



COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

A constituent member of the British Caving Association

Minutes of the Open Meeting held on Saturday 4th December 2004

1. ATTENDANCE (17)

Alan Gray (CSCC Chairman, ACG), Steve King (CSCC Secretary, SBSS Obs/SMCC Obs), Chris Whale (CSCC Treasurer, SBSS), Chris Binding (CSCC C&A Officer, Cheddar CC), Dave Cooke (CSCC BCA/NCA Representative, Wessex CC Obs), Les Williams (CSCC Equipment Officer, Wessex CC), Graham Price (Cerberus SS), Graham Mullan (UBSS), Linda Wilson (UBSS Obs), Alan Dempster (Avon Scouts), Darrel Instrell (MNRC), Lee Hawkswell (MCG), Vince Simmonds (BEC), Doug Harris (ACG Obs), Jonathan Roberts (MCG Obs), Alan Butcher (SMCC), Bob Mehew (BCA/NCA Treasurer).

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (2)

Andy Sparrow (CSCC Training Officer, Cheddar CC), Andrew Atkinson (CSCC Bolting Coordinator, UBSS Obs).

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

SK noted a clarification to Item 9 regarding Piney Sleight Farm. As written this gave the impression that this was the usual or recommended venue for parking whilst visiting Charterhouse/GB Caves. It is not. It is simply an alternative to the Riding Centre.

AG noted that the last paragraph in Item 13 should be amended to read "CB and the ACG have battery powered drills".

That they be a true and accurate record. Agreed. The Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

4. ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Item 4 – CSCC Handbook. *Took also (7.3).*

GP had passed the corrected draft to DC for proof reading. DC has also updated the introduction. It just remains for SK/CW to provide an updated list of CSCC member clubs.

LesW enquired if the "Found Cave of Loxton" would be included? VS said that the diggers, Nick Richards and Nick Harding, had agreed to implement a Club Leader system, details of which he had already passed to AG. AG said he would forward the details to DC / GP. *See also (9) below.*

Note added in proof:

Descent 181 notes that the cave has reverted to its original name of Loxton Cavern!

SK reported that the Surrey Mines Agent, Peter Burgess, had requested a change to his contact details on the CSCC Website and that for consistency the change should also be made in the Handbook. DC said that in fact Peter's legitimate concerns (about spam through the website) were partially unfounded as all email addresses were deliberately obfuscated against this happening. DC said he had explained this to Peter.

ACTION: SK / CW to provide DC / GP with a list of CSCC member clubs.

ACTION: AG to forward the access details for Loxton Cavern to DC / GP.

Item 10 – First Aid Course. *Taken under (10).*

Item 10 – External Funding for First Aid Course

CW said that he had made enquiries about this. In essence it *was* possible to seek funding on behalf of participants *provided* that funding was not sought for anyone needing the "qualification" for work purposes. AS should therefore consider applying to Idris Williams (BCA/NCA Training Officer). However, BM interjected that there was no money left in the 2004 budget!

Item 10 – Various bolting actions. *Taken under (12)*

5. OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

None.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The usual running order has been revised and the BCA discussions, which I think will be quite protracted, have been moved to the last but one Agenda item.

I would like to thank Andrew Atkinson (our Bolting Coordinator) for his work over the past few months, for being trained, inspecting bolts, and for the replacement of the P-bolt on the "Twenty" in Swildon's. Hopefully now this matter (bolting), which has been an Agenda topic for many years, should disappear from these Minutes as it becomes part of routine CSCC business.

7. HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

7.1 - CSCC Emergency Open Meeting

For the benefit of anyone present that had not otherwise been made aware, SK explained that an Emergency Open Meeting had been held on September 26th 2004. The Minutes of the Meeting are available from the CSCC website, or from the Secretary on request. For the record, the Forward to those Minutes reads:

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.

7.2 - Publications received

Derbyshire Caver (#120), NCA Training Committee Minutes (Sep 04), Agenda for the DCA Council Meeting (November 27th 2004).

7.3 - Surrey Mines Agent

Taken under (4).

8. HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

No further 2004/5 subs have been received. There are 37 Member Clubs.

The current account stands at £162.49 and the reserve account at £3984.60.

The transfer of signing powers on the CSCC accounts to the new incumbents is now complete.

The Report from the RC Treasurer's Meeting of November 28th 2004 was taken under (16).

