



# Council of Southern Caving Clubs

A constituent member of the British Caving Association  
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## Agenda for the Annual General Meeting to be held on Saturday 26 Sept 2020, Online Zoom Meeting 19:00.

### Agenda Version 2 - Mon 7 Sept 2020

- 1 Attendance**
- 2 Apologies for absence**
- 3 Approval minutes,**  
GM - 16 Feb 2019.
- 4 Chairman's report**
- 5 Secretary's report** **Frank Tully**
  - 5.1 New Members
- 6 Conservation & access officer's report** **Graham Price & Les Williams**
  - 6.1 Masbury Swallet .
  - 6.2 Loxton Cavern.
  - 6.3 Ubley Warren
  - 6.4 Ubley Warren Reserve – Bat survey
  - 6.5 Cow hole access
  - 6.6 Elm Cave
  - 6.7 Heale Farm Cave
  - 6.8 Blackmore reserve meeting
  - 6.9 Hobnail Hole (Thrupe Lane Swallet)
  - 6.10 Manor Farm Shaft
  - 6.11 CSCC Locks
- 7 Honorary treasurer's report** **Dave Cooke**
- 8 Training officer's report**
- 9 Equipment officer's report** **Andrew Atkinson.**
- 10 BCA rep report**
  - 10.1 See Appendix 2 for report on BCA Council meeting 18 August 2020
- 11 Webmasters report** **David Cooke**
- 12 Regional registry officer's report** **Alan Gray**
- 13 Any other Business**
  - 13.1 Crow Section 25/26 Exemptions and preparatory work.



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## 14 Amendment to CSCC Constitution

Barry Wilkinson of the White Rabbit CG, at the general meeting 29 July 2020 asked for the previously shelved constitutional amendments, to be re-presented at this EGM.

Proposed new constitution is published on the website along with this agenda.

## 15 Election of Officers

- Chairman  
Ed Waters has indicated his wish to stand as CSCC chairman.  
See Appendix1 for Election Statement.
- Honorary secretary
- Honorary treasurer
- Conservation and access
- Training officer
- Equipment officer
- BCA Rep
- Webmaster
- Regional Registry Officer
- Scrutineer for the accounts (Not an officer post)

## 16 Forthcoming events

BCA AGM

## 17 Date of next meetings

**Proposed** dates of the coming year's meetings

- Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019 (GM) 19:00 Zoom Meeting
- Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020 (GM) 19:00 Zoom Meeting
- Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2020 (AGM) 19:00 Zoom Meeting



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## Appendix 1 Election Statement from Ed Waters,

Dear Southern Cavers,

This letter is to inform you of my intent to stand for the post of Chairman of the Council of Southern Caving Clubs (CSCC) at the EGM to be held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2020. As some of you are probably aware, I have been critical of some aspects of how the CSCC goes about its business, and I feel that it is unfair to criticize unless you are prepared to stand up and do something about it. By writing down my thoughts on how the CSCC can be improved well in advance of the EGM I hope that I am giving member clubs a chance to debate my views and decide whether they wish to back me.

I have been a caver for over 30 years and a member, at various times, of 4 CSCC member clubs and currently a member of the Mendip Caving Group. I have been a sporadic attender of CSCC meetings over the last 8 years or so, and have acted as a club representative on occasion.

The key issue facing the CSCC in my view is that of limited representation. Examination of the meeting minutes dating back to 2002 shows that the average voting attendance at meetings is just 8, or around 20% of the member clubs. This also means that in theory just five like minded people could exert control over the activities of CSCC. It has also resulted in the inability to make desperately needed changes to the constitution due to the meetings at which these have been debated not being quorate. This is not intended as a criticism of the small number of people that regularly attend meetings, but a recognition that without wider participation the CSCC will only ever represent a small proportion of its members.

To this end I would like to see changes to the CSCC that will encourage more people, and organisations, to participate. This will require making meetings more accessible, including at least some online meetings, but also encouraging a wider participation in the good work that CSCC does in the field. This will require far better communication not only with member clubs but with the wider southern caving community.

