

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Reports for 14th January 2017 Committee Meeting

Chairman's Report

Another year has passed with very problems as far as far as access is concerned and more success on the conservation front, but we must not be complacent as there is much work to be done.

The revamping of the CNCC website has by all accounts been a real success with more information than ever before now available, all the comments I have seen and heard have been very positive. I must express my sincere thanks to our web master Gary Douthwaite for the tremendous effort he has put in over the last year.

Many thanks also to all the Officers and council members whose hard work has made 2016 a great success.

Hopefully you are all aware that there are a number of vacancies to be filled at the forthcoming AGM. If you or anyone in your club would like to be considered for any position, please let our Secretary know in good time.

There is also a new role being created as an independent caver (not a club caver) to represent all none club cavers in the north.

All the best for a successful 2017.

Roy Holmes – CNCC Chairman

Secretary's Report

A happy new year to everyone!

Since October it has been a quiet few months with respect to matters arising for the CNCC to deal with. This has allowed me the time to focus on the action items from the previous meeting. Needless to say, I departed the last meeting with the word 'liability' ringing loudly in my ears, so addressing the matters raised with respect to this was high on my agenda.

The new CNCC website goes a long way to addressing some of the matters raised in October. The fixed aid section clarifies the CNCC's position; that we endorse resin anchors installed in accordance with BCA policy, but we do not endorse any other kinds of fixed aids. Key safety advice for anchors has been updated and a fixed aid participation statement has been added.

The cave descriptions and rigging topos are now online. There is safety advice concerning use of these resources attached to every document to improve safety associated to their usage.

The layout of the webpage for each individual cave has been redesigned to put much greater emphasis on any warnings that we have become aware of such as loose anchors, blocks, hazardous sections etc. Recent examples include the Penyghent Pot entrance, the collapse in Christmas Pot, and some loose anchors in Bull Pot. These now appear in red at the top of each cave page. I will work with meets secretary's over the coming months to encourage them to advise groups to which they issue permits to check for warnings and notifications on the CNCC website before their trip (or better still to add this advice in text to the permit document). This should aid our responsibility to warn cavers of additional hazards and reduce our liability associated to access.

On other matters, this meeting also marks the deadline for standing for Committee and Officer roles at our AGM on 11th March. At the time of writing this report (10th January), I have 12 applications to join the Committee for 2017. This is good, although it means two positions may end up vacant. Two of the clubs standing are newcomers to the position, which is great news. New applicants have also come forward for Chairman and Training Officer. Unfortunately, there are no applicants yet for Access Officer or the Individual Caver representative.

I am currently gathering content for the fifth in the series of CNCC newsletters, which I hope will be available before the AGM. Content is currently a little light but as many of you have already noticed, I have started nagging the usual people for contributions. Please let me know if you have anything to report relating to any of the CNCC's functions or if you have any ideas for articles.

Matt Ewles – CNCC Secretary

Treasurer's Report

Financial Status as of 6th January 2017:

Business Current Account: £2556.61

Business Saver Account: £18400.69

Since the October meeting, the following payments/receipts made:

£30.00 paid to the Hellifield Institute for the hire of the meeting hall.

£973.12 received from BCA (Grant to Regional Councils) on 30th December 2016 - re 2015 claim.

Travel expenses for Skirwith and Slab Caves have been distributed.

Pete Bann – CNCC Treasurer

Conservation Officer's Report

A team of CNCC volunteers replaced the broken slabs covering Blood Cave and the nearby rift to secure against stock. The work was carried out with the aid of funding from the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership (Stories in Stone).

New volunteers are always welcome, for weekend or weekday working parties. No specific skills are necessary, but if you have them, we will do our best to make use of them. On the job training is given as needed. Occasionally there may be the opportunity to attend a training course. Tools will be provided, but you are responsible for providing your own protective clothing - stout footwear, preferably with steel toe caps, stout gloves, weatherproof clothing, helmet. You will also need to provide your own packed lunch and hot drinks. If you'd like to be placed on the mailing list to be informed of future projects, please contact Kay Easton on conservation@cncc.org.uk

Kay Easton – CNCC Conservation Officer

Access Officer

Nothing to report

Training Officer

There is no serving Training Officer following the former Officer standing down in September. An application for the role for the AGM in March 2017 has been received.

