

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Final Minutes of Committee Meeting 14th January 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	Secretary, taking minutes	
Gary Douthwaite	York CC	Webmaster	
David Willis	York Uni CPC		Yes
Geoff Whittaker	Th'Owd Skool CC	Ingleborough and Aygill meets	
Andy Lindley	Th'Owd Skool CC		
Sam Lieberman	Red Rose CPC		Yes
Ray Duffy	Red Rose CPC		
Alan Speight	Yorkshire SS		Yes
Ric Halliwell	Craven PC	Birks Fell/Mongo/Fairy Holes meets	
Pat Halliwell	Craven PC		Yes
Ian Cross	Bradford PC		
Martell Baines	Bradford PC	BCA representative	
Kay Easton	Bradford PC	Conservation Officer	Yes
Victor Wain	White Rose PC		Yes
John Holloway	ULSA		Yes
Lyndon Easterbrook	ULSA		
Marion Holloway	ULSA		
Bob Mehew	N/A	BCA Legal and Insurance	
Sam Allshorn	ULSA	Penyghent meets	
Maureen Blair	Earby PC		Yes
Roy Holmes	Dent House SS	Chairman	
Andrew Hinde	Gritstone Club		Yes
Tim Allen	N/A	Access representative	
Pete Monk	Northern Boggarts		Yes
Tony Brown	Northern Boggarts	Bowland meets	
Simon Wilson	N/A	BCA E&T rep and IC anchor team	

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

Committee clubs not present (3/13):

Over and Under Caving Club
 Burnley Caving Club (apology received)
 Northern Pennine Club (apology received)

(1) Apologies for absence

Pete Bann (Treasurer)
Ian Lloyd (NSG, Eurospeleo representative)
Bernie Bond (Burnley CC)
Pete Hambly (NPC)
Andrew Farrow (Leck meets)
Johnny Latimer (Access Officer)

The meeting opened at 9:30am with a welcome from the Chairman.

(2) Acceptance of October Committee meeting minutes

Two errors in the minutes had been presented in the agenda. A verbal explanation of these was presented by the Secretary. No questions or other issues were raised.

Acceptance of minutes (with the two noted errors corrected):

Proposed: Pat Halliwell

Seconded: David Willis

Votes: 10 votes for (unanimous)

Action: Matt Ewles issue the final minutes with listed changes

(3) Matters arising from the September Committee meeting

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

Individual(s)	Action item
Matt E.	Issue July meeting minutes as final. DONE
Johnny L./Tim A.	Keep CNCC Officer/Committee informed of progress regarding combined access agreement for Leck/Casterton/Ingleborough (and if completed, make efforts to get Langcliffe Hall Estate to join the agreement). Verbal report to be delivered by Tim Allen as part of reports later in the meeting.
Johnny L./Tim A./ Andrew H.	Prepare suggested CNCC access agreement for Fairy Holes for presentation to Savills in York before Christmas. Andrew Hinde has done as requested but as yet no response from Savills.
Matt E./Gary D.	Matt Ewles to convene discussions with all relevant parties to ensure our current scheme meets modern standards and if necessary make recommendations for improvement. Create mechanism to list known hazards/loose anchors etc on CNCC website to bring these to attention of caving community, and to include updated statement on other fixed aids to clarify that we have no responsibility for these. Matt Ewles provided a verbal update on recent changes to the website to address these issues and actions (see Webmaster and Secretary reports). Sam Allshorn asked whether it would be possible to log IP addresses to avoid having to repeatedly read the warning statement for topos and descriptions, however, Matt said he wished to ensure there was no chance anyone could access a topo

	or description without seeing it, and Lyndon Easterbrook emphasised that it was no hardship to select to print only the second page of the document, if the statement was already familiar.
Matt E./Gary D.	Make cave descriptions available on CNCC website and examine means to introduce appropriate disclaimers for these. DONE
Matt E.	Schedule guidance to Access Controlling Bodies for further discussion at January meeting when guidance should have been issued by BCA. DONE

(4) Reports

Chairman's report:

Sam Allshorn pointed out a typographic error on line one ('as far' repeated).

