

## **An educational strategy for the conservation of caves.**

The British Caving Association believe that the most effective long term means of conserving caves is through education.

The BCA will produce material, such as the Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines and 6 Point Caving Code, in a variety of formats and make it widely available to their membership and beyond. The BCA will encourage all membership groups, constituent bodies, clubs and individuals, to strengthen their conservation message.

Whilst education is a key issue, the BCA also support conservation monitoring schemes such as the SSSI Monitoring Projects, and conservation management, such as route marking, signage and conservation wardens. In this respect, the BCA recommends adopting a guiding principle of the least restrictive option to meet the conservation need. We also acknowledge the value of Cave Management Plans and Conservation Audits.

Ideally all people visiting a cave should hear a conservation message. The primary focus should be on those new to the activity but the message should also be used as a reminder to those who are more regularly engaged with caving activities. The BCA believe there are Four main ways to deliver a conservation message:

- Through caving clubs. Many cavers are members of caving clubs or have contact with them. The club has an ideal opportunity to pass on conservation messages. Some clubs nominate a 'conservation officer' for this purpose and BCA encourage clubs to consider this.
- Through caving instructors. Many people are introduced to caving through an instructed caving trip. The cave instructor training and assessment scheme requires conservation briefings to be delivered and other conservation considerations to be met as part of trip planning.
- At the cave and in the caving area. Some people with an interest in visiting caves will not be instructed or contacted by a club. These may be experienced cavers or relative novices. Regional Caving Councils are encouraged to play a role ensuring the message is available in local shops, cafes, events and even at the cave itself where this is appropriate.
- Online via Websites and Social Media platforms.

Please contact the BCA Conservation and Access Officer for further information.

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