

# COUNCIL FOR THE NORTHERN CAVING COMMUNITY

British Caving Association

## MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

VILLAGE HALL, CLAPHAM

25 October 2025

### ATTENDEES

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS (VOTING)

Tim Allen	TA	Individual Caver Rep	ICRep	
Ian Cross	IC	Bradford Pothole Club	BPC	
Chris Bolton	CJB	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	
Pete Monk	PM	Northern Boggarts	NB	
Alistair Rollinson	AR	Northern Pennine Club	NPC	
Sam Lieberman	SL	Red Rose CPC	RRCPC	
Sam Allshorn	SA	Univ of Leeds Speleological Assoc'n	ULSA	
Phil Parker	PP	White Rose Pothole Club	WRPC	
Matt Ewles	ME	York Caving Club	YCC	
Elliot MacInnes	EM	York Univ Cave & Pothole Club	YUCPC	Zoom
Alan Speight	ASp	Yorkshire Subterranean Society	YSS	

#### OFFICERS

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

#### NON-COMMITTEE CLUBS & OBSERVERS

Jon Beavan	JJB			
Alison Fuller Shapcott	AFS	Elysium Underground Group		Zoom

The meeting opened at 9:35am with a welcome from the Chair.  
JMB and ME outlined the village hall's new Fire Safety policy.

### 1.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Kay Easton James Alderson Pat Halliwell Raymond Bell Lynnette Cadamarteri

### 1.2 VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

All 13 committee clubs present at start of meeting, plus IC Rep  
(Minimum is 6 committee members, plus one officer)

### 2.0 DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

GD runs an IT business, which supplies services to CNCC

### 3.0 MINUTES FROM JUNE COMMITTEE MEETING

**VOTE** - to accept the June 2025 Committee Meeting minutes.

Proposed IC                      Seconded SL

Voting: 10 votes in favour, 0 against, with 2 abstentions

**Carried**

(ULSA and YUCPC had not joined the meeting at this point)

### 4.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM JUNE COMMITTEE MEETING

OFFICER	ACTION	UPDATE
Jill B	Finalise January committee minutes	Done
Jill B	Prepare and circulate June committee minutes	Done
Jill B	Update Manual of Operations re mileage funding	Done
Todd R	Set up representation and democracy Working Group (including CDG and instructed caving community)	Done
Ian W	Initiate discussions re concerns about Anchor Scheme	Done
Gary D	Update website with new co-opted volunteers	Done

There were no comments on "Matters Arising".

## 5.0 REPORTS

### 5.1 Chair (TR)

SL mentioned that a dead cow (valued at approx £1300) has been found in a pothole on Casterton Fell. The farmer is seeking recompense, as he believes that past caving activity (dug in 1980s) is responsible. This matter has been passed to BCA's Insurance Manager. This hole has now been filled in, but others on the fell are still open.

TA felt that in the past farmers have resisted fencing around open pots as it reduces the area of land eligible for subsidy, but SL did not believe this is still an issue with the current scheme. SL felt it would be hard to prove that caver activity was responsible for this cow falling in, since it was an already open hole. AH mentioned that erecting fences was not permitted on Registered Commons. IP urged against allowing this situation to set a precedent for farmers making claims when their livestock fall into caves.

### 5.2 Treasurer (KD)

Nothing raised on report

### 5.3 Secretary (JMB)

JMB highlighted that BCA rules allow both elected and co-opted officers to claim travel expenses to meetings.

She was still awaiting an update on the shakehole landscape art project scheduled for early November, including exactly what help or advice they were seeking.

### 5.4 Conservation Officer (KE)

AH (Projects Officer) commented that three projects have now been completed under the Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust funding scheme, including Yordas graffiti clean-up, Long Churn fencing and the recent fencing at Pasture Gill Pot.

SA asked if Swan Dike Pot (Penyghent Gill) could be fenced under this scheme. AH accepted this suggestion, although would need further guidance on the site.

### 5.5 Training Officer (IP)

IP emphasised his wish for clubs to come forward to run New to Caving events, rather than CNCC hosting them directly.

