

Report to CNCC June 15th 2012 Meeting On Recent E&T and BCA Meetings

The following report includes areas of highlighted text taken directly from emails or minutes. Those specific emails and minutes referenced can be provided in full upon request.

Following more than four years of dispute between BCA's Equipment and Techniques Committee (E&T) and the Council of Southern Caving Clubs (during which time CSCC were the only Regional Caving Council that were not part of the anchor scheme) over (amongst other things) the requirement for SRT competence for installers that are installing anchors for ladder and lifeline (as part of the BCA anchor scheme – CSCC did not want SRT competence for installers only installing anchors for ladder and lifeline pitches), the following agreement was reached at E&T's October 2011 meeting;

“As a result of the process of arbitration, CSCC have agreed to the IPTD including a requirement for Council of Southern Caving Clubs SRT competence, on the basis that the document will become copyright of BCA and subject to future revision as agreed by the E+T Committee”

That agreement was made following individual negotiations between David Cooke and Faye Litherland (representing CSCC) and Nick Williams, and individual negotiations between Bob Dearman, Les Sykes and Glenn Jones (representing DCA and CNCC) and Nick Williams. **At the request of Nick, both sets of negotiations were witnessed by Andy Eavis to ensure “fair play”.**

On the basis of that agreement, the authors of the IPTD (Bob Dearman and Les Sykes) completed the legal transfer of copyright to BCA. ***There is now the question of the legality of the transfer of IPTD copyright to BCA as it was based on a deceit.***

On the Monday following the above meeting, I received ‘phone calls from Bob Dearman and Les Sykes concerning a comment Nick had made in the car on their way home (Bob, Nick and Andy were travelling together) and Bob was alluding to a “hidden agenda”. In answer to a comment that Bob had made, Nick apparently replied something to the effect of ***“they (CSCC) would get around that by installing them as a fixed aid”***. I emailed Nick and Andy and Nick replied (09/10/11);

Gentlemen,

It looks like I need a further conversation with Bob in order to clarify what I said. It was a long and stressful day yesterday and it's clear that I misrepresented what I actually meant to say in my brief conversation with Bob.

I am away from home every day this coming week, plus with the Council meeting coming up on Saturday next I have some preparation to do with regard to the PL Scheme renewal and other matters. I am simply not going to be able to devote as much time to this over the coming week as I have for the previous couple. In the meanwhile, please do not wind yourselves up into believing that there is anything devious or underhand going on - there isn't. We made significant progress yesterday and we should build on it, not try to undermine it.

The statement which was agreed yesterday was as follows:

"As a result of the process of arbitration, CSCC have agreed to the IPTD including a requirement for SRT competence, on the basis that the document will become copyright of BCA and subject to future revision as agreed by the E+T Committee".

In order for this to be put into effect we will need a written transfer of copyright from Bob and Les to BCA. The letter I have from you dated 12 March contains a condition regarding publication which does not permit me to follow through on the agreement which was reached subsequently with Bob and Les to permit limited publication, or the agreement which we reached yesterday to permit full publication in due course.

Can I also point out that the current version of the IPTD refers to the Peco anchor as being an acceptable choice of anchor. Clearly this is no longer the case and so the procedure will need to be updated in due course.

Nick.

I spent most of that week placating Bob and Les, and I further spoke to Nick and Andy in the car park at Alvechurch, just before the BCA October Council meeting.

Nicks reply confirmed my understanding of what was agreed at the E&T meeting and there was no mention of any suggestion that the agreed statement was anything other than fact. Nick further confirmed this to me in the brief meeting we had in the car park mentioned above and further stated there was no “hidden agenda”.

On February 3rd, Bob Dearman sent a “very strong” email to Nick concerning a discussion Nick had had with Mark Wright about anchor installer training and again suggesting a hidden agenda. Some days later Nick ‘phoned me expressing exasperation about Bob’s continual rant about (amongst other things) a hidden agenda – which he (Nick) categorically denied. Once again, I ‘phoned Bob and Les to placate them.

