

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Final Approved Minutes of Committee Meeting, 29th October 2022, Hellifield Institute

Attendees:

Name	Abbr.	Affiliation	CNCC role?	Voting?
In Person				
Andrew Hinde	AH	Gritstone Club	Chair	No
Adrian Howden	AHO	Yorkshire Subterranean Society		Yes
Alistair Rollinson	AR	Northern Pennine Club		Yes
Alan Speight	AS	Yorkshire Subterranean Society	Anchor Coordinator	No
Chris Camm	CC	White Rose Pothole Club		Yes
Gary Douthwaite	GD	York Caving Club	Web administrator	No
Ian Cross	IC	Bradford Pothole Club		Yes
Ian Patrick	IP	Craven Pothole Club	Training Officer	No
Joshua Young	JY	York University Cave and Pothole Club	Secretary	Yes
Lyndon Easterbrook	LE	University of Leeds Speleological Association		Yes
Matt Ewles	ME	York Caving Club	PR & Communications	Yes
Pat Halliwell	PH	Craven Pothole Club		Yes
Richard Bendall	RB	White Rose Pothole Club		No
Ray Duffy	RD	Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club		No
Ric Halliwell	RH	Craven Pothole Club		No
Russell Myers	RM	British Caving Association		No
Sam Allshorn	SA	n/a		No
Sam Lieberman	SL	Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club		Yes
Stuart Whitmey	SW	Earby Pothole Club		Yes

Online				
Adele Ward	AW	North York Moors Caving Club	Access Officer	No
Kay Easton	KE	Bradford Pothole Club	Conservation Officer	No
Mark Richards	MR	Yorkshire Subterranean Society	BCA T&E Rep	No
Pete Bann	PB	Northern Boggarts	Treasurer	No
Pete Monk	PM	Northern Boggarts		Yes

11 out of 13 Committee clubs present (Absent: GSG, KCC)

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

The meeting opened at 09:33

1) Apologies for absence

- Alan Jeffreys
- Tim Allen
- John Holloway

2) Acceptance of minutes from the June Committee Meeting

No issues raised.

Vote to accept the June 2022 Committee meeting minutes.

Proposed: ME

Seconded: IC

11 votes for, unanimous

Action: JY to issue final minutes.

3) Declaration of conflicts of interest

- AH is affiliated with Natural England, which may have implications relating to cave access.
- MR is a professional outdoor instructor, who is involved with running CNCC training workshops.

4) Matters arising from the June Committee Meeting

Individual(s)	Action item
Josh Y	Finalise January Committee Minutes Done
Gary D	Add winch meet info pages to the CNCC website. Done
Adele W	Renegotiate access arrangements with the Langcliffe Hall Estate following BCA insurance changes. Ongoing
Andrew H / Josh Y	Put forward a statement to the BCA saying that the CNCC recommend the faulty anchors produced by a manufacturing error which the BCA is holding are currently holding are appropriately destroyed. Done
Josh Y	Invite meeting attendees to claim mileage, using the HMRC rate and in accordance with the BCA's policy. Done. ME suggested a mileage claim form be brought to future meetings.
Ian P	Visit and review the anchor situation in Simpson's Pot and report back to the October Committee meeting. See IP's report

5) Reports

Chairman's report

- ME recommended we ask for copyright permission to use the photos for non-commercial purposes, in return for contributing funds towards the photo exhibition. When asked how much we would need to contribute, AH said we should wait for the national park (NP) to let us know how much it cost before we offer an appropriate contribution.
- AH reported that he had requested that the Cave and Crag Access Group be convened, specifically to discuss access at High Birkwith. AS reported that he had spoken with the landowner recently, and that their position was still firmly against allowing access.

Secretary's Report

- Nothing raised.

Treasurer's Report

- A previous issue regarding PayPal transaction records has been solved by GD.
- Discussing the cost of running training workshops, IP explained that there is expected to be a deficit, but that any shortfall is claimable from the BCA. PM asked if it would be possible to turn a profit by raising prices, but PH replied that the "profit" is producing new cavers, and that we don't want to put people off with higher prices.
- When asked how many people had been benefitting from the workshops, IP and GD said they would get some data together for the AGM.