9. CONSERVATION & ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT

CB provided SK with a typed diary of his C&A activities since the last Meeting. CB then elaborated on particular items:

Was reported that the Cuckoo Cleaves entrance lid needed attention; it was believed that Frome CG was prepared to do the work. ***See also (14).***

Les Davies, the Mendip Hills AONB Warden, reports that Bristol Water has fixed the West Twin Brook Adit door/lock; the CSCC may yet have access as BW are open to negotiation. This will be followed up. Les also reported a dangerous dig between the Charterhouse Centre and Waterwheel Swallet. CB made contact with the principle digger who said that it was due to be back-filled after New Year. CB suggested a grill so that continued access would be possible. This is being considered.

CHCC reported that more road signs had been left in Swildon's Hole. CB subsequently removed one from the top of the Old Forty. **Would cavers please note that whilst there are indeed road signs beyond Sump 1, this is *not* an invitation to festoon the cave with more (or ironing boards, etc...)!**

Emails have been sent to WCC and BEC asking if they can repair the lid on Priddy Green Sink.

Loxton Cavern: Nick Richards is to make 10 keys available. A lid is to be fitted sometime soon and then the major Mendip Clubs will be inviting to nominate potential leaders/keyholders. It is hoped that this will be done early in the New

Year. (*VS explained that the delay was due to the need to stabilise parts of the cave and fit the gate at the request of the Parish Council*).

English Nature have confirmed that the proformas the CSCC is using for the SSSI Caves Audit are acceptable ("excellent", actually!). Alison Moody (WCC) has returned the proforma for Swildon's Hole, and with proformas from the UBSS and the ACG the CSCC have now completed the first phase of 50% of sites on schedule (as at December 4th). (*In fact we have completed more than this*).

Contact with Avon Wildlife Trust (Brownes Folly Mine and other sites on East Mendip are under their administration): The new situation (pending) is that an HSE audit on the safety of the mines is presently being done by an independent mines inspector. The outcome of the report will determine future access to the site(s). There is a possibility that bat monitoring will be affected as those personnel may be prohibited from entering the site(s)! Recreational cavers *should* be unaffected. CB has asked to be put on the emailing list for a copy of the report when published.

Contact with English Nature Wiltshire (Box Mine is under their administration): Unlike AWT they have *not* commissioned a report as this is the responsibility of the multiple landowners, apparently. To reduce graffiti, fires and vandalism grills are to be put on entrances, probably during April or September 2005 (i.e. around the bat breeding season). CB stressed the importance of easy and available access to *bone fide* cavers to avoid problems with forced entry. This was understood entirely (a very pleasant exchange apparently!).

The NCA/BCA C&A Officer has endowed CSCC (and other RC's) with a Leica DISTO Laser Distancemeter (the CSCC one is marked *NCA 12*). The idea is that the device may be used to assist in the surveying of areas where a human presence would be detrimental to the conservation of the cave. (*Our thanks to NCA/BCA for this*).

10. TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Training Officer was not present and no report had been received.

CB said that the Outdoor Activities First Aid Course (with Stuart Marshall of Marlin Training) will take place at the Charterhouse Centre, December 11th/12th 2004. There were 7 places left at the time of writing.

11. EQUIPMENT OFFICER'S REPORT

The Equipment Officer had nothing to report.

12. BOLTING COORDINATOR'S REPORT

The Bolting Coordinator was not present but had sent a report.

Actions from the previous Minutes:

Bolts at the Swildons "Twenty": The lowest left hand bolt of the two "over" the pitch was replaced on the evening of November 4th 2004. The CSCC had subsequently received reports that the right hand bolt was also loose. This was inspected but has been passed as safe (some flexing / lateral deflection is permitted, but rotational movement is more serious). Rotational movement of the left hand bolt of 1-2 mm was present. However it still took 30 minutes work with lump hammer to remove it! AA, CB and BM subsequently performed a "confidence test" on the new bolt on the evening of December 3rd. It took a direct 5 kN load (equivalent to the force of gravity acting on half a tonne) for 15 seconds.

Training additional bolters: Bolts were also placed in Waterwheel Swallet as proposed in the previous Minutes. These placements were used to train AS, CB and another out-of-region bolter. Alison Moody is to be contacted next.

Equipment provision: CB and the ACG have battery powered drills. The CSCC glue "gun" has been relocated. Les Sykes (CNCC Bolting Coordinator) had provided two tubes of glue and two mixing nozzles; however one of the tubes of glue was already out of date when received. BM had brought more glue, and additional nozzles, down with him.

