

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

Draft Minutes of Committee Meeting, 17th June 2021, on Zoom

Attendees:

Name	Abbr.	Affiliation	CNCC role?	Voting?
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
Fiona Hartley	FH	Northern Pennine Club		Yes
Gary Douthwaite	GD	York Caving Club	Webmaster	No
Ian Cross	IC	Bradford Pothole Club		No
Ian Patrick	IP	Craven Pothole Club	Training Officer	No
Joshua 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 Access Coordinator	Yes
Mark Richards	MR	Yorkshire Subterranean Society	BCA E&T Rep	No
Pat Halliwell	PH	Craven Pothole Club		Yes
Paul Smith	PS	White Rose Pothole Club		Yes
Ric Halliwell	RH	Craven Pothole Club	Birks Fell etc. Access Coordinator	No
Sam Allshorn	SA	University of Leeds Speleological Association		No
Sam Lieberman	SL	Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club		Yes
Tony Brown	TB	Northern Boggarts	Bowland Access Coordinator	Yes

12 out of 13 Committee clubs present (Absent: EPC)

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

AH was delayed, so ME acted as temporary chair until agenda item 4.

The meeting opened at 19:10

1) Apologies for absence

Pete Monk (NB)
Chris Camm (WRPC)
John Holloway (ULSA)

2) Acceptance of minutes from the January Committee Meeting

No issues raised.

Vote to accept the January 2021 Committee meeting minutes.

Proposed: PH

Seconded: ME

12 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
Tim A	Write to National Park Authority regarding caving access at High Birkwith. Action postponed until end of Covid restrictions. If we still have no Access Officer in August, officers to take on this action.
Kay E/Andrew H	Arrange conservation work at Starting Handle Hole. Done, see conservation officer's report.
Matt E	Get in touch with Tony B, and perhaps put together an article on Bowland. Not complete, but ME is still happy to do this. Ongoing.
JY	Once GD has formatted all of Simon Wilson's anchor content, JY to contact Simon to get his permission to publish it on the CNCC website. Ongoing
JY	Email the BCA Secretary to suggest the BCA revisit the issue of paying professional training providers for their services. Done. See BCA reps report. SL mentioned that the BCA training committee is getting a new chairperson.
JY	JY to advise installers to use an official booking date when installing anchors in Robinson's Pot. Done. SA said they do not intend to use these.

4) Reports

Chairman's report

- SL mentioned that Natural England (NE) want to do more monitoring of SSSI sites. AH clarified that they are currently just looking at Whernside, and more information on this would come through in the next 6 months or so. Much of this will consist of asking visitors to fill out forms after they have visited the SSSI, which the CNCC could help encourage with some publicity. AH said that cavers could be asked to have a look at particular features, which they then report on after the trip, it's a very quick and easy job. The last time this was done was 2009, before the CNCC had mailing lists or social media outreach, so AH suggested there could even be a formal partnership between NE and CNCC to help get this done.

AH and ME to use the CNCCs online presence to encourage cavers to take part in the upcoming Whernside SSSI review.

Secretary's Report

- Nothing raised.

Conservation Officer's Report

- SL reported on some the the issues with work at Wretched Rabbit, where the entrance has become unstable. In his opinion, work should cease until there is some more reassurance that the whole thing won't just collapse. This could potentially be done by buttressing the cliff above.
- AH recommended getting in touch with Henry Bowring (the landowner) to ask for permission to carry out work stabilising the entrance, which he will probably just wave through.
- AH asked if anyone had contacts with someone with civil engineering experience, who might be able to visit the site and give some advice. RH mentioned that Fairy Quarry in Somerset was stabilised using concrete tubes, but this would be a major job to fit and they must ensure this is done safely. He suggested contacting the people involved in this for advice.
- AH said there were a few upcoming conservation jobs, so calls may be going out soon to the conservation volunteers. He asked the committee to get the word out that we are always happy to get more volunteers signing up.
- AH added that it would be great to spend some money on projects in Scotland. AJ said he has some plans coming along which may be a good use of CNCC funds, which will be brought to a future meeting.