To ensure complete openness, he also highlighted the increase in trainer's fees. JMB stated that she does not believe that IP's involvement is a "conflict of interests", since he was subsidising every workshop he ran. SA argued with this view, and felt we should stick to the term "conflicts".

## 5.6 Access Officers (JAA/MA)

JMB clarified that MA's report is actually a joint report between him and JAA.

IW highlighted the boxed statement in the report about Skirwith Cave. TA said he admires MA's efforts but does not feel we should be supporting such levels of restriction. If CNCC supported this, it could set a precedent for unreasonable requests from other landowners. In particular, the "not posting photos online" clause is very dated and unreasonable. AH agreed that this potential agreement seems like a backward step.

SA emphasised the BCA constitutional requirement for regional bodies to make all possible efforts to improve access. For clarity, CJB recited the exact wording.

ME pointed out that, in reality, the situation MA was proposing was no different to the situation at several other non-access land sites where we currently have agreements with regional access coordinators, except here the access coordinator would be the access officer directly.

At this point, MA joined the meeting remotely. He clarified that the owners at Skirwith Cave have received any hardly requests for access under the current arrangement (whereby cavers have to write in advance with an SAE). He wanted to remove the need for people to send letters or to contact the landowner directly. He raised the option of using our online system but the landowner wanted email. The "no photos online" clause is already part of the current arrangement on our website, so that is no change to the status quo.

IC felt that "lambing season" should be defined by specific dates. AR wanted clarification of who "we" are in respect to the third paragraph (CNCC or landowner)?

CJB felt that the proposed scheme is actually a significant improvement to the status quo, as it removes the need for cavers to contact the landowner directly, and the need for a physical letter and SAE, so this is a step in the right direction. MA added that there may be scope for future improvements.

### **Vote:**

We support the direction the Access Officer is taking with this arrangement, subject to a review of the exact wording in light of these discussions.

Proposed CJB

Seconded ASp

Voting: 11 votes in favour, 0 against, with 1 abstention

**Carried**

## 5.7 Access Co-ordinators (AB, ME, DD)

Nothing raised on the three reports

## 5.8 BCA Council Representative (TR)

TR was unable to attend the last BCA Council meeting so handed over to CJB (BCA Treasurer) to provide a summary, as follows:

- The bid to host the 2029 UIS Congress was unsuccessful, following a late bid from Romania.
- The BCA Executive have been dealing with an organisation called 'Organised Fun' who have been telling universities that students need professional instructors. Explaining how caving is managed safely has taken considerable amount of officer time.
- Risk assessments have shown that the BCA should be a limited company. Efforts are ongoing to establish British Caving Association Ltd, in parallel with current the BCA, and once established, dissolving the current BCA into that company.

TA said he was pleased the UIS bid had failed, emphasising the extremely limited volunteer resource currently available to organisations such as BCA, and how this congress would have sapped so much resource out of the caving community.

TA asked whether the current BCA considers itself to be a governing body. CJB replied that it is recognised as such by the sports councils in England and Scotland, although not in Wales (CW - Caving Wales) or Northern Ireland (SUI - Speleological Union of Ireland).

AH asked whether CNCC might benefit from the limited company status of BCA. In particular the Fairy Holes agreement is with him personally, as CNCC is not recognised as a legal entity, and would CNCC become such if the BCA was limited? CJB said that CNCC would always remain separate, but an access agreement could be made directly with BCA in situations where a legal entity is required.

JJB asked if BCA could be eligible for charitable status, but CJB confirmed it would not meet the required criteria for this.

## 5.9 BCA Conservation & Access Representative

Victoria Kocher, the new BCA C&A Working Group Convenor was now holding regular meetings, but JMB wasn't sure if anyone from CNCC was participating. AH said he has attended meetings recently, but did not want to become the official CNCC rep. JMB agreed follow this up with our Access and Conservation Officers.

TA announced that the BCA has now established a National Access Working Group, to replace the dormant CROW group.

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

Nothing raised on report

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

AMT has stepped down from this role.

JMB has spoken with Kai Trusson, to see if anyone from CHECC might be interested in volunteering.

