

BCA Reps Report to the CSCC Meeting

A significant point for BCA members is that in 2026, insurance costs are likely to have fallen back to in the region of half the cost of membership fees. This has historically been the case but by 2024 it had risen to something like two thirds of the fees, leaving little money over for anything else. The treasurer has stated that his prediction for only a small deficit in 2025 looks viable. This is better than expected and comes about in part due to lower than anticipated claims from regional councils.

BCA is making progress in its goal of incorporation and the treasurer hopes to make further progress on this when the accounts have been finalized.

So far for 2026 106 clubs had renewed their membership as of mid January and 3544 people have joined, including club members. The online membership renewals seem to be working well.

As you will have seen from the Chair's report, the Forest of Dean Cave Conservation and Access Group (FoDCCAG) applied to BCA to become a separate Regional Council rather than being part of Caving Wales. The principal landowner in the Forest of Dean is the Forestry Commission, with whom FoDCCAG already have an access agreement. FoDCCAG have also recently purchased the land around Wet and Dry Sinks and have done amazing work in Redhouse Lane Swallet. The area proposed for the new regional Council was the Forest of Dean and adjacent areas of Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire and Herefordshire. This proposal had been mentioned at the most recent BCA Conservation and Access Group meeting and also at the last BCA Council meeting so it was no surprise when this came forward to the vote.

I circulated the minutes and agenda for the most recent BCA Meeting on 20 January when I received them. I was unable to attend the meeting due to a prior commitment but Joshitha represented CSCC. An email from our Chair stating he felt a vote on this without prior discussions with CSCC to formalize boundaries was premature, only reached Joshitha after the vote, on which the CSCC vote was cast in favour of the proposal. Speaking personally, I don't understand the Chair's stance on this, as CSCC only borders the proposed FoDCCAG region where it touches Bristol and I regard it as a huge stretch of the imagination to think that CSCC has any historic or current interest in any areas north of Bristol. Bristol itself has only one significant cave, Pen Park Hole, which is managed by three CSCC clubs. Immediately north of this lies South Gloucestershire, where Fishmonger's Swallet is managed on an access agreement between Hades CC and the landowner. I believe the intention is for South Gloucestershire to go with the new region, but that is a matter for the Hades CC and not this meeting as CSCC has never had any involvement with that site.

On the above basis, I do not believe that CSCC has any cause for concern and that the matter of agreed boundaries can be handled easily and amicably with FoDCAGG under the aegis of BCA. I do not agree with the chair's suggestion that the BCA has handled the matter badly.

I would like to remind the meeting that many years ago, when Devon and Cornwall Underground Council came into existence, we supported their independence and dealt with the separation amicably without the need to have prior sight of constitutions and boundary maps. There is no reason to believe that there will be any bone of contention between

FodCAAG and BCA and I believe that supporting their independence was the correct thing to have done.

Linda Wilson
Joshitha Shivkumar
9.2.26