

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Final Approved Minutes of Committee Meeting 13th January 2018, Hellifield Institute, Hellifield

Attendees in order of signature on attendance sheets:

Name	Club	CNCC officer/co-opted role?	Committee voting?
Matt Ewles	York CC /NPC	Secretary, taking minutes	
Gary Douthwaite	York Uni CPC	Webmaster	Yes
Ric Halliwell	Craven PC	Birks Fell/Mongo/Fairy Holes meets	
Pat Halliwell	Craven PC		Yes
Peter Hambly	NPC		Yes
Kay Easton	Bradford PC	Conservation Officer	Yes
Matt Jenkinson	Rubber Duck CC		Yes
Phil Gillespie	Rubber Duck CC		
Peter Wilson	Burnley CC		Yes
Paul Whittaker	Burnley CC		
Bernard Bond	Burnley CC		
Pete Monk	Northern Boggarts		Yes
Tony Brown	Northern Boggarts	Bowland meets	
Stuart Whitmey	Earby PC		Yes
Ian Cross	Bradford PC		
Pete Bann	Northern Boggarts	Treasurer	
Sam Lieberman	Red Rose CPC		Yes
Ray Duffy	Red Rose CPC		
Simon Wilson	Bradford PC	Anchor Coordinator	
Tim Allen	N/A	Access Officer	
Lyndon Easterbrook	ULSA		Yes
Andy Gordon	Kendal CC		Yes
Alan Jeffreys	Grampian SG		Yes
Alan Speight	YSS		Yes
Andrew Hinde	Gritstone Club	Chair	
Chris Camm	White Rose PC		Yes

Numbering of sections in these minutes relates to agenda item numbering.

All Committee clubs present.

The meeting opened with a welcome from the chair at 9:33am

(1) Apologies for absence

Maz Holloway (Training Officer)

John Holloway (ULSA, Lyndon Easterbrook representing instead)

Fiona Durham (YSS, Alan Speight representing instead)

(2) Acceptance of October Committee meeting minutes

No matters were raised about the minutes, so a vote was taken immediately.

Acceptance of minutes:

Proposed: Pat Halliwell

Seconded: Sam Lieberman

Votes: 14 votes for (unanimous)

Action: Matt Ewles issue the final minutes.

(3) Matters arising from the October Committee meeting

Each action item from the agenda was discussed in order. Responses highlighted in red.

Individual(s)	Action item
Matt E.	Issue October meeting minutes as final. Done.
Tim A.	Draft a statement regarding CRow/access land for CNCC website for consideration at next meeting (action carried over). Covered under Access Officer report.
Matt E.	Publicise the new Fairy Holes access agreement. Done; over 10000 views on Facebook, but Ric Halliwell commented that so far this has only resulted in three permit requests being made for 2018.
Kay E. and Andrew H.	Contact Richard Bendall to discuss Meridian Pot restoration. Discussions ongoing; Tim Allen to visit the site in due course. Can be removed from ongoing actions.
Alan S.	Pass on copy of Northern Caves to Alan Middleton at Leck Fell House with the CNCC's compliments. Done, book passed on with letter to say it was from the CNCC; it was well received.

(4) Reports

Chairman's report:

- Tim Allen asked if Andrew Hinde had found a stand-in chair for the AGM. Andrew said that he was now able to make the AGM, as he was no longer able to attend his conference. All caves are now considered by Natural England to be 'confined spaces', and surface shafts as 'working at height' and as such, all Natural England staff are subject to additional restrictions for caving related activities, which has prevented his attendance at this conference. This has potential knock-on effects for the Stories in Stone project and has hampered conservation works over the last few months. A few suggested ways forward were suggested around the room, but Andrew will look to identify a solution.

Secretary's report:

- Lynden Easterbrook delivered a question from Sam Allshorn about the carcasses at the bottom of Dale Head Pot; how many open shafts are there across The Dales? Are there not better uses of time/resource than Dale Head? Matt Ewles explained that he had recently visited Dale Head Pot and observed two sheep stood right on the edge of the steep sided hole and this is probably one of the worst examples he had seen of an animal death trap. However, Matt conceded that this was merely a suggestion, and he was happy for this one to be taken under consideration by others more able to make a decision.

