

British Cave Rescue Council

Charity registration number: 1137252



Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts

1 February 2020 to 31 January 2021



Photo credit: E Porter

Objectives and Activities

The objectives of the British Cave Rescue Council (BCRC) are to relieve suffering and distress amongst persons and animals endangered by accidents or natural hazards by co-ordinating and providing support for member underground search and rescue organisations and individuals representing the Council in the British Isles and abroad, with the support and recognition of police, fire and all other relevant authorities.

The BCRC is the co-ordinating body for 15 (soon to be 16) cave rescue member teams operating in the UK and Ireland. It represents and supports its members at national and international level and promotes cave rescue and the exchange of information between member rescue organisations, providing a common voice.

We bring teams together to share training and best practice, co-ordinate grant claims and administer the national 'peer-review' process. We help teams to maintain the core capabilities required of a BCRC member team in order to meet the operational needs required by the calling authorities (Police, Fire & Rescue services) and the general public.

The benefit to the public of a wholly voluntary search and rescue service is that we and our member teams are able to provide trained and equipped personnel to respond to a call out, any day or time of the year. These teams are able to operate underground and in other inhospitable locations to help save lives. The trustees continue to have regard to the Charity Commission guidance on 'Public Benefit', which helps to inform what we do and how we do it.

Officers of the council represent member teams' interests at external meetings, events and conferences. Cave rescue is represented at the United Kingdom Search and Rescue (UKSAR) forum. We liaise with the National Police Chiefs Council, the Police Search Advisors (PoISA) training college, the British Caving Association, the Cave Diving Group and the British Cave Research Association. We maintain a close relationship with other European cave rescue teams through our European Cave Rescue Association (ECRA) membership and with Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW) as an associate member.

The BCRC also works on national equipment procurement deals for its member teams. This year nine teams claimed a BCRC equipment grant of up to £500, seven of them taking advantage of a bulk purchase of the new cave rescue Slix stretchers. We also allocated funds to the new casualty bag (CasBag) project, which provided ten proto-type CasJackets for teams to test and is working on prototypes for the CasBag. The new CasBag is more suited to the underground environment and to work with other safety equipment. We also funded high-visibility Cave Rescue jackets which were distributed to a few locations throughout the UK, to aid interoperability with other agencies.

Policy on Grant Making

The BCRC is not normally in a position to make grants. However, matched funding grants of up to £500 per team to support large purchases of rescue equipment were agreed by the executive committee in 2019, in line with our constitution, and most teams have now claimed.

Volunteers

The BCRC is administered by 13 volunteer officers with support from additional co-opted volunteer officers. The year ended 31 January 2021 has been another busy year for BCRC officers and team members who have stepped up to support teams nationally. Team members spending time on BCRC volunteering in the last year included the CasBag project team.

It should be noted that cave rescue work is normally undertaken by our member teams, and the people that operate in those teams. The 15 teams across the British Isles are made up of approximately 1,000 volunteer rescuers. All team officers and team members are volunteers, making cave rescue in the UK a service run entirely by volunteers.

During the incident reporting year ended December 2020, the teams and their members responded to 47 underground and 220 surface incidents (2019 - 44 call outs) 2,604 man-hours (2019 - 4,195 man-hours) were put in to these searches, rescues and call outs. Many more hours are spent on equipment cleaning and maintenance, training, fundraising and administering the organisations.

Covid 19 affected all areas of search and rescue, increasing the time required, from initial training and new procedures through to cleaning or disposing of kit safely after a rescue.

BCRC officers and team members represent cave rescue interests and provide volunteer support within MREW in areas such as communications, medical, equipment checking, training and spreading the 'AdventureSmart' message to support the mountain rescue teams. All BCRC officers are active members of their local cave rescue teams.

Our co-opted support officers maintain the national website, the facebook page and the incidents reporting. We were very sad to lose our incidents reporting volunteer, Richard, early 2020. His legacy to BCRC is our outstanding incidents reporting system, which he also funded for several years.

In addition, officers, using their own funds, continue to contribute to the development of cave rescue teams overseas.

Achievements and Performance

BCRC was able to provide a small contribution towards excess insurance costs for BCRC teams with over 50 members, to buy teams a year's breathing space, when MREW was unexpectedly unable to meet higher than expected insurance costs at very short notice.

