



COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

A constituent member of the National Caving Association

NCA REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT TO THE CSCC MEETING 6TH DEC. 2003

NCA Special General Meeting 1st November 2003

A Special General Meeting (SGM) of the NCA was called for the 1st November 2003. Its business was to approve the formation of the British Caving Association (BCA), a meeting billed as 'historic'. A larger than usual CSCC delegation comprising eight members attended. The meeting was a marathon, lasting a good six hours, with no break for lunch. The debate was forthright and heated at times but always conducted in a professional manner. I think it is fair to say the CSCC delegation achieved most of its aims.

Overview

Some background (my analysis). It is worth asking why are we doing this, what are our objectives? I think there are two. The first is to have a single national body. There is a perception that we have two, the NCA and BCRA, where it should be more effective and efficient to have one. In truth we only have one, the NCA is the only national body recognised by Government, but this perception of two comes about because the BCRA, for historical reasons, provides some services that should be provided by the national body. The chief of these are insurance and a glossy magazine.

The second is to introduce individual membership to the national body. This is a prerequisite of any merger of the NCA and BCRA but I believe it is also a worthwhile objective itself. The NCA has long suffered from a lack of volunteers and a lack of funds. Individual membership of the national body will put the average caver more in touch with the national body and vice-versa. With a greater understanding and a larger pool of potential volunteers the human resource problems could be eased. It is also about money, a bit of a dirty word I know, but if you want an effective national body you must pay for it. Individual members will provide a new source of funds.

Some extra ideas were suggested such as including the Regional Caving Councils (RCC) in the merger and access to CNCC permits without CNCC membership. This was parcelled up and called the 'One-Stop-Shop' (OSS). The Hub, the working party formed to deliver the OSS, put in a huge amount effort. It became apparent that delivering the OSS in one go was a Herculean task. So sensibly the process has been split into steps. Simply put step one introduces individual membership to the national body and is the task before us. Step two is the merger of the national body with the BCRA and RCCs etc. (i.e. the rest). I'll leave discussion of that for another day...

In more detail step one is to form the BCA. The BCA is designed to be the new national body of caving. It will replace the NCA with a body that has individual membership. Once BCA is up and running NCA will dissolve itself. Note, neither BCRA nor RCCs are affected; this is not the merger yet. The BCA is based on a new constitution written by the Hub. Whilst adding individual membership the opportunity was taken to completely overhaul the constitution. In addition to all the services of the NCA the BCA will offer insurance, an annual members handbook and possibly a glossy magazine. Assuming the current insurance problems can be resolved the BCRA scheme will be moved to BCA. The glossy magazine is conditional on sufficient funds and volunteers being available.

The SGM went through the proposed new BCA constitution with a fine toothcomb and made some amendments, more detail below. It then passed the following two resolutions.

"To approve the Draft Constitution of the British Caving Association".

"To agree that, subject to approval by ballot of the current membership of the NCA, the British Caving Association shall come into being on a date decided by the group from the Chairmen, Secretaries and Treasurers of the BCRA and NCA."

It was hoped to set a formation date of the 1st January 2004 but in the current insurance situation it was felt best not to set a fixed date.

As a consequence your club secretaries should be in possession of a ballot paper "To approve the Draft Constitution of the British Caving Association as amended by the NCA SGM." to be returned by 8th December.

If the ballot approves the new constitution the SGM will have been 'historic', if not back to square one ...

The Detail

The following covers most of the items discussed and hopefully all of those of interest to the CSCC. The latest BCA Constitution that is being voted upon is available in the news section of the CSCC website (www.csc.org.uk) or from your club Secretary or the CSCC Secretary.

There was a feeling that the Constitution was too even handed between individuals and clubs. It didn't recognise the historical fact that caving in this country is club based. The following amendment and principle improve the situation.

- The guiding principle "4.7 That caving is an activity best pursued in a club environment and that the Association recommends individuals be members of a club." Was added at the CSCC's request.
- A second discounted route to individual membership through your club was put forward and accepted by the meeting. It is designed to be a no frills route to insurance. It required no constitutional change but there is a commitment to it in the explanatory notes that go with the ballot.

The suggested CSCC amendment of splitting of the Group Membership into Group and Club Membership was defeated on the grounds that it was just semantics and no change of meaning.

The amendments for 'One Member One Vote' were not moved since the CSCC had changed its policy at its last meeting and now preferred the 'Two House' system. The 'Two House' system was adopted by default.

There was a considerable debate on quorum. Clause 8.6 was amended to "The quorum for any General Meeting shall be 10 members, of which at least 5 persons eligible to vote in each House shall be present. No one person may represent more than one Group Member".

Clauses 5.2b and 5.3b were not changed. The CSCC did not like the fact that individuals had a fast track membership whereas clubs had to wait until a general meeting. The meeting did not see this as preferential treatment for individuals but that the national body had to vet new clubs more carefully than individuals. 5.4b was amended so that Affiliate membership applications were treated the same as clubs and not individuals.

The CSCC request to retain its veto was not accepted. Since I received no support from the CSCC delegates present when arguing for this nor anyone else in the room, it was a rather short discussion. Maybe the policy of keeping the veto is a bit of a knee jerk reaction. To my recollection it has never been discussed in detail at a CSCC meeting, we have always moved to a vote almost immediately.

A new guiding principle "4.6 That the Association will make its services available to all sections of the sporting community, there will be no discrimination on grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, creed, colour, occupation, religion or political opinion."

Other Business

The meeting appointed two new NCA Trustees. David Cooke and Nick Williams. David Cooke said that he was standing so that the NCA had a full complement of Trustees and was demonstrably acting constitutionally. The NCA holds no property and therefore the Trustees are unnecessary. He expected the Trustee clauses to be removed from the constitution either by dissolution of the NCA or resolution at the next NCA AGM. Nick William said he was standing on the same basis.

The provisional subscriptions fro the BCA were set at:

Individuals via a Club	£5 or less.
Individuals	£10
Clubs & National Bodies, Regional Councils	£15
Associates	£20
Cave Rescue and Access Controlling Bodies	Free

These subscriptions do not include insurance.

David G Cooke
28th November 2003