



COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

A constituent member of the British Caving Association

Minutes of the Emergency Open Meeting held on Sunday 26th September 2004

The Meeting commenced at 15:00.

1. NOTE OF EXPLANATION

The Secretary, at the request of the NCA/BCA Representative, called this Meeting. The last scheduled meeting of the CSCC on September 4 2004 had felt unable to discuss the "Hub" proposals on the 2005 BCA Subscription, emanating from the latter body's July 25 meeting, as they were only communicated to the NCA/BCA Representative (who was on holiday) and Treasurer by email on August 30. Given that the proposals were due to be put before the caving community at *Hidden Earth 2004* on October 1-3 and then debated by the BCA Council on October 9, the CSCC considered it important that their representative to the "Hub", and its representatives on the BCA Council, had clear instruction.

The Meeting was announced *twice* in emails to the CSCC distribution list during the week beginning September 20 *and also* by an insert with the Minutes of the CSCC September 4 meeting posted out on September 22 to those members not on email. The BCA proposals were included as Annex 1 to the Minutes.

The Secretary accepts that this Meeting was arranged at very short notice, but strenuous efforts were being made by a number of people to clarify aspects of the "Hub" proposals and there were also difficulties in reconciling the availability of key officers.

Prior to the Meeting there was a considerable amount of e-traffic on the subject. Some extracts, predominantly from people unable to attend the Meeting, are included in Annex 1.

2. ATTENDANCE (10)

Steve King (SBSS Obs/SMCC, CSCC Secretary), Chris Whale (SBSS, CSCC Treasurer), Dave Cooke (WCC, CSCC NCA/BCA Representative), Les Williams (WCC, CSCC Equipment Officer), Vince Simmonds (BEC), John Dobson (ACG), Jonathan Roberts (MCG Obs), Rob Norcross (Moles CG), Graham Price (Cerberus CC), Tim Fell (SBSS Obs).

Note: DC and LW are also BCA Council members.

3. APOLOGIES RECEIVED (4)

Alan Gray (ACG, CSCC Chairman), Andrew Atkinson (UBSS, CSCC Bolting Coordinator), Graham Mullan (UBSS), Linda Wilson (UBSS).

4. CHAIR

In the absence of AG, SK said that he had asked DC to chair the meeting. There were no objections.

Note: The CSCC Constitution only requires a quorum for its AGM and any EGM. At all other meetings no quorum is required and a simple majority vote (one vote per club) is sufficient to pass motions.

JR then opened the meeting with an assessment (see Annex 1) of how the "Hub" had come to make the Subscription Proposals under discussion.

Currently there are three parts to the National caving administration:

- BCA - evolving, and destined to become the sole National body, but presently just an insurance agent;
- NCA - existing National body handling "policy", training, etc, but due to be wound up in 2005;
- BCRA - existing National *charity* that previously ran an insurance scheme, intends to return to its scientific roots.

Regional caving issues are currently administered through the Regional Caving Councils (RCC's) – e.g. CSCC - that have traditionally exercised considerable autonomy in their affairs. The concept of the BCA as a true "one-stop shop" for cavers does impinge on this autonomy. Concessions and mutual understanding from both sides have allowed some good progress to be made.

The present National caving administration is paid for by subscriptions from Clubs augmented by some grant-in-aid and a small income from Training services. The present Regional caving administration is paid for by subscriptions from Clubs with occasional grants from the National body.

The present costs of administering caving, at all levels, have been looked at in some detail. Whilst there will always be elements that are subjective or "best guesses", there is general consensus that nothing of major significance has been overlooked. These costs are:

Estimated Costs of BCA Administration

For the National administration	£ 5.0 k	(Considered “about right” for the size of the organisation)
For the Regional administration	£ 3.8 k	(This figure is agreed by the RCC’s)
For information provision (publications)	£ 3.6 k	(This is with volunteer editors!)
	<u>£12.4 k</u>	

These costs can only be split between ~20 Associates *and/or* ~280 Clubs *and/or* ~3150 Individual Members.

