

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Officers Reports for 17th January 2015 Committee Meeting

Chairman's Report

First of all I hope that all cavers had a good Christmas and New Year and didn't over indulge too much.

The last few months have seen a lot of discussion among the caving community as to the implications of the CRow act being applied to caving. This concluded with a vote organised by BCA as to whether BCA should negotiate with DEFRA/EN to confirm the situation.

The vote seems to have been a bit of a hit and miss affair with some people and clubs receiving ballot papers and others not. The turnout was abysmally small but a positive outcome was proclaimed.

There has been a great deal of success by our permit secretaries and access and conservation officers in negotiating much improved access to many of the caves in our area.

Many thanks to all involved and keep up the good work.

I will let each permit secretary fill in the details.

Roy Holmes – CNCC Chairman

Secretary's Report

It has been a very pleasing and positive few months, with plenty to report.

The draft constitution has been finalised, and two versions posted on the CNCC website. A first notification of the AGM has also been circulated to all full member clubs, urging them to attend and reminding them to bring a letter of authorisation for their voting representative. I have also asked for anyone keen to stand for a committee or officer role in March to provide me with notification of this by the 5th February; including current officers/committee. This is not a requirement (yet – it will be if the new constitution is accepted) but it is good practice so please do let me know.

For the CNCC newsletter, released before Christmas I am very thankful to everyone who provided material; all the CNCC officers and also Ged Benn for the Providence Pot restoration report.

The issues we've been having with our email system has caused a number of headaches; the cause is that some email suppliers (particularly Google) have hugely increased their security and are blocking emails they (incorrectly) deem as spam. Our webmaster, Gary, has made changes to ensure that CNCC emails are not recognised as Spam anymore, so hopefully the issue should be fixed.

To assist with communication, many of you will be aware that we have been using every means possible, including Facebook, Twitter and also UK Caving. I can certainly appreciate concerns over the use of UK Caving; It is often not the friendliest of places; however, it is nonetheless a valuable resource for cavers and a good place to help ensure that news is adequately circulated and that the CNCC is able to listen to a wider number of the caving community. Last year, UK Caving was bought by Tim Allen, who will be redeveloping the site this year. I have accepted an offer from Tim for the CNCC to be involved in this. This will probably involve the creation of a 'notifications' section on UK Caving where regional councils can post relevant notifications. I took some time to consider this, given the bad press the CNCC has received on UK Caving over the last few years; however, I can certainly see that the potential positives outweigh all the concerns.

Regarding the Eurospeleo event in 2016; at the start of October I emailed Les Williams to discuss what involvement the CNCC can play in this, and also to start the ball rolling on any collaborations between ourselves (with Ian Lloyd as the CNCC representative for Euro 2016) and the UK organising committee. Clearly one of the major issues that the CNCC can take a major role in will be obtaining increased access for the two week window of the event. I have not received a reply yet, although I know that Johnny Latimer is separately in contact with Les Williams and Andy Eavis about this, so I am confident that the CNCC will be in a very good position to assist in many ways.

Regarding greater representation for student cavers in the CNCC; I contacted Hellie Brooke who seemed initially quite positive about this. Unfortunately, when we spoke at Hidden Earth she said that a big problem might be that most of the CHECC committee are based outside of Yorkshire and so finding someone to attend CNCC meetings may be problematic. This was to be discussed at the CHECC meeting in November, but I have not yet heard anything about the outcome.

I am pleased to see applications for full membership from two clubs; SUSS and RDCC on the agenda for this meeting; both applications come from clubs who value, and have made a major contribution to northern caving over the years, and so it is an honour for us to know that they wish to take a greater involvement with the CNCC in the future.

At the AGM, Jim Sloane and Malcolm Hughes will stand down as permit secretaries for Leck Fell and Penyghent. Alan Speight's report on Casterton Fell, announces that he too will be standing down as meets secretary. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jim, Alan and Malcolm for their very long service to the CNCC in these roles, and to appeal to anyone interested in taking on one of these roles to come forward and let me know as soon as possible.

Requirements to be a permit secretary are a little free time in the evenings, and reasonable computer skills, as most permit issuing is now done by email, and in future may be done using a simple online system. I am sure that Alan, Jim and Malcolm will be happy to work with the new permit secretary for each area to ensure a smooth handover.

There is plenty more to discuss at this meeting that will continue to set the CNCC on the right track to becoming a more valuable resource for northern cavers.

