

The CNCC request a review of the BCA funding of Regional Councils. We offer a number of observations and proposals on the current rules which were adopted 6th October 2012.

Background: At BCA council meetings earlier this year our attention was drawn to the regional settlement funding figures and the discussions which have followed. This had led to careful consideration of the current funding rules and whether they meet the needs of regional councils going forward. In our case particularly, the outside funding routes we previously enjoyed have now dried up.

In our regional council, attitudes and priorities have changed in recent years. CNCC is committed to working for the benefit of all cavers. Matters of access, conservation funding, and information dissemination have changed considerably at CNCC and we'd like to propose some changes to the regional funding rules to reflect this.

We believe changes to regional funding priorities are a matter for council and not, as suggested at the June meeting, for the Finance Committee alone.

Our observations: There are two main principles which guide the Finance Committee (FC). The first is "to ensure the funding is spent for the benefit of all BCA members". This is a fine ideal for a club but does not reflect the fact that BCA is also the national governing body for all those who wish to venture underground. Interpretation should therefore take the longer term view where short term spending can ultimately benefit all cavers. In any case this principle is contradicted twice in the document where access and anchor funding supports clubs but not individual members of BCA. It is very difficult to judge whether this principle has been met as written and we would suggest that the principle is broadened so long as it conforms to the relevant aims and principles of the BCA constitution.

The second principle of ensuring that "best value for money has been achieved" appears to be sensible although difficult to determine how this is judged.

We propose regional council funding rules are reviewed as soon as possible adopting the further proposals and suggestions included in this document.

It seems sensible that the responsibilities, the funding process, timings and presentation of accounts are set by the FC and approved by council. There is very limited information on the FC available to members and it is not listed as a committee on the BCA web site or handbook and this should be corrected. We do note from responses to our own enquiries that regional councils submit their own scrutinised accounts in different forms. These then appear to be taken on trust by the FC and there is no obvious process to ensure the actual rules have been complied with. Who can determine that a funded gate or a funded anchor placement complies with the first principle?

We would like to see some definition on the rule of, “where there are other external sources of funding, these should be used first.” This should not discourage regional councils from holding their own reserves or spending alternatively sourced funds on other projects. Where BCA funding applies to one it should apply to all.

Following the major changes to the national council in 2004 it is important that BCA continues to fund the **administration** of the regional councils in terms of all running costs. We do not necessarily agree that some admin costs are pro-rata'd according to membership type. This seems to only effect DCA and CSCC who presumably have regional members who are not members of BCA. Even though this does not apply to our region at present we presume having these non-member groups are beneficial to those regions and they should therefore be supported especially as these 'non-core' costs seem to be minimal.

Publications, information and general communication is essential for healthy regional caving and of benefit to all cavers in the longer term. In our view this should be encouraged by national association funding. At present, the opposite is the norm where non allowance of funding discourages these lines of communication. *We propose that council gives broad approval to fund regional council newsletters and other forms of disseminating regional information subject to specific approval by the P&I Officer or P&I group.*

Websites are essential for passing on information to local and visiting cavers alike. At present BCA funding support is limited to those sites which utilise BCA's own web services. This is unnecessarily restrictive especially in light of the web service security issues that have been brought up before council. We propose *that BCA funds all regional council website costs regardless of who provides the services and hosting.*

Promoting caving, both to attract new people into the sport and to inform the wider community is beneficial to all especially the membership health of BCA. Specific initiatives should be funded by BCA subject to prior application and approval by P&I.

Under the **Conservation & Access** heading BCA allows regional council funding to an annual total of £500, paid according to the account and to remove the bureaucracy of day to day C&A work. Above that total, expenditure should be presented as a 'project' or 'parcel of work'. A decision whether to fund the project is then made by the Finance Committee. Surely this is wrong. Approval and decisions over C&A 'projects' should be made by the C&A committee who have the appropriate experience and knowledge in these matters. We would therefore propose *that above the £500 allowance any expenditure which meets the criteria for a 'project' should be approved by C&A first.* This will ensure that the project is judged against the principles and value for money. More importantly it will also allow for regional dialogue and the sharing of ideas.

After several months and numerous enquiries it is has been difficult to find information on the process and detail of regional funding reimbursements by BCA. We would recommend that all regional accounts that receive BCA funding be made available in a central place. Decisions made to grant or reject additional funding applications should be recorded. Moving decision making from the FC to P&I and C&A should ensure better public recording through reports to council and standing committee minutes. Greater transparency should always be the aim.