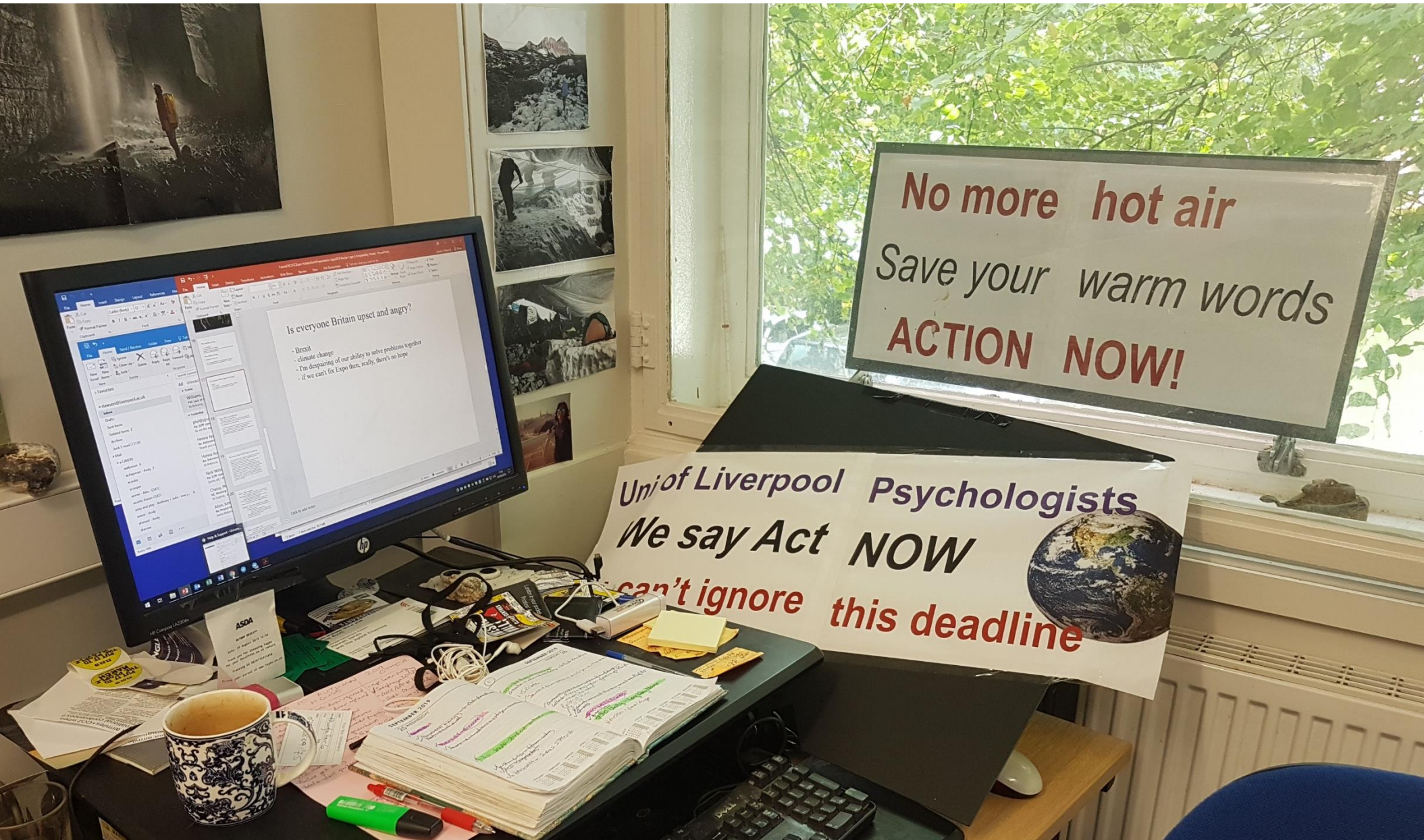
A scenic mountain landscape featuring a prominent, jagged peak in the background. The foreground is dominated by light-colored, layered rock formations with sparse green vegetation. The middle ground shows a valley with more greenery and distant mountain ranges under a clear sky. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

**Cambridge University Caving Club
Austria Expedition - 2019 and Beyond
Becka Lawson**

Is everyone in Britain upset and angry?

- Brexit, climate change: I'm despairing of our ability to solve problems together
- if we can't fix Expo then, really, there's no hope



Plan for the meeting

- overview (Becka)
- minute of silence (Green thing)
- discussion (I'll chair and shut up; I want to let everyone speak and to balance M/F contributions)

Aim of the meeting

- to change how Expo runs
- it's not about rope thicknesses or the great thru-bolt debate
- it goes even broader than Pete's proposals



Expo 2019 wasn't that bad

- there was some hyperbole this year
- I've definitely been on worse Expos and I've heard of really bad ones ... nobody was hurt, nobody stormed off and I think everyone kept on speaking terms
- **"normalise that bad things happen"** - are expectations too high?