Treasurer's report:

- Andrew Hinde apologised to Pete Bann for some discrepancies on the spreadsheets for the Stories in Stone project, but said that this was being dealt with.
- Andrew concluded that we are in good financial health.
- Pete Bann commented that his use of the term 'capital gains tax' in his report should have read 'corporation tax'. There is some uncertainty about whether the £2500 from Natural England resulting from the opportunity presented by Tony Harrison would be subject to corporation tax. Pat Halliwell said the Craven have discussed this and money received from its members was not subject to corporation tax; Alan Speight confirmed a similar situation encountered by the YSS; but money from non-members was subject to tax. Pete said that as the invoice for the cave monitoring was issued by the CNCC, and not Tony, this could be a problem; Ric Halliwell believed this would count as 'trading' and so the money would be taxable. Pete to continue to investigate this.
- Matt Ewles agreed to follow this up with a letter of thanks to Tony Harrison.

Actions: Matt Ewles to contact Tony Harrison to thank him for the opportunity to receive these funds, and Pete Bann to identify whether this money is subject to corporation tax.

Conservation Officer's report:

- This has been a quiet phase for conservation work due to the new health and safety restrictions imposed by Natural England.

Access officer's report:

- Pat Halliwell asked what QMC was. Tim confirmed that this is the Qualifications Management Committee, which was split off from the BCA Training Committee to focus specifically on the professional/commercial side of training.
- Tim expressed surprise that the QMC were coming to us to report an issue on Leck Fell. They regularly raise the issue of access in South Wales (e.g. OFD) but on this occasion Leck Fell has come to their attention. Tim acknowledged that we will see what we can do as the discussions about cave access in our region progress. This may involve looking to discriminate between different types of commercial caving.

- With respect to Langcliffe Estate, Tim recommended that we withdraw from the 1970s access agreement. Sam Allshorn (permit secretary for Penyghent) has been consulted. Tim has prewarned the Marshfield Trust (a family trust set up to run Langcliffe Estate) of these plans to withdraw from the agreement. The representative from the Marshfield Trust knew little about the caves and Tim delivered reassurance about the liability insurance in place for all cavers accessing the land. Despite this, they still wished us to continue with the 1978 access agreement, which is out of date and contains several incorrect details.
- Andrew Hinde asked what Tim thought we should be asking for in the next meeting. Tim said that open access was the only thing we should be pushing for; but at worst case, addition to the online cave booking system could be considered.
- Alan Speight supported Tim's suggestion to withdraw from the agreement.
- Pete Monk asked what the CNCC website should read after we have withdrawn from the agreement. Alan Speight suggested that this be left to Tim's discretion. Matt Ewles said that other details covered in the Access Officer report may provide some guidance for this.
- Alan Jeffreys asked what was the extent of Langcliffe Estate land? This was confirmed to be from Neals Ing near Dale Head across to the Hunt Pot wall. Tim said that there were many other (smaller) caves on this land which the CNCC make no mention of on our website.
- A proposal was then raised:

In favour of supporting Tim's course of action

Proposed: Alan Speight

Seconded by Pat Halliwell

Votes: 14 votes in favour (unanimous)

- Simon Wilson asked exactly what had just been voted upon; suggesting that the proposal needed some more specific wording. After some discussion (including advice from Simon to avoid use of the word 'withdraw') the following wording was agreed:

"The CNCC is unable to continue to support or implement the 1978 access agreement"

- Matt Ewles read out the above amended proposal wording and asked if anyone wished to change their stance based on this wording; no change, so the proposal was accepted.

Action: The CNCC will discontinue support/implementation of the access agreement with Langcliffe Estate.

- Regarding the online cave booking system, Tim confirmed that Ingleborough Estate have now confirmed that we can go ahead with the testing phase of this system using volunteer clubs. Gary Douthwaite confirmed that he had several clubs lined up to help with this.
- Andrew Hinde said that reaching this agreement across so many parties was a tremendous achievement.

- Tim suggested that Lord Shuttleworth is also broadly in support so hopes that after the testing phase this can also be carried forward onto Leck Fell too.

Action: Gary Douthwaite to work with Geoff Whittaker to transfer the online cave booking system into the testing phase.

