



Council of Southern Caving Clubs

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Officers Reports for the Annual General Meeting

To be held on Friday 12 May 2023

Online Zoom Meeting 19:00

Chair's Report: Ed Waters

It is nearly three years since I chaired my first CSCC meeting in July 2020 during a time of some controversy. In that time I feel that much progress has been made in improving the culture of meetings, better representation of members and critically with the relationship with the BCA. Two areas I would have liked to make more progress were access policy and how CSCC could better represent cavers who are not affiliated to member clubs, I hope the future Chair will be able to tackle these more effectively than I was able to. I am not a political animal, and have never relished involvement in the unglamorous activities that go unseen in the background that play such a crucial role in enabling us to enjoy ourselves underground. As such, although I have enjoyed many aspects of the role, the AGM will be my last meeting before standing down as previously notified to members.

At this AGM we have several officer positions for which nominations have not been received, namely Chair, Communications and Training. Given that no formal nominations have been received, the constitution allows nominations for these to be made from the floor at the AGM. I would encourage all southern cavers to have a think about whether they could spare the time to carry out one of these vital roles to help out the caving community. Although only nominated representatives of member clubs are able to vote at the AGM, any caver is welcome to attend as an observer. Though you may not have a vote, you will still be able to contribute to the debate, and as such influence any votes that take place.

Secretary's Report: Frank Tully

No report received



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Conservation & Access Officer's Report: Wayne Starsmore

Please find below the Conservation & Access Officer's Report. This covers the period since the last meeting on 13th February 2023.

Five Buddles Sink

The manhole cover, over the Cornish Shaft entrance to Five Buddles Sink, has been opened and framework cleaned to prevent the cover sticking in future. A descent was made and the shaft appears to be in good condition. A through-trip was made to the Wheelpit entrance.

Singing River Mine

A further quotation has been received for the replacement lid for Singing River Mine. Phil Candy, Blacksmith, has submitted a design along with a quote of £550 plus approx. £200 extra for galvanising. The BCA C&A Working group have approved funding for the project.

I am awaiting the landowner to agree an outline access agreement. This includes a minimum 12 month access duration and the return of the lid if the agreement is subsequently cancelled. Once agreed the lid will be ordered and installed.

Swildon's Changing Barn

A funding application, to replace the floor in the Swildon's changing barn, was approved by the BCA C&A Working Group. A few days later the Somerset Community Foundation confirm they will provide a grant of £2000 to complete the work.

The work will be undertaken between the 10th and 26th June. Please note that the barn will not be available between these dates and cavers are asked to change discretely on the green.

Please could anyone who wants to help refit the floor email CandA@csccl.org.uk and let me know which weekend(s) they are available (10/11, 17/18, 24/25).

Longleat

No response has been received from Longleat regarding re-instating caver access. Several letters have been sent to James Heappy, the MP for Cheddar, asking for his advice and assistance. Unfortunately he has yet to respond.

We will now make a direct appeal to Lord Weymouth to see if he can help or at least explain why access is being withheld.

Holly Bush Shaft

No progress has been made since the last meeting to get Landowner permission to visit Holly Bush Shaft.

Nettle Pot

The padlock at Nettle Pot has been swapped for a new style CSCC one. Subsequently, a telescopic aluminium ladder and rope have been removed from below the "Rock of Damocles" and the danger area below has been taped off. If anyone knows who the ladder belongs to please ask them to get in touch with me to arrange its return.

Wookey Hole Cave

The access agreement for "Dry Cavers" was signed off by Wookey Hole Caves and has been in full operation since. So far some 17 trips have taken place, allowing 85 individual cavers to visit the areas beyond Chamber 20. The agreement was reviewed on the 28th March with a representative from Wookey Hole Cave and they are very happy with how it is operating.

As an aside, if anyone has any photographs of the cave beyond the areas that the show cave visitors normal see, then please could you send copies to Karen Brixey-Watts (karen@wookey.co.uk) so she can consider including them in a future "The Wookey you know and the Wookey you don't" project.

