

COUNCIL FOR THE NORTHERN CAVING COMMUNITY

British Caving Association

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING

VILLAGE HALL, CLAPHAM

17 January 2026

ATTENDEES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS (VOTING)

Tim Allen	TA	Individual Caver Rep	ICRep	
Ian Cross	IC	Bradford Pothole Club	BPC	
Paul McWhinney	PMcW	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	From 9:45
Martin McGowan	MM	Northern Pennine Club	NPC	Online from 10:25
Sam Lieberman	SL	Red Rose CPC	RRCPC	
Lynnette Cadamarteri	LC	White Rose Pothole Club	WRPC	Online
Matt Ewles	ME	York Caving Club	YCC	
Alfie Exall	EM	York Univ Cave & Pothole Club	YUCPC	Online
Aaron Smith	ASm	Yorkshire Subterranean Society	YSS	Online until 11:10

OFFICERS

Todd Rye	TR	Chair		
Jill Bolton	JMB	Secretary		Online
Kay Easton	KE	Conservation Officer		Online
Mark Richards	MR	Assistant Training Officer/Equipment		
Mike Appleton	MA	Assistant Access Officer		
Gary Douthwaite	GD	Web Administrator		
Matt Ewles	ME	PR / Access Co-ordinator - Excalibur		
Ian Walker	IW	Anchor Co-ordinator		Online until 10:30
Tony Brown	AB	Bowland Access Co-ordinator		
Andrew Hinde	AH	Projects Officer		

NON-COMMITTEE CLUBS & OBSERVERS

Chris Bolton	CJB	CPC/BCA		Online
Alison Fuller Shapcott	AFS	Elysium Underground Group		Online

The meeting opened at 9:30 am with a welcome from the Chair.
ME outlined the village hall's Fire Safety policy.

1.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Ian Patrick Kath Davis John Helm Pat Halliwell
Phil Parker Tim Pickering Sam Allshorn

1.2 VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

12 committee members present at start of meeting (11 clubs plus IC Rep)
(Minimum is 6 committee members, plus one officer)
ULSA absent throughout, but NB and NPC joined later.

2.0 DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

MR is one of the CNCC trainers, running workshops

3.0 MINUTES FROM OCTOBER COMMITTEE MEETING

VOTE - to accept the October 2025 Committee Meeting minutes.

Proposed SL **Seconded** AJ

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

Carried

4.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM OCTOBER COMMITTEE MEETING

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)	Done
Andrew H	Liaise with SA re Swan Dike Pot fencing work	Ongoing
Mike A	Finalise wording for access to Skirwith Cave	Done
Gary D	Update website re Skirwith Cave access arrangements	Done

5.0 REPORTS

5.1 Chair (TR)

TR emphasised the item in his report about surveys and CaveMaps. ME said that GD created the functionality for the CNCC website to host surveys several years ago, but despite efforts to contact many clubs, none were ever submitted, so the functionality was removed on update to the website. ME was very supportive of efforts to reintroduce.

GD felt that this may be best done as a separate site linked to the CNCC website (eg as per the booking system) to avoid over-complicating the CNCC core website. SL asked if we could adopt the CaveMaps name to retain this, but this will need discussion between GD and Becca Lawson who put this suggestion forward.

Action: GD to discuss with Becca.

ME expressed concern that CNCC could not be sure all the current CaveMaps content had achieved copyright permissions, which might be a problem. SL asked whether we could contact each of the survey copyright holders, but ME replied that this would be an enormous amount of work and is likely to lead to chasing each one for multiple emails with no likelihood of success.

After a brief discussion, it was felt reasonable to assume that surveys currently on CaveMaps have already gained copyright permission and make them available by CNCC without further permission. This was dependant on a simple mechanism to request that a survey to be taken down if a copyright holder objects, which is very unlikely.

5.2 Treasurer (KD)

Nothing raised on report

5.3 Secretary (JMB)

AH emphasised that Lancaster University were helped out by the BCA when they re-started, but the club has since collapsed. TR felt that Covid created a gap leading to loss of experience and leaders. CJB said that a new person is taking over this year, hoping to revive the club.

IC emphasised the proposed Tourist Tax that could affect clubs. PMcW said that there is currently a national consultation on this, and felt it would be worth checking whether the BCA are planning to respond on behalf of caving bunk barns.

Action: Check on this, and perhaps if BCA re not responding, CNCC ought to lead?

CJB asked about the location of the CNCC's Anchoring and PR kit, as this information is needed to add it to the BCA's insurance.

Action: ME to obtain these details

5.4 Conservation Officer (KE)

AH highlighted the meeting with Tarmac yesterday, with discussions ongoing about Keldheads Cave and the recommencement of quarrying operations at Wensley Quarry with the intention of pacifying our objections. We are thankful to John Gunn for his input. Currently CNCC is not agreeing to anything. AH will attend the public consultation on 28 January, on behalf of CNCC.