Action: IP and GD to report on the numbers of people who have attended CNCC training workshops at the AGM.

Conservation Officer's Report

- Regarding the issue of ropes being left in caves, AH suggested producing some guidance on good practice. IC said that it already comes under the minimal impact caving guidelines. SL said that if individuals leave rope in place for months or years, then they should expect that it might get removed as it becomes a conservation issue.
- The specific case of in-situ rope complicating pull-throughs in Simpsons was discussed. AS asked whether additional anchors needed to be installed, whereas SA said that groups should take their own piece of "sacrificial" rope to facilitate pull-throughs.
- IP suggested putting out a reminder not to leave ropes in caves unnecessarily. ME agreed that the message should be about courtesy to other cavers, don't block anchors.

Action: ME to publish a message regarding leaving ropes in caves. Before publication, a draft statement should be circulated by email to the committee for feedback.

Access Officer's Report

- ME has send AW the Langcliffe MoU. AW has still to speak with the landowner about the removal of section 2, regarding landowner indemnity insurance.
- AH plans to speak with the NP and other groups for support with reinstating access at High Birkwith, but asked what advice should be given to cavers. The feeling was that the 'No Access' category that the Birkwith caves are currently assigned with should be reserved only for caves that are physically inaccessible or too dangerous, and we should not be using this for caves where the only issues are consent-related, as this is essentially doing the landowner's work in restricting access. It was agreed that we should present the facts on the CNCC website; That landowner consented access is unlikely to be granted, but avoid the CNCC from discouraging access.

Action: JY Update CNCC website to ensure clarity on the situation for High Birkwith Caves and avoid using the term 'No Access'

Training Officer's Report

- IP asked clubs to run "new to caving" events, so that he can coordinate the scheduling of "new to SRT" and other appropriate training workshops. Such events could be promoted on the CNCC website.
- Regarding anchors at Heron Pot, SA said he is against installing unnecessary anchors and asked whether anchors here are actually needed, or are they just for convenience. If anchors are needed, he would prefer removing current anchors and carefully considering the placement of new ones, to avoid a situation similar to how Diccan Pot used to be. AS replied that popular pull-through trips should have anchors that allow the safe rigging of pull-throughs, whereas it is currently anchored with hard rigging in mind. IP added that there have been several cases where ropes have become stuck. GD asked whether this was a valid reason for adding anchors, as there is no safety issue. ME reported that a range of views were expressed on the discussion on UKCaving, but that no one else said they had encountered issues other than the original reporter. IC said that the anchors have been in place since the 90s without any anchors being added, so perhaps nothing is needed, and there is little to no risk of an individual adding their own anchors.
- A quick poll revealed that the majority of the room felt that things should be left alone.

Action: JY to reply to the original reporter to inform them of the CNCC's decision.

- The idea of adding an anchor to the start of the Slit Pot traverse in Simpsons was discussed, as there are no options available for natural rigging. IC added that this would mainly benefit groups of schoolchildren, and would improve safety. SA added that an anchor is not needed, a simple drilled hole would suffice, allowing a rope to be threaded through. The committee was approving of this plan.
- SA initiated a general discussion of the anchors in Simpsons and Swinsto. AH suggested that some installers could review the current anchors and alter them as they see fit.

Vote that anchor installers look at the anchors in Simpsons and Swinsto, and amend the anchors as they see fit.

Proposed: ME

Seconded: JY

11 votes for, unanimous

PR & Communications Officer's Report

- PH highlighted the importance of dealing with situations where ash trees are being used as anchors due to ash dieback, referencing a case where someone was paralysed by a dead tree. MR emailed some student clubs who continued to rig off the tree at Bull Pot of the Witches, who replied to say they know about the issues and just judged the tree to be safe on the day despite the risk of this approach. CC asked whether warnings about ash trees should be added to topos which include them, but IP and ME said it would be better to just remove them from the topos altogether, but many cavers use pre-printed topos rather than downloading up-to-date ones.

