

Here are **my** thoughts on funding the Regional Councils (RCs)

The types of expenditure of a RC can be broken down as follows:

- Direct Admin Costs – The cost of running the RC.
 - This would include costs of posting minutes to Officers, Officer travel expenses, room hire for meetings etc.
- Per Member Costs. – The incremental cost of each member.
 - This would include the costs of their minutes, Newsletter or Journal etc.
- Good Works – The cost of services to the wider caving community.
 - This would include C&A projects, Website, Caver Fairs etc.

To take those in reverse order:

Good Works (GW)

It seems to me that the existing BCA grant mechanism is available for Good Works, certainly for the C&A element. I.e. an application is made on a per-project basis to the BCA and it is either funded or not depending upon its merits. The chief merit is that the wider caving community benefit from the results of the project.

Items such as the Caver Fairs are more complex. I think the overall financial risk should remain with the organisers but elements within it can benefit from the existing BCA Training Grants.

So in summary this aspect RC works can be funded by BCA grants if it meets the relevant criteria and by the RCs own funds if not.

NB, no change required here.

Per Member (PM) Costs

Clearly since the costs are directly attributable to the member the member should pay them.

NB, no change required here.

Direct Admin (DA) Costs

Both the members and the wider caving community benefit from the work of the RCs although I would say the local community largely represented by the members benefit most. Therefore there is an argument for the BCA to pay part of these costs. Further I would say these costs are roughly the same for all RCs since they all have approximately the same number of officers.

I propose that the BCA gives each RC an annual non-discretionary maintenance grant. It should aim to fund approximately half of the average DA costs of the RCs. In other words it calculates the DA costs of a typical RC and halves them. Say that comes to £200. It would pay each of the RC £200 on the 1st of January a maintenance grant with no strings attached. It's the same figure for all regional councils to cut the beaurocracy and quibbling. DCUC would probably do very well out of it but I'm quite happy to live with that.

NB, for those whose eyes are glazing over, this is the new bit up for discussion.

Implicit in the above is that the RC continue to set their own subscription, just at a lower rate to take into account the increased funding from the BCA.

Advantages of this system:

- The BCA maintenance grant supports the nationally important work of the RCs. This will be of particular benefit to RCs with a small membership.
- The RC continues to set its own subscription – a key issue for the CSCC.
- The RC maintains autonomy over its expenditure. Clearly it potentially has less autonomy on BCA grant aided projects, but it still has a mechanism for raising funds if the BCA fails to deliver. For example if the grant gets bogged down in bureaucracy or a communication failure – such as the CSCC application for funds to fence Star Mine.
- The RC is not entirely dependant upon the BCA for funding.
- The money (equals power) remains with the RCs rather than BCA. Devolution is better than centralisation.
- Members will hold the RC to account at its AGM on how the money was spent. This is because in part it's the member's money that is being spent. This would not be the case if the RC were fully funded by BCA. In that case the RC representatives would be scrutinising how other RC spent their money at the BCA AGM and or a much greater reliance on the BCA Treasurer to audit RC spending. A much less happy prospect.
- The maintenance grant is simple to calculate and administer.
- The same maintenance grant is given to all regions to avoid argument.
- The maintenance grant is non-discretionary so the RCs know its coming and can rely on it when budgeting.
- This is an evolution rather than a revolution of the current situation. I prefer evolution - people get hurt in revolutions.
- It is easy to explain to the caving community, I can do it in two sentences. "The BCA is now going to give £200 annually to each of the RCs to support the part of their work that is nationally important. We are going to up the BCA Group subscription £3.50 (rather than £15) to fund it."

Your comments are invited.

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