

Dear Chair, CSCC committee.

The public minutes of the CSCC meeting on 20th November 2020 have only recently been brought to our attention. Section 8 makes unsubstantiated accusations about the UKcaving forum which we reject, namely;

- In the past two years we (CSCC) have been singled out on the forum for trolling and abuse by both the users of UKcaving and the moderators.
- UKcaving has a long history of trolling and unmoderated bullying.

It is unsurprising to us that these comments are made by two individuals with a personal axe to grind and an anti UKcaving agenda. We hope the CSCC will allow a right to reply and treat this letter as such.

UKcaving is great source of information, connection, news and entertainment, which is widely used and viewed by cavers from all regions of the country, including Mendip. It is based on a discussion forum where, from time to time, challenging and heated topics in the caving community are aired. Occasionally, contributors take things too far and a post will be reported by other forum users. As soon as a post is reported, an email notification is sent to all our moderators, who are based in each of the main caving regions, including Mendip. While most reports are simply the original contributor asking for a change to be made, very rarely a report relates to bullying, intimidation or offensive comments; such reports are taken very seriously by all our moderators.

Reported posts and actions associated with these are permanently logged and visible to all moderators. Where offences do occur, individuals can be placed on "watched" or "pre-moderated" status allowing their activity to be monitored or screened before appearing in public; in very rare cases some users have been banned for repeated offence. Reports of bullying, intimidating or offensive behaviour are always discussed on the moderators private board and with the exception of swiftly removing offending content if required, no decision is made by any one individual. If individuals within the CSCC do feel that bullying has been directed at them/ the organisation, we would strongly encourage them to report the content in question so that it can be investigated.

We would also like to take issue with the following comment,

- Tav advertised his new guide to Mendip on UKcaving and within minutes the thread was renamed Guide to Mendips locked caves.

The Guide was not 'advertised' as such on UKcaving but we did try to promote the book as we normally do with any caving guide or book. You can see the thread here which was

viewed 7,500 times <https://ukcaving.com/board/index.php?topic=26154.0> but there is no renaming of the thread as stated in the CSCC minutes. We can find no evidence other than an anecdotal story of a doctored picture which emerged on Facebook. In addition to promoting Tav's guide we have helped many Mendip based events such as: sponsoring the Mendip Photo Competition, promoting the JRat digging award, sponsoring and promoting Mendip Cavefest and Mendip based CHECC forums and we will continue to promote cave related media and events wherever they are.

Finally, we note that CSCC regularly uses Facebook. This is the same Facebook which has recently been all over the global news for trying to bully an entire continent. It is widely accepted that trolling and bullying are common on Facebook. Far worse even as the platform is well reported for heinous posts of hate, racism, extremist views, revenge porn, incitement to riot and even terrorist beheadings. From our perspective there does seem to be a double standard at play in CSCC's view of social media.

We would encourage CSCC to use UKcaving to get a positive message across to cavers and those it represents just as other organisations do. CNCC and DCA have been particularly successful in using UKcaving alongside other media to promote their work. We attach to this letter two graphs from Rob Middleton's masters dissertation which give a snapshot of how the regional councils are perceived.

We do hope that we can put any history behind us and all move forward to a better future where we work together to help and promote caving in the UK.