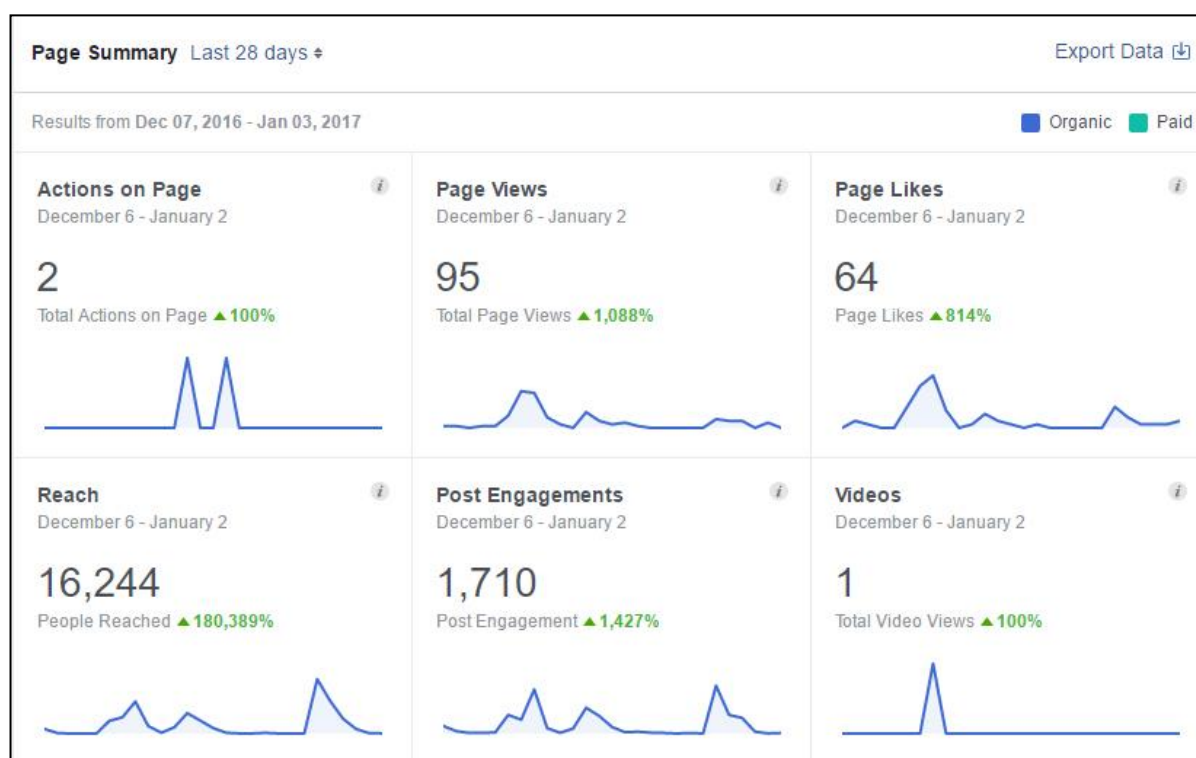
Webmaster report

The new CNCC website was launched on the 11th December and has received a very positive response from cavers on Facebook, UK Caving and in person. The site has been totally re-built from the ground up to incorporate changes in web technology as well as how the CNCC stores and shares its digital resources.

Several sections of text have been re-written to make them clearer and to add some updates including the 'about', 'get involved' and 'conservation' pages. A new section – 'fixed aids' – has been added which clearly sets out our current policy on fixed aids as well as incorporating the current and historic bolting techniques. Photos highlighting the two different approved anchor types have been included to make it clear to cavers not yet familiar with the differences.

The cave detail pages have been re-designed to make them clearer and to incorporate rigging topops and route descriptions. Separate pages showing all topops and descriptions have also been added. The list of caves is now no longer divided into the three sections as dictated by Northern Caves, as this was thought to now be out-dated and a single list would be easier to use.

A great deal of work has been done to allow the site to seamlessly adapt to mobile devices as statistics show that around 50% of people visiting the site do so from smart phones or tablets. The site is now also fully social media ready allowing pages to easily be shared.



