# COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

## British Caving Association

**Final Minutes of Committee Meeting 14th October 2017, 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 CC /NPC | Webmaster | |
| Peter Hambly | NPC | | Yes |
| Ian Cross | Bradford PC | | Yes |
| Tony Brown | Northern Boggarts | | |
| Pete Bann | Northern Boggarts | Treasurer | Yes |
| Ric Halliwell | Craven PC | Birks Fell/Mongo/Fairy Holes meets | |
| Pat Halliwell | Craven PC | | Yes |
| Alan Jeffreys | Grampian SG | | Yes |
| Marion Holloway | ULSA | Training Officer | Yes |
| Andrew Hinde | Gritstone Club | Chairman | |
| Geoff Whittaker | Th'owd Skool CC | Ingleborough/Aygill meets | |
| Andrew Lindley | Th'owd Skool CC | | |
| Stuart Whitmey | Earby PC | | Yes |
| Alan Speight | YSS | | Yes |
| Paul Whittaker | Burnley CC | | Yes |
| Victor Wain | White Rose PC | | Yes |
| Sam Lieberman | Red Rose CPC | | Yes |
| Josh Young | York Uni CPC | | Yes |

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

**Committee clubs not present (2/14):**
Rubber Duck Caving Club (apology received)
Kendal Caving Club (apology received)

### (1) Apologies for absence

Lyndon Easterbrook (ULSA)
Fiona Durham (YSS)
Bernard Bond (Burnley CC)
Pete Monk (Northern Boggarts)
Matt Jenkinson (Rubber Duck CC)
Kay Easton (Conservation Officer)
Tim Allen (Access Officer)
Simon Wilson (Anchor coordinator/E&T rep)
Andy Gordon (Kendal CC)
The meeting opened at 9:31am with a welcome from the Chairman, Andrew Hinde.

## (2) Acceptance of July Committee meeting minutes

No matters were raised about the minutes, so the meeting proceeded immediately to a vote.

Acceptance of minutes:
Proposed: Alan Jeffreys
Seconded: Marion Holloway
Votes: 10 votes for, 1 abstentions
Note: The York Uni CPC representative had not yet arrived so only 11 voting representatives.

**Action:** Matt Ewles issue the final minutes.

## (3) Matters arising from the July Committee meeting

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

| Individual(s) | Action item |
|---|---|
| Tim A. | Contact BCA QMC regarding cave access.<br>Andrew Hinde said that work was ongoing. |
| Tim A. | Draft a statement regarding CRoW/access land for CNCC website for consideration at next meeting. Tim communicated ahead of the meeting that he would prefer to wait until he was able to make a meeting to discuss this further. Rescheduled. |

## (4) Reports

**Chairman's report:**

- Andrew Hinde thanked everyone for their reports. He said that the Leeds Scouts had recently been 'in town' and have helped with graffiti removal in Long Churn. They have agreed to help with more of these kinds of project in the future.

- Andrew then moved onto a suggestion that came to light in the weeks running up to the meeting. Dave Hodgson (CPC/CDG) is doing some scientific research on cave bacteria in collaboration with Norwich University. Andrew wished the CNCC to consider assisting with funding his travel to visit academics and facilities at the university. After some discussion offline with other Officers, he decided to suggest the use of money (~£90) from a fund gained from scrap metal sales after recent conservation projects rather than use CNCC money directly for this. Andrew asked for Committee approval.

The York Uni CPC representative arrived just prior to the vote.
Proposal: Use of £90 from recent scrap metal sales to help fund this research collaboration:
Proposed: Pat Halliwell
Seconded: Alan Speight
Votes: 11 votes for, 1 abstention

**Secretary's report:**
Matt Ewles highlighted that, if re-elected in March, it would be the start of his fifth year as Secretary and that he was keen for someone to consider taking over the role. He emphasised that the role is nowhere near as demanding now as it was three years ago.

