

Comment

The long consolidation process of providing the one-stop shop for caving in the UK is nearly complete. From 1 January 2006 BCRA membership will only be available to BCA members. Here, we explain how it will work.

At its AGM in September, BCRA members voted to accept the motion to amend the constitution to read, **"Membership of the Association shall be open to all those members of the British Caving Association interested in furthering its objects"**.

This means that from January 2006, the route to becoming a member of BCRA will be to join BCA and to pay a £10 supplement for BCRA membership. The background to this 'consolidation' was described in BCRA Newsletter 5 (June 2005), which you can read on-line at bcra.org.uk/news/. An updated version appears on page 42 of this issue.

Practical Matters

What, in practice does the change in BCRA membership arrangements mean?

- If you wish to benefit from the **public liability insurance** that was previously a BCRA benefit, you should now join BCA.
- BCA Direct Individual Members (DIMs) will receive **Speleology** as part of their membership package. *You do not need to join BCRA.*
- If you want to receive **Cave & Karst Science** you need to pay a supplement of £10 to join BCRA.
- If you **only** want to receive **Speleology** and none of the other membership

benefits of BCA, you can subscribe for £8/year, as a non-member of BCA.

- If you **only** want to receive **C & KS**, and none of the other membership benefits of BCA or BCRA, you can subscribe for £16/year, as a non-member.
- A Club Individual Member (CIM) of BCA does not receive publications unless they upgrade to a DIM or subscribe directly.

Individual BCA membership fees for 2006 have been **reduced** and some BCRA benefits **increased**. See page 44.

Some members have voiced the view that they should not have to join another body in order to support BCRA – particularly if they are not an active caver. But BCRA Council is firmly of the view that we are now a *single* caving organisation.

Moreover, membership of BCA is the method by which you can contribute to the process that makes caves available to you, as a scientist. Even if you never go caving, you are reaping the benefits of others that do, and this depends on access agreements, insurance for landowners and so on. Anyone who has a connection with caving, but believes that they should not have to contribute towards the cost of this insurance is entitled, of course, to hold that opinion; but BCRA Council believes that our members should contribute to this 'caving tax' in order to secure the future of cave science in the UK. ■

New Editor for Speleology

Speleology 5 is well over a year late, but the magazine will be back in production for 2006!

At BCRA, we're all acutely aware that the non-production of a magazine has posed distinct problems at a time when we needed to do all we could to encourage members to stay with us. But the lack of volunteers seems to be a problem throughout the caving world at the moment.

However, I am pleased to announce that BCRA have appointed a new editor – **Erin Lynch** – who will receive a small remuneration for her work. Most of issue 5 was put together by Erin, for which I am very grateful. I am confident Erin will do an excellent job, and that that *Speleology* will appear regularly in 2006!

Speleology is now being published by BCRA on behalf of BCA. It will be sent to all BCA members whose membership package entitles them to receive a copy.

Those of you who have submitted material for publication and have not yet seen it in print are asked to contact Erin to check that it is still on file. It is possible that one or two book or magazine reviews remain buried amongst the paperwork.

Contact Details

Erin lives in China, and although email access is generally good, she reports that the post can be very slow. For this reason, I will continue to act as the UK contact point for post and telephone. Email to speleology@bcra.org.uk will go direct to Erin in China. If you have large files to send, please contact Erin first for advice.

David Gibson

BCRA Cave Science & Technology Initiative

£25,000 Grant Money over Five Years

To demonstrate its commitment to cave science, BCRA has announced its **Cave Science and Technology Initiative (CSTI)**. BCRA President Dave Checkley made the announcement at Hidden Earth 2005, saying that the initiative aimed to provide £25,000 over the next five years towards cave research – in both science and technology.

The objective is to raise an interest in caves and to further our understanding of them, and of the technology employed to enter and explore them. Project areas could include ...

- Caving Technology
- Bio-Sciences
- Physical Sciences

No project will be too large or too small to be supported. Examples could include...

- A few hundred pounds to test new equipment

- A few thousand to pay for a longer, more formal investigation
- Some help towards an undergraduate project
- Seed money for a PhD proposal.

The Awards Panel

Proposals will be considered by a panel comprising Nick Williams, David Checkley, Graham Proudlove and Trevor Faulkner, who may consult outside experts for advice. The panel will be involved in regular monitoring of projects and will be chasing you for a full report on completion of the work. Elections to the Awards Panel will be every four years on a staggered basis.

How to Apply

Application forms will be on the BCRA web site from 1 January 2006. Alternatively, you should contact BCRA President, David Checkley (see page 46) ■

The President's Bit

This is a time of change for BCRA, a great opportunity and a considerable challenge. The long awaited start of the new national body has unburdened BCRA of a sizeable body of administrative effort. The organisation now has the opportunity to really focus on its core activities and put all its energy into cave science and technology. These activities are a major enriching force in the caving world.

Few cavers can fail to wonder at the age, the origin and the processes involved in the formation of our world of darkness; or to marvel at the skill of the cave photographer and cool of the cave diver, whose technology has progressed, each to an area of great specialisation. BCRA has a pivotal role in all these areas, to educate, to disseminate information and to encourage further investigation in its widest sense.

This is also a time of challenge. The sport of caving in the UK is in decline. We are not seen as cool

and sexy and we have a bad press. Cavers seem to be an ever-more-aged and young fresh faces

are less and less common. In these circumstances, having lost its national administrative role, BCRA has to offer something special to maintain its membership. We have to change to meet this new challenge. I believe we can change and can play an essential role; not only in the rejuvenation of cave science and technology, but also in the sport of caving.

This is the purpose behind our new **BCRA Cave Science and Technology Initiative**. ■



David Checkley,
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