Compton Martin Ochre Mine

The land containing Compton Martin Ochre Mine is up for auction. Unfortunately it is included in a lot with 28 acres of agricultural land with a starting bidding price of £200,000. I have spoken to the landowner and they are currently unwilling to separate out the smaller enclosure that contains the mine. I will monitor the situation and either contact the new owner or, if the lot does not sell, the existing owner to ensure access continues.

Future Priorities

In the coming months I will be concentrating on the following priorities:-



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- 1) Continue negotiations with Longleat.
- 2) Progress the items listed in the report.

If anyone has anything else they would like progressing then please let me know.



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Honorary Treasurer's Report: Tom Harrison

Having offered to take over the position at the AGM last year, it has taken a little longer than I would have hoped to have got to grips with the Treasurer's role for the CSCC!

Understanding the BCA regional funding mechanism and the actual transfer of access to the accounts has taken some considerable time. At least we can feel safe in the knowledge that any nefarious attempt to gain control of the CSCC accounts would be thwarted by NatWest's incredibly long-winded processes!

Other than the BCA Funding, income for 2022 was under £100, with the subs rising as our non-BCA club paid for 2022 and 2023 in 2022. Tasked with looking at other ways to raise income and on the back of an excellent suggestion to look at Hinkley Point grants, I found the Mendip Hills Fund which we successfully applied for and received £2000 from in February 2023 and will show in next year's accounts.

Much of the expenditure was for work completed before the AGM last year. According to the BCA Treasurer and C&A Officer, this has all been approved, so I will submit the claim after the audit of this year's accounts has been completed.

Paying those expenses left us in a precarious position of having only a few hundred pounds in the accounts. The grant has helped to correct this, and this year's claim will return the accounts to a much healthier state.

Finally, thank you to David Cooke for his assistance in the handover of the treasurer role and for auditing the accounts and to the CSCC officers for their assistance during the year.



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CSCC Accounts Summary 2022

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31st December 2022

		2022	2021
		£	£
Income			
Subs		60.00	30.00
Donations	Note 1	-	-
Net Interest		0.36	0.06
BCA Funding	Note 2	2,350.90	3,551.67
Sundry		-	153.00
Photography Workshop		30.00	-
Total Income		2,441.26	3,734.73
Expenditure			
	Core		
Officer Travel Expenses	Note 3	-	3.00
Conservation Tape		-	28.73
Bolting - Ubley Warren Pot		-	15.78
Replacement Padlocks & Keys		-	365.89
Pondsmead Gates x 2		-	1,200.00
Compton Martin Gate		654.00	654.00
Loxton Entrance Stabilisation		-	77.00
Ubley Warren Pot Stabilisation		-	36.00
Maesbury Swallet Gate		-	8.00
Cow Hole		-	16.50
Stoke Lane Fencing		702.00	-
Waterwheel Gate Repair		414.00	-
Manor Farm Mine Shaft		702.00	-
Manor Farm Cave		2,580.00	-
Stoke Lane Main Entrance		1,020.00	-
Nettle Pot Cave Door Repair		36.00	-
Photography Course		100.00	-
Sundry		-	-
Total Expenditure		6,208.00	2,350.90
Surplus / (Deficit)		(3,766.74)	1,383.83



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Statement of Funds Available as at 31st December 2022

	2022 £	2021 £
Balance brought forwards from previous year		
Current account	3,573.77	2,190.00
Reserve account	505.60	505.54
Cash	-	-
	4,079.37	2,695.54
Surplus / (Deficit)	(3,766.74)	1,383.83
Balance carried forwards to next year	312.63	4,079.37
At 31st December		
Current account	206.67	3,573.77
Reserve account	105.96	505.60
Cash	-	-
Funds Available	312.63	4,079.37

Notes

1. Donated officer travel expenses £0.
2. Prior year's BCA claim paid in full.
3. Core expenditure is claimable from BCA. The 2022 claim will be £6208.00.

