

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Draft Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 20th March 2021, on Zoom

Attendees:

Name	Abbrev.	Affiliation	CNCC officer/co-opted role?	Voting?
Alison Fuller-Shapcott	AF	Elysium Underground Group		Yes
Andy Gordon	AG	Kendal Caving Club		Yes
Andrew Hinde	AH	Gritstone Club	Chairman	No
Adrian Howden	AHO	Yorkshire Subterranean Society		Yes
Alan Jeffreys	AJ	Grampian Speleological Group		Yes
Chris Camm	CC	White Rose Pothole Club		Yes
Fiona Durham	FD	Yorkshire Subterranean Society		No
Fiona Hartley	FH	Northern Pennine Club		Yes
Fay Hartley	FHA	Padfield Caving Club		No
Gary Douthwaite	GD	York Caving Club	Webmaster	No
Graham Proudlove	GP	Northern Pennine Club		No
Harvey Lomas	HL	Yorkshire Ramblers Club		Yes
Ian Ball	IB	Yorkshire Subterranean Society		No
Ian Patrick	IP	Craven Pothole Club	Training Officer	No
John Holloway	JH	University of Leeds Speleological Association		No
Josh Young	JY	York University Cave and Pothole Club	Secretary	No
Kay Easton	KE	Bradford Pothole Club	Conservation Officer	Yes
Lyndon Easterbrook	LE	University of Leeds Speleological Association		Yes
Liv Golby-Kirk	LG	York University Cave and Pothole Club		Yes
Matt Ewles	ME	York Caving Club	PR & Communications /Excalibur meets	Yes
Mark Richards	MR	Yorkshire Subterranean Society	BCA E&T Rep	No
Pat Halliwell	PH	Craven Pothole Club		Yes

Pete Monk	PM	Northern Boggarts		Yes
Phil Murphy	PM	University of Leeds Speleological Association		No
Ric Halliwell	RH	Craven Pothole Club	Birks Fell etc. Meets	No
Russell Myers	RM	British Caving Association		No
Sam Allshorn	SA	University of Leeds Speleological Association		No
Stuart Clarkson	SC	Morley Pothole Club		Yes
Sam Lieberman	SL	Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club		Yes
Stuart Whitmey	SW	Earby Pothole Club		Yes
Tim Allen	TA	N/A	Access Officer	No
Tom Calpin	TC	Kendal Caving Club		No
Tony Brown	TB	Northern Boggarts	Bowland Meets	No

Total number of full member clubs present and voting: 16 (Quorum = 10)

Full member clubs not present (16 in total):

Airedale Caving Club
Bolton Speleo Club
Burnley Caving Club
Cave Diving Group (Northern Section)
CNCC Technical Group
Dent House Speleological Society
Durham Cave and Mine Club
Gay Outdoor Club
Gritstone Club
Lancashire Climbing and Caving Club
Lancashire Underground Group
Over and Under Caving Club
Pegasus Mountaineering and Caving Club
Rubber Duck Caving Club
Sheffield University Speleological Society
Th'Owd Skool Caving Club

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

The meeting opened at 10:00am.

1) Apologies for absence

Ben Wright (Treasurer)

2) Applications for Full Membership

No applications received.

3) Acceptance of minutes from the 2020 AGM

No issues raised.

Proposal to accept minutes of the 2020 AGM.

Proposed: LE

Seconded: SL

Votes: 16 votes for (unanimous)

Action: JY to issue final minutes.

4) Matters arising from the 2020 AGM

- ME mentioned that the project aiming to provide framed caving photos for display in local establishments is almost complete, and is mentioned in his report.

5) Reports

Chairman's report:

- AH said he plans to step down from his officer role next year, so it is time to begin looking around for a potential candidate.

Secretary's report:

- Nothing raised.

Treasurer's report:

- AH asked for people to think of ways to spend CNCC funds in ways that the BCA won't reimburse us. AJ mentioned he has an idea requiring £100-200 which he will bring to a later committee meeting.
- When asked, AH confirmed that Ben Wright will be staying temporarily until a replacement treasurer is found. A potential candidate would ideally need to have some institutional experience. While the role is relatively simple, it can be complex at times such as with Stories in Stone.

Conservation Officer's report:

- KE said we have lots of equipment, and that she and ME have put together an inventory to put on the website. This will wait for now, until GD has finished revamping the site.

