

# COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

## British Caving Association

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### Final Minutes of Committee Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> July 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	
Andrew Hinde	Gritstone Club	Chairman	
Gary Douthwaite	NPC	Webmaster	Yes
Ray Duffy	Red Rose CPC		
Sam Lieberman	Red Rose CPC		Yes
Marion Holloway	ULSA		
John Holloway	ULSA		Yes
Josh Young	York Uni CPC		Yes
Pat Halliwell	Craven PC		Yes
Ric Halliwell	Craven PC	Birks Fell/Mongo/Fairy Holes meets	
Alan Jeffreys	Grampian SG		Yes
Paul Whittaker	Burnley CC		Yes
Nick Garnshaw	Burnley CC		
Tim Allen	N/A	Access Officer	
Pete Bann	Northern Boggarts	Treasurer	Yes
Simon Wilson	Bradford PC	Anchor coordinator/E&T rep.	
Stuart Whitmey	Earby PC		Yes
Kay Easton	Bradford PC	Conservation Officer	Yes
Peter Wilson	Burnley CC		
Andy Gordon	Kendal CC		Yes
Chris Camm	White Rose PC		Yes

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

#### **Committee clubs not present (2/14):**

Rubber Duck Caving Club (apology received)

Yorkshire Subterranean Society (apology received)

#### **(1) Apologies for absence**

Lyndon Easterbrook (ULSA)

Geoff Whittaker (Th'Owd Skool Caving Club, Ingleborough meets secretary)

Fiona Durham and Alan Speight (YSS)

Ian Cross (BPC)

Bernard Bond (Burnley CC)

Pete Monk and Tony Brown (Northern Boggarts)

Matt Jenkinson (Rubber Duck CC)

The meeting opened at 9:32am with a welcome from the Chairman, Andrew Hinde.

Andrew emphasised that for meetings to be effective and productive, good communication is required, which means ensuring any meeting agenda items are communicated in good time. Andrew offered to be a point of contact for any cavers not represented by the Committee clubs to ensure their views are brought to Committee attention at future meetings.

## **(2) Acceptance of January Committee meeting minutes**

Acceptance of minutes:  
 Proposed: Pat Halliwell  
 Seconded: Gary Douthwaite  
 Votes: 10 votes for, 2 abstentions

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

## **(3) Matters arising from the January Committee meeting**

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

Individual(s)	Action item
Matt E.	Issue October meeting minutes as final with the two noted changes. <b>Done</b>
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). <b>Tim Allen said that this action item can be removed from meeting agendas as it is an ongoing action and he will provide regular updates in his reports to future meetings.</b>
Andrew H.	Keep CNCC informed on any progress with Fairy Holes access agreement (ongoing action carried over from previous meeting). <b>Andrew Hinde provided an overview of the new access agreement which is now signed and allows all individual and club BCA cavers to apply for permits on the first Saturday of each month. The only requirement was that the landowner wishes to see the cave for himself. A trip was planned for July but has been rescheduled for Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> August. Andrew said that any assistance would be greatly appreciated. There are still a few matters relating to parking etc. to be dealt with. Matt Ewles said that he has updated the CNCC website with the new details, but has not publicised them yet as there may be minor changes and revisions after the landowner visit. Hopefully we can publicise it in the next newsletter in August/September. Ric Halliwell said that permits are still available for October, November and December.</b>
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. <b>Bob has emailed Ric some questions to be completed for Birks Fell Cave, however they are mostly irrelevant. Bob is reviewing these and will send a revised version in due course. Action item to be suspended until further notice is received that this is ready to progress.</b>

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 <sup>th</sup> March. <b>Done.</b>
Matt E.	Issue warning on website about abandoned ropes in Simpson Pot. <b>Done.</b>
Matt E, Simon W, et al.	Work together to create a CNCC-organised scheme for the systematic inspection of resin anchors. <b>Still work in progress. Gary Douthwaite gave an update on the provisional plan to number all resin anchors on topos for ease of future reporting, but this has not yet been completed.</b>

Action items from AGM:

Matt E.	Contact BCA Insurance Manager to seek liability assurance statement regarding the CNCC having a dedicated anchor scheme and coordinator. Contact BCA E&T to request Damian Weare is recognised as a trainer. <b>Matt Ewles provided a summary of his efforts to seek liability assurances for this, and the consequential production of a CNCC anchor scheme document to demonstrates our compliance with BCA anchor policy (see Secretary report). This has been circulated to the Committee, and no further concerns were raised, so we were good to go with the anchor purchase. Matt has also written to the BCA E&amp;T to request Damian as a trainer.</b>
Simon W.	Subject to go-ahead from Matt E regarding statement from BCA E&T about liability, make necessary arrangements to proceed with sourcing anchors. <b>Simon Wilson confirmed that anchor production had commenced.</b>

**(4) Reports**

**Chairman's report:**

No questions.