Action: ME / GD to look at where we can have clear warnings about ash dieback, especially where trees appear on rigging topos.

- PH praised the recent CNCC newsletter, and AH congratulated ME for all his hard work.

Webmaster's Report

- Nothing raised

Vote to accept all reports.

Proposed: PH

Seconded: SL

11 votes for (unanimous)

6) High Birkwith Access

- Discussed under access officer's report.

7) Funding a Dig at Pot Black (Boulder Pot)

- RB gave background to the project, explaining that although they plan on digging to try and extend the cave, the funding they are looking for is just for re-opening the collapsed entrance. As individuals had already chipped in for the project, RB asked for approximately £50-75. AH suggested a contribution of £250. GD requested photos so that the project can be publicised.

Vote to fund the re-opening and making safe the entrance of Boulder Pot, but not the subsequent further exploration.

Proposed: ME

Seconded: SW

10 votes for, 1 abstention

- Post-meeting, ME contacted the CNCC to say that new information had come to light about the extent of natural cave within Pot Black, and knowing this, he can no longer support the proposal solely under the conservation justification it was originally submitted. ME emphasises that he fully supports the team involved and wishes them well, and he feels that given this proposal was voted upon and received strong Committee support, he does not wish to block the funding from proceeding. Nonetheless, he has requested that this note is added to the minutes and expresses his regret that he did not gather more information ahead of the meeting.

8) Placing a plaque in Alum Pot

- All agreed that a plaque within a cave is not appropriate. RM reminded the committee that a plaque had been placed at the entrance of dihedra in memory of the Boy Scout who died there, but this disappeared after a short while, presumably removed by individuals for conservation reasons. For this reason, even a plaque outside the entrance is unlikely to stay for very long. GD suggested planting a tree as an alternative.

Action: JY to reply to Neil Conde regarding this decision.

9) Approval of anchors for Greenwood Pot

- There was some discussion of whether anchoring this cave could have an impact on access to White Scar, as there is potential that they might be connected by a future dig. PH said that the CPC has recently undertaken a big project to re-open White Scar and have good relations with the landowner, they don't want any risk that this may be jeopardised because the owners don't like Greenwood. SA worried that if the CNCC does not anchor it, another caver will install anchors anyway and may not follow the CNCC methods.
- Due to the potential risk of the project, AHO recommended deferring this decision to the next meeting.

10) Warnings on the CNCC Website

Action: GD / ME to investigate potential ways for these warnings to be reviewed or updated.

11) Date and time of next meeting

Action: AH to investigate alternative venues for the AGM.

12) Any other business

- AH informed the committee that the CNCC angle grinder is currently on loan to SA.
- RM introduced his idea for having a national exhibition on caving, similar to the current photo display at the YDNP offices but on a larger scale. He hopes this will raise the profile of the sport to the public. ME suggested speaking to Tim Allen who has been exploring options for where the photos could go after the exhibition finishes in the new year. AH suggested that the Folly may be interested in hosting an exhibition.

Meeting closed at 12:04

Summary of specific action items:

Individual(s)	Action item
Josh Y	Finalise June 2022 Committee meeting minutes.
Adele W	Renegotiate access arrangements with the Langcliffe Hall Estate following BCA insurance changes.
Ian P / Gary D	Report on the numbers of people who have attended CNCC training workshops at the AGM.
Matt E	Publish a message regarding leaving ropes in caves. Before publication, a draft statement should be circulated by email to the committee for feedback.
Josh Y	Update the CNCC website for High Birkwith caves to reflect the CNCC's current stance on access.
Josh Y	Reply to the Heron Pot reporter to inform them of the CNCC's decision.
Matt E / Gary D	Look at where we can have clear warnings about ash dieback, especially where trees appear on rigging topos.
Josh Y	Reply to Neil Conde regarding the Alum Pot plaque.
Matt E / Gary D	Investigate potential ways for warnings on the website to be reviewed or updated.
Andrew H	Investigate alternative venues for the AGM.