

# COUNCIL FOR THE NORTHERN CAVING COMMUNITY

## DRAFT MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

VILLAGE HALL, CLAPHAM

21 March 2026

### ATTENDEES

### VOTING REPRESENTATIVES

CLUB		NAME		
Bradford Pothole Club	BPC	Ian Cross	IC	
Burnley Caving Club	BCC	Ben Blackburn	BB	Online
Cave Diving Group Northern Section	CDG	Sam Allshorn	SA	
Combined Caving & Diving Club	CCDC	Raymond Bell	RJB	
Craven Pothole Club	CPC	Pat Halliwell	PCH	
Earby Pothole Club	EPC	Stuart Whitmey	SW	
Grampian Speleological Group	GSG	Alan Jeffreys	AJ	
Gritstone Club	GC	Andrew Hinde	AH	
Kendal Caving Club	KCC	Andy Gordon	AG	
Northern Boggarts	NB	Pete Monk	PM	
Northern Pennine Club	NPC	Martin McGowan	MM	
Red Rose Cave & Pothole Club	RRCPC	Sam Lieberman	SL	
Univ. of Leeds Speleological Association	ULSA	Sam Allshorn	SA	
White Rose Pothole Club	WRPC	Phil Parker	PP	
York Caving Club	YCC	Matt Ewles	ME	
York Univ. Cave & Pothole Club	YUCPC	Sophie Brazil	SB	Online
Yorkshire Ramblers Club	YRC	Harvey Lomas	HL	
Yorkshire Subterranean Society	YSS	Klaudia Borbola	KB	
Individual Caver Rep		Tim Allen	TA	

### OFFICERS

ROLE		NAME		
Chair		Todd Rye	TR	
Secretary		Jill Bolton	JMB	
Treasurer		Kath Davis	KD	
Training Officer		Ian Patrick	IP	
Assistant Access Officer		Mike Appleton	MA	Online
Anchor Co-ordinator		Ian Walker	IW	
PR & Communications		Matt Ewles	ME	
Web Administrator		Gary Douthwaite	GD	
Access Co-ordinator - Bowland		Tony Brown	AB	Online
Access Co-ordinator - Excalibur		Matt Ewles	ME	
Projects Coordinator		Andrew Hinde	AH	



#### 4.1 **MATTERS ARISING** (and updates) from 2025 AGM

OFFICER	ACTION	UPDATE
Jill	Finalise 2024 AGM minutes	Done
Jill	Prepare draft 2025 minutes and circulate to clubs	Done
Kath	Finalise 2024 accounts	Done
Matt	Publish a PR/Comms piece about AGM outcomes	Done
Matt	Publicise appeal for volunteers re Foxholes (GG)	Done
Gary	Update website with new Officers/Clubs/Committee	Done
Todd	Representation/Membership - set up Working Group	Done
Jill & Officers	Manual of Operations - review by Officers	Ongoing

JMB commented that the Manual of Operations is a continuous project, to reflect best practice. Can be removed from routine actions.

### 5.0 **OFFICER REPORTS**

#### 5.1 **Chair** (TR)

No questions

#### 5.2 **Secretary** (JMB)

No questions.

#### 5.3 **Treasurer** (KD)

IC asked should we be paying tax, as we have made money this year. JMB confirmed not, as we do not trade or make a profit. The BCA grant is only to reimburse our expenditure. The March-to-March picture is misleading, as accounts are prepared for the calendar year.

ME emphasised that despite the best efforts of CNCC to spend money over last ten years, we still seem to have the same amounts at the bank as when he first got involved over ten years ago, so there is money available to support any worthwhile projects.

RM asked whether the fees for training covered the costs of running the events. JMB confirmed not, as there is a £2280 annual deficit which is reclaimed from the BCA. This subsidy accounts for less than £10 per person per workshop.

PCH referred to her Scrutineers Report and its recommendations (to include explanatory notes supporting any unusual items). As new Treasurer, JMB welcomed these suggestions, which would assist future scrutineers.

