

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

DRAFT MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

VILLAGE HALL, CLAPHAM

13 January 2024

ATTENDEES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS (VOTING)

Ian Cross	IC	Bradford Pothole Club	BPC	
Pat Halliwell	PH	Craven Pothole Club	CPC	
Stuart Whitmey	SW	Earby Pothole Club	EPC	
Alan Jeffreys	AJ	Grampian Speleological Group	GSG	
Andy Gordon	AG	Kendal Caving Club	KCC	
Pete Monk	PM	Northern Boggarts	NB	
Rachel Findlay	RF	Northern Pennine Club	NPC	Zoom (late)
Sam Lieberman	SL	Red Rose Cave & Pothole Club	RRCPC	
Sam Allshorn	SA	Univ of Leeds Speleological Assoc'n	ULSA	
Matt Ewles	ME	York Caving Club	YCC	
Rebecca Hay	RH	York Univ Cave & Pothole Club	YUCPC	
Adrian Howden	AHo	Yorkshire Subterranean Society	YSS	Zoom

OFFICERS

Andrew Hinde	AH	Chair
Jill Bolton	JMB	Secretary
Pete Bann	PB	Treasurer
Adele Ward	AW	Access Officer
Gary Douthwaite	GD	Web Administrator
Matt Ewles	ME	PR / Access Co-ordinator - Excalibur
Aila Taylor	AMT	Youth & Development Rep
Alan Speight	AS	Anchor Co-ordinator
Josh Young	JY	Minute Secretary
Josh White	JW	Inclusivity Co-ordinator

NON-COMMITTEE CLUBS & OBSERVERS

Russell Myers	RM	BCA
Jane Allen	JA	UK Caving Forum
Adrian Turner	APT	YUCPC
Ian Walker	IW	RRCPC
Chris Bolton	CJB	CPC

The meeting opened at 9:36am.

1.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Kay Easton Ian Patrick Mark Richards Tim Allen Chris Devaney

1.2 VERIFICATION OF QUORUM.

11 out of 13 committee clubs present at start of meeting, NPC joined later.

White Rose Pothole Club absent

2.0 DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

AH is employed by Natural England, which may have implications relating to cave conservation and access

YUCPC SRT Project - APT & RH are current club members

3.0 MINUTES FROM OCTOBER COMMITTEE MEETING

SL clarified that he left part way through meeting, so only 12 voting clubs present for second half.

VOTE - to accept the October 2023 Committee Meeting minutes, subject to correction of the discussed amendment

Proposed: ME Seconded: SA

Voting: 10 for, 0 against, 1 abstention (as not present)

Carried

4.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM OCTOBER COMMITTEE MEETING

OFFICER, etc	ACTION	UPDATE
Josh Y	Correct and finalise June committee minutes	Done
Jill B	Prepare and circulate October committee minutes	Done
Matt E/ Gary D	Review website content for clarity for all users, particularly relating to the CNCC workshops	For Inclusivity working group
Matt E/ Jill B	Promote a vacancy for volunteer to lead on EDI matters	Done
IW & Anchor Team	Develop a long-term solution for managing steel ground anchors	Adjourned "sine die"
<i>Adrian Turner</i>	To provide written confirmation of verbal update re YUCPC SRT training facility	Done

5.0 **REPORTS**

5.1 **Chair (AH)**

Nothing raised on report

5.2 **Secretary (JMB)**

RM (BCA Chair) clarified that Direct Individual Members would continue to receive red cards for the time being.

5.3 **Treasurer (PB)**

Nothing raised on report

5.4 **Conservation Officer (KE)**

Nothing raised on report

5.5 **Access Officer (AW)**

Verbal report presented at meeting:

Fairy Holes

Reinstatement of Fairy Holes access agreement

Langcliffe Hall Estate

In response to a question from ME, AW advised that she had made three attempts to contact the owners of Langcliffe Hall Estate to propose a revised Memorandum of Understanding, which does not provide landowner indemnity, but no response has been received.

ME asked if we should now write to formally withdraw from the existing MoU. AW agreed and ME/AW will work together to prepare some wording.

ME commented that we need to ensure this is kept on records, to demonstrate our efforts and our withdrawal. PH suggested recorded delivery to ensure we have a record it has been delivered.

JW (in role of BCA Insurance Manager) mentioned an email from John Cordingley, about a dive site affected by changes to BCA insurance

5.6 **Training Officer (IP)**

Nothing raised on report

5.7 **Web Administrator (GD)**

Nothing raised on report

5.8 **PR & Communications** (ME)

AH asked where newsletters are posted to, as a couple of outdoor centres have requested copies.

GD responded: all club huts, some outdoor centres, Natural England (AH), two National Park addresses, Inglesport, UK Caving Forum (TA & JA).

ME invited members to add any other interested places to this list.