Documentation: AA is waiting for LesW to pass over elements of the existing documentation.

Regarding the inspection regime on Mendip, only the bolts in Priddy Green Sink are out of date.

LesW reminded everyone that the CSCC had agreed previously to bolt Thrupe Lane Swallet (Atlas is already done, but not Slither Pot) and Pinetree Pot.

13. FORTHCOMING EVENTS

LesW announced that Hidden Earth 2005 would be hosted by the Mendip region at Churchill School over the weekend September 23-25th.

SK reminded everyone that in addition the 2005 British Cave Rescue Conference would be hosted by the Mendip Rescue Organisation at Eastwater Farm, over July 1st-3rd.

14. PRESENTATION BY FROME CG

No one from Frome CG was present!

SK explained that after the previous meeting he had been contacted and asked if Frome CG could present details of their conservation work to the CSCC. SK had naturally agreed, but despite two follow up emails and a telephone message there had been no further communication from the contact.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

15.1 - Next BCA Council Meeting

The next meeting of the BCA National Council is in early January 2005. **Items for the Agenda must be placed with the BCA Hon. Secretary (secretary@british-caving.org.uk) by December 30th 2004.**

15.2 - Vacancies on BCA National Council

Most posts on the BCA National Council are up for re-election at the AGM on March 12th 2005. **Nominations for the following are now sought and must be lodged with the BCA Hon. Secretary by midnight on January 3rd 2005:** Chairman (1 year term), Treasurer (3 yr), Publications & Information Officer/Convenor (3 yr), Equipment Officer/Convenor (3 yr), Training Officer/Convenor (1 yr), Conservation & Access Officer/Convenor (2 yr), Legal & Insurance Officer/Convenor (2 yr), **TWO Club Representatives (2 yr), FOUR Individual Representatives (2 yr).**

LesW said that he was standing for the post of Publications & Information Officer.

Note added by the Secretary:

I would like to encourage CSCC Member Clubs to put forward nominations for the two Club Representative positions.

15.3 – BCA/NCA REPRESENTATIVES REPORT

DC suggested that the reportage part of his written report should be taken before the detailed discussions that were to follow. The Meeting agreed.

- Council has accepted the BCA Insurance Officers recommendation that from 2005 cavers will *only* need to pay an insurance subscription through their first club; i.e., there will be no need to pay a “non-caving” subscription for a second (or third, etc) club membership.

- Clubs are reminded that they *must* submit their Club Constitution to the BCA before they can be accepted into the BCA Insurance Scheme. Guidelines on the definition of a Club, and what constitutes an acceptable Constitution may be found on the BCA Website (<http://www.british-caving.org.uk>).

- Council has proposed that there should be Regional Press Officers. *(If anyone believes that they have the right skills to represent the CSCC in this capacity please contact me. SK).*

- Council overturned its longstanding objections to the active promotion of caving. Promotional material is to be produced.

- Regional Councils are encouraged to cultivate relations with local authorities and regional sporting boards as much grant aid is now available on a devolved basis.

- The deadline for the BCA “Design a Logo” competition has been extended until the January Council Meeting.

- Following intervention by the Minister, the HSE appears to have taken on board the representations made by the adventure activities community in respect of Double Rope Technique. But the final HSE report is awaited.

- GP (ex-NCA Webmaster) was requested to discontinue the NCA Website as it was proving confusing to have it running in parallel with the new BCA Website. *(GP responded that he no longer had access to the Website since having changed ISP, but would look into the matter).*

ACTION: GP to “take down” the NCA Website.

16. BCA DISCUSSION

Three documents had previously been circulated and copies were made available at the Meeting. These were: the **CSCC BCA/NCA Representative’s Report** covering the BCA National Council Meetings of May 22nd and October 9th and the “Hub” Meeting of June 13th, the **BCA Secretary’s Notes** on the Meeting of the BCA and Regional Caving Council (RCC) Treasurers held on November 28th, and the **CSCC Treasurer’s Brief Report** on the Meeting of the BCA and RCC Treasurers. These documents will be made available on the CSCC website.

Note added in clarification:

The CSCC Emergency Open Meeting of September 26th passed two resolutions. These formed the backdrop against which the discussions that ensued at the meetings described above, and on the floor, took place. The resolutions were: 1) that “The CSCC believes that the costs of the BCA Administration should be borne by Clubs and Groups” (i.e. not by individual cavers), and 2) “That the CSCC should continue to set its own subscription to be collected locally”. SK.

