

CSCC Representatives Report on BCA Matters to the CSCC General Meeting, February 2021

Change of Chair - Again

Since my last report to the November 2020 CSCC meeting, the BCA has seen yet another change at the top, due to Phil Rowsell's resignation as chair for personal reasons, just before Christmas. BCA secretary Russell Myers stepped into the position as acting chair, with Allan Richardson taking over as acting secretary. During his brief spell at the helm, Phil had started to steer BCA out of some very turbulent waters, making it plain that council members needed to adhere to better and more respectful standards of behaviour.

Russell and Allan were confirmed in the roles at the Council meeting on 2nd February. I think that together with Howard Jones as treasurer, BCA has a strong and capable executive, capable of continuing the work started by Phil. They will remain in post until the next AGM, which is scheduled for October 2021, a year after the last virtual AGM by Zoom. A proposal by some council members in favour of an earlier AGM in June lost the vote. My vote as CSCC rep was in favour of an October AGM, as I believe that a period of stability is what BCA needs and I think that the current executive can offer that, whilst also enabling BCA to make positive progress towards being an organisation that cavers actively want to join, rather than being viewed as simply a provider of insurance.

The council meeting on 2nd December 2020 was the last meeting chaired by Phil Rowsell.

Radon

Before the training proposals were discussed, there was a lengthy debate on the subject of radon. Chris Boardman (Safeguarding Officer) proposed an extension of the monitoring scheme to caves used by recreational cavers, whereas in the past it has been concerned only with monitoring of caves used by the commercial sector. I reported on this and other matters from that meeting in my email to club reps on 21st December.

Training

The main item of business at the December council meeting was intended to be the proposed changes affecting the training committee and clarifying its relationship with the Qualifications Management Committee (QMC). These were circulated to CSCC club reps and were the subject of a lengthy discussion in a CSCC Officers' meeting. The feedback received from those CSCC clubs who responded to the consultation were broadly in favour of the executive's proposed changes.

I also reported in detail in that email on the outcome of the discussion and votes on the training proposals that were able to be considered. The remainder were deferred. These were intended for discussion at the council meeting on 2nd February 2021, but they were hived off to a separate meeting for this purpose intended to be held on 16th February, however this meeting has had to be postponed due to personal reasons affecting the training officer. A further date has not yet been set for this. Nigel Atkins, the Training Officer, has proposed a motion to set aside the votes on training passed at the December meeting. As a matter of principle, I do not believe that attempts should be made to set aside a democratic vote at the previous meeting when the only change in circumstance is the change of chair. It is clear

from correspondence sent to council that Nigel does not support these changes. To try to reopen an earlier vote so quickly entirely negates the time already spent on this matter and would set an unfortunate precedent whereby anyone who loses a vote could keep reopening the same matter. In the absence of any new information, and subject to further discussion, if needed, with CSCC's training officer, I propose to vote inline with the earlier mandate unless a change to this is made by the general meeting.

Three Counties Traverse

A proposal by Russell Myers of a BCA project to make a single, end to end traverse of the Three Counties system was debated. The intention behind this is to set up and carry out something to inspire and excite cavers post-lockdown. Whether or not this could proceed this summer is, as yet, unknown. Concerns were expressed by some people over the proposed timing and a suggestion was made to defer this to next year. There were also reservations about spending BCA money on this, as a provisional request for a funds allocation of approximately £4,000 was not received with much enthusiasm. I think this is a would be a great way of raising BCA's profile and the funds requested are modest for a marketing opportunity of this magnitude. If this is financed by participating clubs or crowdfunded instead, this would be a lost opportunity for BCA to be strongly associated with something that could well inspire future generations of cavers in a (hopefully) post-covid world. While the proposal itself was broadly accepted by council, there was no commitment made on a financial front. If anyone has views on this, please let me know.

Insurance

As previously reported, there have been two recent potential claims on the insurance policy and Howard Jones was asked for some guidance on what should be done if a member is on the receiving an of eg a complaint of property damage, eg to a wall or a fence. Howard says he has taken this up with the broker and awaits a reply, however it seems like that this advice will mirror that already given by motor insurers who simply make it clear that liability must not, under any circumstances, be accepted. Although this puts people in an uncomfortable position, most people will understand that this is standard where insurers are concerned. Howard is also trying to clarify the belief that the landowner cover under the policy also extends to new members. This was believed to be the case, but the correspondence relating to this has not yet been located and investigations/discussions are continuing.

Wellbeing Policy

For the last three months, I have been working with Russell Myers and a few others in an informal group looking at how BCA can help wellbeing in cavers. The group has formulated a short policy statement on the subject and has put together an extensive list of links (predominantly with a northern bias at the moment but it is hoped that this will extend over time to other areas). The group hope that this statement and the links will appear on the BCA website soon as the matter of wellbeing is a now pressing one for many cavers. Working with Russell and others on this has been a rewarding use of time and demonstrates that BCA is trying to help its members in new ways. I have spent approximately four hours on this work.

Conflict of Interests

The conflict of interest policy, previously circulated to reps, was discussed and Howard Jones agreed to look at this again with a view to incorporating the points from the discussion. After the meeting, I helped Howard work on the document.

Crow Judicial Review

There was nothing to report on this. There has been no judgement on whether leave to appeal will be granted.

Proposed Regional Council in Northern Ireland

A request from an individual to form a new Regional Council in Northern Ireland was turned down, on the recommendation of the executive. Several members, including me, spoke strongly against the formation of a new regional body there as caving in Ireland has always been well represented by the Spelaeological Union of Ireland (SUI) who are recognised by the relevant sporting bodies in both the north and south of Ireland. The exec's recommendation to refuse this request was approved. I voted in line with the exec's recommendation after stating, in the interests of transparency, that I am a long-standing member of SUI and have caved in Ireland for over 40 years. There are several clubs in CSCC that have long-standing links with Irish caving and I hope they agree with the stance I took.

Caving Events

The proposed BCA run summer caving event in Yorkshire has been cancelled due to covid. However, it's still possible that the proposed trip to the Pierre Saint Martin might be able to go ahead, and the request for a permit has been submitted.

As CSCC BCA rep, I have also participated in CSCC officers' meetings by Zoom.

Time spent on CSCC/BCA matters since our last meeting approximately 16 hours on attendance at three council meetings, officers' meetings, emails and telephone discussions, time spent on wellbeing group, reading papers and writing reports. It soon mounts up!

Linda Wilson,

CSCC rep on BCA Council.

10 February 2021