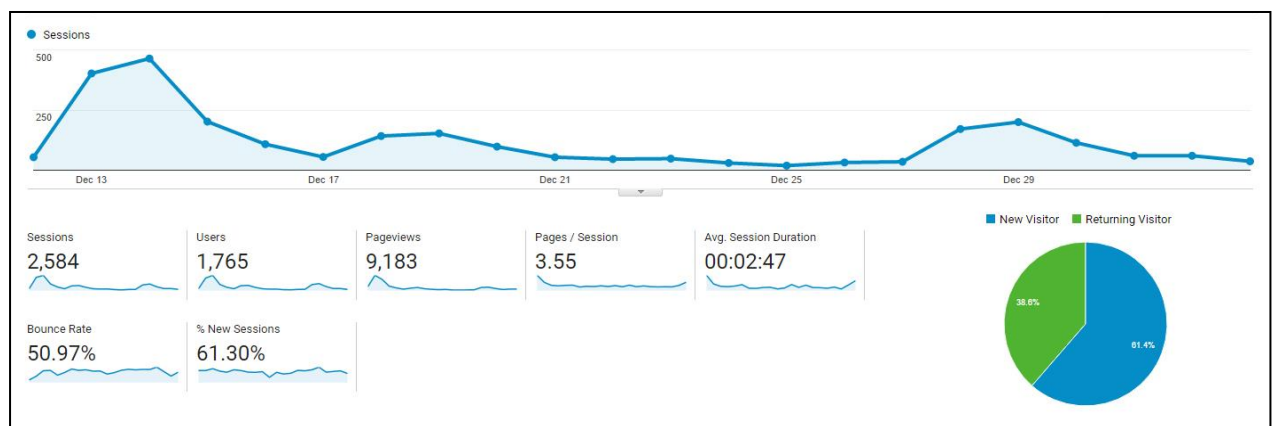
Above: Facebook Insights data showing people using CNCC Facebook page.

Facebook

The CNCC Facebook page now has 416 followers and recent posts at the time of this report have been getting around 6500 views with a total reach for the 28 days up to 2nd Jan at over 16,000. Also during this period 1700 people have actively interacted with a CNCC article or feature via Facebook. Why is this important? Well, Facebook allows us to keep a wider audience up to date and keep the CNCC in the public eye to show we're doing good work. UK Caving has also been used to promote specific items where possible however this only has a relatively narrow reach compared with Facebook.

Google Analytics (website use)

Between 12th December and 2nd January, Google Analytics reports over 2500 sessions for 1700 unique users. Current hit rate is also seeing 61% new users during this period. The peaks correspond with articles posted on Facebook. Google search terms commonly include cave names where the cave details page comes up ranked at number one.



Above: Google Analytics data showing people using CNCC website.

Gary Douthwaite – CNCC Webmaster

Report to the CNCC on the IC Resin Anchor Project January 2017

The total number of IC anchors now installed is 278.

16 have been installed in Foul Pot, Fountains Fell, 9 anchors in Penyghent Pot, 15 anchors in Large Pot, 3 anchors in Pippikin Pot and 10 anchors in Notts Pot. Sam Allshorn has given Car Pot a high priority for anchors in the near future.

There was a report of an anchor missing in Upper Long Churn. This was a hole that appeared to have never had an anchor in it. The hole was filled with mortar. I have developed an easy method of removing Spits. This method was used to remove two Spits from Upper Long Churn and three from Diccan. All the holes were filled.

Following a report of a loose anchor in Bull Pot an inspection was made and 13 loose anchors were found. Because of the number of loose anchors in close proximity. I made the decision to remove all the loose anchors. 10 new anchors have been installed.

I have continued to work on the problem of loose anchors, I have inspected a number of caves and I am in the process of writing a report which will be presented in due course. The CNCC TG have made some anchor records available which will assist in researching the loose anchor problem. In my last report I said that the problem seemed to affect only anchors fixed with Hilti resin. It is now possible to say with confidence that anchors are continuing to become loose and that all anchors fixed with both Hilti and Resifix resin are at risk, which is about 1500 anchors.

There is an urgent need for information on loose anchors. The vast majority of loose anchors are going unreported. One possible reason for this is the advice that 2mm of movement is acceptable. In my opinion no amount of movement is acceptable. I ask the CNCC to change that advice and encourage the reporting of all loose anchors.

I have met with the CRO Equipment Officer and several underground controllers to discuss anchors installed for the purpose of rescue. They agreed that there was a need to develop liaison.

Report on the BCA E&T meeting 1st December 2017

The meeting was held online. Anchors dominated the discussions. BP anchors made of a high corrosion resistant stainless steel for sea water will be tested. Welded anchors, CISCC and the possible use 304 stainless anchors were discussed. Loose anchors were discussed and I said roughly the same as above about an acceptable amount of movement, the advice will be changed but no decision was made on the exact wording. The possible use of self-tapping anchors was discussed. The minutes will be available in due course.

