YORK UNIVERSITY CAVE & POTHOLE CLUB

SRT TRAINING FACILITY

RECENT CORRESPONDENCE

DOCUMENTS

1 Request from CNCC for BCA Grant

2 Minutes of BCA Council meeting

3 Proposal from York Caving Club

4 Statement from Youth & Development Co-ordinator

5 Statement from York University CPC

1 GRANT REQUEST SUBMITTED BY CNCC (22 November)

The CNCC wishes to apply for a grant of £1835 to enable the immediate restoration of the SRT training facility, based at York University Sports Centre. It is currently out-of-action, awaiting certain improvements and inspection.

The YUCPC had originally hoped to restore the full facility, using both the girders and the walls (at a cost of £5290) but are now looking to reinstate just the girders (at a lower cost of £2235).

This was discussed at length in the CNCC committee meeting on 21 October, where there was strong support for the project.

The CNCC currently have a surplus of approximately £4000, above the normal day-to-day cash flow requirements. However, it was felt by members (and by officers) that it would not be prudent to fund the project in full. Some of this surplus is already earmarked for another "non-BCA fundable" initiative that we are currently launching. Using such a large proportion of our available funds for the benefit of one club would be very unfair on other member clubs.

Nevertheless, as a gesture of support, the committee voted to award a grant of £400, on condition that the BCA were minded to fund the balance required.

The presence of funds in the York University Students Union accounts is currently the limiting factor in APEX commencing the work. The university will not even discuss dates for the work until proof of funds is provided, and that is why we are asking for a clear decision at this meeting.

Any delay is likely to "lose" the current intake of freshers, with ongoing consequences for several years.

We therefore request that the BCA considers making a grant of £1835 in order that the training facility can be re-opened promptly.

If a decision is made at this meeting, the CNCC will immediately transfer £2235 to York University Students Union, before requesting reimbursement of £1835 (being the full amount, less the CNCC grant of £400) from the BCA.

2 EXTRACT FROM BCA COUNCIL MINUTES (12 December)

At the meeting Adrian Turner spoke to the proposal:-

About a year ago the Sports Centre started a review of their own policies internally, and found that they had no idea what half the various groups using the facilities actually did, including YUCPC. Also when anchors had been installed, the documentation had been lost by the Sports Centre, so they didn't really know what inspections had been carried out. The Regulations require everything to be tested, some of the Spits do not meet the Regulations, also the slings from the girder are not suitable for fixed installations.

There is a problem with the walls, the Sports Hall has had advice that the walls are not structurally sound enough for being abseiled next to. It is not known at this stage when the structural problems will be sorted out. What YUCPC are looking for is access to the girder so that they can resume training.

The figures for installation quoted are currently correct.

He reported that the university have agreed in writing that they would add future annual testing and inspection to the work that APEX already carries out, so the club does not need to seek longer-term funding.

Allan Richardson asked what would happen when the walls were sorted, would the girder still be in place and usable? Adrian replied that changing the girders would entail knocking the building down, this the University was not prepared to do due to cost. Adrian Turner felt personally that the Sports Centre should be closing the facility on grounds of structural integrity, they have decided its safe to stay open. The work they plan to do is repoint all the brick cladding.

Mike Higgins asked the buildings age, Adrian Turner didn't know.

Jono Lester asked why York Uni was not funding this work? as we are setting a dangerous precedent where the University is being funded by the BCA, this would encourage other Universities to do the same.

Andrew Hinde said that this was an emergency fund request, not an ongoing request.

Aidan Kuhlmann said that in parallel with the climbing clubs, with the BMC refusing to fund facilities, the Universities are being forced to deal with their own issues. Should the BCA fund YUCPC, then there was a risk that all University clubs would request funding for similar facilities, this was unsustainable. He was also concerned about the longevity of the building.

Adrian Turner replied that the Beam Clamps were reusable and could be moved elsewhere, as and when they are required to do so.

Chris Boardman was not aware of any clubs asking the national body to fund their local activities. He had misgivings about this and felt that the Universities were being very cynical about this.

He asked which club if any had been funded in this way in the past?

Jono Lester commented on training being carried out other than in the Sports Centre, using trees, bridges etc. He was concerned that funding this would set a bad precedent for going forward.