Sam asked if you had to be a non-club caver to stand as Individual Caver (IC) representative. Matt Ewles clarified that no, any CIM or DIM BCA member could stand, although he thought that it would ultimately be deemed preferable by the voters for the candidate to have experience caving outside of clubs. Matt said that nobody has submitted an application (or even an enquiry) for the role and that the deadline was the day of this meeting, so the post would likely remain vacant.

Secretary's report:

No questions.

Treasurer's report:

No questions. Ric Halliwell said that he had been given the 2016-2017 accounts to audit.

Conservation Officer's report:

No questions.

Training Officer's Report:

No Training Officer currently in post.

Access officer's report:

In the absence of Johnny Latimer, access related reports were covered by Tim Allen (Access Representative) under 'other reports' later in the meeting.

Other reports: The following questions/comments were raised:

Webmaster: Pete Monk proposed a vote of thanks to Gary Douthwaite for his work to bring together the new website. This was seconded by David Willis and received unanimous acceptance.

Meets: Ric Halliwell asked if people could please request Robinson's Pot permits if they wanted one; as he is keen to demonstrate that there is the demand for these permits.

Access Representative: Tim Allen apologised for the lack of written report and instead made a verbal report instead. The following matters were discussed:

- Tim has been asked to do a presentation to the Yorkshire Dales Local Access Forum to cover the caves that now come under the extended National Park.

- The Chairman of the Lancashire Local Access Forum has described the Three Counties system as 'The Jewel of the National Park'.
- Tim emphasised that the access forums were keen to understand how caving was increasing as a resource even though caver numbers were in decline.
- EuroSpeleo demonstrated approximately 175 trips on Casterton and Leck Fell that week compared to the usual of around 25, so there is ample scope to grow caving without introducing any significant problems.
- There was no Cave and Crag Access Group in December; the next meeting is 21st March.
- Braida Garth Farm may have been purchased by a shooting syndicate. The situation is to be monitored. Alan Speight said that many caves on East Kingsdale don't fall under their land.
- Tim has had another meeting with his local MP Julian Smith, and he seems keen to continue to support caving (Tim reminded us it was Julian Smith who helped to convene the three land agents/owners in the recent meetings to discuss a single access agreement).
- Regarding the work with the three estates (Leck, Casterton, Ingleborough), this is progressing, slowly. Tim has been in email contact with Patrick Holmes, the estate manager to Ingleborough Estate. Tim believes that Shuttleworth and Whelprigg will allow Patrick to take the lead on the arrangements for this combined access agreement. Sam Allshorn asked about the nature of this agreement. Tim said that the outline proposal was to have a simple calendar based booking system online for managed access. Cavers would register to use the online system, thus allowing them to be made aware of conservation considerations and warnings for each cave, and have access to a participation statement. This system will also allow greater visibility to what caves are available for short notice trip planning. Andrew Hinde asked whether it would be just one agreement for all three estates. Tim said that it was more likely to be three identical agreements, one for each estate.
- Discussions are still being held to identify what the 'red lines' are with respect to access on these three estates. Tim emphasised that the agreements need to address liability concerns by trying to ensure that we (CNCC) do not present ourselves as trying to control access, but that we take more of an administrative role on behalf of the landowners.
- Tim wants to ensure any new agreement engages with all groups of cavers, including clubs, CIMs, DIMs and non-BCA member cavers, citing this as being in line with the BCA and CNCC constitution. He believes the CNCC should not turn its back on non-BCA member cavers by excluding them from access agreements. Patrick Holmes (Ingleborough Estate) expressed a wish for all cavers accessing the caves to hold BCA membership; Tim has asked what his reasons are for wishing to restrict access in this way.
- Andrew Hinde said that getting access for non-BCA member cavers was not a top priority for the CNCC given the pushback we have encountered from the landowners on this matter, and that we should not be stalling on achieving a modern agreement due to a sticking point about access for non-BCA member cavers.

