

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Draft Minutes of Committee Meeting, 27th June 2020, on Zoom

Attendees:

Name	Abbr.	Affiliation	CNCC role?	Voting?
Joshua Young	JY	York University Cave and Pothole Club	Secretary	No
Gary Douthwaite	GD	York Caving Club	Webmaster	No
Matt Ewles	ME	York Caving Club		Yes
Pete Monk	PM	Northern Boggarts		Yes
Alan Jeffreys	AJ	Grampian Speleological Group		Yes
Tim Allen	TA	n/a	Access Officer	No
Jane Allen	JA	n/a		No
Pat Halliwell	PH	Craven Pothole Club		Yes
Ric Halliwell	RH	Craven Pothole Club	Birks Fell etc. Meets	No
Sam Lieberman	SL	Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club		Yes
Ben Wright	BW	Bradford Pothole Club	Treasurer	No
Kay Easton	KE	Bradford Pothole Club	Conservation Officer	Yes
Russell Myers	RM	Craven Pothole Club		No
Andy Gordon	AG	Kendal Caving Club		Yes
Ian Cross	IC	Bradford Pothole Club		No
Ian Patrick	IP	Craven Pothole Club	Training Officer	No
Andrew Hinde	AH	Gritstone Club	Chairman	No
John Holloway	JH	University of Leeds Speleological Association		Yes
Geoff Whittaker	GW	Th'Owd Skool Caving Club	Online Booking Administrator	No
Robert Scott	RS			No
Chris Camm	CC	White Rose Pothole Club		Yes
Stuart Whitmey	SW	Earby Pothole Club		Yes

10 out of 13 Committee clubs present (Absent: NPC, YSS, YUCPC)

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

The meeting opened at 09:32

1) Apologies for absence

None

2) Acceptance of minutes from the January Committee Meeting

No issues raised.

Vote to accept the January 2020 Committee meeting minutes.

Proposed: PM

Seconded: IC

10 votes for (unanimous)

Action: JY to issue final minutes.

3) Matters arising from the January Committee Meeting

Individual(s)	Action item
Josh Y	Finalise October Committee Minutes Done
Gary D/Matt E	Promote Fairy Holes and Robinson's Pot via CNCC's online platforms. Done
Andrew H	Speak to landowner regarding potential improvements to the walls and fencing around Alum Pot. Andrew tried to speak with the landowner, but it was not a good time. Ongoing
Gary D	Publish an anonymous poll on usage of Birks Fell via social media. Done, discussed at AGM.
Andrew H	Find someone to stand in as chair at the upcoming CNCC AGM. Done
Josh Y	Research potential alternative venues for future CNCC meetings. Done, discussed at AGM. No change for now.
Ric H	Make enquiries regarding the Skipton museum exhibit & report back to June meeting. Ric forwarded details via email. Work there is ongoing, but there are plans to include some pieces of equipment donated by CPC, alongside audio recordings of interviews with several CPC members. Done
Tim A	Get some framed caving photos costed up, & report back to June meeting. Done. Tim reported that someone with an A3 printer offered to print the images, so CNCC will only need to pay for frames. Tim said that as there are plans to co-opt a PR and Communications officer later, they will be better able to discuss the matter further.

4) Reports

Chairman's report

- AH said a few words about Andy Farrow, a member of Northern Boggarts and keen member of the CNCC Conservation Volunteers who died on the 24th June, and about his contributions to the CNCC over the years. PM then spoke more personally about Andy and his life.
- AH mentioned how we have begun to get the CNCC's image out into the wider world. This includes having caving listed on the "Get Outside" website run by the Ordnance Survey. (more details under TA's report.)

Secretary's Report

- JY mentioned that he planned to produce a newsletter, expected to come out in the Autumn.

Treasurer's Report

- BW is now a signatory and can now make payments on behalf of CNCC.
- The matter of whether to keep old CNCC financial paperwork was discussed. It was decided that BW would look through and see how much may be worthwhile keeping (i.e. not receipts etc.) and will either digitise it himself or ask volunteers to help. GD suggested storing the documents on some form of cloud storage.

Conservation Officer's Report

- AH said that in Crackpot Cave, the new conservation tape placed last year was still in pristine condition.