Andrew Hinde asked did the BCA fund University Caving, and was the BCA worried about future requests for funding. Jono Lester replied that we were being asked to fund buildings by the University.

Allan Richardson having just done some online research, the building was constructed using Concrete Pillar and Brick Infill construction, on or around 1963, its probably coming to the end of its life, especially if the brick infill was coming out. He said that concerning a building of that age and construction, he would not vote to put any money into it whatsoever.

Proposal to fund £1835 to York University Gym works

Proposer Andrew Hinde No seconder

Proposal fails

3 PROPOSAL FROM YORK CAVING CLUB (12 December)

At the October meeting, CNCC Committee agreed to support an urgent requirement from one of our Committee and Member clubs, YUCPC, for funding to support necessary work to reinstate their training facilities. The extent of this support was £400 towards a total of £2235, with the remainder (£1835) submitted as a funding request to BCA. This was for reinstatement of a number of ropes via girder clamps, the loss of which has been catastrophic for the club. This was discussed at length at the CNCC meeting. The BCA Chairman, in personal conversations with our own Chairman, even gave the impression that BCA would be able to help with this.

We (CNCC) put forward a proposal to BCA for these additional funds, which after a frustrating delay waiting to be discussed at BCA Council level, was finally discussed tonight (12th December). The CNCC's proposal for this funding did not even receive a seconder within the BCA, with (to my astonishment) strong opposition from the BCA Youth Development lead, who felt that to fund this would show BCA favouritism to YUCPC over other university clubs (I should emphasise, none of who have ever, to the best of my knowledge, had a comparable funding refused, so I cannot see how this would be deemed favouritism). This is staggering and extremely disappointing to us, and of course YUCPC, who are seriously struggling, despite a simple lifeline being on offer for the sake of a few thousand pounds. This has been a reckless and shameful display from our National Body.

I would therefore like to propose that CNCC fund YUCPC's requirement in full (£2235), and immediately, and I would like to urge my fellow Committee clubs to second this proposal and support this. Until proof of funding is in place, YUCPC are unable to work with the university to commence the work, and I am acutely aware of the damage that this is causing to one of our region's most prolific university clubs, so time is of the essence. I do not believe CNCC can sit back with the money available, while such a club struggles despite a clear and well researched lifeline being available, and I feel the BCA should be ashamed of finding such a course of action acceptable.

As part of this proposal, I recommend that CNCC continues to lobby BCA for a retrospective contribution to this project; It may be that with time and further discussion they may see reason. But for now, my proposal assumes that this project will be fully CNCC funded.

With respect to conflicts of interests, I would like to remind everyone that I am a former YUCPC member, however, I feel that I would be proposing the same thing if any of our major university clubs were in a comparable situation.

Matt Ewles,
Chair, YCC

4 STATEMENT FROM JONATHAN LESTER (13 December)
BCA YOUTH & DEVELOPMENT CO-ORDINATOR

Good evening,
I'd like to express my deepest gratitude to all the dedicated individuals involved in this process so far, particularly Adrian, for his instrumental role in formulating the initial proposal and engaging with the relevant bodies. I am genuinely sympathetic to York University's ongoing challenge in losing access to their exceptional training facility. I firmly believe a swift resolution will be found to reinstate their training facilities. The issue isn't financial as has been passed around, but instead the current proposal does not require the meticulous negotiation to ensure the continuity of our collaborative work with universities and sends York University the wrong message and sets us on a dangerous and already turbulent path, which will impact other university caving groups. Additionally, I want to address the disappointing misinformation of the BCA and myself after the recent meeting.

Brief Background:
I became aware of the York University Cave and Pothole Club (YUCPC) and their initial funding request on (21/09/2023). Over time, this request evolved, and as of (13/12/23), the requested support amounts to £2235, split between CNCC and BCA (£400 and £1835, respectively). This funding aims to reinstate several ropes using girder clamps to facilitate YUCPC's use of their remarkable facility.

My Shortcomings:
Given my recent entry into this role as Youth and Development led, and simultaneous handling of five other student union matters, including the near closure of some student caving clubs, I acknowledge my failure to give this issue the attention it deserved earlier. My apologies to YUCPC and Adrian for the delay and not being clearer with the situation, though some information has also come available to me very late in the day. Misinformation has complicated matters, and I hope this response clarifies my stance and initiates a resolution.