- Moving on to Fairy Holes, Andrew Hinde confirmed that the 2018 access agreement had been sent to the land agents in York. Andrew said that he has always administered this as an individual. He and Tim had disagreed about whether non-BCA member individuals should be able to get permits; Andrew acknowledged that there was no insurance reason for this, but felt that many landowners feel more assured by BCA membership being in place. Andrew is keen to pass this access agreement onto Tim, but Tim expressed some concern that this may be held against him, as it goes against what he has been fighting for (i.e. access for all, not just BCA members). For now, the 2018 agreement has been signed by Andrew, but this is something that needed to be revisited in 2019 to see if a compromise can be reached.
- For Meridian Pot, Tim said he aims to have a look at this at some point. Stuart Whitmey reiterated the Earby Pothole Club's offer of help with any works here.
- Moving onto the North Pennine Geo Park, there are many caves located within this area, including Hudgill Burn, Fairy Holes, Knock Fell Caverns and others. The Geo Park initiative were unaware of the caves in their area, but are now interested in promoting them. Andrew Hinde suggested this could be a good opportunity to promote caving in the area. John Gunn is already involved in some mapping work on their behalf. Tim Allen suggested an item in the newsletter about this; Ray Duffy suggested that we could send them some photos of the cave to show the extent of caving in the region.
- Pete Monk asked whether the Geo Park initiative had a visitor centre; Andrew confirmed no, it is mainly done by interpretation boards in car parks etc. Andrew felt that the CNCC should be proactive in engaging with them, including writing to establish a good relationship from the start, which will help create a positive view of caving.

Action: Officers to work to see what can be done to promote caving through the North Pennines Geo Park initiative.

- Tim confirmed that an article about the Three Counties System would be appearing in the National Parks visitor magazine
- The discussion then moved onto Tim's report and recommendations for rights under CRoW.
- Ray Duffy emphasised not to use red/green as a colour code (due to colour blindness).
- Andrew Hinde asked if we needed a specific proposal to support this recommendation. Tim felt that we were only making progress on Ingleborough/Leck/Casterton Fell due to the CRoW act forcing reconsideration of what level of access should be granted.
- Ric Halliwell highlighted, with respect to Tim's wording, that we currently are an access controlling body in some places. Tim believed that as we aren't policing or enforcing any access, we cannot claim to be 'controlling' access. Andrew Hinde suggested that the term

‘facilitate’ may be more appropriate. Pat Halliwell said that the statement needed to be reworded to acknowledge that we do control/administer or facilitate access, and that acceptance of these reports should be subject to such a change being made.

Tim asked if anyone knew anything about the access situation on Grassington Moor and the ‘lost caverns’. Chris Camm said that moor itself past Yarnbury Estate was subject to an ownership dispute in the 1970s, and today access rights are administered by the Grassington Moor Management Association, chaired by the National Parks. Mining areas remain scheduled ancient monuments. The ownership situation towards Mossdale is different. Grassington Moor is the area of land beyond the moor wall and normally locked gate at the Eastern end of the track beyond Yarnbury. This is the area of land under which the ‘lost caverns’ are situated and contains many scheduled mine workings and the cupola chimney. Relations with the stakeholders are good at present so Chris urged that anyone with anything planned to please ask local cavers for pointers.

Training officer’s report:

- Andrew Hinde presented the report in the absence of Maz Holloway. Andrew expressed surprise in the potential reduction of funding for training course to £150/day and questioned why this might be. Tim Allen said that minimal documentation was supplied on this ahead of the BCA meeting, however, the BCA has increased the grant to the Training Committee. We need to check with Maz if this is correct; clarification may be required from Nigel Atkins.

Action: Matt Ewles to speak with Maz to identify whether this reduction is correct.

Webmaster report:

- Gary Douthwaite said that since the last meeting, a landowner login page has been developed, which will allow landowners to log into the online booking system and view all upcoming and historic bookings and statistics for the caves on their land.

Anchor Coordinator report:

- Andrew Hinde commented that at the last meeting, Simon Wilson reported that he was inspecting the anchors for quality, and had there been any progress? Simon confirmed yes, he has checked them and other than a few minor cosmetic matters, the anchors were fully acceptable.
- Simon raised the matter of the period of time when no anchors were available (from when the CNCC Technical Group ceased installations, to when the IC anchor came to be available). In this time, stainless steel anchors were installed unofficially at several caves, including at Dale Head Pot, Crescent Pot, Echo Pot, Hammer Pot, Kind Pot and Jockey Hole. The installers won’t admit to these publicly, but Simon has received their assurance that they were well installed. Simon asked what were we going to do about these? Can we publish a topo?
- Alan Speight and Paul Whittaker felt we should only provide topos for CNCC anchored caves.
- Tim Allen felt we simply needed to make it clear that they are not CNCC installed anchors.