Training Officer's Report

- IP reported that workshops were going well, with only a few spaces left on many of them. He is looking into running more, including paperless surveying and expo skills. He is open to suggestions, especially now that an effective format is now in place.
- GD asked if there had been any problems with payments, to which IP said that although a handful of payments had failed, no one had been in touch with problems. He has yet to work out how to arrange refunds for exceptional circumstances, but will try to avoid the need for this.
- IP will speak with ME to arrange another PR push, including a separate advertisement for the photography workshop as this is only about half full.

IP & ME to do a PR push to get more people signing up for CNCC training workshops, with a particular focus on the photography workshop.

Webmaster's Report

- Nothing raised.

PR & Communications Officer's Report

- ME checked that the committee was happy with a £250 budget for photo frames, to which there were no objections.
- ME asked for suggestions for places which might be happy to display a framed caving photo in a nice area where plenty of members of the public will be able to see them. The goal is to show off caving and make talking points in visitor centres, cafes, pubs etc. AH suggested Inglesport climbing wall, and RH suggested The Crown in Horton.

E&T Representative's Report

- Nothing raised.

Anchor Coordinator's Report

- GD said they had a meeting between the installers which was very productive. There was a consensus to add other resin anchors onto topos, subject to an assessment by one of the installers. Although they will be shown on the topos, it will be clearly indicated that they are not approved anchors from the CNCC anchor scheme.
- When asked about the testing procedure, ME clarified that it will simply be an installer having a look, checking the quality for installation, and deciding if its sound or not. All users of anchors should be checking them before use, using multiple anchors etc. GD added that we're not telling people to use them, we're just not ignoring them.
- AHO said he understands how adding them reduces confusion, but saying that an installer has checked them makes it less clear whether or not they can be considered safe to use. SA agreed with this point, saying he would not sign off to say they are safe unless he had properly pull-tested them.
- AH suggested the installers put together a policy document, including appropriate wording to clarify this point. He suggested something saying that we acknowledge the anchors exist and that they are used regularly, but that all anchors should be checked before use. GD said they will try and come up with a more concrete plan the next time they have a meeting. He repeated that now we have so many installers, it is really good that there is clear communication between them all.

Anchor installers to discuss policy wording for adding non-CNCC resin anchors to topos.

- AH asked if anyone had heard how the manufacturing was getting along for the BCA's batch of new IC anchors. No-one had. *Secretarial note: AH followed this up after the meeting. About 80% are ready, and the manufacturers have been rading and polishing them between other jobs. There are 730 anchors. They are not yet invoiced.*

- MR was pleased with how cohesive the CNCC is as an organisation. Andrew Atkinson was really pleased that he was listened to and was able to receive some anchors for his project in Mendip. SA said that when CNCC handed over IC anchors, he called Andrew to pass on some tips on their installation, use, and how to handle the resin. When FH asked, SA confirmed that resin gun was loaned, and will be returning when the project is finished.

Access Coordinator's Reports

- RH said he has two Robinson's permits unclaimed for September, and asked for them to be used. AH recommended asking the CDG.

Vote to accept all reports.

Proposed: ME

Seconded: PH

12 votes for (unanimous)

5) Confirmation of co-opted positions and representatives.

- GD said he has been acting booking coordinator, and asked if anyone would like to fill this role.
- ME asked whether Dave Botcherby was still the BCA Y&D rep, to which JY confirmed that he had stood down due to relocating abroad. ME recommended LG consider taking on the role.

Vote to appoint all co-opted positions as per the agenda.

Proposed: PH

Seconded: IC

12 votes for (unanimous)

6) Appointment of Acting Treasurer

- ME gave thanks to Ben Wright for continuing his work while we found a replacement. He endorsed Pete Bann as being more than capable of filling the role and doing an excellent job.