#### 5.4 Access Officer (JA/MA)

MA mentioned the ongoing issue at Hartley Quarry Cave, near Kirkby Stephen.

AB highlighted the badly degraded nature of the oil drums in Hell Hole (Whitewell). The access agreement here is defunct, but the gamekeepers are happy with continuing the status quo, so he is still issuing permits as normal.

JJB suggested the CNCC should look into working with landowners to build understanding and relations are part of the PR role. IP suggested CNCC could even offer underground trips. ME felt this was a great aspiration but expressed concern that he was already at his limit with current PR jobs, and with having to take on Secretary, would struggle to fulfil any extra responsibilities. JJB clarified that he meant this more a longer term aspiration.

JMB suggested that the newsletter could be sent to landowners. ME confirmed there is already a mailing list, and additional addresses could be added if requested. He welcomed anyone to ask landowners if they'd like to receive a copy and to provide ME with details.

#### 5.5 Conservation Officer (KE)

TA recently used CNCC's stock of tape and pins in Gavel Pot for protecting a newly discovered and well decorated extension but felt that CNCC would benefit from holding a small stock of conservation signs (A5, warning cavers to move carefully ahead) as used in F'ing Hopeless and Eastern Front after the North by North End Pot breakthrough. These signs have been used again in the Gavel breakthrough.

AH was happy with this suggestion, but SA was concerned that signs should be minimised. AH emphasised that the only CNCC-installed signs are in Shuttleworth Pot, but CNCC had funded TA's previous ones.

IW felt that a small number of discrete signs in vulnerable locations is fine, but he didn't want to start mass producing these. He emphasised that a sign can be removed, whereas damage to formations can't be undone.

IC asked if we could include warnings of formations on topos. ME confirmed that he would rather not see topos cluttered with additional information, but the CNCC's cave descriptions already did include clear and sometimes bold/boxed warnings for vulnerable areas.

SL asked if we can hold a small stock of the signs, but MM felt these would be better produced as needed; However TA commented that to have signs available and ready to go would be a tremendous advantage when vulnerable/decorated new discoveries are made as this would avoid delays and allow conservation to be done more quickly.

ME felt that concerns about signs appearing all over the Dales were unfounded, and there seemed to be no wish to install signs anywhere other than to conserve new discoveries (or in the case of the Eastern Front, formations which have just become more accessible by a new entrance). He felt that the signs were discrete and provided useful warning to cavers that they may wish to take additional care ahead, so CNCC should have a small stock.

BB believed that signs are not the solution and we should be focusing on raising awareness by other means. TR thanked everyone for their comments but felt we should move on. No consensus was reached so the feedback given is intended as a reflection of the views.

AB commented that Northern Boggarts removed a broken red stal from Wizards Chasm, which has been repaired and is awaiting reinstatement.

#### **5.6 Training Officer (IP)**

IP commented that this is now his sixth year, and the training workshops are now an established format with a good mix of trainers. Checks and balances are in place including the recent Moderation Day to maintain consistency and standards. Participants are diverse and coming from all over the country, and our “New to Caving” events have brought new people into caving. The BCA subsidy is just under £10pp per event.

JMB asked about whether these are workshops or courses. IP confirmed we reserve the term “course” for certified/qualification events such as the recent First Aid course, and use “workshop” where there was no formal certification.

Despite the recent First Aid event being a certified course, most of the 13 participants were non-commercial cavers.

SA emphasised that clubs also provide a huge amount of training.

IW asked about conflicts of interest, and should IP be declaring one (as he is our Training Officer and is paid to instruct on some of the workshops). IW believes this is a conflict, but IP felt that although there is an interest, there is no conflict here in his opinion.

IW suggested IP had installed new anchors in Simpson Pot and Swinsto Hole so that he could use them to take instructed groups caving on pull-through trips. IP denied any conflict here and emphasised that he has no vote within CNCC and that he has always been completely transparent about the nature of the workshops and his involvement at all times.

