

# **CNCC COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS & ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**JANUARY 2025**

## **OFFICER REPORTS**

Chair  
Treasurer  
Secretary  
Conservation Officer  
Training Officer  
Access Officer

## **CO-OPTED OFFICER REPORTS (optional)**

Access Co-ordinators  
    Bowland  
    Excalibur  
    Robinsons & Fairy Holes  
Training & Equipment Representative  
Inclusivity Co-ordinator  
Youth & Development Representative  
BCA Council Representative  
Individual Caver Representative  
Anchor Team  
Web administrator  
PR & Communications

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Anchoring request - Dale Head Pot	<i>(For approval)</i>
Adventure Academy	<i>(For information)</i>
BCA Finances	<i>(For information)</i>

## **CHAIR'S REPORT**

(Andrew Hinde)

On 5 December I attended a consultation on the YDNP "Active Travel Plan". This is a plan for improving access and upgrading facilities for ramblers, runners, cyclists and wheelchair users on public rights of way in and to the Dales. This was a good opportunity to meet some of the new YDNP staff and to catch up with some of the access team that run the Cave & Crag Advisory Group.

The new government are consulting on improved access in protected landscapes and I was able to hear some thoughts from the YDNP on how access to caves will be a major theme in their consultation paper.

There is a long way to go yet, but I want to thank Tim Allen for all the hard work he did to a few years ago to prepare the ground for CNCC to take advantage of opportunities like this. I will update you all, and in particular the Access Officer, when I have a clearer sight of the consultation.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

(Pete Bann)

See separate document

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

(Jill Bolton)

It's been an exceptionally busy few months, mainly due to the Constitution update.

In November, along with several other cavers, I attended the YDNPA's Archaeology Day in Grassington. This year's programme included a presentation by Rick Peterson (UCL) about the archaeological caves and landscapes of Ingleborough.

Also in November I deputised for Kai at a meeting with Tony Brown (Bowland Access Co-ordinator) and a Surveyor from the Duchy of Lancaster Estate, about the Whitewell caves. This was a very positive meeting, and needs following up by the new Access Officer.

On the subject of access, congratulations to Kai Trusson, who has been elected as the CHECC Training Officer, and is therefore standing down as our Access Officer.

I've included a brief summary on the Adventure Academy. Although the CNCC had no financial input into the project, I've heard several people wondering about the outcome, so I hope this report will "wrap things up". It's somewhat simplified, but the overall message remains the same: the project was successful.

I've also prepared a report to shed some light on BCA Finances (which I now have "insider knowledge" of). Twelve months ago, we were all surprised and disappointed at the BCA's apparent reluctance to help fund the restoration of the SRT training facility at York University. As the report makes clear, the BCA was no longer "awash with money" as we believed. Nevertheless, the grant eventually came through, along with a very generous donation from members of the Northern Pennine Club. YUCPC is once again benefiting from these excellent facilities, and welcomes visiting cavers.

The review of the Constitution was extremely time-consuming, mainly as a result of the volume of comments from a very diligent and talented Working Group. The resulting draft, whilst an improvement, is definitely not "set in stone" and there will be further amendments in future years.

We have taken out a lot of explanatory wording which should not be in the Constitution, but which is useful to have preserved in the Manual of Operations. Thus the next step will be to review the Manual to ensure it still represents current practice. This process can be done by CNCC Officers, and will not require committee oversight.

It was interesting to receive several comments about CNCC membership, now that our name change implies that we represent the whole northern caving community, and not just clubs. Our IC Rep and our PR Officer both refer to this dilemma in their reports, and I hope we might start to discuss some of the issues at the AGM in March.

Finally, I'd like to thank Josh Young for acting as Assistant Secretary since he retired as CNCC Secretary in 2023. He will also be stepping down from his current role at the AGM, so I'd really appreciate a volunteer to help me with the minutes.

## CONSERVATION OFFICER'S REPORT

(Kay Easton)

Philip Withnall coordinated the removal of rubbish from Notts Pot, and Russ Brooks led a team to make safe the loose boulders in Shuttleworth.

Red Rose are hoping to deal with the fence at County Pot in the spring, and Sam Lieberman and Ray Duffy have walled up the loose rocks that had been disturbed.

Work on the shaft at Aquamole needs to wait until better weather and firmer ground.

Various other projects are on the waiting list:

- Coal Holes collapse
- Foxholes collapse
- Grollit lid
- Fencing at Low Douk
- Rubbish clearance at Strangle Pot
- Stock proofing and entrance scaffolding at Swan Dike

Some of these are waiting for a team leader to assess what needs to be done, and to manage the work on the day, so if anyone is keen to take one of these on, please let me know. CNCC can provide volunteers, do the admin work, and help with the sourcing of materials.