**Treasurer's report:**

- Andrew Hinde asked about the anchors that we were buying; have we got them yet? Matt Ewles said that he had authorised the £3900 payment however, Simon Wilson had yet to inspect them for quality, so we are still awaiting confirmation.

- Pat Halliwell asked if we were now able to claim some of this money back. Matt Ewles reminded everyone that Nick Williams (BCA E&T) had agreed to refund the CNCC to the sum of approximately £3.50 for each anchor (maybe more subject to E&T approval) and that once we have the anchors this is something the Treasurer can look at claiming.

- Marion (Maz) Holloway asked whether the CNCC needed to consider an income stream now that we no longer have rigging guide sales. Andrew Hinde confirmed that we don't have one at present, but he welcomed any suggestions or opportunities that come along.

- Andrew thanked Pete Bann for dealing with numerous financial matters over the last several months relating to conservation works.

**Conservation Officer's report:**

- No questions on report content. However, in the weeks before the meeting, the CNCC received a submission from Richard Bendall asking for assistance with a restoration project at the entrance of Meridian Pot (Leck Fell). Matt Ewles read out the submission:

*"The 7m deep entrance to Meridian Pot, consisting of rusty barrels is in a very poor state. I would not like to pass through it! The barrel shaft is in a corner of a square shake hole against two solid walls. The shaft would require digging out to remove the rusty barrels so I would envisage a temporary scaff frame and boards on the two sides that are not bedrock would need to be put in place as the dig goes down, removing a barrel at a time. The final shaft would take a plastic pipe in a vertical position. and hopefully allow the scaff frame to be recovered and new pipe backfilled. Without knowing what the bottom is like, provision for lintels & concrete may be required to suitably fix the pipe in place at the bottom. There is scope to terrace the top to reduce the 7m entrance to maybe 5m. All spoil would be contained within the square shakehole which also offers protection from driving wind & rain."*

- Andrew Hinde said that he already has a 3m and 6m section of pipe bought under the Stories in Stone project (originally intended for Great Douk, but still plenty left). Although Leck Fell is outside of the Stories in Stone region, it may be possible to make use of this.

- Matt Ewles asked if anyone knew anything about Meridian Pot. A copy of the new Northern Caves book was used as a reference to confirm details: 250m north west of Gavel Pot, Meridian Pot is a 25m deep and 45m long pothole.

- Andrew Hinde said that it sounded like Richard was looking for CNCC support to pursue the project himself, rather than us taking sole responsibility. Alan Speight suggested that on this basis, we pay for materials only, as it sounds like there is already a plan for the manpower. Stuart Whitmey commented that as this was originally an EPC dig, their members would probably be able to help out.

Proposal: The CNCC to support the Meridian Pot entrance work through funding/supply of materials.
Proposed: Alan Speight
Seconded: Sam Lieberman
11 votes for, 1 abstention

**Action:** Kay Easton/Andrew Hinde to work with Richard Bendall to further this initiative.

**Access officer's report:**
Andrew Hinde opened by saying that Tim has been very busy and should be commended for his work in promoting caving as a sport, as well as for his work in pursuing greater access.

- Andrew has met with Brian Rycroft who works for the trustees of Ingham and Yorke (who manage Ingleborough Estate) to discuss digging consent. Currently to start an exploratory dig, it is necessary to get landowner permission and then Natural England consent, which can be a lengthy process. There is now a process called 'General Consent' which enables the landowner to provide final consent with no need to take the matter to Natural England. The landowner will assess the safety, risks etc. of the project and make a final judgement. This should make it easier to get permission for exploratory digs on Ingleborough in future, although explosives will continue to be disallowed.

- Matt Ewles asked what was meant by an 'exploratory dig' (i.e. just an initial one-day session or a full-on project)? Andrew said that there were no limits and a full project up to the point of breaking into cave was classed as an exploratory dig in this context.

- Andrew said he hoped that Leck and Casterton Fell will also adopt General Consent.