**Secretary's report:**

Regarding surveys on the CNCC website, John Holloway said that Sam Allshorn suggested getting in touch with Cavemaps.org to avoid duplication of work. Gary Douthwaite said he was already looking into this. Matt Ewles said The Northern Pennine Club and Yorkshire Subterranean Society confirmed they have no objections to their surveys being used. Andrew Hinde said he could probably get Gritstone Club approval for theirs. Work is ongoing.

**Treasurer's report:**

Tim Allen asked for a reminder of how the Stories in Stone project worked, financially;

- Andrew Hinde said that the project was supported by the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership for the purposes of numerous projects across the Ingleborough area. One of the projects within this is the H5 Cave Conservation project, which includes about £30000 of cave conservation work. Approximately £11000 of this is from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and much of the remainder is from Natural England (approx £2000/year over four years) and CNCC (£2000, paid as £500/year for four years), and in-kind volunteer hours.

- As part of the scheme we (CNCC) are expected to provide 60 volunteer-days/year. Any cave conservation initiative under this scheme contributes to reaching this total. Travel expenses (45p/mile) can be claimed. Long distance travel is therefore only really viable if this brings a specialist skill to the project (a recent example being the rope access skills of the Buttered Badgers in removing the large metal tub from the bottom of Alum/Diccan Pot). We can also claim for materials or specialist jobs (e.g. asbestos removal).
- We have plenty of cash in hand for projects and we are currently well ahead of the in-kind contribution of volunteer hours that are expected of us. Andrew felt that the contribution we were putting into the scheme was very impressive.
- Tim Allen asked what the advantage was of claiming for a project under the scheme, emphasising that the Buttered Badgers did not expect any financial reimbursement for their work at Alum Pot. Andrew said that he wants every hour of caver conservation work on the Ingleborough Dales area to be captured under the scheme to ensure the scheme's statistics properly reflect the amount of work that is being done.
- Andrew reminded Matt Ewles of the need to include the Heritage Lottery Fund and Stories in Stone logo in all publications including the next newsletter.
- Stuart Whitmey asked what the process was for initiating a project. Andrew said that it should be reported to the Conservation Officer, who would advise if it is a viable project for us to work on under the scheme. Matt Ewles reminded everyone that there is also a reporting form on the website for conservation projects/abandoned digs.
- Gary Douthwaite said he had seen some reports detailing work done by CNCC volunteers or with CNCC funds but with minimal acknowledgement of the CNCC's contribution. He wished for this to change in the future to help demonstrate the good work we are doing.

**Conservation Officer's report:**

Kay Easton confirmed that the work at Great Douk is now complete;

- This was an abandoned dig near the entrance of the cave. The scaffolding and wooden covering were failing, making this a danger to the visiting public, particularly as this is often used as a novice trip. It needed to be dealt with. This has been stabilised with a pipe and covered. There is no ladder down the first 8ft of the pipe.
- The project took two days, each with six volunteers per day.
- With respect to the rest of the report, Alan Jeffreys asked what abrasive wheels were; Kay confirmed that these were stone cutting tools (e.g. angle grinder).
- Tim Allen said that abandoned digs (such as at Great Douk) are problematic elsewhere too, and he urged any clubs with abandoned digs to consider this carefully. At many, the original coverings have now collapsed. This is something we need to start putting greater emphasis on. Tim said that abandoned digs were often the one visible detrimental sign left behind from caver activity on land that farmers/landowners are likely to see.

- Andrew Hinde supported Tim's statement, emphasising that these projects are often quick, cheap and easy to deal with and that there are a few already in the pipeline.
- Andrew emphasised that the CNCC can also support any clubs/groups wishing to perform the work themselves (e.g. help with equipment or equipment transport).
- Kay asked if perhaps we could have some publicity to encourage farmers to report abandoned digs to the CNCC. Andrew Hinde called for opinions on this. Sam Lieberman said that it may not be obvious to a landowner what is an abandoned dig, an active dig, or a pot that has some (non-caver related) rubbish. Kay agreed that it could become a problem if every landowner contacts us to make safe every hole on their land.

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

Maz Holloway provided an update on the Skype meeting with the BCA Training Committee from the previous week. They are trying to re-write their constitution to better describe what they do. Sam Lieberman asked about first aid training courses; Maz confirmed that they were being planned.

