



# Council of Southern Caving Clubs

A constituent member of the British Caving Association

[www.csccl.org.uk](http://www.csccl.org.uk)

Minutes of General Meeting - Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018

**Draft –Published 28 Mar 2018**

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## 1 Attendance

### Voting Attendees

Les Williams	WCC	LW	C&A Officer
Alan Butcher	SMCC	AB	Chairman
Aubrey Newport	White Rabbit	AN	
Alistair Smith	WSCC	AS	
Andrew McLeod	BEC	AM	
Arran Cooper-Davis	EUSS	AC	
Linda Wilson	UBSS	LiW	
Alan Dempster	Avon Scouts	AD	
Dave King	MNRC	DK	
Graham Price	Cerberus SS	GP	

### Non Voting

Frank Tully	WCC	FT	Secretary
Stuart McManus	BEC	SM	
Tim Allen	BCA/CNCC Guest	TA	
Graham Mullan	UBSS	GM	

## 2 Apologies for Absence

Chris Binding	SPCC/ACI	CB	
Barry Wilkinson	White Rabbit	BW	
Andrew Atkinson		AA	Equipment officer
Dave Cooke	Cheddar	DC	Treasurer/Webmaster

## 3 Approval of minutes from AGM 16th Sept 2017

Minutes approved with amendments.

Proposed AB, Seconded LW, Passed Unanimous

## 4 Chairman's report

**Alan Butcher**

Alan Butcher

Its 50 years since I first attended a CSCC meeting, this was chaired by Oliver Lloyd and took place in the New Inn. Realistically we discussed the same things we do now; access and club politics.

We're a quite a small region, we have some quite good caves; some long caves; some pretty caves; a lot of smaller caves; some nice; some short and some rather shitty. But we love them all the same. These caves are scattered across Mendips and are owned by a lot of landowners, of whom we keep contact with, to ensure continuing access. We invite the landowners of larger caves like Swildons and Eastwater to club dinners and we maintain a good relationship. More importantly we respect their wishes. Some caves are gated but we have a system which involves the CSCC key which allows free access to all those who want to visit. A lot of people have worked hard over many years negotiating and maintaining the access that we have today, it may not be perfect but it works for us down here. So in that context I would like to welcome Tim Allen the CRoW Liaison officer.

Tim Allen has travelled down from the Yorkshire dales to speak with CSCC regarding the issues of CRoW and British caving.

Tim Allen



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Not only am I the BCA CRoW Liaison officer, I am also the CNCC access officer. When I discussed with the CNCC committee that I would be coming down to this CSCC meeting they insisted that, as a gesture of goodwill and friendliness I bring some cake.

The fine iced chocolate cake with rope and karabiner decoration was gratefully accepted and sampled at the meeting.

I offered to come down to Mendip to listen first hand to any of the particular issues that you have with the BCA CRoW campaign and possibly see whether we could come to some sort of accord with the wider issue of allowing BCA to get on with their campaign without impediment if at all possible. Perhaps you could consider that the BCA do have a mandate to run a campaign and also I noted back in March 2016 CSCC did put in a complaint about the campaign and the constitutional position of BCA; which has taken a rather a lengthy time, but which BCA now consider as sorted, I wonder if you would agree with that now.

AB As far as I am aware the CSCC attitude has not changed, we do not have to support the BCA democracy. But unless I am speaking out of turn, I represent everyone in the room, we don't feel that CRoW will have a big impact on us, but basically we don't want it to mess up British caving, and in particular caving in our region. The meeting generally agreed with the attitude of this statement. So in that context that is where we are with it.

TA You may not agree with it but BCA believe they have a mandate to run a campaign to have caving recognised under CRoW. The other regions are very much in support of it, certainly CNCC is. In the Dales having caving recognised under CRoW would give access to over 2000 cave entrances and save the CNCC volunteers a lot of effort managing access to those caves.

A wide ranging debate took place discussing various issues.