- Andrew commented that the matter of abandoned digs was raised during his meeting but said that he was happy that this was being dealt with. Alan Speight suggested that it needs to be emphasised that not all mess in shakeholes is caver-related (e.g. Owl Hole). Andrew said that work to tidy up several shakeholes was already being planned (e.g. P5).

**Training Officer's Report:**

- Maz Holloway updated everyone on the results of the training survey (see report) and said that some further responses had come in since publishing these.

- Maz informed everyone that a first aid course has been lined up (just waiting to confirm date and venue), opportunities for SRT training using the YSS facility are being explored, and a computer-based surveying training session is being considered.

- Andrew Hinde warned the Treasurer that training can quickly eat into funds.

- Maz replied that the BCA will fund training events up to £25/head with a maximum of £250/event (i.e. 10 participants), but there is no known limit to the number of events that can be funded in a year.

**Webmaster:**
Gary Douthwaite said that the website continued to perform will in all statistics and that he has a presentation of the new online cave booking system which will be shown after the reports.

**Anchor Coordinator/E&T:**

- Andrew Hinde commented that he thought the zero-tolerance approach to loose anchors Simon is adopting is interesting, and wondered whether this will catch on nationally.

- Alan Speight questioned whether Simon was replacing all anchors in caves (and not just the loose ones) to ensure consistency in anchor style, for example, at Bull Pot.

- Matt Ewles said that the decision what to replace was based mainly on reports received via the website submission form, typically one report per couple of weeks, which Matt forwards onto Simon. Simon is collecting these and acting on them accordingly. Matt confirmed that several loose anchor reports were received for Bull Pot, so it was not about making the anchor style match across the cave.

**Meets Secretaries:**

- Ric Halliwell lamented the lack of people going down the caves that he issues permits for (Birks Fell, Fairy Holes, Stump Cross area, Robinson's Pot).

- Matt Ewles asked what the current situation is regarding Fairy Holes; the new agreement has been live on the website for a while, enabling individual cavers to get access, but we are holding off advertising this until the landowner had been taken down the cave and questions about parking are clarified. Matt asked whether these matters had been dealt with an if we could advertise and promote this new access agreement.

- Andrew Hinde confirmed that the landowner had enjoyed his trip to Vein Chamber and everything went well; we should continue to work through Savills to ensure the continuity of the access agreement for future years. The parking situation is not yet resolved (the former CNCC car park is now gone due to deforestation) and the top gate is now locked due to some vandalism up there (not caver related), so visiting cavers should simply park wherever they can near the top of the track. We can now promote the new access agreement.

**Action:** Matt Ewles to publicise the new Fairy Holes access agreement

Andrew called for a proposer to accept the reports:
Proposed: Ian Cross
Seconded: Marion Holloway
Votes: 12 votes for (unanimous)

**Presentation of online cave booking system (work in progress):**

Gary Douthwaite then delivered a Powerpoint presentation showing how the new online cave booking system was coming along. Key points covered in the presentation include:

(1) New users to the system will need to register using a registration form. As part of this they will need to agree to having read our participation statement. Completion of the form will send an email to the given address (to verify the authenticity of the address) and this will contain a link for the registrant to click on to complete the process.

(2) Once logged in users will be able to see a diary of availability for each individual cave in the area in question, or they can search for availability across all caves by selecting a date.

(3) A calendar based booking diary is presented for each cave entrance showing which dates are free and which are already booked; the user must click on the date they want and then click to confirm their booking. This is based on the Ingleborough system of one booking per entrance per day which is the simplest way to administer this.

(4) As part of the booking process the user will be presented with any warnings about that cave, and any restrictions on access (e.g. parking, group size etc). They will need to click to agree to this to finalise their booking.

(5) An administrator will be appointed who will keep an eye on the system for malicious use, to input bookings from those requesting by email (particularly while we transition from the old to the new system) and to close caves to booking and alert booked groups if we do so, e.g. if we receive news that the entrance has collapsed or there is a serious safety hazard.