Access Officer's report:

- TA and AH attended the cave & crag access advisory group meeting. They ensured the national park acknowledged the current situation and lack of access at High Birkwith. TA suggested that while they may not openly do something on our behalf, it's possible that individuals higher up the ranks may have conversations behind the scenes. The CNCC can't do much about it until the pandemic is properly behind us.
- Some background was given to the ongoing BCA insurance issue. It was previously understood that the BCA public liability insurance extends to indemnity insurance to all landowners who give permission to access caves on their land, whether formally or informally. As such, the landowner would be automatically protected from liability from any incident arising from granting that permission, thus giving them peace of mind for granting permission. It forms an important part of several of our access agreements, and this is probably also the case in other caving regions. In January ME asked the BCA for an indemnity statement as proof of this cover, which he could then give to a landowner. However, at this point Howard Jones, the BCA insurance manager, replied that the insurance policy only covers BCA members, not landowners. It was reported that Howard and his predecessor Nick Williams had met with the insurers and were working towards a solution.

- The seriousness and urgency of this issue was discussed at length, particularly as this reassurance is a vital component of many access agreements in our region. ME said that this uncertainty has already resulted in a loss of access to a cave in the North York Moors. TA said he would continue to work on this on the CNCC's behalf.
- Secretarial note: in the weeks since the meeting, the BCA have released a statement confirming that the insurance covers *"Any landowner or occupier who enters into an agreement with BCA or a BCA member organisation in order to permit access to caves on their land."* And will provide cover against *"Any incident arising from the actions of cavers on the property of a landowner or occupier who has agreed to permit access to caves or abandoned mines on their land."*

Training Officer's report:

- IP looked into the possibility of hosting a training session using a temporary outdoor structure such as scaffolding. However, it's currently off the table as insurance won't cover it. Now looking ahead to 17th May to properly start training again.

E&T Representative's report:

- When discussing the report that shared sports equipment was not a significant risk of spreading covid, RM said that while this was circulated among BCA officers, it was decided it was simpler to leave things as they are instead of updating BCA guidance. The current strategy of a 3-day quarantine of all equipment is simple to follow, but it is comforting to know it's not as much of an issue as we originally thought.
- The report mentioned that while the BCA were endorsing the use of a new resin, they were not discontinuing support of the older type partly because the new resin had not been tested in rocks other than limestone. SA mentioned that the IC anchor had only been tested in slate, and not with the recommended resin, and it had never been tested in other rock types at all. MR said he has the slate testing data, but will follow this up.

Action: MR to report back to the committee regarding IC anchor testing in rocks other than limestone.

Anchor Coordinator's report:

- Nothing raised.

PR & Communications Officer's report:

- AJ asked whether the CNCC were aware of 2021 being the international year of cave and karst. ME said it had not come to his attention, but said he would happily put out some form of PR if AJ emails him a summary. AH said the BCRA were putting on some events relating to this. GP added that there had been 2 talks so far and that he thought they were brilliant. He recommended timetabling and watching them.

Webmaster's report:

- GD has advertised the officer vacancies to hopefully get some interest.

Meets Secretaries' reports:

- TB followed up on a recent issue of a landowner spotting a vehicle around the entrance to Whitewell. He said that although it was not possible to identify the individuals or whether they were cavers, the landowner was satisfied that the CNCC treated the matter seriously and that we were still trying to ensure that all those accessing the cave are adhering to the access agreement.

- AH said that the trees, planted around the Whitewell entrance following the installation of some piping, had not grown as well as hoped. He offered to supply another bag of trees, which could go in any time until around mid April. TB said that it was because the ground was very waterlogged, so AH suggested using willow and birch trees which can survive those conditions. PM said they will have a look and get back to AH.
- RH promoted Robinsons Pot, which still has 7 permits available this year. Being able to report significant use of the permits to the National Trust will help convince them it was worth it to increase the number of available permits up to 9.

Proposal to accept all reports.

Proposed: PM

Seconded: ME

Votes: 16 votes for (unanimous)

6 & 7) Election of CNCC Committee/Officers for the year 2020-2021

The vote was conducted using a Google Form, which allowed for anonymous polling.

A break was taken while voting representatives completed the voting form. Committee and Officer elections were conducted simultaneously. Votes were counted by JY.