5.5 Training Officer (IP)

ME emphasised that demand for our workshops is showing no signs of slowing down, and events are selling out within hours of being advertised, due to cavers coming from all over the UK. This is now very much a national training initiative.

AH asked whether the training team are managing the increased capacity. MR replied yes, he and IP are teaching fewer workshops themselves, but the other trainers are taking on more. We could bring more trainers onboard, but it is a hefty time commitment to bring them up to speed in how we deliver the training and to ensure consistency with the existing trainers.

5.6 Access Officers (JAA/MA)

ME thanked MA for his proactivity in tackling so many areas in such a short time.

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

Nothing raised on the three reports

5.8 BCA Council Representative (TR)

The next BCA meeting is on 20 January. TA asked what the typical attendance at the meetings is, so CJB confirmed around 15 people for council meetings, but they are aiming for more for the 2026 AGM, planned as a hybrid meeting in the Peak District at the end of June.

5.9 BCA Conservation & Access Representative

MA will be attending the next meeting on 21 January.

5.10 Training & Equipment Rep (MR)

A document on concrete screws in volcanic rock has been provided to CNCC. While not directly relevant to our region, this is good additional documentation for this type of anchor which already has quite a lot of literature on our website. ME is to post the article in our documents page, although he felt that these sorts of resources are of national rather than just northern significance and might be best hosted by BCA in future.

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

IW (online) shared a screen to present his report which had not been submitted in advance. He is triaging historic and incoming reports and emphasised that we have 1000's of anchors across our region, so this was going to be a continuous ongoing process rather than just one-off. In particular, some Petzl resin anchors fitted by unknown persons in Death's Head were very poor (on route from bottom to streamway) and emphasised the need for even greater caution with non-CNCC installations. TA felt that whoever installed these did a very poor job, as he found some anchors where the resin had not mixed and therefore did not set.

IW has agreed to help the BCA see how CNCC can send our information about anchors to them, and to help BCA deal with receiving/processing the data.

5.14 **Project Officer (AH)**

AH explained that he is concentrating on high material-cost projects at the moment (such as fencing) while YDMT funding is available.

5.15 **Individual Caver Representative (TA)**

TA said that Jon Beavan recently met the Scoska Cave tenant farmer at the Yorkshire Dales Access Forum and confirmed he is very caver-friendly and has no issues with visiting cavers. TA felt that given this, there could be scope for further efforts to improve access, once the dust has settled following the recent issues. MA is planning a meeting with the landowner.

Dave Rose's contribution to the All Party Parliamentary Group has been very positive, and there is hope to get some changes to access passed through this Parliament. The Conservative rep to the APPG has now stepped down, but David Davis has replaced him. TA and others took David Davis on a caving trip into Gaping Gill several years ago, so this is a very promising step.

5.16 **PR & Communications (ME)**

After discussion, no objections to ME's approach with the SpanSet support.

5.17 **Web Administrator** (GD)

TA asked whether we should still be using X (formerly Twitter) given recent issues in the news.

GD said he has considered this a few times. There are both pros and cons to withdrawing. It is a useful way to get information out to cavers. GD questioned whether there are actually similar ethical issues with Facebook. We have seen our X followers decreasing, which probably reflects people voting with their feet. TA asked whether this could perhaps be put to the AGM. ME agreed and said that as he had already considered this, TA's question was a useful prompt and that getting an AGM opinion would be useful.

MM felt we should be prioritising our time on resources and media platforms that are giving the most in return, but ME emphasised that posting news to all social media is really quick, and dropping X would save negligible time.

GD urged caution in judging X, without justification for whether it is better or worse than others. It was agreed to put the question to the AGM.

VOTE to approve all the Officer Reports

Proposed TA **Seconded** SL 12 votes in favour (unanimous)

Carried

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

6.0 Representation review

(TR, TA)

TR said that there was an additional option accidentally omitted from his report, and that was membership of the CNCC and participation at the AGM. TA summarised that currently only our members, and the IC rep can vote at the AGM, and only clubs can be members. Several options were considered, but many were too administratively complex. It was felt that CNCC should allow other non-club groups to apply for membership (examples given were CRO, Speleo Sisters), and other 'loose' groups who wouldn't be classed as a constituted club.

ME questioned whether there was a wish to enable individuals (speaking on their own behalf) to become members, or just 'groups'. The consensus was just groups for membership.

ME then asked what about the additional Committee positions (Option 2 in the report). Should this also only be open to groups or should we be open minded to enthusiastic individuals taking one or more of these spaces? A lengthy discussion ensued with many perspectives, but it was generally felt that individuals were already represented by the IC rep (TA commented that in his time in the role, nobody had contacted him in his IC Rep capacity) and that if we make Officers able to vote, this also provides a route for individual democratic participation. However, it was also commented that having individual positions on Committees encourages people to get involved. It was questioned whether five additional Committee positions was too many and did this risk 'empty' posts. However, it was countered that these roles would not be considered or listed as 'vacant' if not taken, and that we would simply be providing the flexibility for more groups to get involved in they wanted to. The importance of reaching out to potential other groups was emphasised.

