

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Reports for 27th June 2020 Committee Meeting

Chairman's Report

Covid 19 Response

Firstly I would like to thank Northern Cavers for their exemplary behaviour during the first two stages of Covid Lockdown. We have had no complaints from any landowners or local communities and some gratifying expressions of support where we have been invited to help. I would also like to encourage our member clubs to take advantage of any funding available via CNCC to assist in the restart of club caving activities when appropriate to do so. Whether this is equipment, training, refresher courses or Hut re-commissioning expenses. Many clubs with property have received grants from local authorities but not all.

Please continue to point your club members to the CNCC website for up-to-date information on cave access and general Covid-19 advice. Gary has done a great job keeping our website updated at this important period.

I should also thank Matt Ewles and Jane Allen for keeping our social media platforms appealing and relevant with useful and timely information.

Access

I am sure you will all be aware of the immense amount of work done by Tim Allen to ensure our return to caving activities in a safe and responsible way. His report below shows that this has been virtually a full time job during the transition out of lockdown. The resumption of the cave booking system is a tribute to the trust he enjoys from the big estates and landowners (which has been hard-won over many years). This has required hours and hours of planning, correspondence and farm gate chats. Thanks also to Geoff for sorting out the new and existing bookings. While the Dales honey pot sites have been inundated with visitors (some of whom let themselves down with ignorant behaviour) it has not affected the high regard with which cavers are now held by many landowners who have benefited from our assistance over recent years.

Stories in Stone

The cave conservation project has been put on hold. It is hoped that a further extension will be negotiated with HLF.

Andrew Hinde - CNCC Chairman

Secretary's Report

I have enjoyed familiarising myself with my new role in the CNCC. It has been an interesting experience for Ian, Ben and I to assume our responsibilities just as everything closed down, but I'm looking forward to normality slowly returning over the coming months and we can all start to get underground more regularly again.

Since the AGM, a handful of good news conservation stories have kept the CNCC news page from getting too dusty, with bolt work being done in Rift Pot and Notts Pot, and cleanups at Yordas and Brown Hill. We've also seen a new topo for Boggart's Roaring Hole on the website, along with new descriptions for that and Trapdoor Pot.

I am hoping to put together my first newsletter over the summer, as since the last one in September there has been plenty going on to fill a couple of pages of uplifting news.

Josh Young - CNCC Secretary

Treasurer's Report

I began the process of adding myself onto the bank account, but as usual it's not been as simple as it should be - Barclays lost the form. Pete is now filling in a new one and it'll hopefully be sorted soon.

I've asked Pete to make payments to both the RRCPC for the Avon Pot capping and Alan Speight for resin.

Gary asked me to set up a Paypal account for the training booking system on the website, this has been done.

Finally, I have received a lot of old paperwork from Pete, with accounts stretching back further than 10 years. Do we need to keep all of this? I'd like to propose we dispose of any paperwork older than 7 years.

Ben Wright - CNCC Treasurer

Conservation Officer's Report

Covid-19 has put a stop to most conservation activity including proposed clearing of waste at Owl Holes at the end of March. CNCC can't take any credit, but thank-you to Sean and Daisy Latimer who spotted a large amount of rubbish near Yordas cave, and returned with their Dad Johnny to clear it up.

BCRA are looking for ideas. The UK Cave Conservation Emergency Fund has around £20,000 in its coffers, and they feel this should be put to good use. They are suggesting putting together a publicity pack for the International Year of Cave and Karst in 2021. Any other ideas for possible uses for the money?

We hope to get back to conservation working parties, once issues over social distancing and sharing of tools have been sorted. New volunteers are always welcome, for weekend or weekday working parties. No specific skills are necessary, but if you have them, we will do our best to make use of them. On the job training is given as needed. Occasionally there may be the opportunity to attend a training course.

If you'd like to be placed on the mailing list to be informed of future projects, please contact Kay Easton on conservation@cncc.org.uk, or use the link on the CNCC website.

Kay Easton - CNCC Conservation Officer

Access Officer's Report

Greetings to all at CNCC, northern cavers and beyond. The corona pandemic has dominated everything and everybody over the last four months and normal caving has come to all but a standstill. My sympathies go to those who have lost loved ones and sadly there are a few cavers amongst those rather impersonal fatality figures. One small positive thing is that we have all learnt to 'zoom' and meeting by video has become normal. I look forward to seeing the committee in little squares across my laptop screen for the first time.

At the beginning of March, as the slow realisation of the seriousness of the pandemic developed, I put out relevant links to advice from YDNPA, Defra, BMC, Rescue Services etc., as I thought relevant. With the approval of the CNCC team I made several statements starting well ahead of the final lockdown advice and I think we have been well ahead of the curve on this throughout. We closed down the cave booking system and put out information on specific caves as requested by landowners (High Birkwith farm and Rainscar house for example).

I expect a very limited number of people visited caves during the lockdown period but generally cavers seem to have been compliant with government advice and certainly I have received no complaints.

Prior to the end of lockdown I offered general sound advice aimed at anyone who was thinking of caving. I consulted particularly with CRO to ensure that CNCC advice did not conflict with that of rescue services. This involved being extra cautious, caving within capabilities and being considerate to others especially local communities. Working with Gary and the team we posted this information widely under the catchy three word title you might have all seen.

As lockdown ended it was clear that a few people would go caving, particularly those from same household groups or solo cavers/divers. It was also possible that cavers would visit our classic caves just to test their eyesight! I felt it was better to be proactive and facilitate safe access for those who chose to cave. Therefore I consulted with a number of landowners who surprisingly were quite ambivalent about cavers returning to their land. This advice was circulated and several advisory statements put out on our website. As I write my report we are opening up the booking system across all three fells for those who want it as this should keep any cavers as safe as possible. By dealing with access in this way, by advising caution whilst still facilitating access, I think we are setting in place the right messages which will see us through a perhaps lengthy difficult period for caving.

In addition, I am grateful to a member of our council who sent me a letter from the Dept of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The letter made it clear that caving, along with all outdoor sports and physical exercise, are now permitted, without time limit, along as social distancing measures are in place.

Many thanks to the rest of the CNCC team for their help and support during this challenging time.
Safe caving

Tim Allen - CNCC Access Officer

Meets Secretary's Reports - Ric Halliwell (Birks Fell, Robinson's, Fairy Holes, Mongo Gill)

Nothing to report because no-one is caving at the moment. Apart from September & October the end of the year permits for Fairy Holes are still available just in case we can finally restart caving.

Meets Secretary's Reports - Matt Ewles (Excalibur)

It will come as no surprise that no permits have been issued for 2020 and there have been no trips there other than to check the integrity of the Excalibur and Jenga Pot entrances (which are both situated in the streambed) in early March following the catastrophic flooding in February. No issues encountered and the caves look forward to their first visitors once caving resumes.