DRAFT



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Equipment Officer's Report: Andrew Atkinson

Currently, since February I have been injured and unable to cave. I have ripped multiple tendons in my shoulder. no specific event, seems to be overuse, probably of a computer. At this time recovery period is unknown. Therefore, as I can hardly use a computer or cave, I have done very little.

Communications Officer's Report: Peter Hall

Since the last meeting I have produced the May 2023 Newsletter, with thanks to those who contributed content.

Some time ago, I promised my wife and family that I'd only take on one caving committee post at a time after a busy few years with meetings seemingly taking up more time than caving. After taking on the role of Secretary for the Welsh Section of the Cave Diving Group last year, I have been forced to make good on my promise and stand down as CSCC Communications Officer, after two years in the role.

Since the inception of the role, the duties have involved preparing a quarterly newsletter with content mostly provided by others, updating the website with news stories and publicising the above on social media.

The role would best suit someone who is active on social media, with an enthusiasm for southern caving, who can drive engagement through regular online activity.

Training Officer's Report: David Keegan

I'm back in the UK now, apologies for being silent for the past six months, I had hoped to make some of the meetings but time differences/work got in the way.

I've been asked to run SRT training, so am doing a two day session on the 17th/18th of June. I still need to sort some final bits, however if anyone wants to take part (either helping to teach, or as a refresher for themselves) that would be mega. If it's worth putting in the newsletter then:

With Eds point about there being no nominations for training, I will be honest, with the volume of requests and uptake on training, I'm not entirely convinced there needs to be a training officer. I don't mind having my name there, however I think that the position could easily be removed, with the emphasis being that clubs do the training internally (as they currently seem to do). This might be worth revising in the future if the BCA training side has a resurgence, however that has been very quiet for quite a while; certainly since it became a working group I don't think anything has really happened.



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BCA Representative's Report: Linda Wilson

Vacancies

BCA has received no nominations for either Treasurer and Publications Officer. Volunteers are likely to be welcomed with open arms.

A convenor has been found for the Conservation and Access Working Group. Richard Vooght from Devon has agreed to take the job and the next meeting is being held on 27 April. Richard has also been involved with BCA as the William Pengelly Trust representative on Council.

Insurance

Josh White has taken over from outgoing treasurer Howard Jones as insurance manager. Josh has a background in insurance and has been shadowing Howard in the job for several months.

Josh has been asked by Howden, BCA's insurance agent, to provide the following information to BCA members. They have said that this isn't a change to process, but is intended to serve as a reminder of members' responsibilities under the insurance policy.

The insurance policy requires that all incidents which could give rise to a claim are notified to BCA and their insurance brokers Howden as soon as the member becomes aware of any such.

Failure to do so may affect any claim on the policy.

Howden have put together the following guidance for use in considering what matters should be reported.

Liability Claims Notification Requirements

Your contract of insurance does have certain conditions imposed, which may be summarised as follows:

- You are required to give insurers immediate written notice with full particulars of any claims or circumstances which may give rise to a claim, regardless of any excess that you have to bear under your policy cover, or whether you think that you may be legally liable
- Every letter, claim, writ, summons and process in connection with such circumstances must be forwarded to Howden immediately on receipt
- Written notice must be given to insurers immediately you have knowledge of any prosecution, inquest or inquiry in connection with any circumstances, which may give rise to liability under the policy

Therefore it is important that:

- An investigation of every incident should be carried out whilst those involved, including witnesses, still have a clear idea of the circumstances, and a written report should be produced
- Every incident, particularly those involving personal injury, should be reported to us immediately it happens and we will advise you what to do next. Please ensure procedures are in place for all documentation to reach us as quickly as possible

In order to achieve this, we would ask that you notify us immediately of any incident that involves:



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- A fatal accident
- An injury involving either referral to or actual hospital treatment
- Any allegations of libel/slander
- Any allegations of professional negligence ie arising out of tuition, coaching or advice given
- Any circumstance that has triggered an investigation under your safeguarding policy
- Any circumstance involving damage to third party property

