

# COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

## British Caving Association

### Minutes of Committee Meeting, 17th October 2020, on Zoom

Attendees:

Name	Abbr.	Affiliation	CNCC role?	Voting?
Joshua Young	JY	York University Cave and Pothole Club	Secretary	No
John Holloway	JH	University of Leeds Speleological Association		Yes
Lyndon Easterbrook	LE	University of Leeds Speleological Association		No
Alan Jeffreys	AJ	Grampian Speleological Group		Yes
Alan Speight	AS	Yorkshire Subterranean Society	Anchor Coordinator	No
Kay Easton	KE	Bradford Pothole Club	Conservation Officer	Yes
Pete Monk	PM	Northern Boggarts		Yes
Tim Allen	TA	n/a	Access Officer	No
Matt Ewles	ME	York Caving Club	PR & Communications Officer	Yes
Gary Douthwaite	GD	York Caving Club	Webmaster	No
Ben Wright	BW	Bradford Pothole Club	Treasurer	No
Pat Halliwell	PH	Craven Pothole Club		Yes
Ric Halliwell	RH	Craven Pothole Club	Birks Fell etc. Meets	No
Sam Lieberman	SL	Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club		Yes
Andrew Hinde	AH	Gritstone Club	Chairman	No
Samuel Roberts	SR	Grassington Mines Appreciation Group		
Simone Sambento	SS	Grampian Speleological Group		No
Mark Richards	MR	Yorkshire Subterranean Society		No
Fiona Hartley	FH	Northern Pennine Club		Yes
Andy Gordon	AG	Kendal Caving Club		Yes
Ian Patrick	IP	Craven Pothole Club	Training Officer	No
Chris Camm	CC	White Rose Pothole Club		Yes
Ian Ball	IB	Yorkshire Subterranean Society		Yes

Robert Watson	RW	Council of Higher Education Caving Clubs		No
Ian Cross	IC	Bradford Pothole Club		No

**11 out of 13 Committee clubs present (Absent: EPC, YUCPC)**

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

The meeting opened at 09:35

1) Apologies for absence

None

2) Acceptance of minutes from the June Committee Meeting

No issues raised.

**Vote to accept the June 2020 Committee meeting minutes.**

Proposed: ME

Seconded: BW

11 votes for (unanimous)

**Action: JY to issue final minutes.**

3) Matters arising from the June Committee Meeting

Individual(s)	Action item
Josh Y	Finalise January Committee Minutes <b>Done</b>
Andrew H	Speak to landowner regarding potential improvements to the walls and fencing around Alum Pot. <b>Work now complete, ME to look into producing a news story. Done</b>
Tim A	Put an updated Covid-19 message on the CNCC website. <b>Done</b>
Andrew H	Get in touch with landowners at Fairy Holes negotiate reopening access. <b>AH has had no response from landowners, possibly due to upcoming shooting season. RH to continue issuing permits until we hear otherwise. December is booked, but permits are available for November and next year. Done.</b>
Josh Y	Ask Mark Sims if he would be willing to produce E&T reports for future CNCC meetings. <b>A volunteer has stepped forward to fill this role. Action closed.</b>

4) Reports

**Chairman's report**

- Nothing raised.

**Secretary's Report**

- Nothing raised.

**Treasurer's Report**

- ME to continue as an additional signatory.
- A few transactions from Stories in Stone (SIS) still to come through.

## **Conservation Officer's Report**

- SIS has some money available to assist small businesses with the costs associated with Covid (buying sanitiser, installing screens, etc.) Applications are by invitation only, but the CNCC invitation extends to include all member clubs. Deadline for applications is 03/11, with all receipts to be in by beginning of December.
- Work has been done in Yordas by KE, Edward Easton, and John Nightingale. Edward to assist ME in producing a news article.
- AH and KE agreed to introduce a discreet notice with conservation advice at the entrance to the turnip field in Crackpot. The details of this were discussed.

## **Access Officer's Report**

### **Vote of thanks to Geoff Whittaker for his years of hard work in service to northern caving.**

Proposed: TA

Seconded: ME

11 votes for (unanimous)

- ME spoke about how Geoff's involvement was invaluable for him and the CNCC team 4-5 years ago. He began doing permits for Ingleborough before expanding to Leck and then Casterton Fell, all while engaging with the three estates. Was always incredibly fast in turning around permits. Geoff was a key part of making the modern booking system possible.

### **Action: GD to look into automating monthly booking system reports for Henry Bowring.**

- TA has been in touch with the new managers of the Ingleborough estate. He doesn't foresee any issues with access going forward.
- There have been reports of Leck Fell being crowded with many cars. There doesn't seem to be more people underground, so this is likely because people can't car-share at the moment. ME suggested putting out a polite reminder online.