### **4.1 Training committee update,**

Training update will be covered under the training officer's report, section 8

### **5 Honorary secretary's report**

**Frank Tully**

Nothing to report

### **6 Conservation & access officer's report**

**Les Williams**

#### **6.1 Access to caves on land owned by Longleat Enterprises Ltd.**

There was a meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Jan between CSCC and Longleat Enterprises Ltd. The 'CSCC response' to the 'Longleat Enterprises Ltd. Heads of Terms' document was discussed.

Representatives Longleat Enterprises Ltd. then took the results of this meeting to their lawyers to turn it into a legal agreement. The representative of Longleat Enterprises Ltd was informed that the next CSCC meeting was 17 Feb 2018 and we would need at least a week to review any proposed legal agreement before we voted on it at today's meeting. As of the start of the meeting the proposed legal agreement has not been provided to CSCC.

The club representatives were provided with copies of; the 'CSCC response' to the 'Longleat Enterprises Ltd. Heads of Terms' document and the 'Longleat Enterprises Ltd. Heads of Terms' document. Generally the club committees did not have any significant comments.

#### **6.2 / 6.3 Stoke Lane Slocker**

We have communicated with Rick Massey, the landowner/developer of Cooks Wood Quarry, and the Police. Mr Massey said "his security people will continue to move people on who intend to trespass on his land, he will not give permission to enter his land or visit the cave, that greater horseshoe bats live in the cave and are protected by law, and that he intends to fit a bat friendly door to stop unauthorised access".



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It was not clear which 'cave' he was referring to as there are a number on his property. The exact boundary of his land is not known so it is difficult to talk about specific sites.

I confirmed with Jake Baynes that they were moved on when parking on the west side of the road in the normal parking place for access to Stoke Lane Slocker. It may be that Rick Massey has purchased this land and making enquiries locally no one seems to know. If Rick Massey does own the Stoke field then he may be within his rights to move people on if parking in the usual place for access to the cave.

The Police confirmed that if cavers were not parking on land owned by Rick Massey he had no right to tell them they could not park there or ask them to move. The Police offered to talk to Rick Massey but I considered this may be undesirable at this time. The Police suggested that we monitor the situation and record any incidents and if necessary they would talk to Rick Massey at a future date if this information is available to them.

It is not only cavers that are affected by this and we understand that the security people have also confronted walkers.

It would be greatly advantageous to conclusively establish land ownership and boundaries to help resolving this matter and being prepared for future access problems with Brownes' Hole. It may only be possible to do this with a Land Registry search which will incur expenditure.

\* Linda Wilson said she may possibly be able to help with searches. GP would provide a map. Expenditure of £100 was approved should it be necessary.\*

### **6.4 Loxton Cavern**

Work has been progressing with three whole day working visits since the last meeting. It is impossible to estimate the amount of work remaining as we usually think .... 'just a few more visits'. Work continues.

### **6.5 Maesbury Swallet**

The gate has been made and it ready to be fitted. As there is also a considerable amount of surface work to be done the high flow in the stream currently makes this impossible so work is unlikely before the summer.

### **6.6 Ubley Warren**

Completion of stabilisation works in Foot & Crutch Series pending completion. How to deal with the hanging boulder in the roof of the main chamber is under consideration. A partial climb up the wall has proved the need to import a rigid ladder for safety and ease of access. The boulder is 8m above the floor. Work continues. The new gate for the Nettle entrance has been delivered and the entrance has been rebuilt ready for fitting.

### **6.7 Windsor Hill Flood Sink 1**

I received a call from the landowner complaining that the gate on Flood Sink 1 had not been finished and was dangerous. I visited and although the grating was fixed, covering most of the shaft, the gate was not fitted and was balanced over the opening, which is adjacent to the footpath. I have spoken to Dave Speed who made the gate, and he says that it was finished and has been broken into; although there are no hinges fitted to the opening part of the gate and no hasp for locking. Dave will be looking at this and I have asked him to give it high priority due to the sensitive nature of the situation. If he is not able to do the necessary work can we get someone else to do it? Apparently Dave has not invoiced us for this gate and I reminded him of this. Dinder Estates have a number of caves on their land and we rely on their continuing goodwill for access.