- Matt Ewles said that unless these anchors were CNCC approved, we are at odds with our fixed aid policy. Matt asked whether we could test these anchors and retrospectively approve them if they met specifications?
- Lyndon Easterbrook suggested that doing this could undermine the anchor scheme completely; people will install their own unofficial anchors, knowing that the CNCC will just go and retrospectively approve them, rather than go via the proper channels.
- Tim Allen believed that this approach was a can of worms.
- Alan Speight suggested that the only topos we publish should be for CNCC installed anchors. There was general agreement with this. Matt Ewles concluded by reiterating that our fixed aid policy, which had been introduced a few years earlier following work with Bob Mehew, was clear that the only anchors we support are those installed in accordance with the BCA anchor scheme. Matt believed that publishing a topo for these unofficial anchors was tantamount to our support or endorsement for their use.
- Matt concluded by saying that he sympathised with Simon's thoughts, but we could not publish a topo for these unofficial anchors as this would go against our fixed aids policy.

Report on the most recent BCA meeting:

Tim Allen delivered a verbal report on the BCA meeting from the previous weekend.

- The BCA Chairman spoke of Ric Halliwell's offer to review the BCA constitution. Tim felt that the BCA needed to consider its future vision and direction of travel first, and address the constitution according to that; therefore, Ric needs this guidance before he can start.
- The BCA are looking to co-opt someone into the insurance role. There is currently a suggestion to raise the level of indemnity on the policy from £5m to £10m at an annual cost of £8000. This is due to the insistence of the landowners of Longleat Estate. An agreement has been reached to go ahead with this. Matt Jenkinson asked how many caves this covered; Longleat Estate covers Cheddar Gorge area, including the Frozen Deep/Reservoir Hole. Ric Halliwell said that the National Trust had also asked for this increased indemnity during the last negotiations for Birks Fell Cave. Andrew Hinde asked if this would come as any benefit to the Gaping Gill winchmeet; but Ric said no, as the BPC and CPC are limited companies.
- BCA databases are currently held in several places, which needs to be sorted. A solution had been found with Tahdah, but this has fallen through. Some funding has been approved for someone to improve the current database.
- A volunteer has been found for the Safeguarding Officer (formerly Child Protection) position, Mark Sims has been appointed the convenor of the Equipment and Techniques Committee, and David Rose the Media Liaison Officer (formerly Andy Eavis).
- BCA have removed the 'Try Caving' website and linked instead to 'NewtoCaving' instead.
- Data protection regulations were mentioned but no specific advice has been issued yet by the BCA. Ric Halliwell advised that the BMC already had some advice on their website and it was worthwhile looking there for now. Kay Easton commented that any data protection

breach needs to be reported to the Information Commissioner, therefore it was best to seek consent for a wider data sharing agreement (which is less easy to breach) rather than for a narrower one. Peter Hambly added that caving clubs couldn't register with the Information Commissioner; they are exempt. He emphasised that the most important thing was to ensure individuals actively consent to their details being stored and shared, with renewal of this consent being undertaken annually.

- Andrew Hinde asked whether Peter, on the basis of his previous involvement with data protection legislation, would take on the action of providing a guidance document on this to the CNCC that we can make available to our members. Pat Halliwell agreed that this seemed a good way forward. Peter agreed.

Action: Peter Hambly to put together a guidance document aimed at caving clubs on data protection requirements

- Tim Allen provided some background to a recent offer from Linda Wilson (a non-practising retired solicitor) to take on a role of 'legal gatekeeper' within the BCA. In this role she would not provide legal input herself but would channel enquiries to the right place. Tim expressed his concerns over this appointment, stating that both the DCA and CNCC have written to the BCA to urge careful consideration, owing to Linda's historic opposition to CRoW applying to caving. Consequently, the post of Legal and Insurance Officer has been removed and split into two roles. The Insurance role will be co-opted, and as required, the executive would seek opinion from a practising legal professional directly. Therefore, Linda's offer to take on the 'gatekeeper' role will be declined.
- Matt Ewles said that he had authored the letter from the CNCC and handed a copy around the room (see Appendix 1). No questions were raised.
- The Scottish Cave and Mine registry is now up and running. Gary Douthwaite said he had contacted someone in the Grampian Speleo Group about getting the major Scottish caves onto the CNCC website but no reply yet. Alan Jeffreys will investigate this.