### **Action: ME to put out a polite reminder to be mindful of parking on Leck Fell.**

- The landowner at High Birkwith is now denying any access to the caves on his land. These caves are excellent for novices, especially for student clubs taking beginners, so it would be a real shame to lose these. Access was lost due to Covid, but it now seems he was frustrated by the rescue in February, with gates being left open etc. TA liaised with CRO, and it was suggested that some protocols are arranged for any future rescues. AS suggested waiting until Covid is no longer such a big issue before attempting further negotiations. TA will write to National Park Authority on the advice of Jon Beavan, as the NPA have invested lots of money in stiles, permissive rights etc, so they have a high interest in the area.
- Not all caves in that area are on his land, and some of those that are are on CRoW land. TA suggested putting on the website that there is "no formal access" rather than "no access".
- TA summarised: CNCC will not approach the landowner until the spring. For now, move to a position of no formal access rather than no access, and TA will write to NPA.
- TA gave an update on the BCA judicial review on whether CRoW applies to caving. The review was denied, but an appeal is being put forward.

### **Action: TA to write to the National Park Authority regarding caving access at High Birkwith. GD to update CNCC website to say there is no formal access at High Birkwith.**

- RRCPC are in discussions with the BCA insurers over a third party claim. The CNCC are prepared to support RRCPC where required.
- There has so far been no likely candidate for a new BCA representative. AH suggested publicising the vacancy.

### **Training Officer's Report**

- Training plans on hold for now due to Covid. IP is still working on plans, discussing ideas with GD, etc. SS asked whether there was funding available for online courses, such as for surveying. IP will speak to the person involved in running that course and perhaps plan something. AH said that the BCA treasurer is keen to give out money, so would be happy to provide funding for any reasonably presented plan.
- SS asked whether a specific Covid risk-assessment was needed for club's in-house training. IP said the club's general Covid risk-assessment should cover it.
- RW was asked how the CHECC training event was run. He replied that they used an industrial risk assessment from a rope access company which just followed the obvious rules of social distancing, no attendees with symptoms, etc. It was suggested that if SRT training was run at the YSS hut, it would be entirely in house and would be above-board so long as government guidelines were followed.
- SL said that RRCPC members were interested in anchor training, which could reasonably take place outdoors of groups up to 6. ME said it's difficult to plan because the regulations change so regularly and with little warning. He admitted it would be popular, and he will organise training when there is less uncertainty.

### **Anchor Coordinator's Report**

- There are 4 rigging topos completed, which will be published online shortly.

### **BCA Representative's Report**

- All proposals from the AGM are now available to vote on. TA asked that everyone votes on all 10 proposals as they are an interim step toward modernisation. TA is generally optimistic for the future of the BCA.

### **PR & Communications Officer's Report**

- Dales magazine replied to say there is no space for a caving article. They suggested trying to get something into the 2021 issue of Visitor magazine. TA said this would be worthwhile, they have a large print run and are everywhere. AJ mentioned the Craven Herald for CNCC news updates. TA suggested Yorkshire Dales review, who are very caver friendly. ME gave thanks for the suggestions
- TA said that Geoff Yeadon will be getting a British Empire medal for services to British diving, which could be a potential PR story. RH mentioned that the wall around Alum Pot has lots of history around it, and could also provide a story.

### **Webmaster's Report**

- Nothing raised.

### **Vote to accept all reports.**

Proposed: PM

Seconded: SL  
11 votes for (unanimous)

#### 5) Covid-19

- CPC held a successful without-a-winch meet, with a small camp and all entrances rigged. Currently, club members can book the hostel for up to 4 nights, and it will then be left empty of 3 nights. Members living nearby have been doing plenty of caving. Official club trips have been occurring, with advance booking required to keep numbers down.
- YSS hut is open for 3 separate bubbles, and is also open for non-members. There are no official club trips at the moment.
- RRCPC have camping available at the farm. The downstairs rooms, including the toilets and changing rooms, are now open. Bunk rooms will soon open for limited groups. The plan is to split the farm into 2 bubbles, between campers and indoor people. Pre-booked groups of visitors will be able to stay.
- BPC started opening their tackle store in June/July, before opening the hut for members. It is currently open for 5 small groups with limited access to communal areas. The hut is seeing a fair amount of use, and is open for 1 group of guests, 2 weekends a month. Official club trips are starting up again. While newer members aren't getting much out of the club at the moment, things are picking up.
- NPC were grateful for a grant from the Craven District Council. They opened their tackle store in June, and the hut is now open for small groups of members. The rule is for a group of 6 inside, and another 6 outside. However, this may change due to complaints from the neighbour. No visitors are allowed, but student groups will be considered.
- GSG opened its hut in July and is currently for members only, 1 household at a time. The club has a Covid officer to keep track of things. No members are walking through the village. The hut has seen a dribble of members since the summer.
- ULSA members have been caving, but students are still restricted due to the student union. Any official trips must be sanctioned by the union, which is not easy, and they control all equipment and training facilities. Some limited training has occurred in trees in parks, and there have been some social meets. The student committee are planning to come up with the relevant risk assessments to prove that they've done everything possible to mitigate risks.
- KCC have suspended all official activities, but members have been going on private sporting and digging trips. The tackle store is open but has seen limited use.
- AH suggested putting hut availability info on the CNCC website. It was decided that there would be too much politics, and the details would change too often. However, if clubs post their hut availability on Facebook, the CNCC will share these.
- TA said that his aim is to maintain access through the winter for those who can and want to go caving. He will be doing his best to maintain access for as long as possible.