An injury is defined as:

- Any head injury that requires medical treatment (doctor or hospital)
- Any fracture other than to fingers, thumbs or toes
- Any amputation, dislocation of the shoulder, hip, knee or spine
- Loss of sight (whether temporary or permanent)
- Any injury resulting from electrical shock or burn, leading to unconsciousness or requiring resuscitation or admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours
- Any other injury leading to hypothermia, heat induced illness or to unconsciousness which requires resuscitation or admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours
- Loss of consciousness caused by asphyxia or by exposure to a harmful substance or biological agent

Please note the above list is not exhaustive and if you are unsure as to whether an incident should be reported, then please do not hesitate to contact Howden claims department for further advice.

We would remind you that in NO circumstances should you admit liability or agree to pay for any damage caused as this may prejudice the position of insurers and COULD result in the withdrawal of any indemnity.

Finally, please note that this is a liability policy where insurers decide if negligence attaches to you. Therefore any payments you make to third parties will not necessarily be reimbursed.

Incident Recording Guidelines

- We would recommend that a designated person within your organisation is made responsible to record any reportable accident. Records must be kept for at least 6 years (and significantly longer where the incident involves a minor). Names and addresses of any possible witnesses should also be recorded
- Businesses are legally obliged to have an accident book which is compliant with data protection legislation. The book is available from HSE Books
- The accident book must contain the following information relating to all reportable accidents or dangerous occurrences:
 - Date and time of accident
 - As regards a person at work - full name; occupation; nature of injury; age
 - As regards a person not at work - full name; status (eg customer); nature of injury; age
 - Place where accident occurred
 - A brief description of the circumstances
 - Method by which the event was reported



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Reporting Incidents to Health & Safety Executive

You may also have obligations under the RIDDOR regulations to report incidents to the HSE. For further information visit the HSE website.

Potential Abuse Claims

Howden Sport, Recreation and Equine have produced specific guidance regarding the notification of circumstances of abuse and poor practice, to help you comply with insurer's terms and conditions.

Full details of this guidance can be found at:

<http://www.howden-sites.co.uk/uploads/documents/docs//Safeguarding-in-Sport- HUG-BJLLP.pdf>

If you have any queries about this or notification of circumstances and claims in general, please speak to your usual contact.

If you have any queries about insurance, please contact Josh White, BCA Insurance Manager:

Insurance@british-caving.org.uk



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Finances

The BCA made a small surplus of £14k in the year and there has been an increase in net assets to £169k.

With regard to the budget for 2023, Howard Jones has said that if all his assumptions are correct, the budget shows a deficit of around £9,000 for the year. BCA will be affected by an increase in insurance costs and inflation will affect all aspects of BCA expenses. If a membership fee increase is not considered then Howard expects the 2024 deficit to be above £15,000. BCA will need to consider whether an increase in the membership subscription will be needed.

Other Matters

BCA Grant to Bendrigg Trust

BCA has agreed to provide support for an event in September 2023, run by the Bendrigg Trust aimed at opening up the underground for those with disabilities. Josh White, who brought the proposal to Council stated:

“This two pronged event will provide opportunities for people with disabilities to experience underground places they’d not previously been able to, but will also offer training to recreational cavers to enable club cavers to feel confident if approached by someone with a disability to welcome them into the club and onto events. The training will be run by Bendrigg’s disability awareness advisor, Kate McCallum and Sam Litten, the activities manager and CIC, but also a CNCC Training officer.

Being the first event of this kind getting every possible bit of support is important. Bendrigg over recent years has run a Climbing Festival that has been generously supported by the BMC, and with this event we are approaching the BCA for some financial support.

The support will go towards keeping costs as low as possible for participants to reduce the cost being a barrier to participation – the third highest barrier noted by those with disabilities at 27% - but also to ensure that the cost of training for cavers can be kept as low as possible to encourage as many to participate as possible.

