



Council of Southern Caving Clubs

A constituent member of the British Caving Association
www.csccl.org.uk

Agenda for the Annual General Meeting to be held on Saturday 26 Sept 2020, Online Zoom Meeting 19:00.

Agenda Version 5 – Thursday 24 Sept 2020

- 1 Attendance**
- 2 Apologies for absence**
- 3 Approval minutes,**
GM - 29 July 2020.
- 4 Chairman's report**
- 5 Secretary's report** **Frank Tully**
 - 5.1 New Members
- 6 Conservation & access officer's report** **Graham Price & Les Williams**
 - 6.1 Masbury Swallet .
 - 6.2 Loxton Cavern.
 - 6.3 Ubley Warren
 - 6.4 Ubley Warren Reserve – Bat survey
 - 6.5 Cow hole access
 - 6.6 Elm Cave
 - 6.7 Heale Farm Cave
 - 6.8 Blackmore reserve meeting
 - 6.9 Hobnail Hole (Thrupe Lane Swallet)
 - 6.10 Manor Farm Shaft
 - 6.11 CSCC Locks
- 7 Honorary treasurer's report** **Dave Cooke**
- 8 Training officer's report**
- 9 Equipment officer's report** **Andrew Atkinson.**
- 10 BCA rep report**
 - 10.1 See Appendix 2 for report on BCA Council meeting 18 August 2020
 - 10.2 Proposals from CSCC to BCA AGM, which were deferred at the last meeting, to this meeting.
The numbering and wording of the proposals will be the same as published in the agenda of the meeting 29 July 2020 and the minutes of the meeting:
 - 6.1 Arbitrary limit of £750 for regional council access projects administered by the C&A Committee.
 - 6.5 BCA National Council should consider the effect of equalising subscriptions between DIM's and CIM's.
 - 6.7 That the National Council implement the recording and live streaming (where possible) of future Annual General Meetings of the Association.
- 11 Webmasters report** **David Cooke**
- 12 Regional registry officer's report** **Alan Gray**
- 13 Any other Business**
 - 13.1 Crow Section 25/26 Exemptions and preparatory work.



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14 Amendment to CSCC Constitution

Barry Wilkinson of the White Rabbit CG, at the general meeting 29 July 2020 asked for the previously shelved constitutional amendments, to be re-presented at this EGM.

Proposed new constitution is published on the website along with this agenda.

A large number of changes have been applied to the proposed new constitution, please compare with the existing CSCC constitution, prior to the meeting.

15 Election of Officers

- Chairman
Ed Waters has indicated his wish to stand as CSCC chairman.
See Appendix1 for Election Statement.
- Honorary secretary
- Honorary treasurer
- Conservation and access
- Training officer
- Equipment officer
- BCA Rep
- Webmaster
- Regional Registry Officer
- Scrutineer for the accounts (Not an officer post)

16 Forthcoming events

BCA AGM

17 Dates of meetings

- Saturday 26 September 2020 (EGM) 19:00 Zoom Meeting
- Proposed** dates of future meetings
- Friday 20 November 2020 (GM) 19:00
 - Friday 12 February 2021 (GM) 19:00
 - Friday 14 May 2021 (AGM) 19:00



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Appendix 1 Election Statement from Ed Waters,

Dear Southern Cavers,

This letter is to inform you of my intent to stand for the post of Chairman of the Council of Southern Caving Clubs (CSCC) at the EGM to be held on 26th September 2020. As some of you are probably aware, I have been critical of some aspects of how the CSCC goes about its business, and I feel that it is unfair to criticize unless you are prepared to stand up and do something about it. By writing down my thoughts on how the CSCC can be improved well in advance of the EGM I hope that I am giving member clubs a chance to debate my views and decide whether they wish to back me.

I have been a caver for over 30 years and a member, at various times, of 4 CSCC member clubs and currently a member of the Mendip Caving Group. I have been a sporadic attender of CSCC meetings over the last 8 years or so, and have acted as a club representative on occasion.

The key issue facing the CSCC in my view is that of limited representation. Examination of the meeting minutes dating back to 2002 shows that the average voting attendance at meetings is just 8, or around 20% of the member clubs. This also means that in theory just five like minded people could exert control over the activities of CSCC. It has also resulted in the inability to make desperately needed changes to the constitution due to the meetings at which these have been debated not being quorate. This is not intended as a criticism of the small number of people that regularly attend meetings, but a recognition that without wider participation the CSCC will only ever represent a small proportion of its members.

To this end I would like to see changes to the CSCC that will encourage more people, and organisations, to participate. This will require making meetings more accessible, including at least some online meetings, but also encouraging a wider participation in the good work that CSCC does in the field. This will require far better communication not only with member clubs but with the wider southern caving community.