On the 4th of March 2012, I read with some astonishment, the following statement from Fay Litherland(CSCC’s Equipment Officer) in the minutes of the 4th February CSCC meeting;

“FL clarified that the acceptance of the IPTD with regards to SRT competence is only applicable for placing anchors for SRT pitches only”

This statement is clearly at odds with the IPTD and what I understood had been agreed at the October E&T meeting. A heated email exchange followed (07/03/12 – presented in reverse order):

There you go, Council meeting 20th June 2009:

NW: Competence of the Installer is an integral part of the safety of the Scheme and of the Insurance cover for the Scheme. The removal of the word SRT would not be appropriate.
Glenn

From: [Glenn Jones](#)

Sent: Wednesday, March 07, 2012 8:35 AM

To: [Nick Williams](#)

Cc: [Bob Dearman](#) ; [Bob Dearman](#) ; [Les Sykes](#)

Subject: Re: CSCC minutes

Hi Nick,

>Well, I have been under a misapprehension then, since I have never considered that the document should apply to anything other than >anchors placed for SRT.

I have decided not to express my exasperation for your comment above, but will say that it is becoming increasingly frustrating to constantly defend E&T's position on the IPTD to people who really should be on top of this.

Cookie and Faye have stated (in the minutes of the October E&T meeting) that they have accepted the IPTD (although significantly CSCC have not).

The IPTD clearly states;

10.1 Cavers wishing to be considered for training must be competent in S.R.T. and rigging techniques and be approved in writing by the Regional Council. These skills must be assessed by the trainer during anchor installation training which may be suspended if this competence falls into doubt.

and;

10.3. Eco/Peco resin bonded anchors that are to be included on the BCA anchor scheme insurance must only be installed by cavers who have been trained under the scheme approved by the British Caving Association and have the authority of the Regional Council.

Therefore, all anchors installed under the BCA scheme must be installed as per 10.1 and 10.3 above, that clearly will include ladder and lifeline pitches (if they are to be included as part of the BCA scheme). Further, the issue of including ladder and lifeline pitches was one of the original concerns of CSCC, to which E&T replied;

Item H

IPTD 10.1 says that the trainee "must be competent in SRT and rigging techniques". Many Mendip pitches are only ladder pitches and there is no requirement for SRT.

We have keen volunteers who can rig a ladder climb competently and safely but have no desire to do SRT.

1. Can the wording be changed to "Cavers wishing to be considered for training must be competent in the relevant type of rigging technique for the pitch and be approved in writing by the Regional Council"?

The E&T Committee spent a lot of time discussing this, however the E&T Committee are not prepared to change the existing wording because:

- There are existing SRT routes in the CSCC area that need to be inspected and maintained by a competent and accredited installer.
- The E&T Committee do not accept that installing anchors for ladder and lifeline safely requires a lower skill level.
- Lack of local SRT skills should not be a reason to downgrade the standard of the IPTD, especially when SRT training for potential installers is available free of charge from BCA.
- The E&T Committee believe that potential installers should be brought up to the required skill level rather than creating a special category of installer for only ladder and lifeline.

This issue (ladder and lifeline) was also discussed at Council and I recollect (although I don't have time to look for the relevant minutes) that you (Nick) agreed with E&T's position due to the insurance issue raised by having a lower skill level.

I maintain, that as Cookie and Faye have agreed the IPTD, Faye's Statement **"FL clarified that the acceptance of the IPTD with regards to SRT competence is only applicable for placing anchors for SRT pitches only"** is factually incorrect and divisive.

Sorry for the weird pagination, it is because of the numerous cut and paste's.

Glenn

From: [Nick Williams](#)

Sent: Tuesday, March 06, 2012 9:45 PM

To: [Glenn Jones](#)

Cc: [Bob Dearman](#) ; [Bob Dearman](#) ; [Les Sykes](#)

Subject: Re: CSCC minutes

Well, I have been under a misapprehension then, since I have never considered that the document should apply to anything other than anchors placed for SRT. I don't think I am the only one - CCC take the same view, according to some correspondence I have seen.

Can someone explain why it is necessary for the installers of anchors which are not being placed for SRT to be SRT competent? I can see the logic for anchors where they may be used for SRT or for ladder (or other fixed aids) but there are some circumstances where anchors will never be used for SRT - the chain at the end of Blue Pencil Passage in Swildons and the ladder dig climb in GB to name just two.