We’ve estimated that to provide training for 10 cavers and caving for 15 participants we would require funding of £2,500, this covers subsidising costs for the cavers training and participants, as well as providing a souvenir of their trip and costing for additional staff to ensure the weekend runs as successfully as possible.”

BCA’s support is being acknowledged on the publicity for the event. I enthusiastically voted to support this proposal. For the record, as Josh works for Bendrigg, he declared his interest to Council in accordance with BCA’s policies and procedures.

Membership Cards

A CSCC member recently queried the need for BCA to continue to supply plastic cards each year and asked whether another way could be found to evidence membership when needed. I have raised this within BCA and will report back in due course.



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Ash Die Back

The problem of ash die-back was raised in the C&A meeting, as there is likely to be a significant problem with this in various caving regions. As I had been involved with this problem wearing a different hat, I produced a short note as an appendix to the notes of the C&S Meeting, which is reproduced here in case this is helpful for anyone else involved in access discussions over areas of land where this is a problem.

“Note from LJW of CCC Ltd regarding the terms agreed with Somerset Wildlife Trust regarding continued access to the caves and digs in the Longwood Valley.

- Helmets must be worn at all times whilst in the reserve.
- Cavers must not enter the reserve when winds are expected to be gusting at approximately 35mph and over. Cavers should check a reliable weather source for the area when planning a visit if high winds seem likely. [A link is given on the CCC Ltd website to the Met Office forecast for Cheddar]
- Access to the reserve will ONLY be from the north end and NOT from Black Rock/Velvet Bottom.
- To enable SWT to assess any risks from continued caver access, clubs will be asked to keep a note of the number of visiting cavers to the reserve eg number in party and date visited. This information will be collated by CCC Ltd and passed to SWT.
- Visiting cavers are expected to play an active role in conserving and managing the sites, as they do now, by immediately reporting any of the following safety and conservation concerns to the CCC Ltd secretary.

Further details can be found on the CCC Ltd website: <https://charterhouse-caving-company.ltd.uk/longwood.htm>

In addition, SWT felled a considerable number of trees around the cave entrance and the dig sites as a risk reduction exercise for their H&S metrics. A qualified tree surgeon (a contact of one of the diggers) assisted in the felling of one large tree above the Toothache Pot dig, in an example of caver/landowner cooperation. CCC Ltd are very grateful to SWT for their support in retaining access to two of Mendip’s major cave systems.”

If members have anything else they would like to raise, please let me know. The next BCA Council meeting is on 9th May.

I am happy to continue in the role of BCA representative.



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Webmaster's Report: David Cooke

In the past year I've updated, maintained and supported the various aspects of CSCC's IT. The webserver, website, access guide, calendar, email, mailing lists (Mailman, MailChimp), etc. I've also supported the Comms. Officer with various posts to the Website and Facebook.

I added an easy way to add news items to the website. Adding a news item to the website required various conventions to be remembered such as how the page should be named, where it should be located, etc. If you aren't doing this regularly then it is easy to forget. In the officer's section I've added a form to make life easier. Just fill in the form, press save and the news page is created – no need to recall those conventions. Happy days.

As part of the new Wookey Hole access agreement, several people have been appointed as wardens. To help coordinate their work the C&A Officer has asked for a mailing list to be set up. I've setup a Mailman mailing list on the CSCC webserver for them.

The general principle I aim to follow when developing the website is to enable updates to be done by others as well as the webmaster. Too many website rely on just the webmaster for updates and then stagnate when the webmaster is overworked or loses enthusiasm. So for example I'm very pleased to have the Secretary posting the Minutes, the C&A Officer updating the Access Guide, the Comms. Officer posting news items and the Equipment Officer maintaining the anchor placement pages.

Some parts of the website are becoming out of date. I'll be chasing the Officers to update their respective pages.

Any suggestions for improving the website or other aspects of IT are always welcome.

I noticed in the last set of Minutes my role was described as IT Officer rather than Webmaster. That makes some sense and wonder whether the role should be officially renamed?

I'm happy to stand again.