Although Mendip is undoubtedly the hub of southern caving, there are also a rich variety of underground sites across the rest of the south. As such I believe that the CSCC needs to make greater efforts to embrace the wider region by ensuring that people and organisations involved in activities outside of Mendip are more aware of the support that CSCC can provide to them.

Another issue facing the CSCC has been the sometimes toxic relationship with BCA and some other regional councils. This has not been restricted to any single issue, but the CROW debate has been a significant factor. To be fair I believe that this has been part of a wider issue in British caving politics due to a general lack of respect for those who may hold opposing views. This has been evidenced by the recent spate of resignations in BCA and the subsequent appeal from the new BCA Chairman in his opening statement.

If elected I intend to ensure that the culture within the CSCC will support this much needed change by pledging that debate will always be respectful. This does not mean that CSCC will become an echo chamber or a puppet to the BCA Council. There will be differences of opinion, indeed it is vital that there are, and those differences may be made passionately and robustly. However, calling into question someone's motives or insulting them simply because they disagree with your point of view must become completely unacceptable. It should be perfectly possible to remain friendly with those we disagree with and this must be achieved if progress is to be made.

In the past the election of CSCC officers has been a less than transparent process, often apparently sorted out in smoke filled rooms or at the last minute before the AGM with the voting representatives given little if any prior notice to form views on who to back. By posting this letter I hope I am bucking this trend and allowing members clubs to decide whether or not they like the sound of what I would like the CSCC to become. It would be great if other candidates would come forward, as a real choice of Chairman, and other officers, can only be a positive outcome for the organization. I would however call for others interested in the role to break cover now, tell us what your plans are and give the members a chance to make a real decision on the future of the CSCC.

I am intent on making CSCC change for the better and I hope you will give me your support,

Ed Waters, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020.



## Appendix 2 for report on BCA Council meeting 18 August 2020

### CSCC Representatives Report on the BCA Council Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020

The meeting was held by Zoom and lasted two hours. Linda Wilson attended as CSCC rep, with Ed Waters in attendance as observer. The private message function on Zoom enabled us to remain in close contact throughout the meeting. We both felt the meeting was well chaired by Phil Rowsell and was conducted in a civilised manner.

#### **Report on matters raised with CSCC club reps prior to the meeting.**

The points put to the reps are reproduced here for ease of reference with the report on each in bold afterwards.

[Four responses to the consultation with CSCC reps were received before the meeting. On point 1, three of the four responses were in favour of candidates for unopposed positions being elected without a vote. On point 2, the consensus was that an outside perspective could prove useful. On point 3, there was unanimity that the sanctions sought were unacceptably draconian for the nature of the complaint.]

1. Debate about the process by which BCA Officers and Representatives are elected. A paper has been circulated to council making suggestions about the voting process at BCA AGMs. The paper is imaginative and examines how this can be achieved fairly. Personal opinion is that some of the options potentially over complicate the process in the quest for fairness, and our opinion is that the voting process needs to be as simple as possible in order to avoid potential conflict over interpretation of results. The key point in this paper is how to deal with situations where only a single candidate stands, a situation which led to some controversy at the last BCA AGM. Our opinion is that in such cases the unopposed candidate should be automatically elected, and that there should be by a more transparent and accessible process for the proposal of candidates, accompanied by published personal statements from all candidates.

**Report: There was no substantive discussion on the paper. This was deferred to a future meeting. It appears that the executive are in favour of the position that an unopposed candidate should be elected without a vote being held. Other council members took the opposite view. There seemed to be a view amongst some people that allowing unopposed candidates in without a vote would risk letting the 'wrong sort of person' onto council. We found the use of that phrase to be of concern and will do our best to go into these issues in more depth for consideration by CSCC reps before the BCA AGM.**

2. BCA Constitution & Manual of Operations. It is clear that the current documents needs considerable amendment to become fit for purpose. Both of us are concerned that this activity has the potential to become bogged down by intransigence unless sufficient new and neutral perspectives are brought to the debate. We would both like to see some form of neutral independent, i.e. outside of caving, representation on any working group which we feel would provide a more objective analysis of some of the potentially polarised views from various factions and hopefully aid compromise.