- Alan Speight said that as we aren't yet at the stage of open access, all we can do is seek to achieve access for those who we represent and who are paying out towards the BCA. Alan emphasised that he believes Tim is going in the right direction but agreed with Andrew that we shouldn't get hung up on the matter of access for non-BCA member cavers.
- Sam Allshorn disagreed and said that he believes we need to try our best to represent all cavers and push as hard as we can for this, and not to 'keel over' too easily. Sam said that we need to take advantage of the opportunity that is being presented here. Lyndon Easterbrook agreed with this statement.
- Sam Lieberman added that we need to do what we can to help overseas cavers during any visits to the region.
- Alan Speight agreed that we should push the matter, but said that it should not get in the way of us getting better access for those who have paid for BCA membership.
- Marion Holloway agreed with Sam, and said that if the landowners insist on BCA membership, could a deal be struck with the BCA to create a new category of membership to make this possible?
- Andrew Hinde concluded this point by suggesting that Tim tries to achieve access for all cavers, but shouldn't stall any significant progress just based on access for non-BCA member cavers; this is something we could work towards in the future.
- Bob Mehew asked Tim if we are likely to have the new agreement before the next CNCC meeting and do the CNCC need to review the agreement and vote on whether to accept what has been achieved. Tim said it was unlikely anything would happen that quickly.
- Tim said we need to be careful to ensure that the CNCC does not appear to be representing the landowner instead of the caver. We should not serve as a free land agent.
- Gary Douthwaite asked if we would not be better just looking to get one good agreement with one Estate (Ingleborough, as they are most communicative) and then simply invite the other estates to join onto the same agreement, rather than trying to include all three from the start which could prove more time consuming. Tim agreed that this is an option but believes that if we can get an agreement with Patrick Holmes, Leck and Casterton will also likely agree to join the agreement anyway.
- Tim said that our agreement should not disallow digging or new exploration, as this would suggest we are somehow going to police this.
- Finally, Roy Holmes said that he has been receiving the National Park newspaper for some time and has never seen anything about caving in there.

The Chairman brought this discussion to a close and called for a proposer to accept the reports:

Proposed: Pete Monk

Seconded: Alan Speight

Votes for: 10 (unanimous)

(5) BCA guidance to Access Controlling Bodies

Matt Ewles introduced the subject.

- Bob Mehew said that he had received feedback from the insurance broker that the first draft of the guidance document (from BCA to Access Controlling Bodies regarding risk assessment responsibilities) was too burdensome. A reduced and revised draft has been produced and he has got agreement from Nick Williams that this is ready to be tested with a volunteer Meets Secretary on an area where access is not sensitive.
- Ric Halliwell suggested Birks Fell, as it is a single cave, with a simple access agreement. Ric said he would be happy to work with Bob to use Birks Fell as a test case providing it could be done by email. Bob said this should be fine.
- Martell Baines asked should the CNCC not see the document before we agree to go ahead with this? Bob said that we shouldn't be widely distributing the document now as it could open a can of worms to do so for a draft document which may change.
- Martell reiterated her concern that the Council had not seen the document, yet was authorising it to be tested on one of our access agreements. Matt Ewles asked Bob if the draft document could be circulated to a small group within the CNCC (e.g. the Committee) on the agreement it is not made public. Bob said he was reluctant because of the potential consequences if the document did get released publicly.
- Sam Allshorn asked if we should not just let Bob and Ric work through this privately. The results of the trial aren't going anywhere, this is just a 'thought experiment' at the moment with no immediate consequences. Matt Ewles agreed that the situation drew parallels to the work to overhaul the CNCC constitution; we had a team to work on this and test it under various scenarios, but without release/circulation of draft or unfinished documents.
- The outcome was general agreement that Bob and Ric could work together to test the draft guidance using Birks Fell Cave as a test case.

Action: Bob and Ric to work together to test the draft guidance using Birks Fell Cave as a test case.

(6) Date and time of next meeting

AGM Saturday 11th March 2017, Hellifield Village Institute, 10am

(7) Any Other Business?