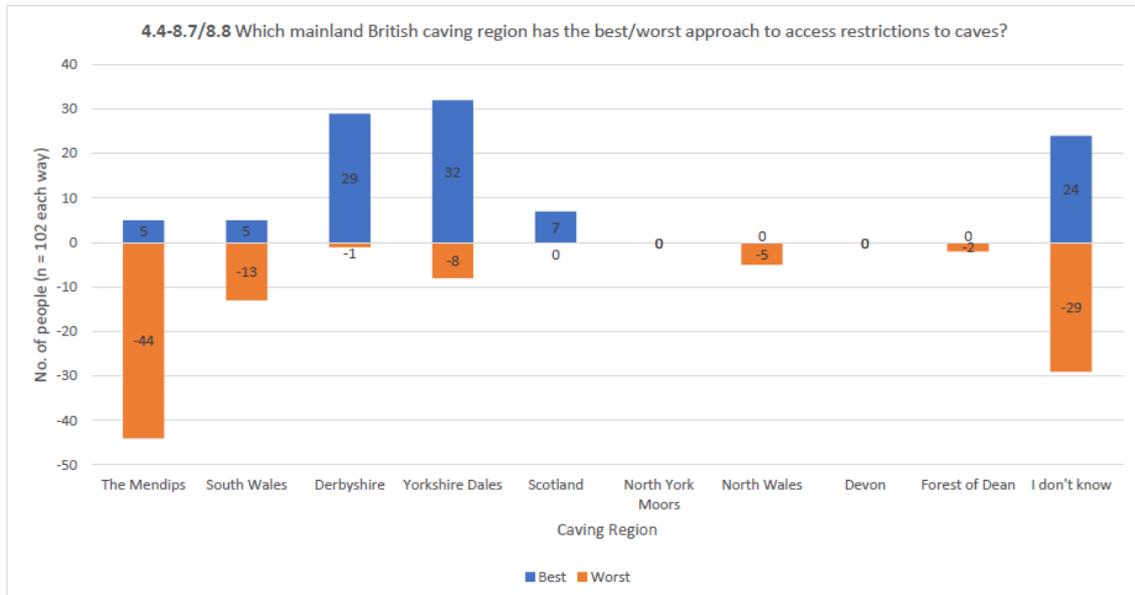
Best regards,

Tim & Jane Allen

On behalf of UKcaving

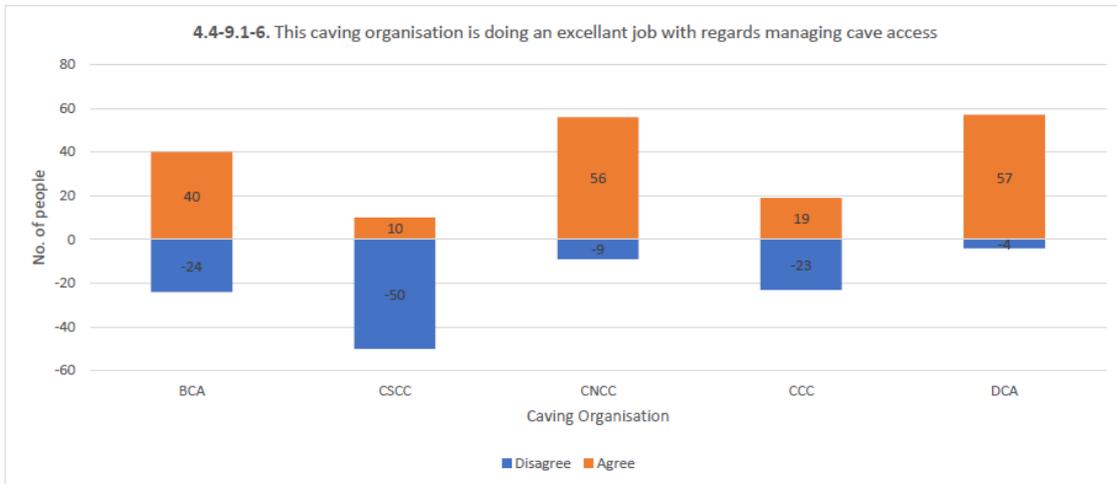
15th March 2021

Attachments



The Mendips is widely regarded as the worst area regarding access restrictions with 43% of the vote. Also of note is the popularity of both Derbyshire (28%) and Yorkshire Dales (31%) access restrictions while in both cases a significant minority did not feel able to comment (Best 24%, Worst 28%). Slight anomalies were noted in both Scotland (entirely positive with 7% of the vote), and North Wales (entirely negative with 5% of the vote) both of which are minor caving regions with limited visitors.

The graph below shows the positive (agree or strongly agree) and negative (disagree or strongly disagree) responses to each statement for the BCA and the four largest regional councils.



The BCA is reasonably well supported regarding its work in relation to access restrictions, and seen as fairly progressive (despite interviews to the contrary from TA and AH) although both mean values were <4 suggesting only gentle support. Of those with an opinion, there was a strong view that CSCC was not doing a good job, though this would be worth cross-correlating as the variance on this issue was almost at the threshold (0.97) even including all the 'I don't know' data sets. The number willing to comment on the CCC was the lowest at only 41% suggesting there is limited knowledge of its work with regards access. Of those with an opinion both DCA and CNCC were typically highly regarded with mean values >4 suggesting strong support for their access work.