The “Hub” has essentially proposed that *all three* categories above should contribute, but at varying rates:

<i>Proposed 2005 BCA Subscriptions</i>	Insurance Element	Admin, Publications & RCC Elements	Total Subscription
<i>Individuals</i>			
Direct Individual Member (Caver)	?	£20	£20 + ?
Direct Individual Member (Non Caver)	?	£20	£20 + ?
Club Individual Member (Caver)	?	£ 5	£ 5 + ?
Club Individual Member (Non Caver)	?	£ 5	£ 5 + ?
<i>Groups</i>			
Club taking BCA insurance	?	£30 for club	£30 + ?
Club with other recognised insurance	Excluded	£30	£30
National Bodies	Depends	£ 0	£ 0 + ?
Regional Caving Councils	£0	£ 0	£ 0
Cave Rescue Organisations	£0	£ 0	£ 0
Access Controlling Bodies	?	£ 0	?
<i>Associates</i>			
	Not Provided	£30	£30

The table above is from the “Hub”.

Current expectations are that the costs of insurance in 2005 will not be known before November/December 2004.

JR concluded by pointing out that *if* the overall costs were only to be distributed between Associates and Clubs then the (Admin/Publication/RCC) burden on these organisations would be ~£40-£50. This should be contrasted with the existing situation where, typically, a Club pays a £15 subscription to the NCA, a £15 subscription to the CSCC, and maybe also subscriptions to additional RCC’s (e.g. the CNCC) and/or the BCRA.

Note: Some RCC’s permit Clubs and Individuals to affiliate to the RCC *without* affiliating to the NCA. These RCC’s have indicated that they would not wish to lose this additional income stream. The CSCC has previously indicated its intention to follow suit. The “Hub” has (reluctantly) agreed to recommend to the BCA Council that it allow direct affiliation to RCC’s.

At the suggestion of DC, the Meeting then focussed on two questions.

5. SHOULD CIM’s PAY FOR NATIONAL COSTS?

The essential issue here is that if CIM’s *do not* contribute directly to the overall costs, Club contributions would have to rise. This might be acceptable to “large” Clubs, but not necessarily to “small” Clubs. However, what has to be balanced against this is the question of which would be more likely to put people off becoming cavers and joining Clubs and the BCA; an extra (personal) charge of £5 *on top* of any insurance subscription, or an increased Club subscription (any increase in which might, for example, be offset by other income streams available to the Club)?

DC emphasised that the issue was not necessarily “Club” or “Individual” or both, and that there were alternative solutions with different weightings.

There was a spirited discussion. VS wanted the costs to borne by Clubs and not Individuals. RN expressed concern for small Clubs. LW emphasised the point made by JR that BCA Membership saved Club’s money by doing away with the need for multiple RCC subscriptions. This suggested an “effective breakeven Club membership” of just under 10 people. DC and JR said that when the BCRA had looked at Club membership figures, the number of Clubs of the “breakeven” size or smaller was very small. VS suggested that small Clubs could save more money if they lobbied the BCA to allow them to opt out of publications, but LW said this would merely put the unit costs up. SK queried whether the number of publications that had been budgeted for (1 handbook, 6 newsletters and 2 magazines, per year) was excessive. GP said that keeping the membership informed had to be one of the BCA’s core activities and that he thought what was proposed was reasonable. VS said that without Clubs there would not be any caving on Mendip.

There was also unanimous opposition to the way that the “Hub” had arrived at the figure of £5 for the CIM subscription - actual plus projected costs of £2.52 had been “rounded up” – though it was acknowledged that this had been done with good intentions (namely to give a “cushion” against unexpected/unforeseen additional costs). The “Hub” has further proposed that any “profit” would be put into a fund for “caving good causes”. The Meeting, however, felt that this was too much of a rounding and would be an obstacle to new cavers joining Clubs and the BCA.

