

COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

British Caving Association

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

VILLAGE HALL, CLAPHAM

21 October 2023

ATTENDEES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS (VOTING)

Ian Cross	IC	Bradford Pothole Club	BPC	
Steve Kirk	SK	Craven Pothole Club	CPC	
Stuart Whitmey	SW	Earby Pothole Club	EPC	
Alan Jeffreys	AJ	Grampian Speleological Group	GSG	
Andy Gordon	AG	Kendal Caving Club	KCC	Zoom
Pete Monk	PM	Northern Boggarts	NB	
Alistair Rollinson	AR	Northern Pennine Club	NPC	
Sam Lieberman	SL	Red Rose Cave & Pothole Club	RRCPC	(first half)
John Holloway	JH	Univ of Leeds Speleological Assoc'n	ULSA	
Chris Camm	CC	White Rose Pothole Club	WRPC	Zoom
Matt Ewles	ME	York Caving Club	YCC	
Adrian Turner	APT	York Univ Cave & Pothole Club	YUCPC	
Alan Speight	AS	Yorkshire Subterranean Society	YSS	

OFFICERS

Andrew Hinde	AH	Chair	
Jill Bolton	JMB	Secretary	
Pete Bann	PB	Treasurer	Zoom
Kay Easton	KE	Conservation Officer	Zoom
Ian Patrick	IP	Training Officer	
Gary Douthwaite	GD	Web Administrator	
Matt Ewles	ME	PR / Access Co-ordinator - Excalibur	
Aila Taylor	AMT	Youth & Development Rep	
Alan Speight	AS	Anchor Co-ordinator	
Anthony Brown	AB	Access Co-ordinator - Bowland	

NON-COMMITTEE CLUBS & OBSERVERS

Jon Beavan	JJ	-	
Sam Allshorn	SA	-	
Alastair Gott	AG	-	
Ian Walker	IW	RRCPC	
Luke Stangroom	LS	ULSA	Zoom
Rebecca Hay	RH	YUCPC President	
Chris Bolton	CJB	CPC	
Bernard Bond	BB	Burnley	

The meeting opened at 09:35

1.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Josh Young Mark Richards John Cordingley Tim Allen
Pat Halliwell Fiona Durham Gordon Coldwell

1.2 VERIFICATION OF QUORUM.

13 out of 13 committee clubs present

2.0 DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

AH is employed by Natural England, which may have implications relating to cave conservation and access

YUCPC SRT Project - APT, RH & ME are current/former club members

3.0 MINUTES FROM JUNE COMMITTEE MEETING

(already reviewed for one month, before publication on website)

One error correction: SL was not Acting Chair at this meeting

VOTE - to accept the June 2023 Committee Meeting minutes, subject to correction of the discussed error

Proposed: AS

Seconded: IC

7 votes for, 0 votes against, 3 abstentions

Carried

(3 members arrived late)

4.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM JUNE COMMITTEE MEETING

OFFICER, etc	ACTION	UPDATE
Josh Y	Correct and finalise January committee minutes	Done
Andrew H	Suggest to BCA council that they should take action to try and get caving considered in potential changes to countryside access legislation	Done
Jon B	Research available options for CNCC equipment storage	Done
Matt E	Do a PR push to remind the community that funding is available for conservation projects	Done
Alan S / Anchor Team	Discuss a long-term solution for managing steel ground anchors	Ongoing

5.0 REPORTS

5.1 Chair (AH)

High Birkwith

AB queried the parking at Low Birkwith Farm, as he encountered someone (farmer's brother?) who was unaware of the agreed arrangements (including honesty box).

IW mentioned the stiles on the path to Calf Holes are in a dangerous state.

5.2 Secretary (JMB)

JMB described receiving several comments relating to "Equality, Diversity & Inclusion" (EDI). One caver struggled to understand how the workshop system was meant to work, and believed it was necessary to start off with the beginner courses.

ACTION: ME/GD to review website content to see if clearer explanations can be provided on how the workshops work, and how to sign up.

Another person (with autism) described some of the specific difficulties he encountered with the website, and with caving more generally.

Thirdly, BPC are looking to put together an EDI policy for their club. Is this something CNCC can and should be taking a lead in?

It was questioned whether CNCC could benefit from having a co-opted EDI Officer, or perhaps a working group. SA clarified that most university clubs will have policies on such matters imposed on them. SL felt this is something everyone should be thinking about, and CNCC should be looking to support our clubs, without this feeling like a box-ticking exercise.

