

FORTHCOMING BCA BALLOT – The CSCC Recommendation

In the coming weeks, BCA members will be balloted about changes to the BCA Constitution aimed at abolishing the two house voting system which will remove the “Group” vote and disenfranchise clubs, regional councils and other such groups in favour of individual membership. This is a change that, if passed, will have profound and long lasting effect on British caving.

This proposal was placed directly before the AGM without prior consultation. It has not been debated by BCA’s National Council. At a national level we do not know whether our elected representatives think this is a good idea or not.

Currently, the BCA has club individual members (all members of BCA member clubs are CIM’s) and Direct Individual members who join the BCA directly; DIM’s, all of whom have a vote in any ballot. Additionally, clubs, regional councils and other bodies known as Groups have one vote in any ballot. Regional Councils also represent member clubs at the BCA Council along with the other specialist groups.

The retention of the group vote and representation at BCA Council level is important for clubs and cavers as they have no other representation at council meetings other than the four representatives elected at the AGM.

The BCA Constitution is based on a club structure via regional councils which is recognised by the constitution of the BCA. A move to an organisation of individual members will likely see the removal of this recognition in favour of a centrally controlled regulatory organisation dominated by individuals to the disadvantage of the ordinary club caver who cares nothing for national caving politics and only wants to go caving.

The caving club has long formed the backbone of British Caving with its members trusting to their elected committee to deal with caving politics in whatever form they may occur. The caver kitted up and stood outside the cave entrance trust to their club and regional council to ensure they have continued access to that cave irrespective to how much politics it took to gain that access.

The proposed change to the constitution was passed at the BCA AGM by a very narrow margin and not everyone is in favour of such a fundamental change to the structure of caving as we know it and which has kept caving and cavers free to carry on what they love and enjoy with the minimum of interference.

Below are the changes which will be the subject of the ballot:

Abolish the house of groups in BCA AGM votes and ballots and the club vote along with it.

This is a shift away from a representative democracy towards a direct democracy. In effect issues will be decided by referendum which, as recent history shows, has its problems.

A responsibility is placed on the individual caver to engage with and understand the issues before voting. Many will but most would prefer to just go caving and leave the politics to their elected representatives.

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Remove postal ballots so that all ballots will be conducted as online Ballots. There will not be a postal ballot. This will disenfranchise those members who do not wish to give their email address to the BCA (currently approx. 2000 members fall into this category)

Putting all proposals at the AGM that gain more than 25% of the vote out to an online ballot of all members. Currently constitutional changes that pass, getting 70% must go to a ballot. Non- constitutional proposals that pass, getting 50% go to a ballot if the AGM chooses.

This change will result in members being balloted far more frequently which is possibly a good thing but it does seem daft to ballot members on proposals that have so little support that they fail to be passed by the AGM.

Group Membership applications no longer taken at any General Meeting.

Contested election of Officers will go to an online ballot of all members. Thus it will be weeks if not months before the posts are filled.

Makes it ambiguous if the Chairman of a General Meeting has a casting vote. Currently they don't.

Removes the paragraph detailing how a ballot of the membership shall be conducted. This removes the option of a postal ballot in the process.

Upon dissolution, the plan for dissolution must gain 75% of the votes in an online ballot of the membership. Currently more than 75% of the vote at a special meeting convened for the purpose is required. At the point of dissolution the organisation might not have the resources or the time to conduct a ballot.

The CSCC is once again accused of being negative and resisting change, we do not see it that way, we are working to ensure the continuation of British Caving as we know it and not to promote some hidden agenda where individuals rule the roost and access and insurance could be used to force cavers to toe the party line.

It is therefore very important that, when you receive the ballot paper, you consider your vote carefully.

CSCC recommends that you vote against the removal of the group vote and its associated constitutional changes and show support for the retention of British caving as we know it, now and into the future. This recommendation was agreed unanimously at the last CSCC meeting.

Whatever your view, PLEASE VOTE. Every vote is crucial. Engage with your members and encourage them to vote as well.

**Council of Southern Caving Clubs
15th October 2019**