Any Other Business Item 1: BCA constitutional amendments

Sam Allshorn raised some concern that nobody had discussed the upcoming BCA constitutional amendments as highlighted in the report document. He said that he understands the aim of these changes is to allow the BCA to campaign to change DEFRA's interpretation of CRoW for caving.

- Sam asked whether this bit of the BCA constitution could just be deleted?
- Andrew Hinde said that there was an opportunity for the CNCC to provide feedback on this.
- Tim Allen provided an update on some of the background to these constitutional changes. The Council of Southern Caving Clubs are essentially using their constitution to block the BCA from pursuing the CRoW campaign and these changes were intended to remove any constitutional barriers to the campaign.
- Bob and Tim both expressed concerns that the amended wording would not be sufficient to remove these barriers, and the amended wording could be interpreted in several ways, one of which could still be held against the BCA if it campaigned for CRoW to apply to caving.
- Bob Mehew said that people need to write to the BCA Secretary to express any concerns about the constitutional amendments before the end of January, so they can be discussed at the March council meeting. Therefore, there is opportunity to provide feedback.
- Martell Baines said that there just wasn't enough time to provide feedback to the BCA by the end of January. It is too short notice to canvass opinion from our members.
- Matt Ewles asked Tim and Bob, for complete clarity, if their feeling was that these changes would make absolutely no difference, and the CSCC would still use the constitution to block the BCA from pursuing CRoW. Bob confirmed this was the case.
- Andrew Hinde said that all individuals and the CNCC can communicate their thoughts on this directly to the BCA if they wish.
- Bob Mehew said that the CNCC AGM was 11th March; the BCA meeting however is two weeks later. Therefore, we can discuss this in more detail at our AGM and provide instruction to our representative how to vote.
- Pat Halliwell asked about when the BCA were thinking about circulating notification of these changes to clubs and individuals; Bob expressed some frustration about some of the timings and the way these constitutional changes have been pushed forward. John Holloway asked whether the recent deterioration in BCA performance happened since the change in BCA executive? Tim said that the BCA was seriously missing Damian Weare.
- Andrew Hinde asked what we could do for now? Can someone write to the BCA executive? Bob suggested that he send through all the documents to Matt Ewles, to circulate to CNCC membership and make available publicly, and encourage clubs to provide feedback. The matter should be scheduled for our AGM on 11th March where we can decide how we (as a regional council) should react and vote with respect to these changes.
- Pat Halliwell asked if any change to the BCA constitution necessitated a postal ballot. Bob confirmed, but Andrew Hinde said that they were working towards an online system.

Action: Bob to email full details of BCA constitutional amendments to Matt. Matt to circulate to all full members to canvass opinions and place this on the agenda for the AGM on 11th March.

Any Other Business Item 2: Ropes in Simpson's Pot

Matt Ewles introduced the topic by summarising the details in the agenda.

- Sam Allshorn asked if they were EuroSpeleo ropes. Matt confirmed that although they appeared to be EuroSpeleo ropes, they were nothing to do with the individual who rigged this rope for EuroSpeleo so have obviously been put in later.
- The consensus was that it should be incumbent on all cavers to remove any ropes in caves that they feel are dangerous, subject to confirming that they wouldn't risk stranding any cavers who might be underground.
- It was decided that Matt should issue a warning about the presence and state of these ropes via the CNCC website, but no other official CNCC action was deemed appropriate.

Action: Issue warning on CNCC website about these ropes but no further action.

Any Other Business Item 3: Anchor scheme discussion

Matt Ewles provided an overview of why this item had been added to the agenda. This was specifically based on recent comments on UK Caving being critical of anchor installation, which he felt reflected badly on the CNCC. Matt said that even though the anchor scheme was independent of the CNCC, he believed that people associated it with the CNCC by default.