Nick.

On 4 Mar 2012, at 11:11, Glenn Jones wrote:

<http://csc.org.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=documents:start>

I do not recall (and neither do the minutes) that the agreement we reached in October included this caveat;

FL clarified that the acceptance of the IPTD with regards to SRT competence is only applicable for placing anchors for SRT pitches only

9.4 GP asked for clarification regarding the wording of 9.1 paragraph 2 of the previous minutes with regards to SRT competence (05/11/11 "As a result of the process of arbitration, CSCC have agreed to the IPTD including a requirement for Council of Southern Caving Clubs SRT competence, on the basis that the document will become copyright of BCA and subject to future revision as agreed by the E+T Committee"). FL clarified that the acceptance of the IPTD with regards to SRT competence is only applicable for placing anchors for SRT pitches only

This is why I have been pushing for formal acceptance of the IPTD by CSCC because without formal acceptance, they can clearly do what they like. The remainder of that section is also interesting, the bit about training. And so it continues....

Glenn

At no time during any of these exchanges did Nick inform me (or anyone else) that he had made a different deal with CSCC at the October meeting, which DCA/CNCC were not privy to.

During this time, I have been doing my very best to placate Bob and Les, when, it now transpires, their concerns were correct and my trust in Nicks denial of a hidden agenda was misplaced. When Nick admitted at the March 17th 2012 E&T meeting to the deceit, I felt

betrayed by someone in whom I had great trust and respect, and I regret to say, I took it personally.

EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MARCH 17th E&T MEETING:

15.2 Concern with item in CSCC Minutes: GJ had emailed out prior to the meeting to seek clarification on an apparently contradictory report in the minutes of the February 4th 2012 CSCC meeting (<http://csc.org.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=documents:start>);

“FL clarified that the acceptance of the IPTD with regards to SRT competence is only applicable for placing anchors for SRT pitches only

9.4 GP asked for clarification regarding the wording of 9.1 paragraph 2 of the previous minutes with regards to SRT competence (05/11/11 “As a result of the process of arbitration, CSCC have agreed to the IPTD including a requirement for Council of Southern Caving Clubs SRT competence, on the basis that the document will become copyright of BCA and subject to future revision as agreed by the E+T Committee”).

FL clarified that the acceptance of the IPTD with regards to SRT competence is only Applicable for placing anchors for SRT pitches only”

I [GJ] seek clarification as the minutes of the October E&T meeting record that ***“As a result of the process of arbitration, CSCC have agreed to the IPTD including a requirement for Council of Southern Caving Clubs SRT competence, on the basis that the document will become copyright of BCA and subject to future revision as agreed by the E+T Committee”***

The IPTD clearly states;

10.1 Cavers wishing to be considered for training must be competent in S.R.T. and rigging techniques and be approved in writing by the Regional Council. These skills must be assessed by the trainer during anchor installation training which may be suspended if this competence falls into doubt.

and;

10.3. Eco/Peco resin bonded anchors that are to be included on the BCA anchor scheme insurance must only be installed by cavers who have been trained under the scheme approved by the British Caving Association and have the authority of the Regional Council.

Therefore, all anchors installed under the BCA scheme must be installed as per 10.1 and 10.3 above, that clearly will include ladder and lifeline pitches (if they are to be included as part of the BCA scheme).

NW noted that he accepted he had made a promise to CSCC which he had not made clear to GJ, BD and LS in that he had distinguished between SRT anchors and anchors for other purposes. GJ noted that the IPTD was not just for SRT application and said he was surprised to read the CSCC minutes since the IPTD also covered the question of SRT competence. RM sought clarification on whether the point of dispute was relating to just anchor usage or just SRT competence or both. NW accepted there were two points, the coverage of the scheme to anchors for use other than SRT and also the requirement for SRT competence.

NW sought the views of AL and RK. RK said DCUC have accepted that as the IPTD requires SRT competence, then they can only put forward people for training who were competent. However such competence was not necessary in many of the locations where they desired to place anchors for use with ladder and lifeline. He noted the same was also true on Mendip.