BCA Annual Meeting and Raised Concerns:
While the meeting minutes are pending publication, I highlighted the importance of cautious wording in the proposition which is lacking in its current form. It's crucial to avoid implying that funding university-owned facilities falls under the BCA's responsibility. This responsibility lies with universities, entrusted to educate, foster growth, and provide opportunities for students.

Another concern highlighted during the meeting was regarding the building's walls, which appear to be displaying early signs of significant deterioration. There's a growing suspicion that this might eventually lead to the building's demolition and removal all together.

I believe the repeated framing of this situation as "catastrophic for the club" is a significant exaggeration. It's important to note that the majority of university caving clubs often make use of trees, YSS and alternative facilities. What's unique about

YCUPC's arrangement hasn't been readily available elsewhere. While York's facility remains inactive, I'm perplexed as to why an alternative hasn't been explored while we address the current issue, with the clubs declining membership being pinned on this issue alone?

It's also disheartening that there was no student representation from the YUCPC student body at the BCA meeting on (12/12/23).

The Core Issue Summary:
My opposition to the current proposal stems from its implication that cavers, regional and national bodies are to now fund university facilities and property maintenance. This notion, especially from a leading UK university, is astounding. We're already facing numerous challenges with student bodies and universities, so now endorsing the idea that we must start funding wealthy university educational facilities is ludicrous and a dangerous road to go down. Had the facility been independent of the university, this wouldn't pose such a concern. Precision in wording and crafting a solution that navigates these concerns is crucial.

I must make it clear here that the universities do talk to each other, and this has been noticed at an increasing rate and causing more and more issues with student caving each year.

The Current Proposed Solution:
As highlighted in the council meeting, I aim to collaborate on a new proposal that addresses these issues without giving the university the impression that external bodies will cover their facility costs, of which they should be providing and maintaining. Discussions regarding installation should remain separate, as the university should handle this and as such a new strategy will be created, especially with the likely hood this will have to be reinstalled in a few years' time elsewhere. The requested equipment will be strategically separated and brough and owned by YUCPC.

I'll be circulate an online sheet to arrange a meeting, either in person or via Zoom with the relevant bodies and individuals this weekend, to collectively propose a new proposition, and work together to find a resolution that makes sure the university does get away with the notion that we should be paying for its own facilities upkeep and installation costs.

If the CNCC Proposal Went Through:
Regarding the recent proposal to CNCC members 12/12/23, I want to emphasise that its approval would undermine the collective efforts of my predecessors and myself. The Universities each year are pushing back more and more and the work we do is not something that is understood by the wider caving body for a variety of reasons, but is becoming more difficult, as such if this proposal went through in its current form, it would do irreversible damage.

If this proposal went through it will set a precedent to universities that we are
A. Not an activity that universities should continue supporting or funding.
B. The expectation that local and regional bodies will now be funding caving at university level in all aspects.
C. Cause many more issues with regards to being seen as a “Dangerous sport” and further push back from student unions, with the real possibility growing year by year that university clubs will start to be shut down.

CNCC Misleading Proposal:
I want to express my disappointment regarding the recent proposition from the York Caving Club (not YUCPC) that followed the BCA meeting, with no public minutes of the meeting available to be scrutinised fairly and freely. This proposal lacks all the crucial details and presents a one-sided view of the discussion. I'm concerned about the implications of this submission and how it might impact our ongoing efforts, especially when it comes to misrepresenting the BCA and myself, along with unnecessary motive inflammatory language like reckless and shameful etc.
It's imperative to grasp the gravity of this situation, especially considering the involvement of a university and the dangerous precedent this current proposition will set. It's vital to emphasise that no university or caving club should ever receive preferential treatment. All should be regarded equally, irrespective of labels like "one of our region's most prolific university clubs," as mentioned in the circulated email. Assistance financially, training and education will be given to anyone who comes to seek it.

I strongly advocate for transparency and openness in presenting motions and against making knee jerking behaviour. My disappointment stems from the conflicting interests in this proposal, leading to confusion and misdirection. It's crucial that our communications and proposals are accurate and inclusive to enable informed decision-making based on the truth.