- Simon Wilson said that you can't control UK Caving and he felt that the thread had not been detrimental to the CNCC.
- Sam Allshorn thanked the CNCC for prompt payment of his bill for some resin.
- Tim Allen said that he felt the BCA anchor scheme had improved since three years ago.
- Matt Ewles expressed concern about the distinction between the CNCC and the IC anchor installers team (i.e. they are separate, but not always perceived as such).

Simon Wilson read out a report relating to this matter:

"No significant number of approved anchors have been installed since 2003 and up to 2014. During that period cavers have installed several hundred unapproved anchors because they justifiably felt it necessary. Cavers have not been engaging with the anchor scheme because the anchor scheme had stalled.

What is the CNCC doing to support the anchor scheme? The CNCC are responsible for anchors and need to start doing something.

The CNCC need to maintain the existing anchors. I would like the first task to be to gain information. There is an urgent need to inspect all anchors. This does not require a high level of skill. Inspectors need to record for every anchor what type it is, whether or not it is countersunk, what is the colour of the resin and whether or not it is loose. This could be done under the adopt-a-cave scheme but it is more likely to be done by those with enthusiasm.

The CNCC need to properly fund the anchor scheme and I would like to see someone be responsible for sure that happens. Should that be the Treasurer's job?

During the past two years, we have installed nearly 300 anchors. I have received £2000.

Where has the £18000 that the CNCC holds come from?

I can envisage a need to install a number of anchors which might be in the region of 1000. That does not include replacing loose anchors. The CNCC has the money and I would like to see £6000 per year spent over the next two years."

End of report.

- Alan Speight said that the original anchor scheme put lots of anchors in, tested them, and published them. People though the CNCC Technical Group (and the IC anchor team) were closed shops; anchors are not in control of the CNCC yet and never have been.
- Sam Allshorn said he has installed >50% of the IC anchors and agrees that the CNCC needs to be more involved in the anchor scheme.
- Gary disagreed that the CNCC Technical Group scheme was cliquy and he had encountered no problem getting involved and becoming an approved installer.
- Ric Halliwell reminded everyone that a big source of the CNCCs income came from rigging guide sales.
- Matt Ewles agreed with Gary that the CNCC Technical Group system was quite easy to get involved with; just send an email, attend a day course, and then they would arrange for you to collect anchors, resin, the drill and support you on your project. Matt expressed concern that there were currently people (e.g. Alex on UK Caving) who were wishing to get involved in this way with the current system but there was no easy pathway. Matt said he has always felt that it would be the wish, even the expectation, of the caving community to be managed by the regional council, rather than by endorsed individuals.
- Sam Allshorn said that the CNCC need to arrange more trainers for IC anchors, more anchors to be produced, and someone to audit the records that we have, to make sure they are comprehensive and comprehensible.
- Sam Lieberman said that he was under the impression that the CNCC Technical Group had deposited their records with the BCA E&T.

- Tim Allen said that he was concerned that Simon is finding lots of the original anchors that are coming loose or losing their resin. Bob Mehew challenged this, asking whether it was really 'lots'. Simon and Sam both agreed that 'lots' was an appropriate term. Tim said that the big problem is that a number of anchors are not lasting as long as they were originally intended. Tim suggested the CNCC might be better making a start on the anchor replacement rather than installing new ones.
- Simon Wilson said it was important to look at what anchors are loose, who installed them, what resin was used, etc. This needs to be examined more from an engineering perspective. Tatham Wife has 80% of the anchors loose, 75% in Hardrawkin, etc. If we can get the records of these installations, we could start gathering more data.
- Simon said we needed to inspect every anchor.
- Gary Douthwaite asked what the current issue holding up the inspection process was? Simon said that we need more people to start reporting loose anchors to allow us to gather more information.
- Ray Duffy and Alan Speight both commented on the fact that a loose anchor does not necessarily mean it is dangerous or that it will fall out.
- Alan Speight said we should be taking advantage of the CNCC website to try to help gather the necessary information.
- Bob Mehew said he was aware that there is a concern over anchors in the Dales, possibly due to resin shrinkage. However, Bob said he felt he needed more justification for the request/recommendation of Simon to inspect every anchor.
- Gary Douthwaite asked if we needed some kind of plan? If the biggest problem is the reporting, don't we need to focus on that? Simon said yes, but we also need to focus on the missing records and inspecting every anchor.
- Bob Mehew assertively emphasised that the BCA anchor scheme does not require the routine inspection of anchors; it only requires a pre-use inspection. Simon acknowledged this but it doesn't change his opinion that there should be a full inspection.
- Tim Allen warned us against starting to say anchors are dangerous, as this presents liability issues to Access Controlling Bodies which could lead to the closure of caves (e.g. Rhino Rift in Mendips). We need to consider the nature of the problem, does it constitute a danger, or is it just a matter that needs to be addressed?
- Sam Allshorn said that he has already tested an anchor with several mm of rotation using the Hydrajaws, and it could not be pulled out of the rock. Therefore, a loose anchor does not necessarily constitute a danger.
- Bob Mehew expressed concern that the information that Simon was presenting to the meeting suggests a danger, one that may necessitate the CNCC to issue a statement saying that no anchors are to be trusted.

