



COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

A constituent member of the British Caving Association

Discussion of Individual Membership at the Meeting on the 3rd Dec. 2005

The CSCC wants to introduce individual membership. The meeting considered the voting systems in the discussion document (Appendix 1). As is the way of these things, a further voting system that I hadn't considered was proposed with considerable support. I've documented the system that seemed to be the consensus of the meeting. It is not cast in stone and your comments are invited.

It was recalled that CSCC clubs currently have a veto, which cuts through the complexity of some of the other proposed systems. Also the idea that members of member clubs should have a vote was liked. This means that in practice (generally) all those who make the effort to attend a meeting will have a vote yet the clubs position is protected.

More precisely it was suggested that the member clubs have 1 vote, direct individual members have 1 vote and members of member clubs have 1 vote. One person can only have 1 vote. Member Clubs have a veto. Members of member clubs would not pay a subscription and would get nothing from the CSCC other than a vote. Direct individual members would pay a subscription and receive in return a vote, minutes, handbook, etc.

1. Simplest voting procedure - just count the hands in the air.
2. Individuals cannot force a change on the clubs.
3. More people will have a vote than the current system, which should result in more people feeling involved and willing to volunteer some time and effort.

In terms of the Constitution the following changes should be sufficient.

Currently clause 4.a reads:

"The Council shall consist of the delegates from member clubs. It shall meet not less than once a year to transact business."

Delete the redundant first sentence, it is repeated below. Proposed clause 4.a reads:

"The Council shall meet not less than once a year to transact business."

Currently clause 5 reads:

"A club becomes a member club by signifying its wish to do so and paying the current subscription."

I've added individual members and the fact that a vote is necessary before becoming a member. Proposed clause 5 reads:

"a. The classes of membership shall be:

1. Club. Members of member clubs are deemed to be individual members of the CSCC.
2. Individual.

b. An applicant becomes a member by signifying their wish to do so and paying the current subscription and being elected by simple vote at the next council meeting."

Currently clause 7 reads:

"An Ordinary Meeting of the Council shall consist of the Council Officers and the nominee of each club wishing to serve. It shall regulate its own business."

Delete the redundant first sentence. Proposed clause 7 reads:

"The Council shall regulate its own business."

Currently clause 8 reads:

"At all meetings each paid up club shall have one vote and the right to veto. An Ordinary Council Meeting can not approve changes to the Constitution."

Proposed clause 8 reads:

"At all meetings each paid-up member shall have one vote, no person shall have more than one vote. Paid up member clubs shall have the right to veto. An Ordinary Council Meeting cannot approve changes to the Constitution."

Note to keep things simple I've deliberately left the quorum and the requirements for calling an EGM in Clause 4 as they are. It is biased towards the clubs, but we are not expecting a rush of direct individual members. If they materialise in sufficient numbers they can argue their case for amending the Constitution.

The full constitution is available at www.csc.org.uk in the 'About CSCC' section.

David G Cooke
4th December 2005

Appendix 1. Possible Voting Structures to Accommodate Individual Members

Some time ago the CSCC resolved to allow individual members. That decision immediately raises the question as to what voting system should be adopted. It is not any easy question to answer. To promote the debate I've identified several voting systems. The first three are fairly traditional but all have failings and are not particularly satisfactory in my view. The fourth is more radical but I think it might fit the bill.

ONE MEMBER ONE VOTE (OMOV)

Club members have 1 vote. Individual members have 1 vote.

1. Simple voting procedure - just count the hands in the air. Some people might be holding up two hands if they represent a club as well as being an individual member.
2. A club only has no more influence than a single individual.
3. This is the system the BCRA uses and also the DCA uses for its Council Meetings (in fact the DCA also gives votes to its Officer who are neither club reps or individual members.)

BANDED VOTING (BV)

Each individual member has 1 vote. The number of votes a club has depends upon its size, say up to 20 members has 2 votes, a club of 21-40 members has 3 votes, a club over 40 members has 4 votes.

1. The voting procedure would require some maths.
2. Clubs share their power with individuals, although biased to individual members.
3. Contains arbitrary and debatable cut-off points.
4. This is the scheme that DCA previously used, although they stipulated that a club could have no more votes than the number of representatives it sent. So for a large club to use all 4 of its votes it would have to send 4 representatives.

TWO-HOUSE SYSTEM (2HS)

Clubs would comprise one house, individuals the other. For a proposal to be passed it would have to be passed in both houses.

1. Voting procedure would require each vote to be taken twice.
2. Clubs share their power equally with individuals.
3. Clubs can't force a change on individuals and vice-versa.
4. Change is more difficult to achieve since a proposal has to jump two hurdles.
5. The house of individuals is likely to represent only a few individuals compared to the house of clubs which would represent a hundreds cavers. Which means a minority can hold up the wishes of the majority.
6. Below a certain number of individual members, say ten, this system becomes nonsense.
7. This is the system used by the DCA at its General Meetings.

BCA STYLE TWO-HOUSE SYSTEM (BCA2HS)

All members of the CSCC member clubs are deemed to be club individual members of CSCC as well as the direct individuals members of CSCC. Clubs would comprise one house, individuals (Direct and Club) the other. For a proposal to be passed it would have to be passed in both houses. Club individual members would not pay a subscription and would get nothing from the CSCC other than a vote. Direct individual members would pay a subscription and receive in return a vote, minutes, handbook, etc.

1. Voting procedure would require each vote to be taken twice.
2. Clubs share their power equally with individuals, although most of the individuals will be club members.

3. Clubs can't force a change on individuals and vice-versa.
4. Change is more difficult to achieve since a proposal has to jump two hurdles.
5. The house of clubs and house of individuals are much better balanced with the house of individuals representing slightly more cavers than the house of clubs.
6. Since the vast majority of individual members are club members you would expect them to vote with the clubs, thus the clubs would always get their way.
7. This is the system used by the BCA.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this is to get more individuals, whether club members or not involved with the running of CSCC. We need as many volunteers as possible. If you give those individuals a vote they will feel more involved, that their view matters and therefore more likely to contribute their time and effort.

The reason this is a difficult and contentious issue is that the clubs see individual membership as a dilution and diminishment of their power and influence. Caving in the UK is based on club caving. An individual will get much more from the sport by joining a club than going it alone. It is the clubs that always have and always will be at the sharp end of maintaining access and providing the skills, knowledge and opportunity. The voting system needs to recognise this.

OMOV fails because only a handful of direct individual members could out vote all the clubs combined. The meeting could be easily hi-jacked.

BV attempts to balance direct individual votes verse club votes. The boundaries are arbitrary and debatable. Over time they might become inappropriate if the number of direct individual members increased dramatically.

2HS guarantees clubs can't force a change on direct individuals or vice versa. However if, as seems likely for the CSCC, there are very few direct individual members then those few could hold up the wishes of the clubs.

BCA2HS retains most of the club's power. Direct individuals have a voice, but a voice that is diluted by club individuals who you would expect to vote for their club. In practice almost everyone attending a meeting would be in the house of individuals and a subset of club representatives in the house of clubs. The chairman would call for a vote from everyone on a show of hands. If it were close or requested the chairman would call for a vote of club reps. to determine the final outcome.

I hope the above will stimulate a good debate.

David G Cooke
3rd December 2005