of members who are active in the Cave Rescue Organisation, Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association and Calder Valley Search and Rescue Team.

**York University Cave and Pothole Club:** YUCPC is an extremely active student club, running trips every weekend in usual times and hosting regular training sessions to introduce new young people to the wonderful world of caving. Due to the pandemic, we have been hit more than most as we not only have to follow the government restrictions, but the restrictions of our university, although have caved every weekend this year it was possible for us. This year more than usual we would like to contribute to discussions with our usual youth-focused viewpoint, because a number of student clubs are going to be facing substantial difficulties in the wake of the pandemic. We have a significant interest in the work of the CNCC and a desire to do what we can to assist that work and contribute to discussions.

**University of Leeds Speleological Association:** ULSA would like to stand for re-election to the CNCC committee at the AGM this year. We have played an active role on the committee for several years, supporting improved access to caves for all cavers, and improving representation for DIMs. We will continue to ensure that the views and interests of student cavers are represented.

In The Dales, our members are active in sports trips, digging, diving, surveying, conservation and bolting. Many are also members of other caving clubs around the country. As a university club, we introduce many new, mainly young, people to caving although this past year has been somewhat challenging in that regard. New cavers are the future of caving and we would like to continue helping the CNCC with the good work they do.

**Northern Boggarts:** The Northern Boggarts, a local northern caving club based in Clitheroe, is happy to stand again for the committee for the CNCC in 2022. Our club has been on the committee since June 2009 and during this time has played an active part in promoting the interest of northern cavers. Our club has contributed to some of the CNCC Newsletters, helped with the design of a leaflet on digging guidelines and one of our members helped with the publication on the opening of Shuttleworth Pot and Witches 2. Several of our members continue to play an active part in conservation projects and have helped publicise and make photographic records of many of these. Our club continues to play a lively part in the running of CNCC. One of our club members is the Conservation Officer for the CNCC, one is the Treasurer, and another club member is Access Officer for the Bowland Area. We are happy to play an active role in the CNCC and look forwards to your continuing support.

**Red Rose Cave & Pothole Club:** The Red Rose are keen to maintain involvement in with matters affecting cavers and caving in the North and support the CNCC in their work. Despite the pressures of COVID we're a thriving club, with trips, digging and conservation work in the Dales and beyond. We're proud to have taken an active part in the great team effort required for the Three Counties Traverse and completed significant works to stabilise and reopen access to Aygill Caverns. Looking forward, there's Wretched Rabbit entrance to fix, the magic and mayhem of hosting another CHECC weekend and we're also working towards changes to help bring younger members into caving.

**Northern Pennine Club:** No statement provided.

**White Rose Pothole Club:** No statement provided.

**Yorkshire Subterranean Society:** The YSS would like to stand again for the committee – as a longstanding and active Yorkshire club and member of the CNCC we feel we continue to offer something to the CNCC and its decision making . We attended all meetings in 2021.

**Kendal Caving Club:** Whilst always a relatively small club, we have been active in the Dales and elsewhere for over 60 years. Our present activities are normally largely focussed on regular sport caving meets. In association with this we have introduced numerous people new to caving and helped others further develop their skills. In addition we have some members who are involved in various digging activities, cave clean-ups and so forth.

We are keen to maintain our links with CNCC

**Craven Pothole Club:** We have a large active caving membership from all over the UK and the world.

Our yearly Gaping Gill meet took place in a much reduced format again in 2021.

Our Dales cottage is normally used by a number of university and climbing clubs introducing new people to caving and the north.

The current membership represents active members of cave and mountain rescue teams covering the whole of the UK (Dales, Mendip, Midlands and the national body). We have an active conservation policy with membership involvement in Sell Gill, Ingleborough, etc.

Finally the CPC is a long established Dales club (1929), are founding members of the CNCC and have actively helped the CNCC on many occasions in the past due to our extensive network of local people.

The club is keen to continue this long-standing contribution to the CNCC.

## Appendix B: Officer Elections

The following individuals have provided notification of their intention to stand:

**Chair:** Andrew Hinde

**Secretary:** Joshua Young

**Treasurer:** Pete Bann

**Conservation Officer:** Kay Easton

**Access Officer:** Adele Ward

**Training Officer:** Ian Patrick



**Application from Kay Easton:** I would like to stand again for Conservation Officer, a post I have held for the last seven years. I am a member of the Bradford PC and Northern Boggarts. As Conservation Officer, I will perform a facilitative role, helping people access the support and information they need to carry out the conservation projects that they are interested in.

**Application from Adele Ward:** Having always enjoyed a challenge, it is my intention to stand for the post of CNCC Access Officer. I view this as an opportunity to promote caving in a positive manner and increase participation in our sport.

Over my years of caving across the north, I have found interacting with landowners / farmers / gamekeepers to be a rewarding experience. Explaining to these people about the land that is beneath their feet has been a pleasure. Favourable relationships helps cavers keep doing what we are doing.

I have been caving for a number of years and consider myself quite experienced, having undertaken a number of the more challenging routes. Nonetheless, I am always learning and I would like to think I've done all I can to support people into sport caving and digging. In my time caving I have seen the CNCC go from strength to strength, and having more free time than many people my age, I would like to give something back to the organisation.

I am a member of several clubs, some of which are involved in mine exploration too. Living in the north east of England this has meant that I have done a lot of caving in the Northern Pennines and Eastern Dales areas. These regions often have crossovers between the mine and cave communities. In particular, now that Tim Allen has done a great job with access in the Three Peaks/Three Counties areas, many of the future access issues are likely to lie in some of the less well known parts of our region, which I am particularly fond and familiar with, and where I already have many contacts with local cavers.

Whilst there is no magic wand for access, I believe my enthusiasm and clear communication will be useful tools. I am a former mental health nurse and used to resolving conflict in a quiet and constructive manner which I think puts me in good stead for resolving issues that may arise from time to time.

Positive landowner relationships help us all keep caving. Tim has a wealth of experience and would be assisting me within this role. I am aware that there is much fine detail I would need to develop.

**Application from Ian Patrick:** For the last 12 months the CNCC training workshops have been extremely well received and the demand has shown no sign of diminishing.

We have now advertised for 2 additional new trainers to help us deliver the SRT workshops.

I would like to stand for the Training Officer role for another term, to help continue and develop the workshops.

I hope the committee are happy with the workshops and the format and see fit to trust me continuing in this role.