A list of equipment available for CNCC members to borrow for conservation projects is on the CNCC website:

<https://cncc.org.uk/about/>

(It's under the "about" heading rather than "conservation" because the list also includes publicity and anchor placement items.)

Those who are planning conservation works are reminded that Sam Allshorn has money donated by Mike Cooper from sales of "Not for the Faint Hearted" which is available for conservation work on caves featured in the book.

## **TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT**

(Ian Patrick)

### **2024 Workshops**

48 workshops (the most ever) were delivered in 2024, to 243 participants, who came from all over the UK including Cornwall, Derbyshire, London and Newcastle.

Most of these workshops covered SRT, Rigging or Rescue, ranging from introductory courses to advanced techniques. There were also five "New to Caving" days, plus workshops on Leading Trips and Digital Surveying.

<https://cncc.org.uk/training/>

### **Trainers "moderation" day.**

We recently had a very productive day of all five SRT trainers getting together to spend the full day going through all the skills, techniques etc that we are teaching. This will ensure consistency throughout our delivery. We have focused on some core areas and come to a satisfying consensus on these. The trainers agreed to this day based only on basic travel expenses. The CNCC covered the cost of the venue hire.

### **New SRT kit.**

Following the above day, a request will shortly be going into to the CNCC for some new SRT kit to add to our existing portfolio to ensure we can provide participants with the most current options regarding SRT kit.

### **New format workshops**

We have been trialling a new format to our workshop portfolio. This is a 2:1 ratio underground for rigging workshops and rescue workshops. This has proved very popular and will certainly be continuing.

### **2025 workshops**

We will be starting to put together the Spring/Summer programme around February time. I am hoping to put some geology based workshops and photography based workshops on the program. Please let me know if there are any other "special interest" type workshops.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the CNCC trainers in making all this happen, it is very much appreciated.

## **ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT**

(Kai Trusson)

Inquiry on 20 November about Bruntscar Cave access. The owner is currently trying to get planning permission to convert the barn. Until that happens, access remains closed due to the danger of the barn collapsing.

## **ACCESS CO-ORDINATORS' REPORTS**

### **Bowland**

(Tony Brown)

We met with the Estate Surveyor in November, to discuss modernising access arrangements for the caves on Duchy of Lancaster Estate land. They seem to be amenable to updating the current agreement.

### **Excalibur**

(Matt Ewles)

Pleasingly, I have received a permit request for Excalibur Pot for 2025. These days, I just email a blank document and let groups fill it in with whatever date they please, and on the day of their visit, to allow them flexibility to change the date – it's not as if two groups are ever going to clash any more. In fact, thinking about it while writing this report, I will probably just remove the need to specify a date, as I don't think it is a requirement. The gamekeepers are friendly and the landowner happy, and their only real need these days is to see a permit document on display in a car so they know the mystery vehicle isn't poaching.

The entrance to Jenga Pot has suffered over the winter, particularly in Storm Darragh, which uprooted a large tree next to the entrance, ripping a new opening into the entrance rift, which is currently taking water in flood. We need to get this dealt with ASAP before too much mud washes in and silts up the passages, but this is probably going to require a good amount of stone and concrete to be purchased and delivered and needs to wait for drier (and less freezing) conditions. Access for cavers is still fine though, should any groups be so inclined to want to do the Jenga to Excalibur through trip; it is a most memorable experience for your 2025 meets list!

### **Robinsons & Fairy Holes**

(Dinny Davies)

Currently only one booking for Fairy and Robinsons for this coming year. Please get in touch if you are interested in booking a trip to either.

## **TRAINING & EQUIPMENT REP'S REPORT**

(Mark Richards - Equipment Rep)

CNCC received a request from the Speleological Union of Ireland (SUI) asking if they could become trained and approved under the BCA Anchor Scheme, to be supplied with and to be able to install IC anchors.

Discussions took place with Alan Speight (CNCC Anchor Co-ordinator), Steve Gray (T&E Working Group Convenor), CNCC anchor installers, the T&E Working Group itself and the BCA. An Action Plan is now in place to allow this to move forward in 2025.

The T&E Working Group has a range of other tasks being addressed, which I will update CNCC at a later meeting once I have all the relevant information.

## **INCLUSIVITY CO-ORDINATOR**

(Josh White)

Several queries have been fielded over the last few months by the Inclusivity Working Group. The output of some of these queries was published in the recent CNCC newsletter. Massive thanks to the Working Group and to Matt for his assistance with the editing process.

