

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Minutes of Committee Meeting, 23rd October 2021, Hellifield Institute

Attendees:

Name	Abbr.	Affiliation	CNCC role?	Voting?
In Person				
Andrew Hinde	AH	Gritstone Club	Chairman	No
Alan Jeffreys	AJ	Grampian Speleological Group		Yes
Chris Camm	CC	White Rose Pothole Club		Yes
Gary Douthwaite	GD	Northern Pennine Club	Webmaster	Yes
Ian Cross	IC	Bradford Pothole Club		Yes
Joshua Young	JY	York University Cave and Pothole Club	Secretary	Yes
Russell Myers	RM	Craven Pothole Club		No
Sam Lieberman	SL	Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club		Yes
Stuart Whitmey	SW	Earby Pothole Club		Yes
Online				
Andy Gordon	AG	Kendal Caving Club		Yes
Adrian Howden	AHO	Yorkshire Subterranean Society		Yes
Kay Easton	KE	Bradford Pothole Club	Conservation Officer	No
Lyndon Easterbrook	LE	University of Leeds Speleological Association		Yes
Pat Halliwell	PH	Craven Pothole Club		Yes
Pete Monk	PM	Northern Boggarts		Yes
Sam Allshorn	SA	University of Leeds Speleological Association		No

12 out of 13 Committee clubs present (Absent: YCC)

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

The meeting opened at 09:33

1) Apologies for absence

- Ian Patrick
- Mark Richards
- Ric Halliwell
- Fiona Hartley
- Matt Ewles
- John Holloway

2) Acceptance of minutes from the June Committee Meeting

No issues raised.

Vote to accept the June 2021 Committee meeting minutes.

Proposed: SL

Seconded: AJ

9 votes for, 3 abstentions

Action: JY to issue final minutes.

3) Matters arising from the June Committee Meeting

Individual(s)	Action item
Josh Y	Finalise January Committee Minutes Done
Access Officer	Write to National Park Authority regarding caving access at High Birkwith. Ongoing. AH spoke with landowner over the summer, who is still not ready to allow cavers back. AH informed him of the available grants for improving access and ensuring everyone follows the right route through his land. AH believes a joint approach with YDNP through this funding scheme may help us get an access arrangement for all users of the land at High Birkwith. For now, we have the right message on the website considering that the caves are on access land. AH suggested re-approaching the issue around mid-winter, when there is much less walking traffic.
Matt E	Get in touch with Tony B, and perhaps put together an article on Bowland. Ongoing
Josh Y	Once GD has formatted all of Simon Wilson's anchor content, JY to contact Simon to get his permission to publish it on the CNCC website. Ongoing
Andrew H / Matt E	Use the CNCC's online presence to encourage cavers to take part in the upcoming Whernside SSSI review. Ongoing
Ian P / Matt E	Do a PR push to get more people signing up for CNCC training workshops, with a particular focus on the photography workshop. Done
Anchor Installers	Discuss policy wording for adding non-CNCC resin anchors to topos. Ongoing, needs a second meeting for further discussion.
Matt E	Discuss access to Birks Fell Cave with the National Trust. Josh Y to support if any official documentation is required. Done, see item 7.
Josh Y	Contact Hellifield Village Institute to find out their availability in October. Done
Josh Y	Contact the committee in late July to see if there is support for moving back to full in-person meetings on a Saturday morning. Done
Josh Y / Gary D	If the October meeting will be held in person, make arrangements for this to happen, including the option for people to attend remotely. Done.

4) Reports

Chairman's report

- Regarding the unstable entrance at Wretched Rabbit, SL reported that they have an idea for how to solve it, they just need to sort out the details and acquire the materials. The most important issue is assessing the safety of any work being carried out. AH offered to contribute CNCC resources to the project if necessary.
- The Health & Safety lead for the upcoming TV production at Alum Pot would like to add 4 temporary anchors below the Greasy Slab, on the traverse; he has asked the CNCC's opinion. These will need 8mm holes, and the anchors will be removed afterwards. AH said that these holes will probably be hidden from sight, as the wall in question is very mossy, so proposed that we reply saying we're happy for this to happen. SL asked if there is any natural rigging available, but this would not be acceptable for camera operators working at height due to health & safety regulations. CC asked that it be made clear that decisions like this would be made on a case-by-case basis, to avoid setting a precedent.