#### 6) IC Anchors

- Regarding proposal 1: JY obtained quotes for the production of more anchors: 650 for £5.60 each, or 1300 for £5.50 each (excluding VAT). BW said that this would be a large proportion of our funds, but perhaps we should suggest the BCA buys a batch so that the anchors can be used throughout the country. ME agreed, we have 447 unused anchors and are running out of caves that need them. AS mentioned that technology may improve over time, and over the years we may find certain drawbacks or limitations in these anchors for future caving needs or practices. LE withdrew the proposal.

**Action: JY/MR to put forward a proposal to the BCA E&T committee that the BCA purchase a batch of IC anchors to allow them to be installed throughout the UK.**

- Regarding proposal 2: ME said that he engaged Simon on this during ME's time as Secretary when IC anchors were first endorsed by the CNCC, but at that time Simon was opposed to the idea. ME suggested that an officer confirm that Simon is happy for this to happen.

**Vote to accept ULSA proposal 2.**

Proposed: LE

Seconded: AJ

11 votes for (unanimous)

**Action: Officers/GD to arrange incorporating Simon Wilson's anchor documentation into the CNCC website.**

- Regarding proposal 3: AS said that several others had heavy input into the design of the IC anchor, not just Simon Wilson. ME said that it has been widely known as the IC anchor, and it would be a huge effort to rebrand it in all CNCC documentation. LE mentioned that not all anchor installers agree with this proposal. TA asked who has the right to rename it. After some discussion, LE withdrew this proposal as it is not in the CNCC's remit to change the name.

#### 7) University Caving Advice

- ME believes the advice is excellent, but would just like to work with RW to adjust the text, including asking readers to refer to the specific pages on the CNCC website for up-to-date access and adding a polite reminder to minimise number of cars.
- AH suggested adding some details on cave conservation.

**Vote that the CNCC provide access to this resource on the website.**

Proposed: LE

Seconded: ME

11 votes for (unanimous)

**Action: ME/GD to work with RW to adjust the wording and add the University Caving Advice document to the CNCC website.**

#### 8) Trespass

- TA responded to the government consultation on behalf of CNCC, and persuaded the BCA C&A officer to respond on behalf of BCA. There isn't really anything else we can do. CNCC did publicise the government petition objecting to the change in regulation.

#### 9) Confirmation of Coopted E&T Rep

**Vote to confirm Mark Richards as CNCC E&T Rep.**

Proposed: ME

Seconded: FH

11 votes for (unanimous)

#### 10) Grassington Mines Conservation Project

- SR gave background to the project. There is an area of untouched mine shafts around Grassington, many of which are unfenced and have simply been covered over, some with just railway sleepers covered with spoil. They have been left in this state as there is no legal owner of the land. The Grassington Mines Appreciation Group plan to fence the shafts to protect walkers. There is a risk that the government could concrete the entrances if there is an incident. Fences allow for spoil to be removed and for exploration to continue.

- Budget for the work is £5000, including cost of obtaining all permissions. Work will be completed by volunteers. GMAG have raised some money from local organisations and individuals, including the YDNP offering to fund 50-75% of the overall cost.
- AH asked whether they had thought about maintaining the fences going forward. SR replied that the plan is for a review to take place every year, and they would raise any funds needed for repair work.
- TA pre-emptively applied for £2000 from the BCA. It was discussed and decided that this would be a suitable contribution.
- ME asked whether this could be publicised. SR would be happy to keep CNCC up to date with details of the work and with plenty of photos. SR said that long term, they will cautiously publicise access and rigging details for those who want to visit. However, for now they will focus on making the shafts safe. All info is available on their website.

**Vote to give the Grassington Mines Appreciation Group a grant of £2000, once all permissions for the conservation work have been obtained.**

Proposed: PH

Seconded: ME

11 votes for (unanimous)

11) Date and time of next meeting

- It was suggested that, as the meetings are currently being held online, the January meeting be moved to a weekday evening. JY to look into this.

12) Any other business

- AH has been managing the Roger Sutcliffe archive. Club librarians who want anything from the list of available items to complete their collections can get in touch with him.
- IP suggested running a Cave of the Month programme, where a club pre-rigs a cave. ME said there would be too much disagreement on the most correct or safest way for it to be rigged and other problems, would be better to avoid this.

Meeting closed at 12:45

Summary of specific action items:

Individual(s)	Action item
JY	Finalise June 2020 Committee meeting minutes.
GD	Look into automating monthly booking system reports for Henry Bowring.
ME	Put out a polite reminder to be mindful of parking on Leck Fell.
TA	Write to the National Park Authority regarding caving access at High Birkwith.
GD	Update CNCC website to say there is no formal access at High Birkwith.
JY/MR	Put forward a proposal to the BCA E&T committee that the BCA purchase a batch of IC anchors to allow them to be installed throughout the UK.

Individual(s)	Action item
GD/CNCC Officers	Arrange incorporating Simon Wilson's anchor documentation into the CNCC website.
ME/GD	Work with RW to adjust the wording and add the University Caving Advice document to the CNCC website.