Vote to co-opt Pete Bann as Acting Treasurer

Proposed: ME

Seconded: AG

12 votes for (unanimous)

- AH mentioned that Pete had coerced him into staying on a bit longer as chairman. He said it would be good to have some stability in the officer posts. However, he would happily support a new volunteer through their transition if someone wants to do it.

7) Birks Fell Access

- ME gave some additional context for this proposal. Many consider this to be an excellent caving trip, but as it requires dry weather it would be preferable to be able to decide to visit on short notice, or even on the same day. As our previous access officer, Tim Allen brought the vast majority of access land caves out of permit restrictions, and Birks Fell is one of the last caves on access land which is still part of the permits scheme.
- IC suggested that if the National Trust (NT) and the landowner want some kind of access system, perhaps it could be incorporated into the online booking system. ME replied that the system was meant to be a compromise to keep good relations, but it would be better to avoid suggesting that straight away. AH said that the booking system would be a strong opening bid, if we show them how many estates are using it successfully.
- RH suggested waiting until the Welsh Government court case decision, which will add some legal clarity regarding access to caves on access land.
- SA said that in his experience, most cavers going down there didn't have permits. Opting for a booking system would be a backwards step. The system is ok as a compromise, but it's definitely preferable to try getting open access first. ME agreed, adding that the official BCA stance is that access is already covered under the CRoW act.
- RH that when the access agreement was first created, the landowner wanted more restrictive access as he strongly objected to anyone making his land look untidy, which had happened during a couple of rescues. When his estate left the land to the NT, they continued with the previous agreement as they assumed that was normal. He also added that there is currently a closed season due to lambing in April and May.
- SA suggested checking what NT's generic access arrangement is. For example, Yorkshire Water have an access arrangement policy. For this reason, they wouldn't engage with CNCC because they don't put access restrictions in place, because it's access land.
- ME said we're administering an access agreement on their behalf, even though our national body says it should be open access. We should say we can no longer support this access arrangement, and put the ball in their court to say what comes next. This is a similar line to what the CNCC did with the Langcliffe Hall estate. This would be a good option if the NT decides not to engage with us.
- ME offered to get in touch with the NT, and put in the effort to try and discuss this issue with someone, bringing the outcome to the next CNCC meeting. AH suggested collaborating with JY if anything official is needed in writing.

ME to discuss access to Birks Fell Cave with the National Trust. JY to support if any official documentation is required.

8) Date and time of next meeting

- Some action items were discussed for possibly holding the October meeting in-person.

JY to contact Hellifield Village Institute to find out their availability in October.

JY to contact the committee in late July to see if there is support for moving back to full in-person meetings on a Saturday morning.

If the October meeting will be held in person, GD and JY to make arrangements for this to happen, including the option for people to attend remotely.

9) Any other business

- Nothing raised

Meeting closed at 20:25

Summary of specific action items:

Individual(s)	Action item
Josh Y	Finalise January Committee Minutes
Access Officer	Write to National Park Authority regarding caving access at High Birkwith.
Matt E	Get in touch with Tony B, and perhaps put together an article on Bowland.
Josh Y	Once GD has formatted all of Simon Wilson's anchor content, JY to contact Simon to get his permission to publish it on the CNCC website.
Andrew H / Matt E	Use the CNCCs online presence to encourage cavers to take part in the upcoming Wherside SSSI review.
Ian P / Matt E	Do a PR push to get more people signing up for CNCC training workshops, with a particular focus on the photography workshop.
Anchor Installers	Discuss policy wording for adding non-CNCC resin anchors to topos.
Matt E	Discuss access to Birks Fell Cave with the National Trust. Josh Y to support if any official documentation is required.
Josh Y	Contact Hellifield Village Institute to find out their availability in October.
Josh Y	Contact the committee in late July to see if there is support for moving back to full in-person meetings on a Saturday morning.
Josh Y / Gary D	If the October meeting will be held in person, make arrangements for this to happen, including the option for people to attend remotely.