#### **Access officer's report:**

Tim Allen discussed his report with everyone:

- Firstly, Ric Halliwell provided a clarification that his attendance at the Cave and Crag Access Group was not in a CNCC capacity.
- Tim started with a discussion on bats; he said that in Wales, bats have been used as a 'tool' in cave access discussions. In our area however, bats and cavers have co-existed for many decades. The Cave and Crag (C&C) Access Group chairman, Jon Beaven, is himself a caver. John Altringham, a bat expert, was invited to discuss bats with the C&C Access Group to provide some information for future reference should we encounter similar access issues to Wales, but unfortunately the meeting fell through and is being arranged for a later date. Tim said he was conscious that cavers have opened many caves which have become bat roosts. Ric Halliwell said that John was a very good person to get involved as he was supportive of the coexistence of bats and cavers in many of our caves. Ray Duffy agreed, referring to studies done in Link Pot, demonstrating that there does not necessarily need to be any access restrictions due to the presence of bats.
- Tim said that the Yorkshire Dales National Park are writing a new action plan, and he wants cavers to make a proactive contribution to this. He has a meeting on Tuesday to discuss this. This includes working to improve public relations with cavers and on caving in the region (e.g. giving talks to local communities, information boards etc).
- With respect to the efforts to move to a calendar based booking system on Ingleborough, Leck and Casterton Fell, Tim said that Patrick Holmes of Ingleborough Estate has agreed to review a draft version of the system. Gary Douthwaite has built a system but it is hot off the press and Tim needs a little time to review it first. The system will be open to all cavers, not just BCA members, following a successful argument that failure to do so will only result in people going caving outside of the system. Tim hopes that if the system is approved for Ingleborough it will hopefully be able to be extended to Leck and Casterton.

- Sam Lieberman asked if the intention of the system was that anybody could book any cave at any time. Gary Douthwaite said yes, but that there will be some common-sense limits on the numbers of bookings any one user can make (currently 10) to avoid individuals just block booking caves without good reason or malicious use. Matt Ewles emphasised that for a long-term project though this could be discussed on case by case basis; the limit is to protect the system from abuse, and is not intended to limit those who want genuine access.
- Pat Halliwell expressed concerns that a nominal limit on bookings/user may be problematic for clubs who like to book a year of events in advance. Matt Ewles agreed, but said that, for example, Pat could book several caves, and another Craven PC member could book another several, hence there are ample ways around this for those genuinely wanting to make lots of cave bookings; the per-user limit simply offered some protection from any malicious use of the system by rogue individuals (not necessarily cavers) or any robots.
- Ric Halliwell congratulated Tim on his productive meetings with the land agents.
- Moving onto Langcliffe Estate; Tim has spoken with Sam Allshorn and got the numbers of people accessing Penyghent Pot and Dale Head Pot. They are quite low. Tim is considering writing to Robert Bell of Langcliffe Estate to say that we (CNCC) don't wish to continue with the permit-based access agreement (which dates back to 1978) and that instead we propose it should just become open access due to the low numbers of visiting cavers. If there is any pushback on this a compromise could be the online booking system.
- Ric Halliwell asked if there is a get-out clause in the agreement. Andrew said that we can withdraw from it whenever we want.
- Sam Lieberman suggested that we go ahead and inform them of our intention to withdraw and announce the caves open access, putting the ball in their court to take the next move.
- Andrew Hinde concluded by suggesting we leave this matter to Tim's discretion.
- Tim finished by discussing a number of 'special arrangements' with respect to many of our access agreements. It has become apparent that various groups (including for example the BCA Training Committee) have for many years enjoyed being able to get permits despite not being a BCA member 'club' as such, due to bespoke historical agreements with landowners possibly arranged by previous Access Officers many years ago. The undocumented nature of these was causing some concern. Tim said he was concerned that these agreements give the wrong impression that access may be better than it is in reality.
- In particular, Tim was concerned about the arrangement with the BCA Training Committee, as Lord Shuttleworth did not want commercial caving on his land.
- Alan Jeffreys suggested that the new access system would help negate these issues, and for any special or bespoke arrangements, timeframes could be imposed.
- Ray Duffy and Ric Halliwell confirmed that the army have a special arrangement with the landowner for access to Casterton Fell and Stump Cross.