Outcome:

All standing Officers and Committee received a minimum of 3 votes and were thus elected.

Note: Ben Wright and Tim Allen withdrew their applications to re-stand as Treasurer and Access Officer respectively.

Officers and Committee for 2021-22 are:

Officers

Chair: Andrew Hinde

Secretary: Josh Young

Treasurer: *position vacant*

Conservation: Kay Easton

Access: *position vacant*

Training: Ian Patrick

Committee

Bradford Pothole Club

Craven Pothole Club

Earby Pothole Club

Grampian Speleological Group

Kendal Caving Club

Northern Boggarts

Northern Pennine Club

Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club

University of Leeds Speleological Association

White Rose Pothole Club

York Caving Club

York University Cave and Pothole Club

Yorkshire Subterranean Society

The actual number of votes for each are not reported. All met eligibility acceptance (min. 3 votes). The number responses to the Google form was confirmed to tally with the number of voting representatives at the meeting (16).

8) Dales Dye Tracing Data

- PM gave further background to the project. There are currently 460 traces in the database, and a note will be going in Descent to encourage more people to contribute. Although currently nearly all the traces in the database are published, they are happy to accept unpublished traces and expect that there will be a great number of these; PM added that negative results are also important, and should also be submitted. They believe that the CNCC's web presence is the obvious place to put this so that northern cavers can access this database. TC gave a demonstration of the web front-end of the database.
- When asked, TC said he could add other info to the database, such as geological data, in the future.
- SL voiced concern that individuals may submit data without permission from the owner, who may not wish for it to be made publicly available; no solution was suggested for this. He was also concerned that the data may reveal breaches of access agreements. It was pointed out that the data could have been from any point in the past, so modern access agreements did not necessarily apply when the investigation was carried out.
- LE asked how traces will be controlled and validated. PM replied that there will be an editorial system where each submission must be approved, but the details have not yet been worked out.
- AH suggested the BCRA might want to organise a field meet, with volunteers providing the manpower for investigating various traces. Something similar was successfully done in the Malham area a few years ago.
- SA suggested making it mandatory to agree to a creative commons license when submitting data, to ensure there is no ambiguity.
- CC asked if there was a way to ensure no-one else was doing dye tracing in the area when performing investigations, to avoid confusing results; in Wharfedale they have settled with phoning likely people, and have left sufficient time for other dyes to clear through the system. AHO suggested adding an injection point with a future date. PM said this was out of scope for now.
- RM said that, as trustee of BCRA, PM/GP should contact him if there is anything he can do to help. He is not aware of anything like this in other regions.
- GD said he can easily arrange hosting, and will discuss the specifics of this with TC offline. He mentioned the possibility of linking this database to the cave web pages on the CNCC website.

Action: GD to work with TC to incorporate the dye tracing database into the CNCC's web hosting.

9) Covid-19

- Nothing raised

10) BCA Event in the Dales

- RM said he is recommending the BCA withdraw from the publicity side of the 3 Counties diving traverse attempt. The project is being fully controlled by the CDG northern section. While they initially predicted they would need £4000 worth of equipment, a large proportion of this has since been taken care of - financial support was the main reason for BCA involvement.

- It was agreed that the CNCC will support the 3 counties traverse in cooperation with the CDG and whatever assistance they may require. If there is a caver event in the summer, the committee can be asked if they would like to support that.
- TA mentioned he had phoned Geoff Crossley who is the CDG dive coordinator for the attempt to ask what support they may want from us. He replied that we have already done our job by improving access across the board, which divers can now take advantage of. TA also spoke with Tony Seddon, one of the lead divers, who said he would be much happier for the attempt to be done under the radar with his own close-knit support group without CNCC or BCA involvement.
- SA pointed out that the divers can do any filming of the dive themselves during the attempt, without any expectations or media involvement, if they so wish. Then any material can be passed to the BCA to promote after the fact.

11) Proposal for Constitutional Amendment

- ME clarified that section 7;c;(vi) was intended to cover the situation for if less than 14 committee positions were filled, hence why it said 10-13, and so was not an error. However, acknowledging that this could lead to confusion, it was agreed that there would be no harm in going ahead with the change of wording.