ME asked those who believed there is a conflict of interests (SA and IW) what exactly they wanted CNCC to do about this? IW wanted acknowledgement of a conflict, but ME asked what IW would want if IP disagreed with this. Should CNCC be forcing IP to declare a conflict when he doesn't perceive one? IW felt that it is important for CNCC to recognise potential conflicts, but ME highlighted that IP's involvement and the training structure has always been transparent and open for all to see, but this matter keeps getting brought up. ME asked what exactly is going to be achieved with yet another discussion on this?

RM suggested CNCC could set up a scrutiny group to examine such situations, but TA urged extreme caution with such actions. He felt the current CNCC system is something we should be proud of, and if you start putting volunteers under unnecessary scrutiny, or forcing them to declare conflicts they do not identify with, we will find that volunteer pool decreases. GD felt this has been brought up at plenty of meetings, everything is transparent, everybody knows the current situation, and we were achieving nothing by revisiting this.

## 5.7 OTHER REPORTS

### 5.7.1 Individual Cover Rep (TA)

No questions.

Note: BB left meeting at this point.

### 5.7.2 Anchor Co-ordinator (IW)

IW clarified a typo in his report about standing for election at this meeting. His role is co-opted so will be confirmed by the Committee at the June meeting.

IW asked whether acceptance of the reports would also mean the AGM accepts that there are loose anchors in our region, and we should expect CNCC to be working to deal with this. There was general agreement with this (no vote), and praise for IW's efforts.

JMB asked if we need to attract more people to the anchor team. IW explained there was an installer revalidation event planned for May with existing installers, so after that could be a good time to start bringing new installers on board.

IC asked how can we encourage people to report loose anchors? IW said he would appreciate help to encourage engagement with this. ME felt there is already very good engagement with the CNCC's anchor reporting function, and since this was launched, the number of reports has increased to almost weekly now, so cavers are embracing this.

ME added however that he will continue to push this through CNCC's media to try to raise awareness, and he is also keen to promote anchor remedial work to show that reports are being acted upon. He appealed to IW and the other installers to provide him with a photo and short article whenever any anchor remedial work is performed.

### 5.7.3 Project Co-ordinator (AH)

AH asked MA whether we could apply again for Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) funding. MA confirmed yes, and the application system will be open again in April.

AH also emphasised the ageing nature of the volunteer pool and it would be good to see more younger people, such as student clubs, involved in conservation.

### 5.7.4 Archaeology Co-ordinator (AB)

Nothing raised.

### 5.7.5 Access Co-ordinators

<b>Robinsons &amp; Fairy Holes (DD)</b>	)
<b>Excalibur (ME)</b>	) Nothing raised
<b>Bowland (AB)</b>	)

### 5.7.6 Inclusivity Co-ordinator (JW)

Nothing raised.

#### **5.7.7 PR & Communications (ME)**

TA asked about progress with CaveMaps. ME said that GD has been working on this quite extensively, and the current new site looked amazing and would hopefully soon be ready for proper testing.

#### **5.7.8 Web Administrator (GD)**

SA added that with ME becoming Secretary, and GD/ME being a couple, having the Secretary as the emergency second person with access was not ideal, and could we give access (passwords, etc) to someone else. GD felt not, because current systems use multi-factor authentication, so you can't simply pass on login details. GD said he is aware of the issue but there is no easy solution. Using BCA servers would be ideal but currently they do not have the capacity. IW asked if we can just create another account. GD confirmed we could, but that would incur recurring costs (not just a one-off payment). He will consider options, and TR will raise the matter again with BCA to see if their servers can be expanded in capacity. JJB thanked GD for the CNCC website, which he felt was a great resource.

#### **5.7.9 BCA Council Rep (TR)**

JMB felt that matters seem to be improving at BCA, with more volunteers coming forward and working groups becoming more functional.

#### **5.7.10 Training & Equipment Rep (IP/MR)**

IP mentioned that they are still looking for a convenor for the T&E Committee.

#### **5.7.11 Anchors Working Group Rep (IW)**

IW said the CNCC's Anchor Policy still references the BCA E&T group which no longer exists, and this needs updating to the BCA's new Anchor Group.