Action: Alan Jeffreys to follow up on getting Scottish caves included on CNCC website.

- LUSS (Lancaster Uni SS) is being revived with assistance from CHECC. This may inspire interest in resurrecting other defunct clubs (e.g. BUSS) or perhaps having a caving section added to existing mountaineering clubs. Tim Allen suggested we could write to the BCA Youth and Development Group (led by Rostam Namaghi) to offer support in whatever way we can. Matt Ewles agreed and will action this.

Action: Matt Ewles to write to BCA Y&D Group to offer any support the CNCC can offer.

- Tim said that out of the ~25 people at the BCA meeting, he was the only 'northern' caver present (Andrew Hinde and Mark Sims could not attend). He suggested moving or rotating the location of the meetings, but this has been refused. The BCA AGM this year (which does move around) is in the Forest of Dean, having missed the Dales on its recent cycle. Tim felt it would be nice to get a greater input and voice for northern cavers in the BCA executive. The Chairman has promised that the next AGM will be in the Dales.

- Andrew Hinde emphasised the need for getting an official CNCC representative to attend BCA meetings.
- Andy Gordon said he had recently dealt with Nigel Atkins, as Kendal Caving Club recently received funding to train new members of their club. Nigel gave the impression that he was keen to roll out the DCA's 'top down' approach nationally (e.g. each club having a Training Officer). Andy asked whether this was the direction things were going? Tim said that the DCA scheme has been considered nationally but felt that all CNCC matters would be dealt with appropriately via Maz as our Training Officer.

(5) Discussion about future CNCC/instructed caving relationship

- Andrew Hinde opened discussions by asking whether any CIC/ACI people were present in the meeting; there was not. He suggested postponing until we have some representatives present from the instructed caving community but also called for any thoughts now.
- Lyndon Easterbrook asked for clarification; does the CNCC represent commercial cavers or recreational cavers? Tim Allen added that according to our website we represent 'northern' cavers without making the distinction between recreational and commercial.

At this point in the meeting (11:37am) the YSS representative left. There are now 13 voting clubs.

- Andrew said that the DCA have a liaison for the instructed caving community.
- Lyndon asked whether bringing commercial cavers into CNCC access agreements would result in us charging? Tim Allen gave a definite 'no' to charging for access.
- Matt Ewles said that he, on instruction from the Committee, had a few years ago sent a letter to the Association of Caving Instructors to build bridges and provide a point of contact. However, this was before the existence of the Qualifications Management Committee (QMC, the commercial side of the BCA Training Committee). Matt offered to reissue this letter to the relevant QMC individuals and to invite them to the next Committee meeting to discuss any concerns in person. This was agreed.

Action: Matt Ewles to write to QMC to invite to next Committee meeting to discuss their concerns directly and potentially future inclusion in CNCC access arrangements.

- Tim Allen said that there had been a verbal agreement in place between the previous Access Officer, Les Sykes, and the land agents on Leck Fell for commercial cavers, but this had fallen through with change in Access Officer and land agents over the years.

(6) Potential for future involvement of CNCC in Kendal Mountain Festival

- Lyndon Easterbrook said ULSA were in favour, and Maz Holloway was happy to be involved.
- Tim Allen clarified that we weren't talking about a stand (which would cost too much) but perhaps the BCA artificial cave could form a prominent feature of the 'base camp' part of the event. We would need volunteers to man it. There was also the possibility of SRT demos.

- Pat Halliwell has received an advert for the Banff Mountain Film Festival, which was going on tour with dates in York, Harrogate, Leeds and elsewhere, if anyone was interested.