Here is my attempt to summarise the situation that existed at the point that this Agenda Item was discussed – SK:

After much (apparently heated) discussion the BCA National Council had agreed, for the coming year at least, to set the CIM (Club Individual Member) subscription to zero, effectively adopting the CSCC’s position in Resolution 1. The Hub had previously been proposing a rate of £5 per CIM. However, to offset what would otherwise be a loss of necessary operating income, BCA Club/Group subscriptions then had to rise. A figure of £45 per Club was calculated (it was previously £30 if CIM’s paid). This was seen as unacceptable for smaller Clubs which nationally, it had been discovered during the 2004 insurance exercise, actually contained the majority of Club cavers (25% of Clubs have <20 members, 75% have <30). Thus a scheme of banded Club subscriptions was proposed. To further reduce the financial burden on smaller Clubs (and thereby further encourage them to join the BCA) it was decided that the publications element of BCA membership would be split into “included” and “optional”. This then led to the following table of subscription rates which, it appears, has broad support amongst the RCC Treasurer’s:

Club size (members)	Basic Charge	Publications	Basic Club BCA Sub ex insurance	Optional Publications	Club BCA Sub ex insurance
4 to 10	£15	£5	£20	£5	£25
11 to 20	£25	£5	£30	£5	£35
21 to 30	£35	£5	£40	£5	£45
31 to 40	£40	£5	£45	£5	£50
41 upwards	£50	£5	£55	£5	£60

In addition, the “services” that will be provided to Clubs and their members for the Basic Charge have been detailed (see Minutes of the Hub Meeting of May 9th 2004 or the BCA Treasurer’s Notes on the Meeting of November 28th 2004).

The outstanding issue then became one of how to collect and redistribute the income from these subscriptions...

The existing situation is that each RCC raises income from subscriptions (which vary from RCC to RCC) from its Member Clubs. Some RCC’s also collect subscriptions for the NCA which they pass on. Clubs that are members of more than one RCC, for example, to gain access to caves (e.g. those that need CNCC permits) pay multiple subscriptions.

The mechanism proposed in the BCA Prospectus was rather different. Clubs would pay one subscription to the BCA which would then fund each of the RCC’s at a flat rate multiplied by the number of Clubs (and Individuals) that indicated that they wished to “tithe” their subscription to a particular RCC. Membership of BCA automatically conferred membership of all RCC’s; thus there would be no need to pay multiple RCC subscriptions. The difficulty that CSCC had with this mechanism is that funding went where the cavers were, and not necessarily where the need for funding was greatest. Also CSCC sensed that its historic liaison with its Member Clubs would be diminished or sidelined.

The RCC Treasurer’s Meeting had to consider if there was a way to reconcile these issues without completely abandoning the “One Stop Shop” (OSS) principle on which the BCA Prospectus had been built. If they could not, some RCC’s had indicated that they might walk away from the whole BCA process.

The compromise that emerged is being called the Post-Prospectus “Single Pot” Deal. Essentially BCA will undertake to fund the costs (subject to a mutually agreed “cap”) of the core OSS services provided on its behalf by each RCC (thus ensuring that funding is according to need and not the size of a RCC’s membership). RCC’s may also levy additional local subscriptions, raise other funds, or accept direct membership as they see fit. To ensure fairness and transparency, the RCC Treasurers and the BCA Treasurer will meet at least once a year to review each other books and to set the amount of each RCC’s tithe for the following year. But Clubs and Individuals will simply pay one subscription to the BCA to receive the benefit of membership of all RCC’s, as originally envisaged in the BCA Prospectus.

JR did put forward another alternative mechanism but this was not as widely favoured as the Post-Prospectus Deal.

The RCC Treasurer's Meeting decided that BCA should proceed with the Post-Prospectus Deal whether or not the CSCC decided to adopt it (though the deal has yet to be ratified by the RCC's). The CSCC therefore had to decide if it Post-Prospectus Deal was a compromise it could live with or whether it would stand by its earlier Resolution 2.

Comments made:

In his Report, CW said "It is my view that the CSCC should go forward with the Post-Prospectus system. It probably is not perfect but our representations have been listened to and I'm sure will be in the future. I do not personally think that there are arguments significant enough to merit the CSCC making such a stance." He concludes "From a Treasurer's point of view, we are guaranteed an income for next year, with the ability to raise surplus funds should we wish."