5.9 **BCA Council Representative**

ME commented that attendance seemed very low, with only 12 members out of 40 positions actually present for the meeting.

RM clarified that only 20 council positions have voting rights, and furthermore not all posts are filled.

JMB commented that an unavoidable last minute postponement might explain some absences.

5.10 **Training & Equipment Rep** (MR)

SA mentioned a working group meeting on 9 January (after MR's report).

5.11 **Youth & Development Rep** (AMT)

AMT briefly described some of the challenges currently facing university clubs, including one club temporarily banned by their SU.

JW (previous BCA Y&D co-ordinator) requested that any issues are referred to either CHECC or the current Y&D co-ordinator, to better minimise the number of different people trying to help.

5.12 **Anchor Co-ordinator** (AS)

ME reported that Five Ways Pot is now finished

5.13 **Access Co-ordinators**

Robinsons & Fairy Holes (DD))

Excalibur (ME)) Nothing raised on report

Bowland (AB))

VOTE - to accept all the officer reports in full

Proposed SL Seconded SA Voting Unanimous

Carried

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

6.0 CLUB MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

Two clubs, Birmingham Students Caving Club (BSCC) and Ulster Speleological Society & Caving Club (USSCC) have applied to join the CNCC at the AGM.

There was a brief discussion on eligibility for CNCC membership, following a few queries regarding the geographical location and other affiliations of the two applicants.

ME clarified that geographic boundaries to membership were removed early in his time as Secretary, and read out the section of the constitution stating that they only need to show a significant involvement in northern caving, so there is no impediment to either clubs becoming members.

Two committee members (SA and ME) agreed that their clubs would propose and second the two applications at the AGM.

BSCC - to be proposed by ULSA, and seconded by YCC
USSCC - to be proposed by ULSA, and seconded by YCC

7.0 INCLUSIVITY CO-ORDINATOR

The October committee meeting agreed to introduce the role of Inclusivity Co-ordinator, to advise on matters of "Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity".

Josh White introduced himself, and explained how his background made him particularly suitable for this role. He plans to coordinate a small team, and organise specific projects. He works at an outdoor centre that caters mainly for people with disabilities. He therefore intends to be transparent and open whenever there might be a conflict of interest relating to his employer.

AMT expressed the hope that we could help student clubs lacking the skills or experience to take people with disabilities caving.

JMB mentioned improvements to the website, to avoid causing confusion, particularly for people attending workshops.

VOTE to co-opt Josh White to the new role of Inclusivity Co-ordinator

Proposed ME	Seconded SA	Unanimous (11)	Carried
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8.0 INDIVIDUAL CAVER REPRESENTATIVE

There was some discussion about the purpose of an Individual Caver Representative (IC Rep). At the moment, the constitution specifies that the IC Rep must be a BCA member, which might have contributed to the position never being filled.

The June committee meeting agreed to consider this requirement being dropped at the next AGM.

PH raised a concern about whether having a non-BCA member on the committee would invalidate the BCA public liability cover. She understood this to be the case for caving clubs.

SL suggested that the rest of the committee might still be covered, but the non-member would presumably be at personal risk.

JW (BCA Insurance Manager) agreed to clarify the situation.

ME suggested that we consider opening out the vote to all individuals at the AGM, rather than just DIMs.

VOTE to propose amending the constitution at the AGM, as follows:

- To remove the requirement for the IC Rep to be a BCA member
- To allow everyone attending the AGM to have a personal vote (ie remove the requirement for voters to be DIMs)

Proposed: SA Seconded: SW

Voting: 10 for, 0 against, 1 abstention

Carried

This will now be taken forward for discussion and a vote at the AGM

9.0 CNCC NAME CHANGE

The October committee meeting requested that we consider in more depth the benefits and consequences of changing the CNCC's name.

JA (UK Caving Forum) explained that in this day and age, branding really matters. By all means keep CNCC acronym so the branding can remain unchanged.

But changing the name changes the underlying message, to make it clear we are working for all cavers. This matters especially for young people, and for anyone who may feel excluded

ME reminded us that Jon Beavan (JJ) said, in his professional capacity, that our current name gives the impression that we are only about clubs. This does not help us in our interactions with other organisations. We should not ignore such clear advice. It also gives a poor message to reject this, saying "We don't want to be more inclusive; we don't want to adapt and change".

JA encouraged us to also think about the positive PR that would come from a name change, emphasising our move to greater inclusivity.

Vote This committee recommends a change of name at the AGM

Proposed SA Seconded ME

Voting: 9 for, 1 against, 2 abstentions

Carried

The committee agreed to propose two names to the AGM:

“Council for the Northern Caving Community”

“Council of Northern Cavers and Clubs”

This will now be taken forward for discussion and a vote at the AGM

10.0 YORK UNIVERSITY SRT GRANT

APT gave an update on the lack of developments since the BCA Council meeting on 12 December, where the YUCPC grant application was rejected.