Vote to advise that the CNCC is happy for the production to install the 4 temporary anchors in Alum Pot.

Proposed: AH

Seconded: IC

12 votes for (unanimous)

Secretary's Report

- Nothing raised.

Conservation Officer's Report

- AH is pleased to see university caving clubs offering to help on conservation projects.
- When asked for an update on the loose boulder above the 2nd pitch in Fossil Pot, KE said that it's still there and we still have a warning on the website. CC says that when he looked at it, his opinion is that there's not much they could do given its size and location and that it's just the nature of the cave, there are lots of loose boulders. KE said that the individual who reported it was satisfied to see a warning on the website, no further action required.
- PH reported that the CPC had been helping at White Scar, moving a boulder from behind Big Bertha. The project is ongoing but nearly there, so access will hopefully be restored soon.

Training Officer's Report

- AH commended IP on doing a fantastic job, with lots of courses being run and receiving great feedback on these. GD added that it seems the payment system has been working with no issues.

BCA Representative's Report

- AH reported that the CRoW legal battle has moved to a new stage, requiring a new court date. He commended David Rose for his work on this.
- The proposals from the recent AGM were still up for online voting until the 31st October, so AH reminded everyone to vote on these.
- AH stressed the need for a volunteer BCA representative, as he cannot keep up this additional job. He added that meetings are much shorter nowadays, so it is nowhere near as much of a commitment as it may have been in the past.

E&T Representative's Report

- Nothing raised.

PR & Communications Officer's Report

- AH commended ME on the important work he has been doing, particularly earlier in the year when he was always on top of Covid access updates.
- GD said that the promotional framed photos are in the process of being distributed, but isn't sure of where they're going yet.

Webmaster's Report

- GD reported that the mailing list shot up by around 50 people recently. SL suggested this could be due to university clubs recruiting new cavers at this time of year.

Vote to accept all reports.

Proposed: IC

Seconded: AJ

12 votes for (unanimous)

5) Gaping Gill Winch Meets

- The new Ingleborough Estate land agents, Strutt & Parker, were in touch with the CNCC with lots of questions regarding insurance cover for cavers accessing their land. After they had made arrangements for winch meets, they had assumed that all cavers needed insurance, which is not the case. AH has been corresponding with the CPC chair Paul McWhinney, who explained the situation of how the club has their own separate insurance for winching and for other cavers using their rigging, but that this is distinct from the CNCC's access agreement. Strutt & Parker now understand the situation and are happy with current arrangements, and their insurers have the correct information.
- PH read out a statement from the CPC, which is copied here in full:

"CPC and BPC run annual winch meets which are not only a significant attraction for the public, but also a major event for many cavers. As part of the welcome CPC extend to visiting cavers we are keen to facilitate access to this superb system and make our rigging of entrances available to visiting cavers. There has been plenty of positive feedback (especially after our last two Summers' meets without a winch), and we hope this is seen as a service to the UK caving community.

CPC fully support the CNCC position on cave access and CROW.

The running of the winch meet goes beyond what is described in CROW legislation (construction of winch, a public event, overnight stay, motorised access etc) and an agreement with the landowner is required.

CPC has appropriate insurance cover for the winch meet. CPC have high standards relating to the safety, and an independent assessment (Bureau Veritas). Where we have facilitated access to the system for cavers (as opposed to people just using the winch to visit the main chamber) we have asked that people using our equipment have an appropriate third party insurance. This was for cavers wishing to use our equipment, and was with regard to liability between cavers (and our club members are required to have such insurance). Our discussions with the landowner relate exclusively to the execution of the winch meet and have no bearing on other access.

CPC now understand that the BCA insurance will cover all cavers accessing the Gaping Gill system during the meets (whether booked in or not, and if not insured). This would remove the need for our requirement for insurance."

- AH informed the committee of a new problem with BCA insurance regarding landowner indemnity. The newly released "To whom it may concern" letter (published 21st October) says

that non-BCA-members are only covered under specific circumstances: if they have permission to visit the cave; if they have over 2 years experience; or if they are accompanied by a BCA member (CIM or DIM).