Proposal to accept “Correcting Errors” amendment

Proposed: JY

Seconded: KE

Votes: 16 votes for (unanimous)

Proposal to accept “Meets Secretaries” amendment

Proposed: TA

Seconded: AG

Votes: 16 votes for (unanimous)

Action: JY to update the constitution with the agreed amendments.

12) Approving CNCC Anchors

- SL said that pre-existing anchors were not adopted because we knew nothing about the anchor type, resin, techniques used, etc. However, he suggested they could potentially be adopted if they were properly tested and documented.
- ME pointed out that this would not affect many caves, with the most obvious example being Dale Head Pot.
- SA said that after Simon Wilson introduced the IC anchor, there was a paragraph that stated that any anchor placed by a BCA member would be covered by the insurance. However, in the CNCC anchor scheme the quality of record keeping and quality of anchor location is much higher. If older anchors are adopted, a visual inspection would be insufficient, for example the resin may look good on the outer surface, but could fail during a proper pull test. AHO suggested that such anchors should also be shown differently on topos.
- AH and GD suggested that simply identifying anchors which were not installed under the anchor scheme on topos would be sufficient, and would just be a reflection of reality. They would not need to be officially adopted. IP countered that this would mean topos have to absolutely match with all anchor placements, which would be particularly difficult in places such as battle-axe traverse, where half the anchors are approved IC anchors, and half are not.
- IP agreed to withdraw the proposal, and to re-propose at a future meeting with new wording.

Action: IP to re-draft his proposal regarding retrospectively adding anchors to the CNCC list of approved anchors.

13) Anchor Projects for Approval

- Mayday hole project was approved.
- With respect to Diccan Pot, SA said that IP should be credited for the effort he has put into the proposal. However, some installers disagree with adding to Diccan because the cave is accessible with SRT in its current state. It could be potential issue going into the future, with knowing where to draw the line on adding to and modifying routes; it would be different if there was a safety concern. Even the idea of removing old anchors is potentially problematic, as some rock can be destroyed and can leave the site looking unsightly.
- GD suggested arranging a group meeting with all the installers, to help make sure everyone is on the same page not that there are a larger number of installers. He thought it would be better to discuss the issue there, rather than with the CNCC committee. AH agreed, saying that the committee doesn't really have the expertise to deal with this.
- TA suggesting creating a set of criteria to help the committee decide whether to approve a project, e.g. ensuring all installers have agreed. PM said he believed it was the anchor coordinator's role to discuss with the installer team, and then report back to the committee. He didn't think it was the committee's role to be discussing the minutia of exact bolt locations. SA countered that this isn't an issue when installing new anchors, the issue is that they need committee guidance to say if they are adding too many or too few anchors in a site that is already accessible.
- It was agreed that the Diccan anchoring project is approved in principle, with the proviso that the installers will have a meeting and agree to a plan.

Action: Anchor installers to arrange a meeting to discuss the anchoring of Diccan Pot.

14) Dates for the coming year

- ME requested that the June meeting be moved 1 week earlier, due to the government plan to remove all lockdown restrictions on the 21st.
- GD suggested having every other meeting be online, rather than all committee meetings. ME also talked about the positive social aspect of having in-person meetings. SA said that online meetings were much more accessible. GD suggested adopting a hybrid approach, with an in-person meeting also adopting online attendees.
- JY said that the AGM would still be in-person, and a hybrid approach could be used to increase attendance. However, moving committee meetings to a weekday evening follows the lead of the BCA council and sub-committees, and minimises disruption to the lives of those attending as there is no need to travel and it does not take up part of the weekend.

15) Any other business

- KE said that the Leeds Sailing and Activity Centre may close, and if it does would anyone want their artificial cave. LE said that his employer at the Courtyard Dairy may be interested. (Secretarial note: a statement saying that the decision whether or not to close the activity centre has been delayed 12 months, so the cave will remain there for the time being.)

Meeting closed at 12:30 pm

Summary of specific action items:

Individual(s)	Action item
Josh Y	Finalise 2020 AGM minutes
Mark R	Report back to the committee regarding IC anchor testing in rocks other than limestone.
Gary D	Work with TC to incorporate the dye tracing database into the CNCC's web hosting.
Josh Y	Update the constitution with the agreed amendments.
Ian P	Re-draft his proposal regarding retrospectively adding anchors to the CNCC list of approved anchors.
Anchor Installer team	Arrange a meeting to discuss the anchoring of Diccan Pot.