Although Mendip is undoubtedly the hub of southern caving, there are also a rich variety of underground sites across the rest of the south. As such I believe that the CSCC needs to make greater efforts to embrace the wider region by ensuring that people and organisations involved in activities outside of Mendip are more aware of the support that CSCC can provide to them.

Another issue facing the CSCC has been the sometimes toxic relationship with BCA and some other regional councils. This has not been restricted to any single issue, but the CROW debate has been a significant factor. To be fair I believe that this has been part of a wider issue in British caving politics due to a general lack of respect for those who may hold opposing views. This has been evidenced by the recent spate of resignations in BCA and the subsequent appeal from the new BCA Chairman in his opening statement.

If elected I intend to ensure that the culture within the CSCC will support this much needed change by pledging that debate will always be respectful. This does not mean that CSCC will become an echo chamber or a puppet to the BCA Council. There will be differences of opinion, indeed it is vital that there are, and those differences may be made passionately and robustly. However, calling into question someone's motives or insulting them simply because they disagree with your point of view must become completely unacceptable. It should be perfectly possible to remain friendly with those we disagree with and this must be achieved if progress is to be made.

In the past the election of CSCC officers has been a less than transparent process, often apparently sorted out in smoke filled rooms or at the last minute before the AGM with the voting representatives given little if any prior notice to form views on who to back. By posting this letter I hope I am bucking this trend and allowing members clubs to decide whether or not they like the sound of what I would like the CSCC to become. It would be great if other candidates would come forward, as a real choice of Chairman, and other officers, can only be a positive outcome for the organization. I would however call for others interested in the role to break cover now, tell us what your plans are and give the members a chance to make a real decision on the future of the CSCC.

I am intent on making CSCC change for the better and I hope you will give me your support,

Ed Waters, 28th August 2020.



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Appendix 2 for report on BCA Council meeting 18 August 2020

CSCC Representatives Report on BCA Matters to the CSCC AGM, Including a Report on the Council Meeting on 15th August 2020

BCA Council Meeting, 15th August 2020

The council meeting was held by Zoom and lasted two hours 15 minutes. Linda Wilson attended as CSCC rep, with Ed Waters in attendance as observer. As before, the private message function on Zoom enabled us to remain in close contact throughout the meeting. Phil Rowsell continued his excellent chairmanship and we felt the meeting was both positive and productive.

The agenda for the meeting contains numerous reports, and rather than re-writing these, please refer to the online copy here for the bulk of the reports: [https://british-caving.org.uk/wiki3/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=about:documents:council_meetings:2020-09-03 - 15 sept 2020 bca council agenda - final 1 .pdf](https://british-caving.org.uk/wiki3/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=about:documents:council_meetings:2020-09-03_-_15_sept_2020_bca_council_agenda_-_final_1_.pdf). The comments below in each area will be kept brief.

The minutes have not yet been circulated, so this report is taken from the notes Ed and I made during the meeting. The minutes will be circulated when they are available. Ed and I did not consider there was anything that needed to be put to CSCC reps prior to the meeting, however, it would help to have a discussion at the AGM as to how much information reps would like to receive on an ongoing basis between reports to CSCC meetings.

At the beginning of the meeting, Phil reported the death of Mick Day, BCA's president. Mick had also, for many years, chaired BCA's predecessor, the Nation Caving Association. Mick did a vast amount for British caving over a very long period and he will be much missed.

The minutes of the previous meeting (on the BCA website in draft here: https://british-caving.org.uk/wiki3/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=about:documents:council_meetings:20200818_bca_council_minutes_final.pdf) were presented. There had been a request from Tim Allen (who was not able to be present at the meeting) to amend the minutes. This was regarding the wording of the basis on which the complaint, made by him and others, had been withdrawn. This resulted in several emails to council, but the Executive believed the minutes were accurate. As such a proposal was made that the minutes were accurate as written. The meeting voted unanimously to accept the minutes (there were no objections and no abstentions). There were no matters arising from the minutes.

IT Report

Ari Cooper-Davies, the IT Working Group Convenor gave the meeting a tour of the new website. He stressed that this is a work in progress and draws heavily on prior work done by Dave Cooke and Gary Douthwaite. The website has facility for shared events (with BCRA and others), it will contain the newsletter and past issues. There will be a member login which will enable members to manage their details. This intention is for it to be as much of a one-stop shop as is possible. The website looked fresh and engaging and everyone was impressed and thanked Ari for all his hard work on this.



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Treasurer's Report

In addition to his circulated report, the Treasurer asked everyone to send in any expense claims ASAP, including CSCC. **Action CSCC.**

CroW Report re Judicial Review

David Rose gave a report on the Welsh Judicial Review case regarding CroW. Leave to proceed with the review was refused by the first judge on the grounds that the committee Stuart France had applied to join was not part of the Welsh Government. This application for judicial review has now been renewed and will proceed to an oral review before a different judge. The BCA's lawyers will claim that even if the committee is a different body, they will then be joined into the action. The action will be held in early October. David said that in his view, if this stage of the procedure is lost, it will be 'the end of the day'. He did not feel an appeal would be a good idea.