- Andrew Hinde said that the live issue at the moment (which has recently been raised in some email communications) is can we give permits to the new Qualifications Management Committee (QMC), formerly the BCA Training Committee? Previously we have, but if we are to clamp down on special arrangements, and respect the landowners wishes not to support commercial caving, maybe we cannot. Pat Halliwell asked whether they were getting paid for what they were doing, and if so we need to write to them to inform them that as it is commercial caving, we cannot continue to support this, and we advise them to seek alternative arrangements or locations?
- Tim Allen volunteered to write to them to set up a discussion on the matter.

**Action: Tim to work with BCA QMC regarding cave access.**

- Tim said that in general he wanted the CNCC to alter our tone on access and consider putting a statement on our website describing our position on the Countryside Rights of Way act with respect to caving. We should identify which of our cavers are on access land and highlight this on the access page. Andrew Hinde suggested that Tim drafts a statement.
- Matt Ewles said that while he supported the change in tone, we needed to be extremely careful not to deliver mixed messages on our access pages. For example, we do not want to be saying that the cave is on access land, possibly implying that you do not need permission, while also saying that it is a requirement of access to use the new calendar based booking system. Such a conflict would present confusion and an unclear position which was not desirable.
- Andy Gordon said that this ultimately all depends on the wording of the statement.
- Maz Holloway emphasised that at Eurospeleo, people were extremely keen to know whether other cavers will be in their preferred cave each day, hence the booking system was very popular. She said that the new access system could have similar benefits.
- Ric Halliwell suggested that any statement regarding CRoW needs to be run via the CNCC Committee at a future meeting.

**Action: Tim to draft a statement regarding CRoW/access land for CNCC website.**

**Other reports:**

**Anchor Coordinator/E&T:**

Simon Wilson provided a verbal summary of activities:

- Car Pot anchor installation is complete.
- The ca. 650 CNCC owned IC anchors are being produced.
- 10 loose anchors have been reported via the 'report a defective anchor' system on the website. Seven of these were already known about; three have been superseded with new

anchors, four have been dealt with by other means (replaced or removed) and one is currently being looked into.

- Gary Douthwaite asked whether Simon provided feedback to those who reported the defective anchor in the first place? Simon said that yes, sometimes (e.g. Bull Pot and the anchor at Dr Bannisters in Upper Long Churn). Gary felt it was important that those who are reporting the anchors can see that something is being done following their report.
- Simon has been testing self-tapping concrete screws. A report will be provided for the CNCC website in due course.

**Meets Secretaries:**

No questions.

**Webmaster:**

Gary Douthwaite emphasised the download statistics presented in his report, saying these were particularly striking.

- The matter of the suggested £50/year expenditure on an improved email system was then raised; Gary said that this would help to improve robustness of the CNCC email system for the secretary@cncc.org.uk account. Pat Halliwell suggested that given the recent issues of online security this was a good idea. Gary said that this wasn't necessarily about security, but more about ensuring the email system worked well for the future.

**Proposal:** The CNCC Committee support the expenditure of approx £50/year as outlined in the webmaster report.

Proposed: Pat Halliwell

Seconded: Josh Young

Votes: 11 votes for, 1 abstention

Andrew Hinde urged everyone to help provide news to keep the Facebook page fresh.

Andrew then brought the discussions on the reports to a close and called for a proposer to accept the reports:

Proposed: Pat Halliwell

Seconded: Stuart Whitmey

Votes: 12 votes for (unanimous)

**(5) Confirmation of co-opted positions and representatives**

Matt Ewles introduced the subject and confirmed that all co-opted position holders had been asked and none had wished to step down. The only role that is vacant is BCA representative, after Martell Baines stepped down earlier in the year.

Reconfirmation of all current co-opted officers and meets Secretaries for a further year:

Proposed: Pat Halliwell

Seconded: Sam Lieberman

Votes: 12 votes for (unanimous)

The meeting went on to discuss the recent BCA meeting. Andrew Hinde said that either he or Tim should probably provide an update, as they attended the meeting.

- Tim's proposal to remove the controversial sentence from the BCA constitution that was prohibiting the CRoW campaign was accepted and will now go forward to a ballot of all BCA members. This will require 70% acceptance to be accepted. The poll may be done partially by email for those who have supplied their email addresses to the BCA, to reduce cost.
- Andrew said that we needed as many people as possible to attend BCA meetings.
- In response to a comment from Ric Halliwell, Matt Ewles said that although we could make people aware of the CNCC's position on CRoW, we could not advise people how to vote in the ballot as this would be interfering with individuality.
- The BCA motion on proxy voting failed in the house of groups.
- All housekeeping changes to the BCA constitution were accepted and will go forward to ballot.
- There was high support for Tim's second proposal; that the BCA agree that there is no constitutional impediment to the BCA campaigning for CRoW to apply to caving.
- Andrew Hinde said that thanks to the efforts of a few key people, the BCA AGM was productive and chose the simplest route to achieving a result.
- Tim confirmed that he will attend BCA meetings whenever he can, and is happy to provide a brief report or verbal summary on proceedings to the CNCC, in the absence of a specific designated BCA representative.
- Nick Williams has taken over from Simon Brooks as BCA Secretary, with Bob Mehew as Assistant Secretary. Leanne (the paid clerical assistant) has resigned.