Access Officer's Report

- TA added the CNCC onto the OS "Get Outside" initiative, which has coronavirus-related advice for the public from a wide range of sports. He will also update the virus message on the CNCC website.

Action: TA to put an updated Covid-19 message on the CNCC website.

- AH was asked to speak with Mr Lambert about allowing access to Long Churn again. He suggested asking for this to happen at the same time as the tourism and hospitality industries re-open. TA mentioned that several outdoor instructors have sent letters to Mr Lambert separately, but have had no reply.
- No negative feedback has been received from any landowners regarding cavers during lockdown.

Training Officer's Report

- IP gave a quick verbal report, summarising the agenda item he submitted (item 10). He has been working with GD to get the online infrastructure ready including payment via PayPal, and he is getting plans ready for after the pandemic.

Webmaster's Report

- This report was not in advance of the meeting, but was shared electronically during the call. It has now been added to the reports document.

Anchor Coordinator's Report

- Alan Speight was not present at the meeting and no report was submitted, but ME gave an update on anchor work which has been taking place.
- News items have been released regarding anchor work performed in Rift Pot, Notts Pot, and Toyland in Valley Entrance. Anchor work in Shep Pot and Growling Hole are both coming soon.
- There was a minor issue where anchors were stamped with duplicate codes, but this has now been sorted out.
- It was mentioned that Simon Wilson placed anchors in the upper half of Pasture Gill Pot, but does not plan to return to anchor the bottom half so this will need to be completed.

- When asked about training for anchor installers, ME said that it was on the agenda but nothing has been organised yet. He knows 4 installers who are happy to deliver the training, which usually takes just a couple of hours and is performed outside the BPC's hut.
- JY said Mark Sims had made a request by email for anchor installation projects in a couple of caves.

Vote to approve anchor installation projects in Bye George (including the Grand Cascade) and in Craftsman's Pot.

Proposed: ME

Seconded: BW

10 votes for (unanimous)

Meets Secretaries' Reports

- GW mentioned that Leck Fell is becoming busy again, while there is still very little activity on Casterton and Ingleborough.
- RH said that he asked the Stump Cross/Mongo Gill landowners to renew the access agreement as free access, but as there's lots going on at the moment they only agreed to renew the current agreement.
- AH offered to contact the agents responsible for access to Fairy Holes, to try and open it for bookings from 6th July. RH added that the only current bookings are 1 each in September and October.

Action: AH to get in touch with landowners at Fairy Holes to negotiate reopening access.

- ME said Adele Ward had shown the Fairy Holes landowner the CNCC's video of Crackpot Cave, and as a result he was excited and keen for something to be filmed at Fairy Holes. There is now a plan to produce a video over the summer to show off the cave. This will be a good promotion for the cave.

Vote to accept all reports.

Proposed: BW

Seconded: AJ

10 votes for (unanimous)

5) Confirmation of co-opted positions and representatives.

- AH suggested it would be useful to have a representative to the BCA Equipment & Techniques committee. ME suggested that as Mark Sims is E&T convenor, he could be asked to write reports for our meetings without making it a formal position.

Action: JY to ask Mark Sims if he would be willing to produce E&T reports for future CNCC meetings.

- IP was asked if he would consider being representative to the Training Committee. He agreed to stand for this position, and that this will be included in the vote to confirm all other co-opted positions.
- AH mentioned discussions of creating a PR and Communications Officer role which ME would fill, with assistance from JA and GD.

Vote to appoint all co-opted positions as per the agenda, to co-opt Ian Patrick as representative to the BCA training committee, and to co-opt Matt Ewles into a new position of “PR and Communications Officer”.

Proposed: PH

Seconded: IC

10 votes for (unanimous)

- TA informed the Committee that Jon Beavan is now chair of the YDNP Local Access Forum, a position he held previously in 2007/8. This will help maintain good contact with the national park, and Jon could help highlight anything going on in the national park which could be a CNCC news item.
- Jon Beavan was also the individual who suggested distributing photos for PR purposes. TA said the hardest part of this is finding places to put them and persuading people to display them. Jon has said he'd be happy to be involved with this.