Simon Wilson.

Matters concerning the CNCC arising from the 7th January 2017 BCA meeting

Andrew Hinde attended this BCA meeting and has fed back several matters, summarised below:

Constitutional amendments: Several amendments to the BCA constitution have been proposed. The key amendment is the clause that affects the BCA's CRoW campaign. The proposal is:

That the following section of item 4.6 of the Constitution "That the owners and tenants of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access." be amended to "That any rights held by the owners or tenants of property or mineral rights, to grant or withhold access, be respected."

The second proposed amendment is to add the following regarding proxy voting:

8.16: An Individual or Honorary member (the 'voter') who is eligible to vote at a General Meeting may choose to appoint a proxy to vote for them. This proxy (the 'nominee') must be another Individual or Honorary member who is also eligible to vote. The form of proxy, determined by National Council, will be provided with the notice of the meeting. The voter must provide the completed form of proxy to the Recorder at least 7 days for any General Meeting before the relevant meeting excepting an Emergency General Meeting where 48 hours shall be sufficient. Voters may indicate how they wish their nominee to vote or allow their nominee discretion. Council is empowered to limit the number of voters who may be represented by each individual nominee to as few as two, excepting the Chair who shall have no such limit (or the maximum number of voters may be represented by each individual nominee is limited to two). Proxy voting is not available to Group Members.

There are several other proposed amendments (of lesser relevance to the CNCC directly). These will appear in the upcoming BCA documents. For now, it may be worth the CNCC considering whether we wish to use our vote to support the above two key proposals.

These constitutional changes will require a costly (£10000) ballot of all BCA members (hence why so many changes are being put forward in one go, to maximise value for money from the ballot).

Other issues to report on involved Child Protection reporting procedures which need formalising, i.e. any suspicion of abuse MUST be reported to child protection authorities or Police. This has become more apparent as witnessed by the FA coaching scandal. Bob Mehew will be present to update CNCC on this as he is temporary Welfare Officer at BCA. An advice note will probably be issued for clubs.

Finally, BCA compensation is available for money spent by Regional Caving Councils on conservation signage at caves (such as the one being developed by Tim Allen with the YDNP).

Meet's Secretary Reports

Aygill Caverns – Geoff Whittaker

During 2016, permit requests for Aygill Caverns have as usual been very quiet, and only 4 permits have been issued to clubs. Looking into 2017, only one permit has been issued so far for Aygill Caverns. There have been no issues raised by the Estate Office.

Ingleborough Estate/Allotment and Newby Moss – Geoff Whittaker

During 2016, there has been slightly less activity in permit requests for caves and potholes on the Ingleborough, Allotment and Newby Moss areas, than 2015, approx 20% less, the majority coming from BCA member clubs with quite a few BCA DIM's and CIM's also requesting permits. A total of 37 BCA member clubs have requested permits with a further 12 requests coming from BCA DIM's.

Overall, a total of 188 permits have been issued during 2016

Looking ahead into 2017, 10 BCA member clubs have requested permits so far, with a total of 41 permits issued so far. A lot of the permit requests have been at short notice, and most have had their permits electronically returned within the day.

There have been no issues raised from the Ingleborough Estate/Ingham and Yorke.

Mongo Gill, Robinson's Pot, Fairy Holes and Birks Fell – Ric Halliwell

Mongo Gill: I have received no requests for permits. We do not have an access agreement regarding descents of Stump Cross because access is only available through the showcave/café buildings. I have however managed to arrange access for 2 clubs who have contacted me about the possibility of access. Only one of the trips has happened so far but the owners of Stump Cross were very happy with how it went.

Robinson's Pot: I have only received 3 requests for permits out of the 8 available. I would very much like to fill the other 5 permits in order to keep the NT believing that there is plenty of demand for access.

Fairy Holes, Ludwell: Likewise, I have only received 3 requests for permits out of the 12 available. I am less bothered by this but would be happy to issue more permits.

Birks Fell: Again, I have only received 3 requests for permits, be nice if more people visited this excellent cave

If anyone wants access under any of the access agreements I am happy to answer any queries, and if dates are available, by email.

All other areas (Casterton, Penyghent, etc): No reports received or nothing to report