There was a call for a resolution that could be put to a vote. After several iterations the following was agreed:

Resolution 1

“The CSCC believes that the costs of the BCA Administration should be borne by Clubs and Groups”

With SK voting for the SMCC this was carried by 8 votes to none. There were 2 observers unable to vote.

JR left the Meeting at this point for another appointment.

6. SHOULD RCC’S BE FUNDED FROM THE TOP DOWN OR THE BOTTOM UP?

The issue here is whether to maintain something approaching the *status quo* where Clubs (and Individuals in some instances) pay a subscription to the RCC that they feel most affinity for, or whether BCA should collect a subscription from Clubs and Individuals *nationally* and then *redistribute* a “tithe” to the RCC’s to fund defined activities.

It was noted that the CNCC had pressed for the “tithing” route since one of its concessions to the principle of the “one-stop shop” was to grant access to caves it controlled to all BCA Members. With a loss of secondary affiliation subscriptions the CNCC stands to lose income.

In the discussion that followed many questioned the practical sense of CSCC Members paying money to the BCA only to have the BCA hand the money back to the CSCC. These concerns were founded more on a wish to preserve the independence of the CSCC rather than on any suspicion that the BCA would be too “prudent” with the tithes! However, concern was expressed at the fact that the “Hub” proposals did not explain what formula would be used to calculate the size of any “tithe”.

The CNCC issue was thought to be something of a “red herring” since its concession was in the National interest and so it should be compensated (for a limited period only) out of the National subscription. Alternatively, other RCC’s could be asked to collect a “CNCC levy” on top of their subscription that could then be passed on.

Another resolution was called for:

Resolution 2

“That the CSCC should continue to set its own subscription to be collected locally”

This was carried by 6 votes to none with 1 abstention. There were 2 observers unable to vote.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

Note added in clarification:

Prior to the Meeting representatives of some CSCC University and Scout Member Clubs expressed grave concern at the “Hub” proposals. This was because these Clubs do not require the BCA Insurance and they were thus alarmed at what they interpreted as a requirement to make them pay the £5 CIM subscription for each of their Members if they wanted to affiliate to the BCA. The resulting “capitation bill” would, quite simply, have represented an enormous increase in the financial outgoings for these Clubs that they openly admitted they could not have justified to their Members or Trustees. JR sought clarification on this point and received the following reply from Bob Mehew (email of September 23), the architect of the proposals:

“My understanding from what was discussed on 25 July was that a Club has 3 options

- 1 – it became a Club Member of BCA for £30 with insurance
- 2 – it became a Club Member of BCA plus took out membership of BCA including insurance for its Members at £30 plus £5 per each Member plus whatever insurance is per Member
- 3 – it declined to join BCA”

I hope this clarifies this aspect of the proposals – SK.

The Meeting concluded at 17:10.

ANNEX 1

COMMENTS RECEIVED

The following are extracts from emails posted to the CSCC distribution list or sent to CSCC Officers between about September 16 and September 26 2004. I have decided not to attribute them to spare the authors' undue criticism or embarrassment but I think they give a good indication of what concerns the Membership and where BCA needs to improve its communication channels to prospective members – SK.

“In a time when we are desperate for younger members we cannot put the cost of caving up so much.”

“...as is well known cavers are notoriously tight, ask them to pay a pound or two more and they will be horrified – but will probably pay in the end... BCA needs to sell itself to justify their subscription – inform their membership in very simple terms what they have to offer and what the implications for cavers and access might be if there is a mass migration to the DCA scheme.”

“£2.50 does not seem too bad to run the National body and all RCC's... But I cannot see any financial control of how the monies get distributed to the councils. This could be a real problem, which will lead to arguments for years to come. I strongly disagree with the rounding to £5.”

“If one is a member of more than one Club, as I am, would I have to pay a fiver for each?”

“As a Club Chairman I obviously do not want to see subscriptions going sky-high. It is not difficult to promote £5 as long as we can see what we are getting.”