6) Covid-19

- TA asked all representatives whether their clubs are currently issuing tackle to members for trips, and what their current plans are for reopening huts.
 - GSG are considering opening their hut for use by a family group/support bubble on weekends, keeping it empty during the week to ensure no contamination remains.
 - CPC members can book out tackle but it must be washed after use, and people can use the booking records to avoid taking recently used equipment. Main accommodation is currently closed, but the family hut is available for single households with a minimum 3 days between groups. The CPC chair is an infectious diseases consultant, and suggested cleaning with household sprays with added bleach. They are currently looking at September for a full reopening, but this will be reconsidered as things develop.
 - RRCPC tackle can be taken out, and will be cleaned and quarantined after use. The hut will soon open for camping for its members and is planning a phased return, starting with day visits for members and moving to limited bunk use and so on. Everyone, including members, will need to book in advance.
 - BPC members will soon be able to take tackle, but will need to book a collection time slot. After use, gear will be cleaned and quarantined for 72 hours. The hut is closed and there are currently no plans to reopen.
 - NPC tackle can be taken, but the hut is closed and there is no plan to reopen. However, there is a strong will among their committee to get the hut open to as many people as allowed as quickly as possible.
 - KCC has no hut and there are no planned club activities. Their store has remained open, and members have caved as households.
 - WRPC has no hut, but members are caving in small groups with social distancing.
- CC said he was out caving most days, and had never seen the Dales so busy with people even in out of the way places such as Wharfedale. SL confirmed this observation.
- RM mentioned that the government advice for commercial hostels is that communal dormitories and cooking facilities should not be used. While he is unsure whether club huts can be considered commercial, he believes they should probably follow this advice. He acknowledged the challenge of juggling these rules against opening up cottages.

7) The BCA

- TA summarised the state of the BCA. Following the resignations of ME and GD as secretary and webmaster, JA will stop being P&I officer and the officers for training, E&T, newsletter, treasurer and C&A may all be standing down. Individuals who have dominated the BCA and opposed change have been around for 30 years. TA is uncertain whether the AGM will happen this year at all. The BCA is taking fees, but the rest of its function has been non-existent. He acknowledged that RM is trying hard as acting secretary, but is no doubt coming up against the same problems experienced by ME, Nick Williams, Damian Weare, Simon Brooks and so on.
- TA said that over the 3 years he has been involved in the BCA, the situation has only deteriorated in terms of representing all cavers. He said that while there are many good, willing volunteers, but rather than being able to work on behalf of caving you end up spending all your time on inter-regional and interpersonal battles. TA believes the CNCC should have a contingency plan for if the BCA folds or becomes so dysfunctional that we don't want to be associated with it.
- PH said it would depend on how the AGM goes and which proposed changes are accepted or rejected. She referred to an article in the Wessex journal about the CSCC being too overbearing at the BCA which had very well thought out arguments. JA said she had permission to post the article on the UKC forum. RM said this was written by Malcolm Foyle, and that the CSCC were feeling pressure to amend their proposals. He said that Alan Butcher had told him the CSCC's proposals to the BCA AGM should have been under his name, not under the CSCC. RM said that this is evidence that there is no general antagonism between northern and southern cavers, just from a handful of individuals. Most Mendip clubs and cavers are just like us, they just prefer to stay away from politics and just go caving. RM said he will do his best to break down barriers between groups.
- TA informed the committee that after Brexit, ELMS (environmental land management scheme) would be responsible for all subsidies under the common agricultural policy. Michael Gove said these subsidies would be given for public good, including for access. However, the BCA was not invited to various meetings regarding this. The Ramblers' representative asked about this exclusion, to which DEFRA replied that caving has no value to the land. The BCA have not engaged in the slightest way with any of this because they haven't been able to function.
- AH pointed out that depending on the outcome of the Welsh Government case, public liability and landowner indemnity insurance may no longer be necessary when caving under CRoW. This is something worth considering as many access agreements are reliant on cavers being insured. TA pointed out that cavers would still need insurance, as around 30% of northern caves are on non-CRoW private land. RM said the CNCC wouldn't be able to afford insurance as it would not have the same economy of scale the BCA currently has; it could cost an individual £500 a year for the same cover BCA offers. TA suggested aligning with larger organisations to make it more viable.
- SL brought up the issue of funding, as CNCC gets large amounts of money from BCA to fund its activities. He suggested the CNCC just continue what we're doing and be an example of good practice.
- AJ said that his club generally knows very little about the BCA other than hints from the CNCC agenda; he would need to be properly informed before taking any decision relating to the CNCC's relationship with the BCA to his committee for discussion. AG agreed with this sentiment.
- RH said that the NCA was originally formed as the government would only recognise caving as a sport if there was a national body. AH agreed that having a strong and functional national body is important, it just needs to be able to function effectively.