I'm already looking ahead to the next newsletter for content, so please do email me at [inclusivity@cncc.org.uk](mailto:inclusivity@cncc.org.uk) with any suggestions for content that the Working Group can pool their knowledge together for.

Over the next few months I'm looking to step up the scope of the Working Group, by picking up the pace of some projects that have sat dormant for a little bit, so extra help is always appreciated.

If this interests you, please reach out to me directly and I can explain a bit about what we're about.

## **YOUTH & DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT**

(Aila Taylor)

Not much to report with Y&D really. I wasn't able to make it down to Big CHECC but I'll be around for the upcoming Northern CHECC and helping to lead trips then.

Nothing has happened regarding the Y&D Working Group and no developments from the new BCA Y&D officer as of yet.

## **BCA COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT**

(Andrew Hinde)

### **Council Meeting 29 October**

Isaac Neale was co-opted as BCA Youth & Development Officer.

BCA Treasurer's motion on the Regional Council budget forecasting was approved.

Forest of Dean CCAG was awarded £300 to cover legal fees for the purchase of Slaughter Stream Cave entrance.

### **Council Meeting 17 December**

£250 was allocated to prepare a UK bid for the UIS congress in 2029.

HSBC mandate changes were approved.

John Sheehy was approved to be the certifier of the BCA accounts.

Council accepted Treasurer's budget proposal for 2025, noting that a membership fee increase may be needed in 2026 to keep within the operational reserve.

Two new member clubs were accepted for BCA membership:

- Out on Rock

- Morganwg Caving Club.

## **INDIVIDUAL CAVER REPRESENTATIVE**

(Tim Allen)

I am unable to make the January meeting but I hope to nominate a suitable person to stand in for me.

I was pleased to help the group with the task of redrafting the constitution. I only contributed in a small way compared to the lengthy and diligent work of the others, particularly Jill and Matt. I hope my fellow committee members will recognise their efforts.

I am fully supportive of the new constitution especially having observed the process and considerations that led to the final version. Believe me there was a process and there were many versions. I fully endorse the process and the outcome, which is well described in the agenda.

However, the recent work on the constitution reminded me of letters that I sent to CNCC back in 2015 concerning representation. These letters led to the introduction of the Individual Caver Representative. I think most would agree that this was a 'sticking plaster' solution to a bigger problem.

Much has changed and improved at CNCC and many of the other problems outlined in those letters have been resolved, but representation is still poor. This is perhaps typified by the mismatch between the new name 'the Council for the Northern Caving Community' and the constitutional membership of CNCC which only allows that fully constituted clubs be members. How can other groups and cavers accessing the Dales caves be represented more fairly?

This is far too large an issue to be addressed or even discussed within the framework of the current redraft of the constitution. However, I do think the time is coming that this issue needs to be discussed more fully. I would like to raise a motion to the March AGM so that issues concerning representation, membership and related matters can be discussed going forward beyond this current redraft. Perhaps a similar working group could take a lead? I highlight this now purely to demonstrate that more work is needed beyond the acceptance of the current redraft which has not considered these issues.

## **ANCHOR TEAM REPORT**

(Alan Speight)

See separate document, compiled by Ian Walker on behalf of Alan Speight.

## **WEB ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

(Gary Douthwaite)

Please see separate document for full report with analytics



## **PR & COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER'S REPORT**

(Matt Ewles)

There's been plenty going on over the last three months since the last meeting. First and foremost, I posted on UKCaving to follow up our October discussion and vote on the chains/rings in Simpson Pot. This was an emotive discussion particularly on UKCaving and I was keen to communicate the outcome ASAP out of courtesy to those who had participated, and to show that despite the vote in favour of proceeding, we have listened to some well-presented concerns and are going to try to address these in the implementation. A similar article also appeared in the December newsletter.

After our endorsement to continue the system at our last meeting, the newsletter contained a reminder about the online booking system.

That brings me onto the new newsletter, published in December. As well as the usual compilation of stories from the six months since the June newsletter, there were also some bespoke articles to try to encourage interest from those who have already seen all the other stories (or who are less interested in CNCC business). Make no mistake - I have no intention for the CNCC newsletter to compete with Descent - but I do welcome a small number of unique articles that are only loosely based on CNCC's work.