GM said that the Deal was "far more sensible than anything we've had in the past; we'd be foolish not to go for it".

VS was concerned by the size of the banded subscription for a big club like the BEC, but AG and others pointed out that they would not be paying multiple RCC subscriptions.

BM said he understood the concern. But "Speleology" was to become a joint publication with the BCRA which was the origin of the optional £5 publication. So for, say, £60 a Club would get the membership benefits of the BCA, BCRA (except for Cave & Karst Science), and all RCC's. Yes, the higher subscription bands were slightly inflated, but this helped to subsidise the lower bands for smaller Clubs. Bigger Clubs usually had alternative sources of income. But at the end of the day, surely it was better to try and encourage as many Clubs as possible into the BCA?

VS asked when the subscriptions would come into force. BM replied January 1st 2005. The BCA were just waiting for confirmation of the insurance element of the subscription from the Underwriters.

AD asked how Avon Scouts should "count" their membership. Nominally they had some 1200 individuals! BM said it would make more sense to just count the Cave Leaders. LesW asked if there was a case for the Scouts being Associate members of BCA. BM replied that Associate Membership was really there for professional cavers, the Scouts should be considered a Club.

DC then said he had to interject a note of discord. He said that he was aggrieved at the way that the Hub, and the other RCC Treasurer's, had been unwilling to answer the questions he had posed (see the CSCC BCA/NCA Representative's Report) in any detail. Rather, he had been accused of attacking the OSS whilst seeking what he felt were important clarifications for the "needs" of the CSCC that he was, after all, representing.

DC asked why his concerns were not put to the meeting of the RCC's & BCA Treasurer on November 28? GP asked if there was any explanation. BM in declining to comment suggested that the CSCC Treasurer should respond to the question. CW made no response.

AG said that some of the emails he had seen had made "his blood boil". (*I was specifically asked to minute this – SK*). He added that he sincerely hoped there would be no more exchanges of this type and asked everyone in future to consider what they wrote in emails more carefully. DC said that he was quite happy to make the whole correspondence available for others to judge.

LesW agreed with DC, saying that the correspondence he had seen seemed reasonable but answers had not been forthcoming, particularly about *why* the method of funding the BCA had to change. What was meant by the OSS had clearly been fixed in different peoples minds in different ways.

JR said that the CNCC position had *always* been that you put everything in one place and so their Representatives probably considered that an adequate response.

DC said that he felt the CSCC was "being bullied because our choice isn't whether to accept or reject this proposal [the Post-Prospectus Deal], our choice is whether to stay in BCA or not". However he conceded that the Deal was "an improvement on the one proposed in the BCA Prospectus. But is it the best possible method?"

GM offered that the funding had to change because it was the only way to simplify the system.

SK reiterated that some of the CSCC's arguments had persuaded a change of views at the centre and that had to be encouraging for the future.

JR said that the important thing was that we now had a much clearer picture of the services that would be provided *and* an important agreement that the BCA and RCC's will be transparent in their budgeting. Plus there would be the annual discussion to set each years tithe.

VS asked what the alternative was if the CSCC decided not to "opt in". BM said that there was no difference for a Club if the CSCC was outside the BCA if that Club was a member of the BCA. VS then asked if the CSCC could function

outside the BCA. BM replied that it could, *if* it could get insurance (through another scheme) or *did not want* insurance. Several people expressed the view that this would not be a desirable situation.

BM said he wanted to make it clear that if the CSCC joined BCA and adopted the recommendation of the RCC Treasurer's, its activities would not be proscribed. It would be free to levy its own subscription for whatever reason, and it could have direct members in the event that some Clubs did not want to join BCA but wanted to affiliate to the CSCC.

AG asked CW if the CSCC would need additional funds in 2005 beyond the proposed tithe. CW said not.

There was a call for a motion. The following emerged:

“That the CSCC agrees to go forward as a member of the One Stop Shop process (with the Post-Prospectus “Single Pot” Deal) including the elements as set out in the Notes on the Meeting of the BCA and Regional Council Treasurers held on November 28th 2004”. Proposed: JR. Seconded: LindaW.

The Meeting voted: For: 10, Against: 0, Abstentions: 1, Not Entitled to Vote: 6

The motion was therefore carried.

The discussion was closed and SK and AG thanked BM for taking the trouble to attend.

17. DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Saturday 5th February 2005, 10:30