SW questioned what the BCA were doing to take a lead, but AH commented that the BCA were not in a position to lead on such issues.

SA emphasised the point that the predominance of the room was white men. IW agreed this is an issue which CNCC should explore. He suggested that CNCC and BPC could work together, and that CNCC should be a leader, rather than a follower.

AH suggested we identify a suitable volunteer to take a lead on EDI matters.

ACTION: ME to promote such a vacancy.

5.3 Treasurer (PB)

AS mentioned that payment is due to YSS and RRCPC for their recent "New to Caving" events.

5.4 Conservation Officer (KE)

KE queried whether there was a limit on the amount of travel expenses which could be claimed by an individual. ME confirmed that there was no fixed limit, and the committee was happy to rely on KE's judgement. If someone had the particular skills necessary for a project (eg tree surgeon), then reasonable expenses could be paid in full.

5.5 **Access Officer** (AW)

No report submitted

5.6 **Training Officer** (IP)

JMB mentioned that she had recently attended a couple of excellent CNCC workshops, and was keen to ensure that the First Aid course was repeated next year.

5.6 **Web Administrator** (GD)

Nothing raised on report

5.7 **PR & Communications** (ME)

Nothing raised on report

5.8 **Training & Equipment Rep** (MR)

IP explained the transition from a BCA Committee to a Working Group. The role was further discussed later in the meeting in AOB (item 10.2)

5.9 **Youth & Development Rep** (AMT)

AMT elaborated on the importance of the Northern CHECC event, in enabling student clubs to support each other. She also emphasised the current financial and other difficulties (inexperienced leaders, etc) faced by many student clubs, and CHECC itself.

AMT suggested that student clubs might “buddy” with other clubs (either student or open clubs), to arrange competent trip leaders.

IP emphasised that CNCC is very happy to arrange bespoke training workshops for all clubs. However, he has not specifically pushed this to the student community, due to not wanting to step on the toes of CHECC. In particular, he felt that providing help to “train the trainers” would be beneficial, and reaffirmed CNCC’s commitment to provide such support if requested.

5.10 Anchor Co-ordinator (AS)

SA raised concerns about anchor installation at present, emphasising recent examples of unilateral action by three different members of the anchor team to install anchors in locations where he did not agree anchors were required.

In particular, he singled out his own actions, and those of IP (Swinsto Hole) and GD (Notts Pot). ME emphasised that the actions of IP in Swinsto were discussed at length in a committee meeting, and it was agreed to leave this to IP’s discretion

SA felt that the CNCC needs to be in better control of where anchors are being placed, but AS felt that there needs to be an element of installer discretion.

IW believed that the re-anchoring of Swinsto had been excessive, and that his own enjoyment of the cave had been affected. IP clarified that he is basing his judgement on the current situation, in which the new and old anchors currently co-exist, but several older anchors are scheduled for removal, meaning the actual increase in anchor numbers across the entire cave will be minimal.

AH reminded the committee that we follow the principles outlined in the BCA's "Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines".

The discussion continued for some time, ending with ME saying that he felt it was impossible for CNCC to democratically discuss every pitch in every cave, and that installers need to be allowed to get on with their work without worrying that their work is going to be criticised by fellow installers.

ME emphasised that he and GD were going to anchor Five Ways Pot that afternoon, and did the committee really want to discuss the number of anchors that are going to be placed on every pitch? The discussion ended with no particular conclusion, but with SA urging greater discussion amongst installers to agree new anchor placements in future.

5.11 Access Co-ordinators

Robinsons & Fairy Holes (DD))	
Excalibur (ME))	Nothing raised on report
Bowland (AB))	

VOTE - to accept all the officer reports in full

Proposed: IC	Seconded: PM	Carried (unanimous)
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OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

6.0 Exploration Grants

VOTE - to approve the suggested wording for Exploration Grants

Proposed: IC

Seconded: PM

Carried (unanimous)

7.0 Paperless Surveying

Item withdrawn (due to uncertainty about equipment)

8.0 Equipment Store

JJ explained that there was no progress to report with finding a suitable equipment store. Landowners did not like the idea of open-ended access.

AH said some equipment was currently kept at the Natural England premises, but would need to be moved when he retired. He was prepared to store it at his home in Ingleton. People would need to make specific arrangements to collect any kit (and be prepared to stay for a cuppa).

The search for a separate store has therefore been put on hold.