“As a caver who decided not to join BCA individually, what might the benefits be to me if my Club joined? How would I (not my Club) be paying for this (if at all)?”

“One of the problems with NCA – which is being inherited by BCA – is an apparent lack of ability to ‘sell’ itself to cavers. There are good reasons for having a National body, but what the governing council lacks is a person who can put this across really effectively.”

“Clubs may be willing to continue paying a subscription at a similar level to that paid to the NCA for the past couple of years, providing they get something for their money such as a regular informative newsletter. I doubt there will be any support for anything beyond this.”

“Recently we did an ad-hoc verbal survey during visits to Swildons and to Burrington Coombe... Including ourselves, 20% of the cavers in Swildons and a mere 9% of those at Burrington Coombe belonged to a Club.”

“I would feel less aggrieved at paying (yet another) £5 if non-Club cavers had to pay £5 as well.”

“While I accept that the body, if it needs to exist, does need an income, £5 per caver is ludicrous – and it is about time that non-Club members should stop receiving a ‘subsidy’ from us.”

“I’m not a very active caver nowadays. But I have to pay £25 to my Club, another £18 for insurance and now £5 to BCA... my wife is a caver too... it would be cheaper to by my (our) own ladder and lifeline and just do it, and sod the insurance. I’m sure lots of others will feel the same?”

“Currently as a club we pay £15 to NCA/BCA and £15 to CSCC (all paid via CSCC) totalling £30 for a club of less than 25 members. I would imagine that our Executive Committee would accept no more than £50 a year for affiliations (£2 per member). If it wasn't for the 'rounding up' nearly doubling the cost, then it wouldn't have affected us that much.”

“Nobody at BCRA, NCA, BCA really knows how the figures are going to add up just yet. (For example the number of people who are a member of one caving club is not known for certain and the number of BCRA members who are in for the science rather than the ‘National body’ status is not known. If you join BCA now then not only do you help to resolve the situation for next year – when we will know the numbers – but you will also get a say in what the fees are, because you’ll get a vote.”

ANNEX 2

PAYING FOR CAVING ADMINISTRATION

Jonathan Roberts, 26th September 2004

Current caving administration

The British Caving Association exists and manages insurance, after a traumatic start following the loss of the BCRA scheme in the last months of 2003. The UK caving world is slowly getting over that and the BCA scheme is finding its legs thanks to huge efforts by a few people. There is some optimism for 2005 insurance but it is unwise to count early chickens.

Other national bodies are looking at working closer with or within BCA. At some point in the next year, NCA should cease to exist, with BCA offering the services previously with that organisation. BCRA may either become a charitable research and publications subsidiary of BCA or remain a separate body with similar objectives. Either way, the main national functions move to BCA – which will need to be funded by cavers and clubs.

In parallel, the regional caving councils (RCCs) have been debating their role with officers of BCA, BCRA and NCA, particularly through the ‘Hub’ meetings attended by regional representatives and others. RCCs have accepted the principle of moving towards providing a basic unified level of service, with national elements secured through BCA (research etc through BCRA), and regional elements through reconstituted regional bodies. Regional sensitivities have been discussed and largely agreed and understood mutually, which itself represents good progress compared to what seemed feasible some years ago.

Current positions

There are two main elements to the current debate:

- what should be the BCA national services and related supply costs (other than insurance which has its own cost equation including its own administrative charge), and how should the agreed costs be levied around the caving world
- what should be the basis for across-the-board regional administration services and how should the agreed costs of this be levied (recognising that some caving regions offer more and will continue that, and some also have more sources of income)

Once costs are aggregated, they must then be spread among regions / clubs / cavers as subs. There may be various charging options. Clearly clubs and members will view the propositions from a number of perspectives – not least the impact on their existing subscription structure, cash flow, administrative effects, and whether the options are reasonable, value for money and saleable to club committees and club members. Also, some particular issues and sensitivities will always occur!