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**Report: The Executive wish to take this matter forward themselves. In view of Phil's appeal for council members to put their trust in the executive (see below), and the fact that all three are relatively recently in post and Phil in particular is bringing a fresh, robust pair of eyes to the matter, we did not oppose that proposal.**

3. Complaints Procedure. There is an ongoing complaint being pursued within BCA council which is seeking to ban an individual from standing as an Officer and to revoke their BCA membership. Both of us feel strongly that the latter sanction should only be considered for the most serious of offences (such as criminal activities) as it will seriously compromise a person's ability to go caving as they will be unable to be a member of BCA affiliated clubs and organisations (including BCRA) and will have access to sites requiring BCA insurance denied. We also feel that a lifetime ban on holding BCA Officer's roles is again draconian and should only be used in the most serious of cases, we would suggest that in most cases a time limited ban would be more appropriate.

**Report: After some discussion, the complaint was withdrawn.**

Finally, BCA is attempting to hold the AGM on 11th October via a virtual online meeting. After the experience of CSCC holding two recent such events we would like to encourage council to fully consider the practicalities of doing so. In particular we would like to understand how it will be verified that attendees have the right to vote and in what capacity.

**Result: Council intend to proceed with the AGM by virtual means. They are aware of the need to verify that attendees do have the right to vote and this is being worked on by the IT group. It seems likely that voting will be done by verified emails after the meeting but the full procedures have not yet been worked out.**

## General Matters

The Executive proposed that meetings are to be held by Zoom for the foreseeable future. Russell Myers (RM) (BCA secretary) confirmed that this is allowable under the manual of operations. This will allow council to be more flexible about the timing and frequency of meetings. The motion was carried.

PR said he would like working groups to be more active and will be encouraging them to present short updates to council each meeting.

PR made an opening speech to explain why he is standing for the position of chair of BCA. He said he joined the organisation in the belief that it was broken and needed to move forward from a position where it is no longer functioning properly. He is happy that people seem to respect him and he hopes that members will place their trust in the Executive, currently consisting of RM as secretary and Howard Jones (HJ) as treasurer. They are trying to do the right thing for British caving and want people to see the point of a national body. He hopes people will work with him and the executive to discuss things amicably and he was hoping for support and a good mandate from council. He made the point that he will try to solicit views widely and the executive are accountable to council.



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**PR was voted in as chair unanimously. He will serve until 2021.**

PR made the point that the organisation needs to get to a point where people are not just joining it to get insurance. He hopes people will feel able to come to him with problems and complaints as infighting has brought BCA to its knees. The exec will need time to get up to speed and a lot of work will fall to Ari Cooper-Davis who is now heading up the IT Working Group. In that respect, Ari thanked both Dave Cooke and Gary Doubthwaite for all the help they've given him since he took over the role.

A point was raised about the impact of covid-19 on university clubs in particular. The Youth & Development group are looking at this and making plans for training events and will be doing all they can to help.

Rostam Namanghi, the new P&I officer, said he will be working on getting a clear communications strategy in place, with comms from council to the membership.

David Rose said there is nothing to report on the subject of the CroW judicial review since the last meeting. There is no indication when they will hear whether leave to proceed has been granted.

On the subject of the operational procedures and constitutional working group, PR feels that the Manual of Operations and the Constitution are not fit for purpose. He wants to do a complete rewrite. He would like to look at this in parallel with the Vision Group and aims to draft a modern constitution and working procedures. PR proposes to head this and will work on it and circulate thoughts to council. The feeling of the meeting was that a working group is required and that terms of reference should be presented at the next meeting is possible. There were no objections to this.

**The next BCA Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September. An agenda will be circulated shortly. If anyone has any matters they would like considered for inclusion on the agenda. Please let us know asap.**

Linda Wilson and Ed Waters  
27 August 2020.