At this point it was realised that no vote to accept the Officers reports had taken place:

Acceptance of Officer reports:

Proposed: Andy Gordon

Seconded: Pat Halliwell

Votes: 13 votes for (unanimous)

(7) Any Other Business

- Paul Whittaker was introduced as the new regular Burnley CC representative, in place of Bernard Bond who has been representing Burnley for 32 years. The attendees gave thanks to Bernard for his unprecedented contribution to the CNCC over this time.
- Ray Duffy said that the RRCPC were naming their reading room in honour of Tom Sykes, the first CNCC Secretary, who passed away last year.

Meeting closed at 11:57.

Summary of specific action items that should be complete by the next meeting:

Individual(s)	Action item
Matt E.	Issue October meeting minutes as final.
Matt E/Tim A.	Announce our opt-out from the Langcliffe Estate agreement and to provide guidance to cavers accessing the caves on this land.
Matt E.	Contact Tony Harrison to thank him on behalf of CNCC for the opportunity to benefit from the Natural England funding.
Pete B.	Investigation whether the above funding is subject to corporation tax.
Gary D./Geoff W.	Implement testing of the online cave booking system.
Andrew H./all Officers	Source information on Northern Pennine caves for Geo Park initiative.
Matt E./Maz H.	Verify whether the training grant is being reduced to a maximum of £150/day, as this could impact the costs of future CNCC courses.
Peter H.	Put together a guidance document on data protection requirements.
Alan J.	Follow up on getting details of Scottish caves to add to CNCC website (names, grid references, access details as a minimum).
Matt E.	Contact BCA Y&D group to offer CNCC support/encouragement.
Matt E.	Write to QMC to invite to next Committee meeting to discuss their concerns and access requirements.

Summary of longer-term initiatives currently ongoing:

- (1) Creation of CNCC-organised scheme for systematic inspection of resin anchors.
- (2) Put together a CNCC stall for Hidden Earth, which can also be used for CHECC.
- (3) Undertake live testing of the online cave booking system.

Appendix 1:
Letter from CNCC Secretary to BCA regarding 'Legal Gatekeeper' appointment

3rd January 2018

To the British Caving Association;

It was with sadness that I learned of the resignation of Bob Mehew as BCA Legal and Insurance Officer. Bob has played an instrumental part in the BCA since (and prior to) its formation, and has also provided invaluable liability advice to the CNCC over the past few years. His dedication to British Caving has been unwavering. Therefore, it was disheartening, and highly regrettable to hear his resignation citing difficulties and conflicts with the BCA executive on various matters.

Since Bob's departure I believe there have been discussions about the appointment of Linda Wilson in the capacity of a legal 'gatekeeper' to provide legal related support.

I am aware that Linda has been an opponent of CRoW applying to caving. I foresee that accepting help in relation to BCA legal matters from an individual who does not, on a personal level, endorse the aims of the BCA CRoW campaign, is likely to cause concern for many BCA members.

The Council of Northern Caving Clubs strongly supports the BCA CRoW Campaign. Now that the BCA membership has voted in favour of the campaign, and constitutional concerns about the campaign have been addressed, it is our expectation that the campaign receives full support from all BCA individuals.

The BCA is likely to rely heavily on legal input as the campaign progresses. I recognise that Linda has skills and knowledge that the BCA could benefit greatly from. However, this seems likely to put Linda in the difficult position of supporting a campaign that she does not necessarily wish to be successful.

For this reason, I urge for a frank dialogue between the BCA Executive and Linda before any appointment is made or any offer of help is accepted. This discussion should address any potential conflicts of interest, and make clear that in any BCA role, regardless of what form this role takes, Linda would be expected to desist from, and renounce personal campaigns against CRoW applying to caving, and to provide all necessary support to the BCA campaign to help it achieving the desirable outcome.

I believe that such upfront honesty and outlining of expectations is owed to Linda and all BCA members, to avoid any conflicts or misunderstandings further down the line.

If these discussions conclude that Linda is able to put personal opinions aside and offer the necessary support to the BCA, then this is excellent news. However, if any potential conflicts are identified, some reconsideration may be required. Ultimately, Bob's departure from his role was due to irreconcilable conflicts within the BCA's own infrastructure. I suggest the BCA make sure history does not repeat itself through Linda, by having the necessary conversations sooner rather than later.

Yours sincerely

Matt Ewles

Secretary of the Council of Northern Caving Clubs

Email: secretary@cncc.org.uk