\* DK said that the gate when originally fitted was fully operational but had been subsequently vandalised. DK suggested options for making the gate more secure and would liaise with Dave Speed. This was urgent and he would keep GP informed re progress. \*



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Whilst in the area we went to look at Viaduct Sink to review what work was necessary to fit the gate. The entrance was found to be completely buried. Considering the high flows in the stream no attempt was made to uncover the entrance so the condition is unknown, but it seems likely that considerable building work will be necessary before the gate can be fitted. No work will be possible until conditions improve when it needs to be given very high priority, otherwise the site could be lost.

\* LW said the continuing issue was arranging a suitable time when the conditions were acceptable for transporting materials across the fields to the boundary of the wood. GP pointed out that there were feasible alternatives for getting materials to the site. LW said that someone was interested in digging there. It was suggested that they might like to help with the entrance works. LW agreed that the works would be given priority as soon as conditions improve. \*

### **6.8 Browns Folly quarry**

No new news, ongoing

### **6.9 Swildons Causeway**

Ongoing

### **6.10 Swildons Stile**

Ongoing

### **6.11 Hunters lodge inn sink**

Ongoing

### **6.12 CSCC Locks**

The initial batch locks, as approved, were purchased but these did not include anywhere enough keys. Reviewing how many extra keys would be required and the cost of having these cut these it seemed nonsensical not to purchase additional locks each of which would come with keys. This had the advantage of being able to replace all the locks in one go. In view of this Cookie obtained approval from BCA to purchase the additional locks which would be claimed as 2018 expenditure. Cookie provided a contact list for CSCC member clubs and so far new keys have been issued to around half. Obtaining a response from some clubs is proving difficult. One key is being issued to most clubs, and three to the main clubs with huts that issue keys to visitors. As limited supplies are available clubs have been given the option to purchase additional keys. This has the advantage that they have been tested and are guaranteed to work. It is preferable that only official keys are in circulation as there have been many issues with poorly copied keys not fitting properly and damaging the locks, and locks being broken off as a consequence. All official keys are stamped CSCC for identification purposes.

Keys are also being issued to landowners etc where appropriate. Fitting the new locks will start at the beginning of March and as it is likely to take some time to complete clubs have been advised that until notified otherwise they should issue both old and new keys to guarantee being able to gain access.

Part of this process has been to establish which caves are fitted with a standard lock. No definitive list was available and reference to the web site produced incomplete and inaccurate information. In consultation with others I have produced an updated list which I am circulating with the keys. If anyone is aware of any inaccuracies or additions please let me know.

In association with this a number of inaccuracies or omissions were noted in the access guide on the web site. I am willing to update the access information on the web site if I can be given access to do this.

\* The meeting asked that DC provide access so that GP can update. \*



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### **6.13 Hole in Innox Wood, Wanstrow**

A hole has been opened up next to the path in Innox Wood, Wanstrow. The person digging this hole does not appear to have permission to dig at this site, and has asked for CSCC assistance with gating the hole.

CSCC policy is not to assist with digging or gating of digs. The individuals or clubs concerned with dig are responsible for land owner relations, making the dig safe for the public and if required provision of gates.

### **6.14 BCA C&A Webex meeting**

LW attended a BCA C&A Webex meeting to discuss the proposed BCA Policy on CRoW.

A 5 point draft policy document was developed in the meeting. The draft document will be circulated to the CSCC officers in due course.

This draft policy document is to be discussed and voted on in the next BCA meeting which will take place in April. Any comments to be forwarded to the CSCC BCA rep, who in this case is AB.

Post meeting Note, The 5 point draft policy document has been attached to the end of these minutes.

### **7 Honorary treasurer's report**

**Dave Cooke**

The 2016 accounts have been circulated and will be published on the website with these minutes  
Vote to approve accounts, Passed Nem Con.

### **8 Training officer's report**

#### **8.1 Report on BCA council meeting and run-up.**

The chairman of the training committee Graham Mollard has resigned. Nigel Atkins is the Acting Chairman.

### **9 Equipment officer's report**

**Andrew Atkinson**

Report presented to the meeting by Linda Wilson.