SA asked what defines a 'failed' anchor. IW suggested that this would be any anchor that shows visible movement, because there is no data to back up CNCC's historic assumption that a small amount of rotational movement (1-2mm) can be accepted. However, this is still under discussion. TA felt that the word 'failure' requires care as it could give an impression of excessive hazard. Cavers rig from multiple anchors, so the risk from a single anchor failure is extremely low. IW agreed, and felt that we should consider our terminology, but the Anchor Scheme should always operate above the minimum standards.

SL felt we need a better understanding of what constitutes a 'failed' anchor. IW asked if CNCC would support the BCA if they defined 'failed' as an anchor showing movement, but ME felt that this meeting was not the right time to be making decisions on this without prior consultation. GD felt this could be discussed at the upcoming installers gathering in May and brought for discussion at a future meeting if necessary.

#### **5.7.12 Conservation & Access Working Group Rep (MA)**

MA will attend the next BCA C&A meeting.

#### **5.7.13 Youth & Development Working Group Rep**

Christopher Holt volunteered to take on this vacant role, to be co-opted in June.

**VOTE** to accept all the Officer Reports.

**Proposed** AH (GC)  
16 votes in favour, 1 abstention

**Seconded** HL (YRC)  
**Carried**

## 6.0 ELECTION OF CNCC COMMITTEE

### 6.1 Election of clubs

The thirteen clubs standing for the thirteen places all received a minimum of three votes and were therefore all elected to the committee.

### 6.2 Election of Individual Caver Rep

The one candidate for the role of IC Rep received the minimum of three votes and was duly elected. The committee for 2026-2027 is therefore:

Clubs:	Bradford Pothole Club	Returning
	Craven Pothole Club	Returning
	Earby Pothole Club	Returning
	Grampian Speleological Group	Returning
	Kendal Caving Club	Returning
	Northern Boggarts	Returning
	Northern Pennine Club	Returning
	Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club	Returning
	Uni of Leeds Speleological Association	Returning
	White Rose Pothole Club	Returning
	York Caving Club	Returning
	York Uni Cave and Pothole Club	Returning
	Yorkshire Subterranean Society	Returning
IC Rep:	Tim Allen	Returning

## 7.0 ELECTION OF CNCC OFFICERS

Only one candidate stood for each post, and received a minimum of three votes, so were duly elected. The officers for 2026-2027 are therefore:

Chair	Todd Rye	Returning
Secretary	Matt Ewles	New to position
Treasurer	Jill Bolton	New to position
Conservation Officer	Kay Easton	Returning
Access Officer	Mike Appleton	New to position
Training Officer	Ian Patrick	Returning

## 8.0 CO-OPTED VOLUNTEERS AND REPRESENTATIVES

The co-opted positions will be presented to the June committee meeting for confirmation. For information, these are currently expected to be:

### CO-OPTED VOLUNTEERS

Web Administrator	Gary Douthwaite	Returning
PR & Communications Officer	Matt Ewles	Returning
Assistant Training Officer	Mark Richards	Returning
Assistant Access Officer	James Alderson	New to position
Projects Co-ordinator	Andrew Hinde	Returning
Inclusivity Co-ordinator	Josh White	Returning
Anchor Co-ordinator	Ian Walker	Returning
Access Co-ordinators		
- Bowland	Anthony Brown	Returning
- Excalibur	Matt Ewles	Returning
- Robinsons & Fairy Holes	Dinny Davies	Returning
Archaeology Co-ordinator	Tony Brown	Returning
Accounts Scrutineer	Dinny Davies	Returning

### BCA WORKING GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

BCA Council	Todd Rye	Returning
Conservation & Access	Mike Appleton	Returning
Training	Ian Patrick	Returning
Equipment	Mark Richards	Returning
Anchors	Ian Walker	Returning
Youth & Development	Christopher Holt	New to position

Note: CNCC welcomes additional coopted roles, and the above roles are not fixed.