**5.12 Inclusivity Co-ordinator (JW)**

Nothing raised on report

**5.13 Anchor Team Co-ordinator (IW)**

IW said the Anchor Team is making progress with filling in gaps in the record keeping. Over half of the approved installers have engaged with him.

He is looking into issues with early 1990s anchors, which are showing signs of movement, and how to manage the risks involved.

Some wording updates are needed to the Anchor Scheme, including removing reference to the BCA, since this is a CNCC document.

**Suggested changes:**

- 1 Update the CNCC name and remove BCA from the title page
- 2 Change Anchor Co-ordinator role from “ensuring compliance” to “reporting on compliance”
- 3 Update CNCC scheme section 5 (training) to accommodate the 2021 BCA changes

Proposed SA, seconded TA,

12 votes in favour, unanimous

**Carried**

SA clarified, in response to IW’s report that there was only one PECO anchor remaining in the Dales (in an obscure location in Marylyn). IW asked about anchors at the entrance of Roaring Hole. ME mentioned that these pre-date the PECO anchors that were subsequently installed (and later removed) elsewhere in the cave.

TA felt the Dave Elliot “red ring anchors” were originally seen as a solution to permanent anchoring in the Dales caves. They eventually deteriorated and failed. Resin bonded anchors were then put forward as the next permanent solution. These anchors are now also showing signs of deterioration and failure. It seems there is no permanent solution and a maintenance or replacement program is going to be a forever task. IW agreed and felt we need to consider how we deal with future maintenance. SA emphasised that replacing IC anchors, if they do come loose in the future, should be easier and less damaging, which is part of the reason they were adopted.

TA asked if we could “downgrade” a defective anchor, or find some wording that allows us to continue to accept an anchor despite showing movement. This would better manage our workload in the future as more are reported loose. For context, most "loose" anchors still require an extraordinary force to extract them. IW said that currently we have a pass/fail criterion with no middle ground. Any movement is considered a fail, as we have no formal evidence that an anchor showing slight movement is safe.

The BCA Anchors Working Group are looking into this issue, but as yet there is no definitive answer. Maybe CNCC could initiate some pull-testing of wobbly anchors to start generating evidence. IP felt that this needed to go hand-in-hand with reminding cavers of the importance of considering points of failure when rigging.

#### 5.14 **Individual Caver Representative** (TA)

Nothing raised on report

#### 5.15 **Web Administrator** (GD)

IP asked what is meant by ‘website views’ and ‘site visitors’. GD confirmed that this is a complex statistic compiled by Google Analytics, and it was hard to define exactly what these terms meant. However, the aim of showing the stats is to show a like-for-like comparison across various months.

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

Nothing raised on report

**VOTE** to approve all the remaining Officer Reports

Proposed SA    Seconded TA    14 votes in favour (unanimous)

**Carried**

## OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

### 6.0 All Party Parliamentary Group on Outdoor Recreation (Todd Rye)

TA mentioned that David Rose has recently posted on the UKCaving forum about a reply received by the APPG chair, Andy MacNae (Rossendale & Darwen MP), from Baroness Hayman, the Defra minister responsible. Her letter simply restated Defra policy, which suggests the minister has not even read his letter. The next job will be to push further for a response, particularly following the Supreme Court judgement on Dartmoor. TA feels it is positive that things are still moving. PP added that to get a reply from a minister, a specific question needs to be asked in Parliament.

### 7.0 Anchoring Projects (Matt Ewles)

In response to a question from IW, ME clarified that the holes from the original spits at the Excalibur streamway climb should be able to be reused for the anchors and he will aim to do if possible.

Proposed AR Secoded SA 13 votes in favour (unanimous) **Carried**

### 8.0 Proposal to upgrade CNCC web services (Gary Douthwaite)

SL felt that GD's request was a no-brainer. JMB added that the end cost would be lower than suggested, since access to Microsoft Teams would no longer require the current Zoom subscription (approx £60 pa).

Proposed TA Secoded CJB 14 votes in favour (unanimous) **Carried**

## ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### 9.0 Ulster Speleological Society and Caving Club - Update

Raymond Bell had requested that CNCC be informed about the unfortunate developments which resulted in USSCC being closed down. JMB felt other clubs could be vulnerable to similar attacks, so it was worth drawing attention to this.