GJ pointed out that the question of SRT competence was secondary. He had understood that CSCC had accepted the IPTD as it then stood and now he learnt that they had not. FL stated that they had accepted it for anchors placed for SRT. NW accepted that he was responsible for causing this confusion.

AL observed that in South Wales most vertical pitches were already rigged with anchors so the current focus was on use of anchors as fixed aides elsewhere. As many cavers felt they could not gain SRT competence due to them not having a need to use the technique, they were adopting other systems of anchors. NW said his concern was that IPTD did not reflect all of the needs of cavers. RK noted that he had learnt of some cavers in Devon and Cornwall were already purchasing BP anchors and placing them in mines.

[RM left the meeting at this point. Subsequent minutes prepared by NW].

NW stated it was important that the document reflected the actual practice in the regions since otherwise it could become a stick to beat us with and it was clear that some regions had officially accepted it even though they clearly had no intention of actually applying it. It did not make sense to him to apply the same requirement for anchors placed for SRT to those which would clearly never be used as SRT anchors, for example chains in Blue Pencil Passage in Swildons or the Surprise View ladder in Peak Cavern. Furthermore, he could not see the point in wasting further time on arguing over CSCC's acceptance of the document or otherwise since BCA did not have any powers or means of enforcing the document.

FL stated that she knew that even if CSCC were to adopt the policy they would be unable to enforce it and she would rather see a document which has some credibility with the people who need to use it than one which provides a gold standard but which in practice is widely ignored.

GJ, BD and LS then stated that they would withdraw from the E&T committee. GJ Requested that his disgust with the way the matter had been handled should be recorded.

The issue was discussed in some detail at the March 24th BCA meeting, which appeared to me to be more concerned with keeping Nick as E&T Convenor, rather than the fact that he (Nick) had deceived two Regional Councils (<http://british-caving.org.uk/?page=82>);

9. Equipment & Techniques Officer's Report *(written report previously circulated)*

NW: Is requesting that Council consider whether or not to accept NW's resignation. NW knows that GJ would agree that they have different perspectives on the events surrounding this. NW was requested by Council to arbitrate, and that necessarily involved making decisions.

GJ: Would like to suggest a way forward here. From DCA and CNCC's perspective, the assumption last October was that CSCC had accepted the IPTD in full. Suggests that CSCC simply accept the IPTD in its entirety at this meeting, including the requirement for SRT competency, and we then run with this for 2 years without discussing the document again in the meantime.

NW: Has concerns about this with his insurance hat on. The Policy as it stands is not being followed by some Regions at the moment, even by some of those that have agreed it. About the worst thing you can do is lay out a gold standard and then accept that you are not going to meet it. That is then very difficult.

FL: There is an incredibly simple way through this. The work on the IPTD by Bob, Les and Glenn is excellent. As Nick said, it is a gold standard, a guide for best practice. However underground there is going to be compromise from time to time. We can adopt it as a guide for best practice, then we empower the Regions to take the document and apply it to local conditions. Doesn't believe there is any argument that, if placing bolts for SRT, you should be competent at SRT and SRT rigging to decide on placements. However, in non-SRT situations, then this is not necessarily relevant.

GJ: The requirement for SRT competence is to protect the installer.

LW: Has always been puzzled that, regardless of what a document says, whoever is underground at the time is going to do things the way they want to. The document should say that you should use safe techniques, rather than specifying SRT.

NW: There are situations where, for example, bolts are being placed for fixed aids. NW doesn't believe the situation is quite as straightforward as some seem to think.

MM: Given the variety and nature of Welsh caves, we tend to find the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach a little alien. The general idea that one specific approach is mandatory therefore seems absurd.

DW: AE has asked DW to pass on that he has always made clear that everyone's absolute motives in all of this should be to make British Caving safer. He notes that the teamwork that resulted from the need to find a replacement to the Peco Anchor was an excellent example of what can be achieved if everyone works as a team. On the subject of SRT competency there are obviously clear and sensible compromises that could be reached if only all sides were willing to work together. AE also adds that for Council to accept the resignation of the E&T Convenor today would be absurd. NW is probably the highest qualified engineer in British Caving, holds a vast amount of respect from all quarters and has faced an incredibly difficult job winding his way between the various factions over the last years. AE would like to see us supporting NW today.