- This contradicts what Howard Jones, the BCA Insurance Manager, told BCA Council earlier this year, which was that any caver is covered. Specifically, it was confirmed that the insurance covered *“Any landowner or occupier who enters into an agreement with BCA or a BCA member organisation in order to permit access to caves on their land.”* And will provide cover against *“Any incident arising from the actions of cavers on the property of a landowner or occupier who has agreed to permit access to caves or abandoned mines on their land.”* (This wording was taken from the Insurance Manager’s report to the 30th March 2021 BCA Council meeting as written on that meeting’s agenda, received via email from the BCA Secretary Allan Richardson on the 28th March.)
- There was a discussion between AH and RM. RM explained that this new wording was the best the BCA were able to negotiate with the insurers, and that it would be extremely difficult to get a policy which covers any caver without question. AH replied that this is an extremely important issue because many of the CNCC’s access agreements were negotiated based on the former wording. What is most concerning is that the CNCC (and, most likely, other regional councils) were not informed when this clause was removed sometime in the last 5 years, and were misled earlier this year when we were informed it had been reinstated in full.

Action: AH to follow up the issue with BCA landowner indemnity insurance with the BCA council.

6) Conflict of Interest Policy

- LE said that ULSA wanted to make this proposal as they were worried about the conflict of interest involved with the CNCC Training Officer arranging BCA-funded courses run by himself and those he knows. PE pointed out that Ian made this clear when he stood for the post and that his “assistants” are not necessarily paid. LE replied that they just wanted to make it more formal.
- RM said that Howard Jones came up with the wording for the BCA policy, based on a standard wording.
- When asked who would need to declare, SA said that it should be all committee members and officers. He clarified that the interest did not necessarily have to be financial, but also that the wording states that while we should aim to avoid conflicts of interest, it does not prohibit people from fulfilling their roles. However, those people may be asked to leave the meeting for any relevant votes.

Vote for the CNCC to adopt a Conflict of Interest policy.

Proposed: LE

Seconded: GD

12 votes for (unanimous)

Action: JY to organise the adoption of a conflict of interest policy.

7) Birks Fell

- Matt Ewles provided a statement which was read out, stating that the National Trust legal team seemed on board with the memorandum of understanding approach to open access to Birks Fell. They received the “To whom it may concern” letter regarding BCA insurance (the previous version, as this was before the most recent wording was published) and were engaging with the tenants at Redmire Farm.
- GD said that Matt was very pleased with how the National Trust had taken the issue seriously, and expressed how it would be good to establish a positive working relationship with them for

the future. AH said that other councils such as the DCA work with the National Trust regularly, and that perhaps we should get in touch with them to notify them of how this has gone.

Action: JY/AH to inform DCA of our recent interactions with the National Trust.

8) Date and time of next meeting

- Following the success of this hybrid meeting, JY suggested moving the next meeting to Saturday 15th January. It was agreed that this would be moved, and that it would stay in the large hall to allow for social distancing if necessary.
- KE said that while it was much more convenient being able to attend remotely, it was hard to hear most people in the room. GD said he could bring better technology to improve the experience at the next meeting.

12) Any other business

- GD said that members of the public had tried to use the online booking system to try and book a trip on the winch. He suggested having a dedicated page on the CNCC website for winch meets with info on what to do, and directions to the separate club webpages. He could also make another winch meet page for cavers, with info on dates and the changes to access while these events are going on.

Action: GD to add winch meet info pages to the CNCC website.

Meeting closed at 10:38

Summary of specific action items:

Individual(s)	Action item
Josh Y	Finalise June 2021 Committee meeting minutes.
Officers	Work towards securing access at High Birkwith.
Matt E	Get in touch with Tony B, and perhaps put together an article on Bowland.
Josh Y	Once GD has formatted all of Simon Wilson's anchor content, JY to contact Simon to get his permission to publish it on the CNCC website.
Andrew H / Matt E	Use the CNCC's online presence to encourage cavers to take part in the upcoming Whernside SSSI review.
Anchor Installers	Discuss policy wording for adding non-CNCC resin anchors to topos.
Matt E	Continue pursuing an improvement to access at Birks Fell.
Andrew H	Follow up the issue with BCA landowner indemnity insurance with the BCA council.
Josh Y	Organise the adoption of a conflict of interest policy.
Josh Y/Andrew H	Inform DCA of our recent interactions with the National Trust.
Gary D	Add winch meet info pages to the CNCC website.