Matt Ewles – CNCC Secretary

Treasurer's Report

Financial Status as of 31st December 2014:

Current Account: £3,091.40

High Interest Account: £18,882.22

Key payments for this period include;

£308.80: Corporation Tax

£273.31: Payment to RRCP for improvements to road surface approaching Bull Pot Farm

£244.20: Volunteer expenses for various cave entrance clearances

£1,215.00: First Aid courses

£789.86: Various payments in support of the restoration of Providence Pot entrance

Glenn Jones – CNCC Treasurer

Conservation Officer's Report

Since the last meeting I have assisted in the SSSI consenting of one surface dig.

I have delegated the design and development of an Access Database to hold SSSI Cave Monitoring data to Kay Easton and Jane Ransom. This has been an enormous task and the database is now undergoing trials. It is hoped that the database can be hosted on the CNCC website in a secure area. This is a vital long term resource for cave conservation in our region.

The conservation volunteers have been very busy. The CNCC newsletter carried reports on the cave clearances at Homeshaw Cave and Daimler Hole. There was also coverage of the enormous logistical battle to repair Providence Pot. This was one of the biggest jobs undertaken by CNCC volunteers. It may have looked like a simple job to the passing caver, but was fraught with difficulties on closer examination.

This year there is the opportunity to clear refuse from some of the biggest shakeholes on Ingleborough in partnership with the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership (HLF). They may also be able to help in projects that have, so far, been too big or technical for our team of volunteers.

A team consisting of Andy Walsh, Luggier and myself had a day in Illusion Pot cleaning stal and taping in the Steaky Bacon area. Hopefully the tape will be respected in this area much loved (to destruction).

In November I gave an illustrated talk to Cumbria Wildlife Trust members on the work of CNCC cave conservation volunteers.

A new cave discovery from a surface dig has yielded a very important archaeological site with a possible Mesolithic assemblage of animal bones in excellent condition. The combined efforts of the diggers, archaeologists and NE staff working in unison have ensured the protection/ recovery/ recording of the site and contents without holding up further exploration of the cave. This was a textbook example of conservation in action and should be widely publicised within caving and statutory body communities.

Andrew Hinde – CNCC Conservation Officer

Access Officer's Report

There are two developments which deserve particular note, the rest is a summary.

Ingleborough Estate

After a good few months in discussion with Ingham and Yorke, I'm pleased that we have managed to negotiate and agree upon a modern and progressive access agreement. This makes permits available to DIMs as well as CIMs. The permits are also issued via email and requests will be turned around very quickly.

Thanks are due to Geoff Whittaker who has drafted several versions of the agreement and liaised with Ingham and Yorke to get the system up and running. Ingham and Yorke have been very good to work with having a common sense approach to the issue.

Fountains Fell

Alan Speight has done a sterling job of relaxing permission onto Fountains Fell. The need for a pre issued permit has been replaced by a courtesy call at the respective farm for each cave (please see CNCC website for up to date information).

Other Information

In the last year the availability of access agreements to committee members has been raised. In light of this I checked all of the agreements and there are a number of discrepancies. The main concern for me was that some of them were out of date or unsigned. I have attempted (unsuccessfully) to address this problem however it is difficult to pin down land agents. I don't think that cavers' access is high on their agenda but I'm trying my best!

Langcliffe Hall Estate

I'm afraid I'm struggling with this one at the moment. The land agents for the Estate won't discuss anything with me until I agree to cover the costs for their time which are £78 per hour (£65 per hour plus VAT). The problem is that I've no idea how long it may take to discuss the various issues we have, and any discussion could be drawn out by them if we are paying for the time.

I'd like to put this to the committee to seek an opinion.

CRoW

I don't have much to add since the last report but I would welcome a discussion at the meeting.

Johnny Latimer – CNCC Access Officer

Training Officer's Report

The two CNCC first aid courses were delivered as planned on 18th October and 01st November; feedback from both courses was very positive and there have been requests to run more courses during 2015. The feedback also indicated that cavers would prefer a two day course so that more time could be spend on practical scenarios. I have discussed this with the training providers and they are prepared to provide a two day course.

Currently I will be delivering two free SRT courses during 2015 these have been allocated to Mr Jennings and Mr Wooldridge.

In April 2014 BCA Equipment and Techniques Committee agreed to purchase a further 2000 anchors from Bolt Products for distribution to the regions. CNCC has issued 28 anchors for placement and maintenance work and has not had its stock replenished by BCA. Early 2014 anchors were installed in Magnetometer. The reported suspected loose anchors in Bull Pot Kingsdale and Alum Pot were tested using the Hydrajaws test equipment; all anchors passed the static load 10kN test.

Due to the recent wet weather we have not been able to carry out the routine testing of the initial anchors (installed with Hilti HITC50), this has now been programmed in for 17 January 2015 therefore I will not be able to attend this meeting please accept my apologies.

Les Sykes – CNCC Training Officer