At the time of writing the newsletter has received 276 unique downloads, and paper copies have been sent to all club huts (nationwide), the National Parks, Inglesport, and to Andrew Hinde and Tim Allen, who drop copies off on our behalf at some local venues. The cost of producing and posting these paper copies continues to rise, typically approaching £150/issue now. The next newsletter will be June/July, but feel free to send stories at any time. A small number of paper copies will be available at the meeting - if you have a local venue who will display one, please feel free to take one for them.

News stories over the last three months have mostly been focused on anchoring projects, topo updates and warnings. It was nice to receive an article about the clean-up of digging equipment in Notts II to keep conservation on the radar.

I have been working with Jill and the constitution team to produce the revised version that will be discussed at this meeting. This is a great simplification of our constitution, however, I would like to add my support to the contents of Tim's report (which I have seen in advance) which makes it clear that this is not the end of the story. From a PR perspective, it is increasingly hard to "sell" CNCC as representing the entire northern caving community, when our entire democracy is built around clubs, other than the IC Rep position. Changes to this are going to be difficult and need an entirely new working party, which is something I am happy to be involved with – but which could also benefit from some fresh faces and ideas too.

I would like to thank Ian Walker, who is currently 'auditing' many of our topos. In response to some very thorough notes from Ian, Gary and I have updated (and are

still in the process of updating) several rigging topos, including publishing a new topo for Wretched Rabbit. Thanks also to a couple of contributors of new cave descriptions, including Middle Scar Cave, Bumbling Hole, and AKA Hole.

I'd like to apologise on record to Sam Allshorn for publishing the AKA Hole topo earlier than he wished. For previous topos from Sam, he had understandably requested I wait until after it appeared in Descent, which I also did for AKA Hole. However, with the very high workload of getting the newsletter together in December, I overlooked that his request on this occasion was to wait until January, rather than for Descent. I have been duly reprimanded.

The generic warning text on our topos/descriptions has been updated to reflect the fact that we are liberalising on what fixed aids we support or show on our topos. This text is added to each document upon download, so thankfully we don't need to update each topo/description individually. However, the small footer that still says 'Council of Northern Caving Clubs' will only be updated as each topo/description is republished.

On a personal level, I am delighted to see Sam's contribution to the January agenda, because it shows CNCC being open to considering expanding our fixed aid support beyond current limits.

I have continued to keep our mailing list updated on a roughly monthly basis with general news, but also a bespoke mailshot about the Shuttleworth Pot warning (given the severity of this situation and the popularity of the cave). The mailing list now has 771 subscribers, an increase of 24 since the last meeting. Sign up is starting to slow down which is inevitable - but I'm pleased that 771 individuals are keen to hear from us, and some of those addresses are clubs, so the reach may well be much higher. Coupled with our high social media engagement, we can conclude that there is strong interest in, and respect for, the work CNCC is currently doing. To all our team, keep up the excellent work - it really is being noted, respected, and valued.

Hidden Earth for 2025 has already been announced, at Llangollen Pavilion again 26-28 September. CNCC will be there again - I plan to "recycle" the same display banner to save costs (and effort).

A reminder that I still have plenty of copies of our New-to-Caving leaflets and posters (these will be brought to the meeting), and one remaining copy of Caves and Karst of the Yorkshire Dales V2 for gifting to anyone with who we should be building good relations. I'd also like to re-iterate my wish to get someone else on board to help with the wider outreach part of the PR/Comms role. In particular, we have ample opportunities to partner with National Parks, and other organisations, to promote caving. These are opportunities I just don't have the time to explore unfortunately, and I'd love to work with an enthusiastic volunteer to take the PR/Comms offering further.

## **ANCHORING PROJECT - DALE HEAD POT**

(Matt Ewles)

*For approval*

Dale Head Pot is a moderately popular pothole (another Black Booker, although one of the more tolerable of the collection) which first came to my attention about fourteen years ago when our trip was turned around quite early as a result of totally knackered spit anchors.

A few years later (towards the end of the old CNCC anchor scheme, but pre-IC anchor), Gary Douthwaite and I turned up at Dale Head Pot armed with a drill, resin and all the usual paraphernalia to anchor Dale Head Pot, only to find that someone else had beaten us to it, and we found CNCC-type P-anchors neatly fitted, at least on the first pitch. The identity of the installer, and why they chose not to publicise the installation (or do it through CNCC) is unknown.

There is a topo published on the ULSA website for Dale Head, showing these anchors to extend through the whole cave, although with one important re-belay still being a spit with in-situ hanger.