Covid 19 meant that guidance was urgently required to protect team members and casualties and this was provided by BCRC's medical officer initially, despite doctors being completely overwhelmed at work and then, in partnership with MREW.

Our constitution was dragged into the 21st century by our legal advisor, with great timing considering the sudden, unexpected need for online meetings.

BCRC continued to support the project team working on the improvement of the CasBags.

BCRC officers attend many meetings and conferences, to raise the profile of cave rescue and to contribute to the national and international discussion and planning of search and rescue (SAR) services. Meetings this year included UKSAR and MREW meetings, specially-convened monthly meetings regarding Covid 19, a PolSA Marketplace training day and a meeting with the insurers. Annual conferences were cancelled due to Covid 19 and meetings mainly went online. The BCRC AGM was also online and the annual training and information sharing weekend which normally ties in with the AGM had to be cancelled. Officers, team members, cavers and divers continued to give presentations on the 2018 rescue of thirteen boys from a flooded cave in Thailand.

Fundraising Performance

Our Fundraising objectives were to cover the expected annual core running costs of the BCRC, in the region of £3-5k a year, so that we can fulfil our objects without impinging on public funds that might otherwise be directly donated to our member teams.

Joint fundraising, with BCRC officers sitting on the MREW national fundraising committee has faltered over the last few years and has finally come to an end. So, BCRC is consider national fundraising opportunities and how to support team fundraising.

Financial Review

2020/2021 settled back down to a more normal year for BCRC. We received £2,928 (2020 - £27,936 due to donor generosity after the Thai rescue) including restricted income and grants and spent £8,627 (2020 24,542) leaving us £5,699 down over all. Most of our unrestricted income for the year was spent on the one-off MREW insurance top-up for team members.

£4,309 was spent from the designated equipment reserve on the matched-funding equipment grants to teams and £700 on CasBag/CasJacket development.

Reserves

We hold a risks reserve to cover one year's operating costs, unexpected large rescue costs and to help towards supporting teams after a catastrophic event or loss of support.

The equipment reserve still hold the funds for the final round of the 2019 team grants.

The funds allocated to the update of the Nicola III 'through rock' radios were not needed and were reallocated to the CasBag project.

Principal Sources of Funds

The principal source of regular income is normally the annual subscription levied on our fifteen member teams at £100 per member team.

Grants are occasionally available for BCRC and teams, although these are not guaranteed. The UKSAR 'Libor' fund administered by CAF is a temporary source of grant funding for training, both centrally and for member teams but it was on-hold during 2020 and is currently expected to end in the next couple of years.

In addition BCRC receives donations from individuals, trusts and companies and ad hoc support from caving, diving and rescue organisations and events.

Risks and Uncertainties

One of the main risks facing the BCRC is ongoing funding. As a co-ordinating body, the BCRC is not as attractive to donors as the cave rescue teams themselves. As a National body, it does not attract local support. In line with many charities, a year's running costs are included in the core Reserve Policy, this allows a little time to find extra funding or cut services and spending should donations or other sources contract. Teams provide the main funding and without outside sources, they would decide and fund the level of activity required from BCRC.

Reliance on busy volunteers and the time that they can contribute is always a challenge, particularly as most volunteers also work full-time and are active within cave rescue teams.

For many years, the BCRC and its member teams have been full members of MREW, which has provided support, funded some of the ongoing costs and administered grants on behalf of its member teams. These include fundamental services such as medical insurance, the licence to administer prescription and controlled drugs, the public liability insurance, top-up accident insurance and vehicle insurance.

MREW became a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) in 2020 and the BCRC and cave-only teams are no longer eligible to be full members. The effect of loss of full membership over time is unknown but associate members were not part of the MREW funded Covid 19 protective equipment distribution during 2020, leaving rescuers in the smallest cave teams funding their own PPE.

The MREW top-up insurance will no longer fund teams of over 50 volunteers, which affects cave teams which cover a large geographical area covered by multiple smaller Mountain teams. Discussions are also underway regarding the licencing of the SARCALL call-out system. The burden of such changes may eventually fall on individual teams but BCRC will help where it can.

Structure, Governance and Management

The BCRC is an unincorporated charity, governed by its constitution and charity law. It was originally formed as the Cave Rescue Council in 1967 and was reconstituted as the British Cave Rescue Council in 1981. It became a registered charity in April 2003 and the latest revised constitution was adopted by the membership at the 2020 Annual General Meeting.