(6) Groups with bookings can go back into the system to manage these, including to cancel their booking. They will receive an automated email the week before to remind them to go and cancel their booking if it is no longer required.

**After the demonstration, there were several questions:**

- Andrew Hinde said that one of the key things the Estates wanted to know was who was in their caves and any particular time. Does this system allow this? Gary Douthwaite replied to confirm that the system can automatically produce reports on visitor statistics. These can, if desired, be automatically emailed to the landowner on a recurring basis. Alternatively, the landowners can be given a login, so they can view a report themselves at any time. However, he felt that to start with the best approach was for the administrator of the system to send reports to the landowner as required.

- Matt Ewles has been speaking with Geoff Whittaker (current Ingleborough permit secretary) about the online system and Geoff is happy to take on the role of administrator. Matt asked if anyone had any objections to this; none were raised.

- Alan Jeffreys felt that the system offered the benefit of providing a full audit trail of who is making what bookings and when.

- Andrew Hinde asked if there were any data protection issues from the system. Gary confirmed that there are potential issues. However, we are already storing data as the CNCC has a membership system with a login facility, so this is not a new issue. The website has a SSL certificate which helps to ensure data security. Sam Lieberman asked whether we could provide a statement to inform people during the registration procedure how their data will be used so that they can agree to this. Gary believed that this was a good idea.

- Andrew Hinde commented that the output of the system is a cave booking, and not a permit. Stuart Whitmey asked for clarification on the reason for the change from this being called a permit. Matt Ewles explained that over the past few years there have been many discussions about liability regarding cave access. The CNCC has never controlled cave access, we have always simply administered it on behalf of the landowner. However, the use of the word 'permit' has led people to see the CNCC as the access controlling body, which we are not. This could have liability implications for us. We wish to move away from the image that the CNCC controls access and make it clear that we simply provide the system as a tool to interface between cavers and the landowner, and moving away from use of the word 'permit' is part of this change in perception and culture.

- Sam Lieberman asked about the possibility for abuse of the system, e.g. individuals booking lots of caves regularly 'just in case' or to keep their options open, but not using most of their bookings. Gary admitted that there are risks of this however there are some safeguards in place. The system can restrict the total number of bookings any one individual can make. Matt Ewles added that the administrator will be able to monitor for such behaviour. Geoff Whittaker said that this already happens on the current email/permit system; groups book numerous potholes just to keep their options open. Matt said the system relies on cavers being considerate in their booking of caves, not over-booking, and always remembering to cancel any bookings they anticipate not using. Matt emphasised that this was something that would need to be closely monitored as the system is rolled out.

- Matt said that he felt the ability to use the system to see what potholes were and were not free each day was a bonus; cavers could use this to help spread traffic and avoid congestion in potholes much as they did at EuroSpeleo using the (very successful) booking diary.

- Ric Halliwell asked what the timeframe was for making this live. Gary said that the system still needed to be finalised and put through months of testing with volunteer clubs before it is made live. The system also still needs final agreement by the landowner.

- Matt Ewles confirmed that the testing of the system would be just for Ingleborough. Although we are hopeful it can also be applied to Leck Fell too, there is some uncertainty whether we will be able to get the go-ahead for 'one booking per entrance' on Leck Fell or whether the system will need to be adapted to have additional restrictions here (currently Leck Fell works on a maximum number of permits per day across the fell).

The discussion about the online booking came to an end.

**Presentation on outcome of recent BCA meeting:**

Andrew Hinde provided an update on the recent events at the BCA meeting and referendum.

- The ballot results for the constitutional changes were interesting. Only 14% turnout for individual members and about 44% turnout for group members. Overall 85% of groups were in favour of proposal 1 (to remove the statement that was being problematic to the CRoW campaign) and about 95% of individuals were in favour.

- The ballot had proved a bit of a nightmare to conduct by email and Andrew hoped that in future it can be done by some other kind of online system; however, further work would be needed behind the scenes before this was possible.