9.0 CNCC Name Change

After a brief discussion, this item was deferred to the next meeting for more detailed consideration, including the legal and financial implications. IP suggested keeping the same name, but adding a strapline (such as "CNCC - working for all Northern cavers")

10.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 SRT Training Facility (YUCPC)

The original proposal was for the full replacement and testing of all anchors in the YUCPC facility. This included numerous anchors installed into a wall, and also girder clamps for several free-hanging ropes. Unfortunately, the wall, which has been deemed too dangerous to use, was meant to be repaired by the university, but they have pulled funding for that, so YUCPC revised their request to ONLY the ropes requiring fifteen new girder clamps, for £2085, costed by APEX (the approved supplier for industrial rope access for the university).

AH asked what impact the current issue was having on the club. APT described the once twice-weekly training sessions, but now they are doing what they can from trees and at bouldering walls, and at the YSS, but it is having a massive impact on their ability to bring new students up to speed, and to retain these freshers.

APT explained that the university will allow other clubs to use the facilities for a nominal charge. After discussing several points and clarifications, IW felt that the availability of money and the opportunity to provide this support marry up well. We should park the idea of funding the wall anchors until the wall has been rebuilt, and focus only on funding the girder clamps request (£2085).

IW was concerned that the university's agreement to pay for the annual inspection of these was not a binding promise, and that getting this in writing may be sensible.

APT clarified that the request was not specifically for funding, but a request for support from CNCC. It is for CNCC to decide if and how they are able to help.

ME pointed out that the suggestion in the agenda to approach the BCA had originated from offline Officer discussions, and not from YUCPC. AH has spoken to the BCA Chair and received a generally positive response. To expedite accessing the money, the emergency loan system could be used. SL felt this is exactly the kind of project the BCA should be supporting.

AMT asked if Jono Lester (BCA Y&D) had been updated on the recent change (the downgrade to only £2085 for the girder clamps). APT responded not yet, as this had only come to light yesterday. AMT will update Jono later today, but emphasised that lots of university clubs are struggling, and that funding this project will set a precedent for funding requests from other clubs.

IW felt that CNCC declining assistance here would send a bad message to other clubs, to not bother applying for financial support. PB confirmed that we currently have about £4000 in cash above our minimum threshold (but once it's gone it's gone!).

CC proposed that CNCC fund £400 with the remainder coming from BCA, with CNCC's support for that (this was seconded so see vote below).

ME suggested that to avoid delays in getting this money to YUCPC due to BCA bureaucracy, CNCC have sufficient funds to pay YUCPC the whole amount. Then we could put forward a proposal to BCA for them to fund it retrospectively, by repaying the difference back to CNCC.

ME emphasised the risk of BCA choosing not to support, leaving CNCC funding the whole amount. He felt the risk was very low, given the BCA Chair's positivity, and this would enable much more rapid progress to help this year's freshers. However, AH vetoed the suggestion of initially using CNCC funds for the full amount.

VOTE: to donate £400 (being 20% of the total amount required) from the CNCC towards the new beam clamps, and to support the application to the BCA for the remaining amount.

Proposed: CC Seconded: AR 10 votes for, 2 abstentions **CARRIED**

10.2 Role of Training & Equipment Rep (MR)

The committee defined the role as:

- to attend meetings of the BCA Training & Equipment Working Group
 - to report back to CNCC on any relevant equipment issues
 - to report to the Working Group any equipment issues arising within CNCC
- (The role does not include any responsibility for CNCC equipment)

VOTE - to confirm the above definition, and also to confirm the committee's continuing support for MR in this role.

Proposed: ME

Seconded: AS

CARRIED (unanimous)

10.3 Scanty Lardos Pot Anchors (MR)

Item withdrawn (already "in hand")

10.4 Disappointment Pot Anchors (GC)

VOTE - to express support for the Anchor Team, and confirm that the CNCC committee is happy to rely on the team's expert opinion in improving the anchors in Disappointment Pot.

Proposed: AS

Seconded: AR

CARRIED (unanimous)

11.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING

Committee Meeting to be held on 13 January at 9:30am

Venue: Clapham Village Hall (Postcode LA2 8DZ)

Meeting closed at 12:15pm

SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ACTION ITEMS

OFFICER, etc	ACTION	UPDATE
Josh Y	Correct and finalise June committee minutes	
Jill B	Prepare and circulate October committee minutes	
Matt E/ Gary D	Review website content for clarity for all users, particularly relating to the CNCC workshops	
Matt E/ Jill B	Promote a vacancy for volunteer to lead on EDI matters	
Anchor Team	Develop a long-term solution for managing steel ground anchors	
APT	To provide written confirmation of verbal update re YUCPC SRT training facility	