Trustee selection

The members at the annual general meeting (AGM) elect the Chairman, the Secretary and the Treasurer. They can also elect extra officers as President, Vice Chairman, Training Officer, Equipment Officer, Conference Secretary, Communications Officer, Medical Advisor, Diving Advisor and Legal Advisor, if they wish.

The Executive Committee can co-opt members as the extra officers if the positions remain vacant at the end of the AGM. The Executive Committee may in addition appoint not more than 3 further co-opted members to the limit of one third co-opted members on the committee.

The wider network

BCRC is affiliated to UK Search & Rescue (UKSAR). Internationally the BCRC is a member of the European Cave Rescue Association (ECRA). It is an associate member of the Mountain Rescue England and Wales CIO (MREW).

Administrative details

British Cave Rescue Council (BCRC)

Registered charity number: 1137252

Old Forge House
Hampton Loade
Bridgnorth
WV15 6HD

Email: secretary@caverescue.org.uk
Website: www.caverescue.org.uk

The charity trustees who manage the charity

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustees
1	Peter Dennis	Chair		Members at the AGM
2	Emma Porter	Secretary		Members at the AGM
3	Heather Simpson	Treasurer		Members at the AGM
4	Richard Whitehouse	Vice Chair		Members at the AGM /Executive committee
5	Gary Mitchell	Assistant Chair		Members at the AGM/Executive committee
6	James Davis	Training Officer		Members at the AGM/Executive committee
7	Michael Clayton	Equipment Officer		Members at the AGM/Executive committee
8	Toby Hamnett	Legal Advisor		Members at the AGM/Executive committee
9	Brendan Sloan	Medical officer		Members at the AGM/Executive committee
10	Christopher Jewel	Diving Officer		Members at the AGM/Executive committee
11	Anthony Haigh	Communications Officer		Members at the AGM/Executive committee
12	Roger King	Information Officer		Members at the AGM/Executive committee
13	Peter Knight	Conference Secretary	May 2021 AGM	Members at the AGM/Executive committee



Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	01/02/2020		31/01/2021

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Levies	1,600	-	-	1,600	1,400
Thai rescue expenses reclaimed	-	-	-	-	6,270
Donations	945	-	-	945	7,405
Gift-Aid	113	-	-	113	398
VAT reclaimed	-	-	-	-	293
Grants	-	-	-	-	12,164
Recharged equipment	251	-	-	251	-
Hidden Earth	-	-	-	-	-
Interest received	20	-	-	20	2
Badge sales	-	-	-	-	5
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	2,929	-	-	2,929	27,936
A2 Asset and investment sales					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	2,929	-	-	2,929	27,936
A3 Payments					
Travel	199	-	-	199	2,204
Rescue costs	-	-	-	-	5,218
Training	-	-	-	-	7,255
Team training grants	-	-	-	-	4,895
Unspent grant returned	-	-	-	-	14
Equipment for teams	233	4,309	-	4,542	4,367
Equipment development	-	700	-	700	-
Fundraising costs	21	-	-	21	42
Insurance	2,500	-	-	2,500	-
AGM	-	-	-	-	150
Uniforms	359	-	-	359	-
Postage, stationery & telephone	71	-	-	71	162
Donations	-	-	-	-	100
Subscriptions	235	-	-	235	135
Sub total	3,618	5,009	-	8,627	24,542
A4 Asset and investment purchases.					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	3,618	5,009	-	8,627	24,542
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 689	- 5,009	-	- 5,698	3,394
A5 Transfers between funds					
A6 Cash funds last year end	35,721	33,650	-	69,371	65,977
Cash funds this year end	35,032	28,641	-	63,673	69,371

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Lloyds current account	1,987	-	-
	NatWest current account	1,508	-	-
	Lloyds savings account	29,131	28,641	-
	Paypal account	2,406	-	-
	Total cash funds	35,032	28,641	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	Unrestricted to nearest £	Restricted to nearest £	Endowment to nearest £
	Levy debtors	100	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	Four exhibition stands	unrestricted	-	-
	40 Cloth badges	unrestricted	-	-
	6 glass coasters	unrestricted	-	-
	90 pin badges	unrestricted	-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
	None		-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Dr Peter Dennis		
		Heather Simpson (FCCA)		