FL: Fully supports NW in his role as E&T Convenor. CSCC is happy to work with any Convenor on the E&T Committee.

GJ: The issue is not about NW's qualifications, knowledge or experience, but rather that NW did not make clear his decision on SRT competency to all parties.

NW: Does not feel he has actually yet reached a conclusion on the matter, but instead has now listened to both sides.

At this point NW left the meeting to allow it to discuss his resignation without him being there.

DJ: DCUC support NW continuing in his role.

LW: Does not see how Council can accept NW's resignation. Who do we replace him with?

GJ: Is not disagreeing with any of this. The problem is that NW conducted negotiations with CSCC and CNCC /DCA independently. He asked AE to be present to ensure fair play and then agreed different things with each group. On that basis copyright was handed over and the nub of the issue is that CNCC / DCA feel they have been deceived.

MD: Is it possible to step back and consider the document again?

LW: Was not at the meeting, but thought that CSCC's stance on the document was that CSCC accepted it on the same terms as Cambrian had.

MM: It was accepted by Cambrian with some modifications.

GJ: But these modifications had nothing to do with SRT competence.

DC: Has an e-mail from MM saying that Cambrian were able to accept the IPTD subject to a number of reservations. The first of these was that "although the document doesn't specifically say so, [Cambrian CC] assume it is to be applied to the installation of anchors in thickly-bedded, sound limestone only and where the pitch is intended to be rigged for SRT from the top. We have a number of potential sites in Wales where we do not believe the procedure is intended to be used: Rock other than limestone (e.g. slate mines); Pitches that are rigged from the bottom; and Ladder pitches."

GJ: Has an e-mail from Cambrian saying they accept it.

MM: Perhaps Cambrian took too benign a view, but we accepted it subject to an applicability statement based on the concerns DC has outlined.

FL: The agreement we had with NW was that we accepted the IPTD on the same basis as Cambrian.

GJ: Has an e-mail from NW in October stating:

The statement which was agreed [at the E&T meeting on 8th October] was as follows: "As a result of the process of arbitration, CSCC have agreed to the IPTD including a requirement for SRT competence, on the basis that the document will become copyright of BCA and subject to future revision as agreed by the E+T Committee". In order for this to be put into effect we will need a written transfer of copyright from Bob and Les to BCA. It clearly states that CSCC have agreed to the document including SRT competency. This is about deception, rather than NW's role as convenor.

MD: Even if we change the role of Convenor, we still have an issue that needs resolving. It, therefore, seems that we need everyone who has been involved until now still involved.

MM: Access Bodies in Wales are continuing to bolt caves in different ways. There is no universal method used.

JP: This document has been discussed by DCA on a number of occasions over the years. DCA is solidly behind the requirements of the IPTD. Bob Dearman believed the document had been accepted in its entirety. The only analogy JP can come up with that reflects the events is that it is like a school pupil saying he agrees to something while keeping his fingers crossed behind his back. The IPTD contains the section "It is recommended that at least two cavers highly experienced in rigging techniques discuss the following points before drilling the anchor holes". The document then goes on to list 8 different points to discuss. This allows for site-specific discussions. There are anchors being installed by DCA that are being used for ladder & lifeline, SRT, traverse lines etc.

GM: One thing here seems worrying. Some people do not seem to understand that modern rigging for ladder and lifeline is the same as for SRT. There are times when handlines and assisted handlines are appropriate rigged in a different way, but ladder & lifeline should follow the same approach as a well-rigged SRT pitch.

SH: Is conscious that whoever the Convenor is, we still need to realise that there is an issue to be resolved.

JP: Bob Dearman has stated categorically that if NW remains as Convenor, he will resign.

GJ: CNCC are fed up of the debate that has gone on for 4 years. 4 out of 5 Regions have agreed the IPTD, as has the 2010 AGM. If NW's resignation is not accepted today DCA and CNCC will simply continue to install anchors according to the IPTD, but will not waste their time attending E&T meetings.

DW: There are potentially very serious long-term effects of the decision we are being asked to make today. Before we do it is important that we reflect carefully on these, and not simply get bogged down in the smaller issues such as whether we think SRT competence should be a requirement, or indeed whether or not NW did deceive anyone.