- Andrew expressed concerns about the bottom up nature of the BCA and how little the organisation currently offers to its members. He believes it needs to have a smaller council and a more powerful executive. They need a constitutional working group to review the constitution, although Andrew believed this is not the key issue; the main issue is the need for a fundamental restructuring of power. For example, regional council representatives may be representing thousands of cavers, but their vote still has the same weighting as a much smaller group representing far fewer. It is currently too easy for voting to be influenced by on-mass voting of minority groups, making it difficult for the BCA to act according to the wishes of the majority of cavers on certain matters.

- Sam Lieberman asked if there was anything the CNCC could do to help drive change? Andrew said that all BCA members can make a proposal to any meeting. He has tried to make suggestions but there have always been too many blockages.

- The CRoW debate has split a small but very vocal minority from the majority of BCA members, and has caused too many divisions.

- Andrew said it would be good to get a dedicated CNCC BCA representative to attend the meetings and to put forward our vote and point, and help to make changes. Currently, Tim and Andrew attend BCA meetings, but they do so in alternative capacities, so it would be good to have a more dedicated representative.

- Andrew concluded by saying that the BCA can do many good things (citing the excellent work of many of the BCA's sub-groups). The issue is not the lack of talent or commitment in the BCA; it is the structure that is the current problem and this needs to change.

## (5) Discussion about the CNCC name

Matt Ewles introduced the subject, stating that we had raised this at the previous meeting, but we needed to revisit it now that more clubs have had the chance to consider the matter.

- Andrew Hinde said he doesn't personally feel that a change in the name is necessary, however, some of the issues raised in the discussions are very relevant, particularly, are we an outward looking body? How do we engage with other organisations and cavers? The motives behind the name change are very relevant and important.

- Alan Speight felt that most of the landowners he had spoken to knew who the CNCC were and what we do, so changing the name could be problematic and cause confusion.

- Ric Halliwell said he had recently spoken to Glasgow university cavers who didn't even know what the CNCC was, which was disappointing.

- Gary Douthwaite believed that published reports, newsletters and Facebook were all key to promoting the work that the CNCC does and outside engagement.

- Alan Speight felt that we should focus more on promoting ourselves using our current name.

- Pat Halliwell expressed concern that 'CNCC' does not lead to us in a Google search. Can this be fixed? Gary Douthwaite said that it was difficult to have just an acronym such as 'CNCC' lead to us however, 'CNCC Caving' should bring us up.

**Matt Ewles called for opinions on the matter from club representatives:**

- Alan Jeffreys highlighted that the CNCC doesn't represent just clubs anymore; we cover individuals and groups too. The GSG would therefore support a name change.

- Marion Holloway confirmed that ULSA were not keen on changing the name, but if we did it should be to something with the same initials.

- Pat Halliwell said the Craven had not found adequately strong arguments to change the name and issued a proposal "That we retain the CNCC name". This was seconded by Alan Speight. Matt Ewles identified that we have a seconded proposal now on the table, but wanted to continue to gather all opinions before proceeding to a vote.

- Peter Hambly said the NPC felt that changing the name could leave to divisions.

- Stuart Whitmey said that the EPC were generally against a name change as the CNCC name was synonymous to northern caving.

- Ian Cross said that the BPC saw no real reason to change the name, and felt that doing so was likely to cause confusion.

- Victor Wain said the WRPC couldn't see a strong enough reason to change the name.

- Paul Whittaker said BCC had no strong opinions either way.

- Matt Ewles said that although the Rubber Duck Caving Club were not able to send a representative to the meeting, Matt Jenkinson had been in touch to say that if they were present they would vote against changing the CNCC name.

- Maz Holloway suggested that if we want to promote the CNCC and have better outside engagement we could create a 'roadshow' that could be taken to relevant places. Matt Ewles agreed, and said that he has been thinking about the fact that the CNCC never has a stand at Hidden Earth (but most other regional councils do). Matt suggested that we should aim to have a stand at Hidden Earth next year to promote the CNCC work. Maz said that

CHECC would also be an excellent place to promote the CNCC, and offered to help take a CNCC 'roadshow' there too.