We would like CNCC approval to visit Dale Head Pot with the following aims:

- Audit the anchors already installed to confirm they are all P-type resin bonded of a good enough standard of installation to display on a CNCC topo with alternative symbol
- Install an additional anchor to replace the spit/hanger
- To potentially install any additional anchors or drilled threads needed to bring the rigging up to an acceptable CNCC standard

This latter point would apply, for example, if any of the current anchoring is a little too minimalistic – hopefully we won't need to do this though.

We would then aim to publish a topo – thus rectifying a fairly major omission from our current catalogue.

*This report has been compiled by the CNCC Secretary, from information already in the public domain. Although the CNCC did not fund the project, it took place in the Dales, and a number of local cavers have expressed an interest in knowing the outcome.*

In January 2020, the BCA agreed to support a youth caving initiative called the Adventure Academy. This aimed to provide educational sessions, training and trips delivered by the Yorkshire Dales Guides (YDG), to young people aged 12-21 living in or near the Ingleborough area. At that stage, the project had already been awarded £7000 from the Stories in Stone initiative, dependent on match-funding from the BCA. Whilst some concern was expressed about funding a commercial enterprise, it had already been reviewed in depth by Stories in Stone, and deemed worthwhile of a significant investment. If successful, it could provide a valuable route to get youngsters involved in caving in the Yorkshire Dales.

However, with the Covid pandemic reaching the UK in March 2020, the Academy project was significantly hindered by the lockdowns. It was therefore not able to deliver all the original intent, nor to use all the offered funding. Nevertheless, the BCA Executive are satisfied that YDG have committed far more time to the project than the funding would represent, and given significant support to caving.

The website and brochure for the Adventure Academy can be found here:

[www.yorkshiredalesguides.co.uk/adventure-academy](http://www.yorkshiredalesguides.co.uk/adventure-academy)

Highlights include:

- A core team of eight young people were recruited, who developed throughout the project and supported the expansion to other youngsters. Eight caving trips were organised, covering knowledge of the cave environment, techniques and rope-work. Three local teenagers were trained in SRT with a view to them becoming trainers for the Academy.
- The Adventure Academy provided training for the Northern CHECC weekend in 2021, and a subsequent leadership course for students.
- SRT training was provided to surface members of CRO who wanted to become more involved in underground rescues.
- A film "The World Beneath Your Feet" was produced, and shown at the Kendal Mountain Film Festival:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfqle8DJhUk>

YDG submitted a full report to the BCA in March 2023, although this was only seen by the Executive, as some of the report was commercially confidential. A summary was prepared by the current BCA Treasurer for the Council meeting in December 2024, which concluded that, despite the impact of Covid-19, the Adventure Academy delivered a significant benefit to caving and the funding provided by the BCA gave value for money.

*This report is based on information from the BCA Treasurer, to explain the BCA's current finances, and the implications for the CNCC and for individual members.*

**“The financial position of the Association is not as good as it is made out to be. The actual position being that the Association has only a very small balance on the credit side.”**

No, that's not a comment from the current Treasurer. It was actually written by the BSA Treasurer in 1946 - but could equally apply today!

Ten years ago, the BCA had large amounts of cash, which was getting eroded by inflation. The decision was made to reduce membership fees, and to encourage surplus funds to be spent for the benefit of caving.

Since then, cash reserves have been seriously eroded by a combination of:

- Increased spending and inflation
- Covid pandemic
- CRoW court case
- Employing staff (instead of volunteers)

The BCA has recently been running at a deficit, budgeted as £27K for 2024.

Nevertheless, the BCA would still appear to have plenty of money with £150K in various bank accounts and investments. But these funds are largely required for:

**Insurance Reserve** (£80K) in case a large claim results in a big increase in premium  
**General Reserve** (£70K) for working capital and unexpected expenses

Both these reserves are to be reviewed, with a view to reducing them if prudent.

It was hoped that the increased fees in 2025 (£20 to £24), together with a reduction of spending, would bring matters under control. This turned out to be optimistic, and there is likely to be a deficit of £5000 in the current year.

The BCA acknowledges that it's important to keep funding the work of the regions, and has asked the CNCC (and other regional councils) for their budget estimates for 2025. In our case, this has been agreed as:

Training	£2500
Conservation	£1500
Admin	£1800

As well as minimising our expenditure where possible, we are encouraged to seek alternative sources of income to reduce our BCA claim.

As for the membership fee, it is currently £24 for individuals, compared to £32 in 2004 (equivalent to £65 with inflation). In comparison, the subscription for canoeing (Paddle UK) is £47 and for mountaineering (BMC) is £35.

Based on the above analysis, the BCA Council may decide that a further increase in membership fees for 2026 is necessary.