Radon Report

Gethin Thomas stated that the radon information is now on the BCA website. The short version of this is that radon is higher in summer than winter and professional cavers might need to be selective about what caves they access and when. Gethin would like to draft an accessible version of Radon Underground for cavers. Rostam offered to take this on as Publications and Information Officer. Bob Mehew commented that the next step might be to see what information Access Controlling Bodies should have on the caves and mines they control access to and to look at sampling radon in caves used by recreational caving. Note that this issue has already arisen with bodies controlling access to mines as the Mining Inspectorate has taken over from the ALA/HSE in regulating recreational access to abandoned mines. Phil suggested parking this to a future meeting, which was agreed.

Qualifications Management Committee

Juliet Parker-Smith gave a potted history of the leadership and awards schemes which are mainly for people leading young people as part of their jobs. A lot of info had ended up out of date and the database was unwieldy, so the QMC set up to address this. Their most recent achievement is an online management system for the info that used to be in the handbook. This is now more economical to run and the administration is now online. They have also done a lot of work on the equipment front, They are also in touch with the Mines Inspectorate who have taken on the health and safety aspects of 'adventure miners'. QMC's vision is to keep their award holders up to date and be a supportive part of BCA.

Data Collection Report

There had been a discussion on Tim Allen's report on the council email list and comments made that an analysis of retention rates would also be valuable. P&I will take over the analysis and also hope to provide a data service and to take a provide professional advice on running polls. They are also planning to produce a historical model.



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Conservation and Access

Will Burn said there were four parts to the C&A group terms of reference: 1) to provide guidelines and promotional material for conservation. He would like to improve presentation and update this. 2) assist regional councils when requested. 3) campaign nationally to improve access and (depending on the result of the CroW action) persuade NGOs of the value of caving and 4) undertake C&A related work.

AGM – To be held 11th October 2020

A long discussion was held on this. The Executive took the decision to proceed with an AGM in 2020 despite the challenges presented by covid-19 restrictions. This will be held online. There is already a packed agenda with 21 reports. Even allowing for a minute on each, this will be time-consuming. Everyone is requested to keep their reports brief and to send these to Russell as quickly as possible.

Various positions are vacant, as set out in the agenda. Phil intends to give all candidates one minute to speak then will allow three minutes for questions. An error was made regarding advertising the group vacancy. To allow time for this vacancy to be publicised, there will be an extension of two weeks up until midnight on 30th September to allow a candidate to be proposed and seconded. Candidates are encouraged to supply a personal statement in support of their nomination.

Phil expressed strong reservations as chairman as to the difficulties of running an online AGM. On Zoom (and other platforms) it is only possible to see a certain number of people at once, and the order of faces/names on screen jumps around depending on who has spoken last. No one has any idea how many people will wish to attend the meeting, and on the basis that this will be live-streamed for anyone who wishes to watch the meeting, active participation will be limited to 100 attendees who will be required to register their attendance one week in advance of the meeting. This will be dealt with on a first come first served basis. This motion was carried (with one vote against).

As CSCC rep, I must stress that this was a long discussion and it was acknowledged that not everyone will be in favour of this solution, however council hopes that people will understand the very difficult constraints of an online meeting and that BCA have never attempted anything like this before. An online AGM does present significant organisational and IT challenges and that the chair's job will be very difficult. Please approach this in a spirit of cooperation in difficult times and remember that both registered attendees, members watching online and all other members will have the opportunity after the meeting to vote on any proposals.

With regard to the numerous proposals for constitutional amendments, Phil hopes that in view of the Executive's strong commitment to the revision of both the constitution and the manual of operations and the formation of a working group to take this one that the proposers will be willing to withdraw their proposals. **[Post meeting note: an email from Phil as chair is appended as an annex to this report. CSCC will need to discuss this at the AGM and take a view on whether, in the light of this appeal, they are prepared to withdraw the proposals.]**



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A long discussion was held on whether, if proposals are not withdrawn, amendments from the floor should be allowed or not. Comments were made that in the past, this has resulted in long negotiations on alternative words and that in view of the fact that voting on the proposals themselves will be done online after the meeting, it was generally felt that managing voting in an online meeting would be very difficult. The end result was (with one abstention) that the chair will not accept amendments from the floor on any proposals for constitutional amendment.