## **(6) Discussion about the CNCC name**

- Andrew Hinde said he had some sympathy with Tim's suggestion to change the name, but asked whether there was any appetite for this from those present.
- Several people expressed an open-mindedness to a name change, although nobody came out for or against this.
- Tim summarised his background/thoughts on why he felt it was a good idea, essentially to present the CNCC as a more modern and inclusive organisation.

- Alan Jeffreys said he supports Tim's reasoning and justification, but warned against the name 'Northern Caving Association' (as Tim had mentioned in his summary) owing to the historic NCA abbreviation.
- Matt Ewles suggested that we went around the room, asking each club rep their thoughts, to see if there was sufficient appetite for Tim to progress this further and come up with some suggestions for the next meeting. This did not happen, as some representatives said that they had not yet had the chance to discuss this with their clubs.
- Pat Halliwell commented that all access agreements were in the name 'CNCC'. Chris Camm followed this up by saying we would need to change our constitution if our name changed.
- Matt Ewles said he felt that we should not be worrying here about the practical considerations of changing our name; these matters could be easily dealt with. We should be focussing more on whether there is an appetite for a name change for the reasons Tim has set out.
- Kay Easton suggested that many companies have a trading name and a company name; could the CNCC name not be preserved, and we simply adopt a 'trading name'?
- Josh Young said that the CNCC name is also well known by many of the people who we deal with including landowners, Natural England etc, who may get confused by the change.
- Matt Ewles read out the YSS position, provided to him by email in the absence of their regular representatives. The YSS felt the name should stay the same as landowners are familiar with it. They felt that the risk of confusing people outweighed any perceived benefits and the CNCC should focus on more important matters.
- Matt Ewles asked for all representatives to take this back to their clubs and to have a discussion. He emphasised that this was quite an important matter that required careful consideration. It was agreed that club reps can bring their feedback to the next meeting or email to Matt directly to help assess the interest for pursuing a name change.

**Action: All to discuss this in more detail within clubs and provide feedback. To be scheduled again as a discussion point for next Committee meeting.**

### **(7) Date and time of next meeting**

Committee meeting, Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2017, Hellifield Village Institute, 9:30am

## **(8) Any Other Business?**

### New to Caving

- Tim Allen provided an update on his new website 'New to caving' and some background. In 2005-2006 Chris Jewell helped the BCA to develop the 'Try Caving' website. However, after Chris' departure from his BCA post, the site was not maintained and is now out of date. Tim has paid a professional developer to build a new website to replace Try Caving.
- Several clubs have been asked if they would like to appear on this website, the requirement being that they are welcoming to novices.
- The Yorkshire Dales National Park have agreed to promote the site.
- Tim said that he was keen for as many clubs as possible to provide a link to this site, to help increase participation in the sport.
- Tim is also keen for the site to help participation with commercial caving; as this leads to more people getting involved, and perhaps helps lighten the burden on clubs by providing a better means for people just wanting to 'box-tick' caving as an activity to get involved, without providing a strain on club resources.
- Tim said he hopes people will support the website.

Meeting closed 11:44am.

### **Summary of action items from this meeting to be completed by next meeting:**

Individual(s)	Action item
Matt E.	Issue January meeting minutes as final.
Tim A.	Contact BCA QMC regarding cave access.
Tim A.	Draft a statement regarding CRoW/access land for CNCC website for consideration at next meeting.
All	Consider within clubs the matter of a CNCC name change and come to next Committee meeting able to discuss.

### **Other ongoing initiatives (with no specific actions from this meeting):**

- (1) Production of IC anchors.
- (2) Creation of CNCC-organised scheme for systematic inspection of resin anchors.
- (3) Uploading surveys to CNCC website as permission is obtained.
- (4) Publicise Fairy Holes access details after landowner visit.
- (5) Finalise draft booking system and present to Ingleborough land agents.
- (6) Consider best way forward with Langcliffe Estate access issues.
- (7) Use of Birks Fell Cave for creating draft guidance to ACBs.