MD: Do CNCC feel that there will be an opportunity for future co-operation on E&T matters?

GJ: CNCC developed this Programme in the late 80s and early 90s. It was a CNCC scheme and we intend to continue running this Scheme.

LW: E&T deals with more than resin anchors. Are you intending to withdraw from everything?

GJ: Doesn't know until the next meeting in June.

LW: There is no single standard being applied across the UK. People are still choosing to follow their own procedures anyway. The likely situation following today is that there will be two separate Schemes. This wouldn't be the end of the world. There are anchors going in all over the country that aren't resin anchors.

SH: Throughout mines in many parts of the country, it has to be desirable to go down the resin anchor route. There will, for example, almost certainly be a pile of bolts going in at Nenthead this Easter, but there is nothing in place for us to do this following a national standard. SH doesn't know how to get out of the situation we find ourselves in today. The important function of a Convenor is not necessarily technical knowledge, but rather their ability to act as a good Chairman.

MD: Would the return of copyright to Les & Bob be an acceptable solution?

GJ: No. The problem is that NW deceived us. GJ has a huge amount of respect for NW and this made NW's admission last week all the more difficult for GJ.

OC: One thing that worries OC is that we need a national standard when talking to a coroner. NW has had a very difficult job. One thing we can be certain of is that NW has now learnt from the experience and has to be a better Convenor as a result.

DC: It comes back to the issue of communication.

GM: Is it really necessary for a BCA document to be agreed by all Regions?

LW: When the document was accepted by the BCA AGM CSCC had withdrawn from the process.

GJ: At the Council Meeting on 20th June 2009 NW stated that "Competence of the Installer is an integral part of the safety of the Scheme and of the Insurance cover for the Scheme. The removal of the word SRT would not be appropriate."

Proposal: That Council does not accept NW's resignation as Convenor of the E&T Committee.

Prop: FL Sec: LW agreed - votes for: 11, votes against: 2 plus 3 abstentions

[NW returned to the meeting]

LW: Has E&T been doing anything else?

NW: We achieved a lot at the meeting last Saturday. It was very helpful and NW is now clear that we have the equipment, experience and expertise to move on. Other than the one issue brought to today's meeting, NW feels the E&T Committee is now in a better position than it has been previously.

Rope-Test Report

LW: Is GM concerned about BM's work in light of what he said earlier?

GM: No. Ladder & lifeline techniques should follow best practice in SRT rigging, but handlines need not. The remainder of the Equipment & Techniques Officer's Report was accepted without discussion.

The above is the background to why Les and I wrote the following;

It was therefore something of a shock to hear (at the March 17th 2012 E&T meeting) Nick Williams (Convenor of E&T) admit to the deceitful way in which he (Nick Williams) managed the negotiations between CSCC and CNCC/DCA at that October E&T meeting. Nick admitted that he had agreed with CSCC that the reference to ladder and lifeline in the IPTD could be ignored for CSCC, but did not inform CNCC/DCA that that was part of the deal. The negotiations were witnessed by Andy Eavis (BCA Chairman) and it is difficult not to see the implied endorsement of this duplicity by BCA.

The agreement that Nick made with CSCC completely ignores the best part of five years volunteer work from E&T members spent drafting the IPTD. It ignores the fact that four out of five Regional Councils have agreed the IPTD and it ignores the fact that the 2010 BCA AGM agreed that IPTD. It also raises the question of how Nick could arbitrarily make that agreement without first consulting and gaining the agreement of E&T.

As a result of this disclosure, both Les and I no longer have the confidence in Nick's ability to act as E&T Convenor and we have resigned from the Equipment and Techniques Committee. I have also resigned as CNCC Representative to BCA Council as I no longer have confidence in the ability of key members of BCA Council to act in an honourable fashion.

Where does this leave CNCC? Nick Williams (who is also the Insurance Manager) has stated on several occasions, that the BCA PLI policy covers the "installation of bolts" so CNCC intends to carry on with the "Resin Bonded Anchor Scheme" (that CNCC instigated in the late '80's) to the standard dictated by the current IPTD using the Bolt Products anchor that CNCC and DCA have recently tested.

Glenn Jones (ex) CNCC rep to BCA National Council