## 9.0 OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

### 9.1 EXPLORATION FUND (ME)

ME said that two recipients (Ray Duffy and James Alderson) have yet to provide CNCC with an update on progress and a short news article. He felt that for any future awards, we need to make these expectations clearer.

**VOTE:** To continue to support the scheme.

**Proposed** SA (ULSA)  
16 votes in favour, unanimous

**Seconded** MM (NPC)  
**Carried**

## 10.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### 10.1 USE OF X (formerly Twitter) (GD)

This item generated a surprising amount of discussion!

GD emphasised that if we decide to withdraw, we should delete the account. Simply stopping using does not make any point, but withdrawing would be a one-way ticket with all followers being lost for good. GD also questioned whether the ethics of other social media platforms (e.g. Meta for Facebook) were any better? TA felt that UKCaving comes under huge scrutiny particularly from other regions, yet people are happy to use X, who are in it for the money and data, and have much more dubious ethics.

ME expressed concerns about CNCC getting into making judgements about ethics on our social media platforms and setting a precedent for doing so, and did not want CNCC to start making political statements. SA disagreed and pointed out that we have just spent two hours discussing caving politics, so we do make political statements.

SL asked if we could poll current followers on whether X is their only source of CNCC news?

Overall there was a strong feeling from several participants that the ethics of X were far worse than any other platform and that CNCC should not be supporting this.

#### **VOTE:**

“Discontinue using X (delete account with no prior action or statement to followers) under the justification that continuing use of X is no longer in accordance with the values of CNCC”

**Proposed** PCH (CPC)

13 votes in favour, 2 against, 2 abstentions

**Seconded** SA (ULSA)

**Carried**

### 10.2 REPRESENTATION REVIEW (TR)

TR responded to RM’s question on whether there was really any demand for further participation in CNCC. He explained the main point is to create the opportunity, should non-club cavers wish to get further involved. TA pointed out that many people using the CNCC’s booking system make a statement that they are not booking as a club.

IW asked whether clubs felt threatened by the suggested changes? He felt that CNCC has changed so much in recent years and we need to adapt so wider participation is available if people want it.

SA said that the CDG Northern Section is opposed to giving CNCC Officers a vote.

SL responded that part of the reason for giving Officers a vote was to ensure that at least one person from ‘within’ the organisation’s day-to-day running has a vote, as well as to provide a mechanism for enthusiastic individuals to become more involved.

ME said that while he supported the ideas put forward by the team, he has never been hugely in favour of Officers needing a vote, and maybe other means for enabling individuals

to participate could be explored. MA felt he would like a vote as Access Officer, as it would give him more opportunity to support CNCC from within his role.

IW asked, if we are looking at giving votes to individuals, should we have proportional representation, i.e. clubs having a vote weighted to their membership?

TR thanked everyone for the feedback and acknowledged that the main sticking point of concern seems to be giving CNCC Officers a vote. This can be taken back to the team for further discussion and presentation of a strategy to a later meeting.

### 10.3 SRT KIT

JMB updated the meeting on the background to the SRT kit being stolen, along with the Training Officer's van and personal kit. The BCA Treasurer has agreed to cover replacement costs, although it is currently unclear whether they might claim on their insurance policy.

## 11.0 FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates for the 2026-27 meetings were confirmed:

13 June	9:30	Committee meeting
24 October	9:30	Committee meeting
16 January	9:30	Committee meeting
20 March	10:00	Annual General Meeting

The meeting closed at 13:00 pm

## SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ACTION ITEMS

OFFICER	ACTION	UPDATE
Matt	Finalise 2025 AGM minutes	Done
Matt	Prepare draft 2026 minutes and circulate to clubs	Done
Matt	Publish a PR/Comms piece about AGM outcomes	
Gary	Update website with new Officers/Clubs/Committee	
Todd	Representation - Take on board comments and aim to present a proposed constitution update to 2027 AGM	
Matt / Gary	Delete X (Twitter) account	
Todd	Take matter of BCA's servers to BCA council meeting	
Gary	Consider backup/emergency planning	