

COUNCIL FOR THE NORTHERN CAVING COMMUNITY

Minutes of Anchor Installer Meeting, 2nd May 2026, Yorkshire Dales Guides, 10am

Attending

Ian Walker (Anchor Coordinator)	IW
Ian Patrick (Anchor Installer and CNCC Training Officer)	IP
Gary Douthwaite (Anchor Installer and Trainer/Assessor)	GD
Matt Ewles (Observer, CNCC Secretary, taking minutes)	ME
Toby Buxton (Anchor Installer)	TB

IW opened the meeting by summarising the aims of this session. This is the first meeting of CNCC's installers for many years. He emphasised the BCA's requirements for CNCC to revalidate installers on a three-yearly basis as well as to undertake an annual review of who our installers are.

The aim of this meeting is to discuss issues, share practices and concerns, revalidate the three installers who are attending, and identify how we go about training new installers.

IW confirmed that there are several people on our list of approved installers who have not been recently active and don't reply to emails (including about this meeting).

Our list is of approved installers is currently 10 people:

Damian Weare	(Trainer/assessor)
Gary Douthwaite	(Trainer/assessor)
Graham Coates	
Ian Patrick	
Kieran Hodgson	
Mark Sims	(Trainer/assessor)
Ray Duffy	
Sam Allshorn	
Simon Wilson	(Trainer/assessor)
Toby Buxton	

IW has been contacted by some individuals wishing to become new installers. The text on CNCC's website for this requires people to approach CNCC with some proposed projects that they would be looking to undertake, but otherwise no formalised pathway or regular training events. The current pathway is hard to define as it is a very 'human' process requiring bespoke arrangements. GD felt that having an annual 'induction' session was a good idea so a date could be clearly advertised in advance, but a training syllabus would be needed, as the previous IC anchor syllabus documents cannot be found. The team felt that new installers need some kind of assessment.

ME suggested creating a 'probationary' category on our anchor installers list so that prospective installers can receive email invites to future events and perhaps be contacted directly by existing installers who are happy to be shadowed on planned installation trips. IW added that a 'lapsed' category is also needed for former installers who are no longer validated.

ACTION: Create probationary and lapsed category in the Anchor Installers database.

ACTION: Create a syllabus for training new installers and also an installation guide.

ACTION: Arrange a repeat of this session for other current installers who wish to remain certified for anchor installation who have been unable to make this session; This could possibly also double up as an opportunity for provisional installers to receive training/assessment.

Who is an assessor for new installers? Currently GD is a trainer/assessor (having been previously approved by BCA, when BCA's procedures required that). IW felt that we needed to assign more of our current regular installers to being trainers/assessors, and that doing so was now at the discretion of CNCC. Therefore IW will liaise with existing installers to identify suitable individuals.

ACTION: IW to make suggestion to CNCC Committee to approve additional trainers/assessors.

The text needs to be clear on CNCC website that a pre-requisite for becoming an installer is being a competent caver and rigger; But we should remove the current requirement to have a 'wish list' of projects they want to undertake, particularly as the work of an installer has shifted from new projects to anchor replacements.

ACTION: Update CNCC website with relevant pre-requisites for becoming an installer and generally review text on the process towards becoming an installer.

It was agreed that for a probationary installer to be upgraded to a full installer, they need to demonstrate to a trainer/assessor that they have all the skills and knowledge necessary, which will include both the technical knowledge for installing an anchor, as well as suitable caving competence. It was agreed to leave this to the discretion of the trainer/assessor, as some individuals may be well known experienced cavers who could be assessed only on a surface-based event, but others may need to be assessed on an underground installation trip too. Need to be careful to avoid bias against new people who are not familiar names and ensure that there is opportunity for all to get involved, particularly from other areas of our community (e.g. mine explorers).

It was agreed that installers must attend a revalidation event every three years. GD suggested that afternoons after CNCC meetings, once yearly, would be a good opportunity; This event could also be combined with offering training for probationary installers. It was concluded that revalidation does not necessarily need to mean each individual installing an anchor, it can just be a discussion or a single demonstration with verbal discussion of techniques.

GD/IP/TB spent some time installing anchors in concrete block, and pulling out an anchor, discussing techniques and kit and were satisfied with each others results. These installers were declared to be recertified until 2nd May 2029 (assuming exactly three years).

Topics discussed included the choice of the two available resins (Fis V and EM) versus hole size; Fis EM being the preferred due to lower shrinkage but being a less sympathetic colour to limestone and much runnier and sometimes harder to get a tidy finish, especially if re-using an 18mm hole left behind by pulling a DMM/BP anchor.

There was agreement on the importance of re-using holes wherever possible for conservation.

GD suggested some kind of plastic ring/washer could help prevent Fis EM resin from leaking from 18mm reused holes; to be investigated.

ACTION: Team to consider plastic collar/washer for keeping runny resin in 18mm holes (or potentially 12mm holes for ceiling installations).

Other topic included standardisation of labels attached to anchors after installation to inform cavers of the 'safe to use' date; Suggest getting a large batch produced for IW to issue with anchors.

ACTION: Team to produce bulk stock of anchor 'safe to use by date' labels.

Terminology: It was agreed that all installers are responsible for training, so those involved in formally approving new installers will be called 'Assessors' moving forwards.

The current approvals process for anchor installation sites was discussed; Do Committee always need to approve; IW felt yes, but perhaps this is something to revisit in a future Committee meeting.

IP expressed concern about the quality of some recent installations, including some anchors placed recently in Swinsto Hole with resin egress from the hole and a visually unsatisfactory finish. It was felt that this would be good to discuss at a future event. ME agreed that ensuring an aesthetically pleasing finish was important to maintaining community support for our scheme.

The question of whether to fill a non-reused hole was considered, with a difference of opinion emerging, but the majority in support of filling non-reused holes and applying a suitable camouflage to minimise visual impact. IW felt this was not necessary, but ME, GD and IP believed holes should be filled, emphasising the importance of the aesthetics to maintaining caver confidence and support in the anchor scheme; IP was concerned that an empty hole could even be interpreted by some cavers as an anchor having fallen out. Options include filling entirely with resin, or with mud and applying a resin 'cap'; Possibly Fis V resin being better as thicker and more limestone coloured; can apply a surface dressing of grit to help improve aesthetics. IW was concerned that this could hide the hole from future installers for the next generation of anchors, however this concern was not shared. Overall, no consensus but perhaps a discussion to have with other installers.

IP was concerned that some topos have started to show 'optional handlines' with excessive verbiage about who/when might need these; General agreement that we should try to avoid going down this route and existing topos with this (e.g. Gavel and Lost Johns') will be reviewed to try to minimise; Can always elaborate in the description instead.

ACTION: Review topos with extensive wording on optional rope usage to simplify.

Session ended 3:45pm.