8) BCA's Judicial review against the Welsh Government

- RM expressed his hope that a synopsis of the situation will be available at the 18th July BCA council meeting. They are currently waiting for a go-ahead from the courts.
- TA summarised some notes he received from BCA's CRoW convenor David Rose, the full version of which is as follows:

The current case concerns the Welsh Government's Access Reform Group, ARAG. Stuart France, the CCC access officer, was invited to a couple of meetings of this and then abruptly disinvited – on the grounds that the CRoW Act doesn't apply to caving. This is the matter we seeking to judicially review. Defra has added itself to the case as an "interested party", stating that the outcome has national application in England as well as Wales. This is very helpful: it means that if we win, then the law will apply to caves and caving, as we have argued it should for many years.

At the moment we have filed our claim, and the WG has filed a defence, which basically just repeats its belief that caving is not an outdoors recreation, and hence not covered by CRoW. We are waiting for the judge to decide whether to grant "permission" for a full hearing to go ahead. The BCA is supporting the case. The other side has agreed that there will be a £5,000 cap on our obligation to pay their costs if we lose. We anticipate our total costs will be £35,000 plus VAT, which they will have to reimburse in full if we win.

This case should resolve this issue once and for all. It's helpful that it's pegged to a government decision, and doesn't involve any particular cave system, so there are no landowner interests to complicate matters – as there would have been had a case gone forward on the basis of access to a cave such as Ogof Draenen or one of the systems on Great Whernside.

9) Promoting CNCC to the public

- It was agreed that enough had already been discussed previously in the meeting, and that this aspect will now be overseen and run by ME, JA and GD.

10) Proposed format and funding framework for the provision of CNCC training workshops

- The implications of the funding proposal were discussed. IP wanted to ensure he had full support from the committee to go ahead with these projects, but the officers wanted to ensure he was not limited on funding by his suggested budget. It was decided that IP would withdraw his proposal, and that any necessary spending for training workshops would be considered and approved by BW as separate refunds of less than £500.
- It was also discussed who the workshops should be open to.
 - There were concerns that, while new cavers may be covered as temporary members under the BCA's 4 visit rule, other non-BCA cavers may need additional insurance to come on a workshop. IP spoke with BCA treasurer Howard Jones regarding insurance, who advised that for underground, non-technical workshops participants would be just caving as peers. For technical workshops it is the instructor that needs insurance, not participants.
 - From a funding perspective, some were concerned that as funding for these workshops would be coming from the BCA's training budget it would not be appropriate to offer them to those who were not BCA members. It was decided that the best course of action would be to initially open courses to anyone, and if BCA took issue with this then restrictions could be applied. It was considered unlikely to be an issue as there are currently so few non-BCA cavers.

Vote to make CNCC training workshops available to all cavers, not just to BCA members.

Proposed: JH

Seconded: AJ

10 votes for (unanimous)

11) Date and time of next meeting

Nothing raised

12) Any other business

- JA took the opportunity to congratulate ME on his new role, and gave general thanks for the very positive tone of the meeting.
- GD confirmed that, despite ceasing to work with BCA, he will still be webmaster for CNCC.
- RM mentioned that clubs running huts are eligible for the government's £10'000 Covid grant. BW said that all such northern clubs have applied and received the grant.
- TA asked generally how people found the Zoom meeting. The response was entirely positive, with many individuals showing thumbs up.

Meeting closed at 11:34.

Summary of specific action items:

Individual(s)	Action item
JY	Finalise January 2020 Committee meeting minutes.
AH	Speak to landowner regarding potential improvements to the walls and fencing around Alum Pot.
TA	Put an updated Covid-19 message on the CNCC website.
AH	Get in touch with landowners at Fairy Holes to negotiate reopening access.
JY	Ask Mark Sims if he would be willing to produce E&T reports for future CNCC meetings.