The BCA Y&D Co-ordinator had promised to work with YUCPC, to produce a new proposal. However, nothing had happened, and he had not even responded to AT’s emails.

AT explained that three main points against the proposal were raised at the meeting.

Firstly, there were structural concerns about the building, with the suggestion that it might be nearing the end of its life.

AT subsequently discussed this with the university’s surveyor, who said that said that previous information was incorrect. The actual problem is that the old climbing holds in the wall do not meet any standards, so they need to be removed to ensure they can’t be used. There are no structural concerns about the building. It has no end date, and the university is still investing in it, with a new roof and floor.

Secondly, would this be unfairly benefiting one club? It was incorrectly claimed that the BCA has never given money to any other clubs.

Thirdly, the Y&D officer was concerned that this would set a precedent of the BCA being seen as a source of funding for university clubs.

AT agreed that student clubs should be self-funding, but there have always been other sources of funding outside of the universities. It is unlikely that universities will think they no longer need to fund their caving clubs.

AH said it seemed clear that BCA council members had not read the provided documentation. They had also overlooked the fact that the request was for “beam

clamps”, a commodity retained by the club, which would not be lost if the building was closed. BCA has previously spent lots of money to support university caving.

JW explained the underlying issue with giving money to one student club is that, on previous occasions, the BCA gets lots in return in terms of volunteer hours, promotion, etc. There has been no mention in the proposal of how it benefits other cavers outside the club.

ME expressed disappointment in this perspective, highlighting that there were three individuals in the room (ME, GD, JY) who started caving with YUCPC, who have since given up huge amounts of their time over the last ten years to CNCC, and to northern caving in general. To suggest that YUCPC’s continued success would not benefit others was both offensive and short sighted, and did not consider the contributions that future YUCPC cavers might make to the wider caving society.

AH replied that it was made clear in the proposal that the facilities were, and will be, open to all who want to use them.

There followed a discussion about:

- whether universities should fully fund their student clubs
- external sources of funds, including sponsorship and alumni
- issues with repaying a loan
- lack of support from BCA
- advantages of setting a precedent

RF explained the viewpoint of Northern Pennine Club, three of whose members had generously pledged £700 to YUCPC. NPC felt that student clubs were an important route into caving, and provided future members for the main clubs.

NPC recommended giving a further £600 (in addition to the £400 pledged in October), which would be a total of £1000 granted by CNCC. NPC also thought that YUCPC should continue work to raise funds from other places.

GD stated that this whole thing has been an embarrassment for both BCA and CNCC. Both organisations are sitting on large amounts of money, and it seems ridiculous that they are so worried about spending it to help out a University club in need.

RF repeated that NPC would support a proposal to fund a smaller amount of money, but not the full amount. £1000 would leave funding gap of £535, and AT said he was confident the university would make up the shortfall.

VOTE To increase funding commitment from £400 to £1000, contingent on YUCPC raising the remaining funds.

Proposed RF Seconded ME
Voting: 5 for, 4 against, 3 abstentions

Carried

ME stated that YCC were voting in favour of this, only because it seems to be the only way to resolve the issue. He felt very strongly that it should have been dealt with differently.

11.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 STUMP CROSS

Tom Thompson (Craven PC), a member of the “Angels of the North” group, requested a grant for remedial work at Stump Cross, as requested by the landowner. JMB clarified that this conservation expenditure was reclaimable from the BCA.

VOTE to provide funding of £400, as requested

Proposed PM

Seconded IC

Voting: 11 for, 1 abstention (conflict of interest)

Carried

11.2 UK CAVING FORUM

Jane Allen (owner of forum) thanked the CNCC for using and supporting UK Caving.

12.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING

Annual General Meeting to be held on 16 March at 10:00am

Venue: Clapham Village Hall (Postcode LA2 8DZ)

Meeting closed at 11:55 am

SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ACTION ITEMS

OFFICER	ACTION	UPDATE
Jill B	Correct and finalise October committee minutes	Done
Jill B	Prepare and circulate January committee minutes	
Adele W / Matt E	Prepare letter to Langcliffe Hall Estate, withdrawing from existing Memorandum of Understanding.	
Jill B	Club membership applications: request letters from proposer (ULSA) and seconder (YCC)	
Josh W / Jill B	Establish Inclusivity working group	
Josh W & working group	Review website content for clarity for all users, particularly relating to the CNCC workshops	
Matt E / Jill B	Draft motion for constitutional change regarding Independent Caver Representative	
Jill B	Write to BCA Insurance Manager for clarification on insurance cover if non-BCA member on committee	
Matt E / Jill B	Draft motion for CNCC name change, and prepare ballot on new name	