- Andrew Hinde believed we need to engage more with organisations outside of our key regions, for example, organisations in Cumbria are far less aware of cavers (and the CNCC) than those in Yorkshire. Sam Lieberman suggested increasing circulation of our newsletter to various relevant organisations. Stuart Whitmey felt this could all be achieved without us rebranding.

A vote on the proposal raised earlier in the discussion was now taken.

Proposal: That we retain the CNCC name
Proposed: Pat Halliwell (earlier in the discussion)
Seconded: Alan Speight (earlier in the discussion)
11 votes for, 1 abstention

## (6) Date and time of the next meeting

Committee meeting Saturday 13th January 2018, Hellifield Village Institute, 9:30am

## (7) Any other business

### (A) Funding of 'Northern Caves' for landowners

Alan Speight put forward a suggestion. A couple of years ago he was sorting out access details for inclusion in the new Northern Caves, and he called on John Hanley who owns west Kingsdale. As part of the agreement for ongoing open access, John requested a copy of the book, which was delivered at cost to the authors (Sam Allshorn and Paul Swire). The book was delivered on the Saturday of the book launch. Alan suggests that perhaps the CNCC may wish to retrospectively pay for this book. Furthermore, he suggests that the CNCC may wish to fund a copy for Alan Middleton at Leck Fell House who has always been extremely friendly to cavers, has always granted free access to the caves on his land, and has always been interested in the caves.

Proposal: Fund £60 for two copies of northern caves (£30 as a retrospective refund to the authors and £30 for a copy to pass to Alan Middleton)
Proposed: Pat Halliwell
Seconded: Maz Holloway
12 votes for

**Action:** Alan Speight to pass book onto Alan Middleton at Leck Fell House

Andrew Hinde asked what about other landowners who give us open access? Alan suggested that it could be overall beneficial to caving for the CNCC to provide them with a copy of the book to show goodwill and promote their interest in caving, which will be beneficial in the long run.

**(B) Funding to help sustain caving facility in Settle**

Alan Speight raised the matter of a store of caving materials in Settle currently used by several individuals to help progress new exploration projects, and asked whether the CNCC would be able to make a financial contribution to the upkeep of this given its wide-reaching benefit to exploration in our region. There was a several minute discussion on this matter which concluded that it was not appropriate for the CNCC to fund this as it was not something that could be publicised for security reasons. Matt Ewles said he was uncomfortable putting CNCC funds into something that could not be broadly advertised and made available to more cavers. Alan withdrew his suggestion.

Finally, Maz Holloway reminded everyone that funding is available from the sales of 'Not for the Faint Hearted' to support any conservation work on any of the caves in that guidebook.

Meeting closed 11:43am.

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

| Individual(s) | Action item |
|---|---|
| Matt E. | Issue July meeting minutes as final. |
| Tim A. | Draft a statement regarding CRoW/access land for CNCC website for consideration at next meeting (action carried over). |
| Matt E. | Publicise the new Fairy Holes access agreement. |
| Kay E. and Andrew H. | Contact Richard Bendall to discuss Meridian Pot restoration. |
| Alan S. | Pass on copy of Northern Caves to Alan Middleton at Leck Fell House with the CNCC's compliments. |

**Summary of longer-term initiatives currently ongoing:**

(1) Production of IC anchors.
(2) Discussions with BCA QMC regarding cave access.
(3) Creation of CNCC-organised scheme for systematic inspection of resin anchors.
(4) Put together a CNCC stall for Hidden Earth, which can also be used for CHECC.
(5) Continue development and testing of online cave booking system.
(6) Consider best way forward with Langcliffe Estate access issues.
(7) Use of Birks Fell Cave for creating draft guidance to ACBs.