Budgets

Draft budgets for core national and regional services have been discussed and noted by officers of BCA, BCRA and NCA, and also debated at Hub meetings. The budgets are not a finality, but some reasonably certain numbers have had to be developed for planning purposes, so that if changes proceed there is an indicative budget and cash flow to deliver and manage services.

The annual draft budget headlines are:

BCA national administration net cost including meetings: **£5,000**.

Net regional costs after income: **£3,800** which excludes any costs of servicing individual members at a regional level, as that is a discretionary matter for each region.

Publications (an annual handbook, a regular newsletter, and issues of a journal) would only be supplied to member clubs, associates and BCA Direct Individual Members, not to Club Individual Members who would have access to the Club copies. Therefore this would be a cost levied only on specific groups of members, estimated at the rate of just under £12 cost per Publication Subscriber.

Overall, this is a low cost administrative operation. The BCA national costs are less than have been incurred by combined NCA and BCRA national core activities in recent years, while the regional costs are what is currently incurred or anticipated by each region, irrespective of whether they operate as part of BCA or not.

There was support at the 25th July Hub meeting for rounding up the potential subscription by a “comfortable margin”, to help ensure financial stability. There was also the possibility of making donations towards good caving causes. It is fair to say that, as a former treasurer, I would always aim to go for a measure of comfort in the subs, so that variations can be allowed for and for good years to cover bad years. This stood CSCC in good stead. However, the scaling-up element can have different gross effects on cash volumes if applied to club subs or to individual member subs.

Allocation of costs:

After much debate, the following estimates were made for numbers of different BCA membership categories, to which costs were then assigned. The membership numbers are based on membership trends with the first year of BCA insurance.

Associate members: 20

Clubs / Groups: 280

Club individual members: 3150

The Hub minutes show numerous iterations at dividing up the costs among the members. For the purposes of this note, I shall try to be very simple:

- Club-based subs at £30 a go (very similar to £15 for national body, £15 for main region), which will be understood by almost all clubs, was agreed as a working basis at the Hub meeting in June 2004. That might raise upwards of £8,400-9,000, to cover net regional costs of £3,800, publications costs of £3,600, and a contribution towards BCA administration of about £1,000-1,600 (about £5 per club).
- That leaves about £3,400-4,000 to raise from some form of payment from all BCA individual members. That wasn't how the Hub defined the matter on 25th July (see the Hub minutes), but it is the net cost of the main national elements. Crudely, even with large variations in guesstimates – which may need to be allowed for – it is difficult to see how this equates to the £5 a head among 3150 members, which ended up as the preferred option. The rounding-up element was high. For example, an individual membership of 2,000, largely serviced indirectly through their main caving club, should at best need to pay a capitation sub of £2 (or less) as Dave Cooke has said.

These numbers contrast with:

- a wholly individual member financial proposition, to cover about £9,000 (about £3-4 a head depending on actual membership numbers), to which would have to be added the costs of supplying clubs with admin. services and their publications, about £15 a club
- a wholly club-based financial proposition, of about £12-13,000, to be spread among about 300 clubs and associates (or fewer if lesser take-up), ie, about £40-50 per organisation.

Dave Cooke in his proposal has suggested that regions keep their own subscription arrangements, but otherwise ends up with a similar situation.

Historic arrangements for national administration have meant that smaller clubs pay a higher share of costs because larger clubs spread their central costs over more members. However larger clubs are also those that have tended to have multiple regional memberships for access to caves, so some have paid more in regional if not national membership subs. This cost isn't needed in a one-stop shop.

Conclusion:

It is the allocation of BCA costs among groups of members which is the central issue at present. There can be financial models ranging from all-club subs to all-individual member subs. BCA's prospectus has always aimed for subscriptions from both clubs and individual members. If mixed sourcing of subscriptions were to go ahead, the key issue is the size of the individual subs and the 'comfort margin' on those.