Broadly there was no opposition to the suggested direction, just lots of considerations raised.

Action: TA to draft a document for the 2026 AGM agenda to detail the direction we are taking. Members can then provide input and vote to give confidence in the general direction, allowing time to draft the necessary constitutional changes for the 2027 AGM.

7.0 Anchoring Projects

(ME)

Additional anchors in Lost Johns' Cave Monastery route

Proposed TA **Seconded** IC 10 votes in favour (unanimous) **Carried**

8.0 Access Agreements

(TA)

TA introduced the topic, and felt that particularly in areas such as Scoska Cave, we should not be supporting or publicising restrictive arrangements. This could set a precedent for us being happy to accept and advertise such matters, which may lead to other landowners deciding to make additional requests or restrictions.

TR felt that any step forwards for a particular site should be supported.

SL asked whether we are talking about simply saying that there is no agreement in place for restrictive sites, or should we say that cavers need to contact the landowner, and provide the necessary details, but not necessarily advertise their restrictions if they are unreasonable. TA agreed that for challenging locations we could provide contact details.

KE considers herself an individual caver. She felt that if she looked at the CNCC website for a particular cave and just saw 'no access agreement' she would be deterred from visiting. She felt it would be better for CNCC to be upfront with the information about what requirements need to be fulfilled for a caver to obtain consented access, and that by providing this information we are doing a service to individual cavers.

ME felt that there were good arguments on both sides here. That willingly advertising any restrictions is setting a bad precedent, but failing to advertise restrictions is not providing a service to cavers and may hamper landowner relations, particularly where future access improvements could be on the horizon. The focus of this agenda item should be to identify our 'red lines' - ie what kinds of restrictions might we consider to be too unreasonable to willingly communicate to cavers? For example, we might be happy to promote a landowner's preferred route of approach, or short periods when they prefer cavers not to visit, but maybe not arrangements that are discriminatory about who can visit.

ME reminded the meeting that MA has already said that he is planning a meeting with the Scoska landowner and felt that the details on the website should be left alone for now as it could damage any hope of achieving an access improvement during that meeting.

TA asked whether we should have publicised the new Scoska arrangement already. MA said that at the time, we were firefighting a challenging situation, and we were not in a position to negotiate anything better.

SL felt that in these situations, we can just provide contact details and allow cavers to make their own enquiries about what the restrictions are.

CJB emphasised that if there is an agreement in place, the landowner is indemnified under the BCA's insurance, and this could be used as leverage in discussion. However, TA voiced concern over this, as it would only be true if the cavers were BCA members and CNCC is keen to avoid creating situations where insurance is needed for access.

AH felt that the Scoska situation has precipitated following a change of landowner, and we should be providing some option for visitors to gain consented access, so would rather present some information on how cavers can achieve this.

ME suggested that we schedule this for further discussion later in the year, to identify CNCC's red lines which allow us to decide whether we should advertise a landowner's restrictions, or whether we should refuse to and simply pass on contact details for cavers to make their own arrangements.

In the meantime, regarding Scoska, ME suggested we leave matters for now. However, if there is no movement following MA's meeting with the landowner, we review the situation and consider whether CNCC should remove the restriction details from our website and instead simply provide contact details for cavers to make their own enquiries.

AH highlighted that Scoska is not the only situation where we advertise access conditions which might be deemed unreasonable (eg Mongo Gill, Fairy Holes), the difference with Scoska being that this has changed from open access to restrictive access.

To follow this up, the Secretary will schedule a discussion (probably for June meeting) on CNCC's access 'red lines' for where we will or won't communicate restrictions to cavers on behalf of landowners.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.0 Casterton Fell Cow

SL informed that the dead cow issue on Casterton Fell continues, and the BCA's insurance company are going to deny the claim. The farmer will likely claim against their own insurance policy.

10.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING

AGM to be held on 21 March at 10:00am
Venue: Clapham Village Hall (Postcode LA2 8DZ)

Meeting closed at 12:05am

SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ACTION ITEMS

OFFICER	ACTION	UPDATE
Jill B	Finalise October committee minutes	Done
Jill B	Prepare and circulate January committee minutes	Done
Andrew H	Liaise with SA re Swan Dike Pot fencing work	Ongoing
Gary D	Cave Maps hosting - discuss with Becca Lawson	
Jill B	Tourist Tax consultation - follow up with BCA	
Matt E	Location of Anchoring and PR kit for insurance	
Matt E	Post Volcanic Rock article on CNCC website	
Matt E	Discussion paper on X (Twitter) for AGM	Done
Tim A	Representation Review - paper for 2026 AGM	Done