Future Engaging Parties:
I urge all involved parties to recognise that this matter primarily involves the BCA, CNCC, and YUCPC. This is a student caving club issue. Moving forward my interactions will be involving key members of YUCPC, CNCC, CHECC and Adrian.

Conclusion:
I can see how people can jump to conclusions, especially when minutes take a while to come out and people are hearing things rather than being in the room and discussing them…

I hope that this update provides some truth to what has been going on, please feel free to drop me an email if you would like more information or see the BCA minutes when they are published.

Yours in caving
Jon
Youth and Development

5 STATEMENT FROM ADRIAN TURNER, YUCPC (5 January)

Following the generous support of the CNCC for both offering funding and also proposing our application for further funds from the BCA, we would like to keep the committee apprised of how things are going concerning YUCPC's training facilities.

There was an initial uncertainty over whether we were allowed to attend the BCA Council meeting in December, but Adrian Turner did so along with Andrew Hinde. Unfortunately, despite the reassuring talks that Andrew had had with BCA Chair Russell Myers, the BCA council did not support the proposal.

BCA Secretary Allan Richardson was concerned that the building may be approaching the end of its life and felt that it shouldn't be invested in, despite my reminding them that girder clamps can be removed and placed in a new venue if such a need were to occur.

We have since emailed the sports centre and university to ask them for the projected life span of the building, and the university has replied stating that there are no structural concerns to the building and it is inspected periodically to ensure this. There currently isn't a projected lifespan for the building, and over recent years they have invested in renovating the roof and installing a new floor to keep it up to spec.

Chris Boardman (BCA Safeguarding Officer) was concerned that this would show favouritism towards a particular club and believed that other clubs had not received any funding from the BCA so why should YUCPC? Andrew attempted to correct him but was unfortunately interrupted. It should be noted that a number of clubs have received BCA funding with Lancaster University Caving Club being a recent example.

The big surprise came from Jonathan Lister, the BCA's Youth and Development officer. Adrian had previously contacted him in September to request assistance but had not heard anything since then. At the meeting, he raised concerns that the BCA funding the club could set a precedent that might allow all universities to shift their funding commitments onto the BCA. He felt strongly that the university should be funding the work.

We were disappointed that he had not made his concerns known prior to the meeting, and had not discussed them with Adrian when he had seen him at CHECC at the end of November. While we agree that the university (students union) ought to fund the work, they have long been aware that there are other sources of funding available to clubs, and they do encourage clubs to use that funding while trying to balance their budgets. However, Jonathan did feel that there should be another way of resolving the situation and offered to help find this.

During the meeting, Adrian was very grateful to Andrew for his support. Unfortunately, the meeting felt antagonistic at times, and Andrew's support made this a lot more bearable.

Following the meeting, Adrian emailed Jonathan to express disappointment in not hearing of his concerns prior to the meeting but also to again ask for his help. Jonathan replied stating that he wanted to help and that he would put something together the following day. We next received his statement that was sent to the CNCC, BCA and CHECC.

Adrian recently emailed Jonathan to try to clarify some of the points that were raised in his email, and to address some inaccuracies that portrayed the club in a negative light, while again stating that we wanted to work with him and asking for his support or any ideas that might be useful. Adrian also invited him to attend the upcoming CNCC committee meeting. We are awaiting a response.

Following the meeting we were very grateful for the support from York Caving Club with their proposal, and then further buoyed by the recent proposal from the Northern Pennine Club and the amazing announcement that three of their members had very generously donated £700 towards the work. The donations had us in a state of shock for a couple of days, we are immensely grateful to the donors!

The NPC proposal rightly looks at the funds available to the CNCC along with how both proposals would impact this. Given the sentiment at the BCA meeting, we are also unsure that the CNCC would be able to claim funds back as per the YCC proposal.

With the presence of the donations, there is also no need for the CNCC to provide the full amount. With this, we hope that the committee will support the NPC proposal, and feel that should the proposal pass, we should be able to find the rest of the funding through the other sources mentioned.

Once again we would like to thank the CNCC committee and the officers, especially Andrew and Jill, for their brilliant support.