In response to a question from AJ, JMB confirmed that USSCC has been removed as a CNCC member (and committee member) and the new club ("Combined Caving & Diving Club") would need to apply to re-join.

JMB asked if the statement posted on the website should be removed post-meeting for reasons of sensitivity and also to remove future association with the individual. AR felt not, as this is something to be learnt from in the future and it should remain in place. ME suggested that the statement could be moved from being a standalone document to an appendix to the minutes, to ensure preservation, but with less prominence. There was general agreement to this course of action.

### 10.0 Representation Review

TA commented that nowhere in the meeting documentation is the Representation Working Group mentioned, despite the original remit being to report to each meeting. TR apologised, saying this was top of his list - but would happily relinquish the responsibility if another volunteer was passionate about taking on the job of chairing this team.

### 11.0 Easegill Open House

SL said that RRCPC are hoping to do another "Open House" event in 2026. ME said he would be delighted to help promote this through CNCC's media.

### 12.0 Cave Database

JMB mentioned an email she had received from a Norwegian caver, Mags Heggen, about a database they are developing for documenting caves, and anyone interested in collaborating should get in touch. AJ asked for details, which JMB will pass on.

### 13.0 Sulber Pot

JJB highlighted that Sulber Pot appears to be on the Online Booking System, despite not being part of Ingleborough Estate and never having had a permit system. It has a lot of rubbish at the bottom and might benefit from a cleanup operation.

*(After the meeting, AH clarified that Sulber Pot is on a Registered Common known as Fell Close, which is part of the Ingleborough Estate.)*

### 14.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING

Committee Meeting to be held on 17 January at 9:30am  
Venue: Clapham Village Hall (Postcode LA2 8DZ )

Meeting closed at 11:05am

### SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ACTION ITEMS

OFFICER	ACTION	UPDATE
Jill B	Finalise June committee minutes	Done
Jill B	Prepare and circulate October committee minutes	Done
Todd R	Report progress with Representation Working Group (including CDG and instructed caving community)	
Andrew H	Liaise with SA re Swan Dike Pot fencing work	
Mike A	Finalise wording for access to Skirwith Cave	
Gary D	Update website re Skirwith Cave access arrangements	

**ULSTER SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY & CAVING CLUB**  
**STATEMENT BY RAYMOND BELL**

Firstly, I would like to offer my sincere apologies for not being able to attend today, as my attention has been required elsewhere during this time.

Over the past few weeks, the Ulster Club (USSCC) has unfortunately found itself in a difficult and unexpected situation. It came to light that a long-term member - and someone we had considered a friend - was not who we believed him to be. In reality, he was a **con artist and fraudster**, living multiple false identities for personal gain over a long period, going unnoticed for almost six years.

It appears that not only our club, but also a number of other organisations, may have been victims of his actions in the past - and possibly even in the present or future.

Due to his dishonest and unlawful activities, when his actions came to light, **nearly all of the club's records and data were deleted** by him in an attempt to cover his tracks.

The individual in question is now in custody awaiting sentencing. He was known to us as **Liam McCarthy**, but also operated under various other names - most notably "**Graham Eckerman**" from Durham - for all the wrong reasons.

I must make it clear that **no other club members were involved** in, or had any knowledge of, his behaviour.

As a result of these events, the **Ulster Club (USSCC)** will no longer continue to operate. Many members understandably do not wish to remain part of a club whose name has become associated with this individual.

However, on a much more positive note, on 24 October, a **new and stronger club** will be launched - remaining members and supported by many new ones as well. This new organisation will have **better leadership, a clear direction, and a stronger, united mindset** for the future for the better of caving.

Although this has been a significant setback - particularly financially, as we lost our bank accounts and funds - the level of enthusiasm and commitment towards building this new club gives me great confidence that it will be a success.

The **name of the new caving club** is yet to be finalised, but the feedback so far strongly suggests that we wish to **remain affiliated with the CNCC** and continue to be an active and contributing member club going forward.

I hope the meeting goes well today, and that you all enjoy some excellent caving afterwards.

Kind regards,

**Ray Bell**

*(On behalf of the new club in formation)*