- Simon said that the total number of loose anchors doesn't mean anything. We need to know why they are becoming loose, is this happening in a linear fashion etc.
- Sam Allshorn agreed that we just don't have enough information to make any broad judgements on the entire anchor scheme.
- Lyndon Easterbrook said that there seems to be a desire to see all anchors inspected, and that there is good advice on how to do this on the CNCC website.
- Bob Mehew said that we now have a complete set of records of all anchors placed. Simon said that these records (referring to the recently provided CNCC Technical Group records) were not complete and there are many omissions.

At this point, Martell Baines put forward a proposal:

“The CNCC create a scheme to systematically inspect all resin anchors”.

This was seconded by Pat Halliwell. Some further discussion then happened before the vote:

- Pete Monk said that we need to go beyond just the matter of inspection, and look at the broader scheme (e.g. training). Martell agreed, but said she feels that we need to start somewhere, and reporting is a good start.

The Northern Boggarts representative had to leave the meeting (now 9 voting clubs).

- Simon Wilson emphasised that the aim of collecting this information is to identify if we are going to have a problem in the future so that we can be proactive to avoid this now.
- Simon was invited to estimate the total number of loose anchors, but said this was not possible on the information so far. He referred to Kay Easton as a person "skilled in statistics" who might be willing to help. Kay explained that Simon was saying that he could not use his current results to estimate the total number of loose anchors because the sites he had inspected were not a representative sample. She also explained that while she had indeed been a Chartered Statistician, she had now been retired for almost 10 years and had allowed her Chartered status to lapse; she was no longer in a position to give professional statistical advice.

The above proposal then came to a vote: 8 votes for, 1 abstention.

Action: Matt Ewles, Simon Wilson, and any other interested parties to work together to create a CNCC-organised scheme for the systematic inspection of resin anchors.

Sam Allshorn ended the discussion saying said that he thought this had been a good debate.

Meeting closed 11:55am.

Summary of action items dictated or inferred from this meeting:

Individual(s)	Action item
Matt E.	Issue October meeting minutes as final with the two noted changes.
Tim A.	Keep CNCC Officer/Committee informed of progress regarding combined access agreement for Leck/Casterton/Ingleborough and if completed, make efforts to get Langcliffe Hall Estate to join the agreement (ongoing action carried over from previous meeting).
Andrew H.	Keep CNCC informed on any progress with Fairy Holes access agreement (ongoing action carried over from previous meeting).
Bob M, Ric H.	Work together to test the draft guidance for access controlling bodies about risk assessments using Birks Fell Cave as a test case. Report back to future Committee meeting when ready.
Bob M, Matt E.	Bob to email full details of BCA constitutional amendments to Matt. Matt to circulate to all full members to canvass opinions and place this on the agenda for the AGM on 11 th March.
Matt E.	Issue warning on website about abandoned ropes in Simpson Pot.
Matt E, Simon W, et al.	Work together to create a CNCC-organised scheme for the systematic inspection of resin anchors.