An equally long discussion was held on the question of voting on nominations for council positions. Rostam has produced a report on this which was circulated with the agenda. Concern was expressed by Ed and I for CSCC that the idea of voting 'against' a candidate, particularly if there was only one candidate for a position as this has very negative associations. The end result was a proposal that if, for example, there are three vacancies, that you can vote up to three times with a cross. You can vote to leave a position vacant, rather than voting for a candidate. So each candidate will be listed, with the addition of a box where you can vote to leave a position vacant. This proposal was accepted as the best compromise.

With regard to the proposal to abolish the current categories of Club Individual Member (CIM) and Direct Individual Member (DIM) and replace these with just Individual Members, please read and consider the report and if you have any questions, please refer these to the chair. My understanding is that if club members wish, they can still use their club treasurer as the conduit to report the necessary membership information to BCA.

Other Matters

David Botcherby, Bob Mehew and Russell Myers met to discuss the need for more support to university clubs and clubs generally due to the covid situation and they will be putting together some guidelines. Caving is on the list of approved sports. It was agreed that the Exec can deal with this without the need to run anything back past council as time is pressing.

Ed asked for a risk assessment pro-forma, as a covid one will be needed for the activity to take place, Bob commented that this is not a simple matter. This will be looked at asap.

The date of the next meeting is likely to be on 21st October, This will be notified when decided.



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Addendum:

Email received by CSCC Secretary from Phil Rowsell regarding AGM proposals. The same email was sent to Tim Allen and Rostam Namaghi who have also proposed constitutional amendments.

Dear AGM Proposer,

I am writing to you as Acting Chair of BCA regarding your proposals which you have submitted for the BCA AGM in October. We currently have 18 proposals! This is a considerable number to attempt to progress through an AGM, leading to a potentially very lengthy AGM.

Running the numbers even if we only spent 5 minutes on each with speech and questions this amounts to 90 minutes (1 1/2 hours minimum), and realistically it will be far longer.

With the formation of the Constitution and Manual of Operations Review Working Group (CMoOR), to review both these documents and produced revised documents for approval by council and the 2021 AGM, I am asking you to consider whether you would consider pulling those (or some of those) relating to these two documents. Obviously this is your decision.

I will ensure you that they will be considered carefully and that the CMoOR WP will consult you about your proposal during this review to fully understand and ensure you we have fully considered your proposal/s.

If you decide that you are prepared to pull any proposals please send both Russell (BCA Sec) and myself an email, indicating which email you are prepared to pull for inclusion into the CMoOR working group.

Furthermore there are several that are similar in nature, that by possible pre-discussion prior to the AGM, agreement could be reached to combine these proposals again reducing the number.

Thank you for your consideration.

Phil Rowsell

CSCC Rep's Comments

Since taking on the role on an acting basis, I have attended two, two-hour council meetings, each of which has required a minimum of an hour's preparation. In addition, there is the time taken writing reports, which has been a minimum of one to two hours, in each case. I haven't done a count of the number of emails received on the council email list, but these are rapidly approaching 100 or more (which places into insignificance compared with the 2,000 the acting BCA secretary has had to contend with!) but the role does clearly entail a significant amount of paperwork and staying on top of emails, not all of which need action, but all need reading. I have also liaised closely with Ed at all times.

This is clearly a time of great change for BCA. Phil has been forthright in his observations that BCA is a badly broken organisation, crippled by continuous infighting in Council, coupled with an unhealthy culture of bullying and lack of respect for others. He and the rest of the executive have made it clear that that this sort of behaviour will not be tolerated, and they have taken a strong stand on this.



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Phil has encouraged council members to take a positive stance and, when talking to others, to promote the BCA and to indicate that they are changing for the better and to highlight some of the benefits that a strong national body can bring. He has also asked people to put a stop to openly criticising people or organisations for things in the past and to try to speak positively of them in view of the fact that they too might be changing, and if this is not possible, to refrain from commenting. Phil's comments have in general been positively received by council members and my own experience in the two meetings I have attended is that his appeals for a more positive and respectful attitude have generally been welcomed.

My own experiences as acting CSCC rep on Council have been positive ones and after a great deal of thought and discussion with Ed, I have decided to stand for the role of CSCC rep on BCA council at the CSCC AGM. I believe I have a good working knowledge of how BCA operates, as well as a long history of involvement with CSCC. Ed and I have worked well together and would continue to do so if he is elected as chair. I believe I have a good working relationship with the BCA executive and the other CSCC officers, and I confirm that I can and will (if elected) fully represent the views of CSCC at council meetings.

It would help to have direction from the meeting as to what depth of report is considered desirable for future meetings. I have erred on the side of length for the last two reports as I feel that during a time of change in particular, it's important to have as much information as possible to enable reps to report to and represent their clubs.

Linda Wilson, acting CSCC rep on BCA Council.

Full report compiled and presented by Linda Wilson and Ed Waters

21 September 2020.