To answer the question about who can place anchors, currently myself Graham Price and Chris Binding are one the list as far as I know. However, there appears to be lack of paper work. As for renewing, I believe that it is just by approval of the CSCC meeting. If they have not been trained or the council decide that a person needs a refresher the that will need to be undertaken.

However, currently we have no anchors that can be placed, the helical ones by bolt products are still under query, I have placed some test ones in Fairy Quarry, but still am trying to get the test to check them. The dates that keep been suggested whistle by.

As for future documentation, may I suggest that CSCC sets up a document store, preferably versioned so that officers or other parties with documentation can use this as a store, this would also form a historic record as well as a backup for the documents. In the modern world this is the sort of thing that really should be in place, rather than random collections of documents on individuals own devices.

I have also returned to Eastwater, I can confirm the anchors currently in use are not up to modern standards, and would recommend replacement as soon as we have a suitable anchor. I believe it should be possible to extract and reuse existing placements, this is an obviously subject to how it goes on the day, however the current placements are in adequate positions and the improvement gained would not justify the additional damage caused to the cave. As usual this may have to change due to circumstances when a team goes in to do the work



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Following the report an action was placed on the CSCC members.

Policy for anchor placement is on the website could members please review this and bring any issues to the next meeting.

### 10 BCA rep report

AB attended the BCA Council meeting, representing CSCC

The BCA are no longer purchasing the software which was to organise training.

Graham Mollard has resigned as training committee chairman.

Discussion regarding CRoW were extensive. BCA agreed to continue with lobbying

### 11 Webmasters report

**Dave Cooke**

No report presented

### 12 Regional registry officer's report

**Alan Gray**

No report presented

### 13 Forthcoming events

#### 13.1 Cave Fest

- Friday 4<sup>th</sup> May through to Monday 7<sup>th</sup> May – First May bank holiday. DigFest and Cavefest. See [www.cavefest.co.uk](http://www.cavefest.co.uk) for details. CSCC is happy to assist.
- Sat 4<sup>th</sup> August - Wessex challenge

### 14 Date of next meetings:

**Note Time has been changed to 10:30**

Saturday 19th May 2018 (AGM) 10:30 Hunters

### 15 Any other business

DK Throup Lane Swallet is currently blocked with flood debris. It would be good to open this before the Dig-Cave-Fest weekend.

AB The next meeting is the AGM

FT to present to the AGM, a constitutional amendment to section 4c of the current constitution, as published on the CSCC website.

The amendment to be in line with the proposals made for the EGM 26th November 2016.

“The Annual General Meeting shall be called for May. An Extraordinary General Meeting may be called at the request of at least six member clubs. A quorum for the Annual General Meeting and the Extraordinary General Meeting shall be twenty five percent of the paid up member clubs of the Council or 10 members whichever is the lower.”

Meeting duration 1h55m



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Post meeting note, BCA C&A '5 point draft policy statement',  
circulated by LW to CSCC 19<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018

BCA policy statement on the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)

1. The British Caving Association holds the opinion that the CRoW Act already permits access for recreational caving. (Note: this view has been verified by the legal opinion of Dinah Rose QC and supported by many external organisations and individuals as well as its own members).
2. The access principles of the CRoW Act are in accord with BCA's own principles of improving access to caves. The BCA encourages caving bodies who have control of access to caves on 'access land' to renegotiate access agreements to reflect the rights provided by the CRoW Act.
3. The conservation of caves is important. The BCA Conservation Code applies to all caves regardless of the land designation. The BCA agrees with the CRoW guiding principle of the least restrictive option to meet the conservation or safety need.
4. The BCA believe that any particular conservation concerns on CRoW 'access land' can be adequately dealt with by those means already set out in the legislation. The BCA recognise that many of the concerns raised prior to the introduction of the Act never materialised and access to caves should be no different.
5. The BCA will support cavers in their work to develop access to caves on CRoW access land.

Reference documents;

1. Dinah Rose opinion
2. Conservation Code and Guidelines
3. Educational strategy for conservation
4. Section 26 advice to ACBs