.... but many people got really fed up and - probably more than anyone - I want Expo to survive and to thrive so we need to fix it

Wookey's reply to Pete's proposals was that there was nothing we haven't heard already ... I feel that response is part of the problem

- these issues occur in many other spheres (work, open source community, politics, clubs), we should learn from them to help Expo

The basics of the CUCC Expo are amazing

- we have **documented one of the deepest, longest cave systems in the world** in a magnificent karst area (Viennetta rock in Switzerland)
- we have **good relations** with the local cavers, the local Austrians, other expeditions in the area, no problems with permissions
-
- **Expo is open.** I'd never have started expedition caving without the CUCC expo and some of the best cavers I know have done little expedition caving because they weren't in the know or weren't assertive / pushy enough to get themselves invited on expeditions ... there's arguably a place for invite-only expeditions ... but I don't want to just be cosy and cave with my chums all the time

So what's the problem?



Expo feels to me like a decaying mansion

- the owner (CUCC) frets over health and safety regulations, the blocked drains and the dry rot
- the visitors (non-CUCC Expoers) grumble about the cost of entry and the lousy food in the cafe compared to the National Trust stately home next door
- **neither sees the problems from the other side**
- I think I might be best able to do this as I started caving with CUCC and I've been on many Expos but I haven't lived in Cambridge since I was an undergraduate, I know non-CUCC Expo cavers well and I don't feel I belong

Expo = lots of work

- but it's not visible to many Expoers (people seemed to think rigging and derigging in 2019 took a long time ... I didn't)
- we mis-sell Expo as a holiday: it's not
- the work is not spread fairly (work doesn't get done or people get burnt out or resentful - Expo leaders never come back, bad news as they're **exactly** who Expo needs in the long term!)
- it's not sustainable: there are no younger cavers coming in to replace me, Anthony or Wookey

Balance is crucial - Expo should be FUN!

Expo = too much work - examples

- *the work is never-ending, there is **no sense of progress or achievement** as there's always more to do and few clear end points*
- *things don't get done* (no journals, no Descent articles, no finished versions of surveys, website + kataster always out of date)
- *things are over-spec* (massive Daren drums, giant solar panels, huge tarps) soaking up lots of time and energy
- *things are done badly due to rushing or insufficient man power* (battery dropped at Top Camp; Tatie Hut loft disaster; Balkon left fully rigged in 2018 with no record)
- *logistics are hard, especially for small teams* (moving gear from Cambridge to Austria and from Base camp to Top camp)
- **look at the other groups in the area!** 3 weeks is a *long* Expo (only the Dachstein does up to 3 weeks), 1 week typical (VHO, Ishlerhutte, Applhaus, Arge) with small groups (down to ~ 6); they can push quickly and easily using in situ rope and lightweight camps; no big derigs

Expo cavers do lots for caving, loads of examples

Emma Wilson and Tom Clayton have run the Red Rose meets list for years

Holly Bradley is the Red Rose conservation office

Alex Crow and Jess Stirrups organised an open-invite Ardeche trip this month

Brendan Hall as the CHECC treasurer

Thom Starnes was the CHECC president

Sam Lieberman on the Easegill survey and RRCPC committee

Noel Snape and Holly Bradley surveying on Fountains Fell

Becka Lawson on the Leck Fell survey

Fleur Loveridge and Pete Talling organising other expeditions

Andrew Atkinson on Mendip surveying, archive and survey training

Holly Bradley and Noel Snape training ULSA cavers

Ian Walker stabilising Crescent Pot

Lydia Leather setting up and running Nottingham Uni caving club

.... those are a few off the top of my head, there are many more

So why are we failing to get (enough) Expo cavers to help long-term with Expo?

Expo = lots of work

- but it's not visible to many Expoers (people seemed to think rigging and derigging in 2019 took a long time ... I didn't)
- we mis-sell Expo as a holiday: it's not
- the work is not spread fairly (work doesn't get done or people get burnt out or resentful - Haydon as leader)
- it's not sustainable: there are no younger cavers coming in to replace me, Anthony or Wookey

Solution - less work + spread it more fairly

- most cavers are up for hard work (after all, that *is* caving)
- we need to make the work visible and allocate it explicitly
 - every Expoer gets a pre-Expo job
 - during Expo have tallies to show who has done what
- give people kudos for doing jobs (people get projects)
- be intelligent about who does what (use people's skills)
- reduce the work (see next)

A young man with short brown hair and a dark t-shirt is sitting in the back of a white van. The van is packed with climbing equipment, including two large blue plastic barrels, several large coils of red and white rope, and various other gear. The man is smiling and looking towards the camera. The van's rear door is open, and the interior is visible. The background shows a wooden building and some greenery.

Solution - reduce the work

- leave equipment in Austria
- leave caves rigged
- minimise pointless, effortful shifting stuff off the hill and back to the UK

Solution - reduce the work

- scale down / move Top Camp
- slim-line Base Camp



Has Expo been mis-sold? Newbies ...

We must be honest about what to expect (failing to do this means some people have a miserable time on Expo and, in the worst case, are put off expedition caving in general - ask are you better off coming next year?):

- your SRT needs to be safe and efficient
- you won't have fun if you're unfit, physically or mentally
- it's not for you if you just want an easy holiday
- we all feel sad if we see people struggling ... and there's a limit to what we can do to help especially if there's more than one or two

Solution

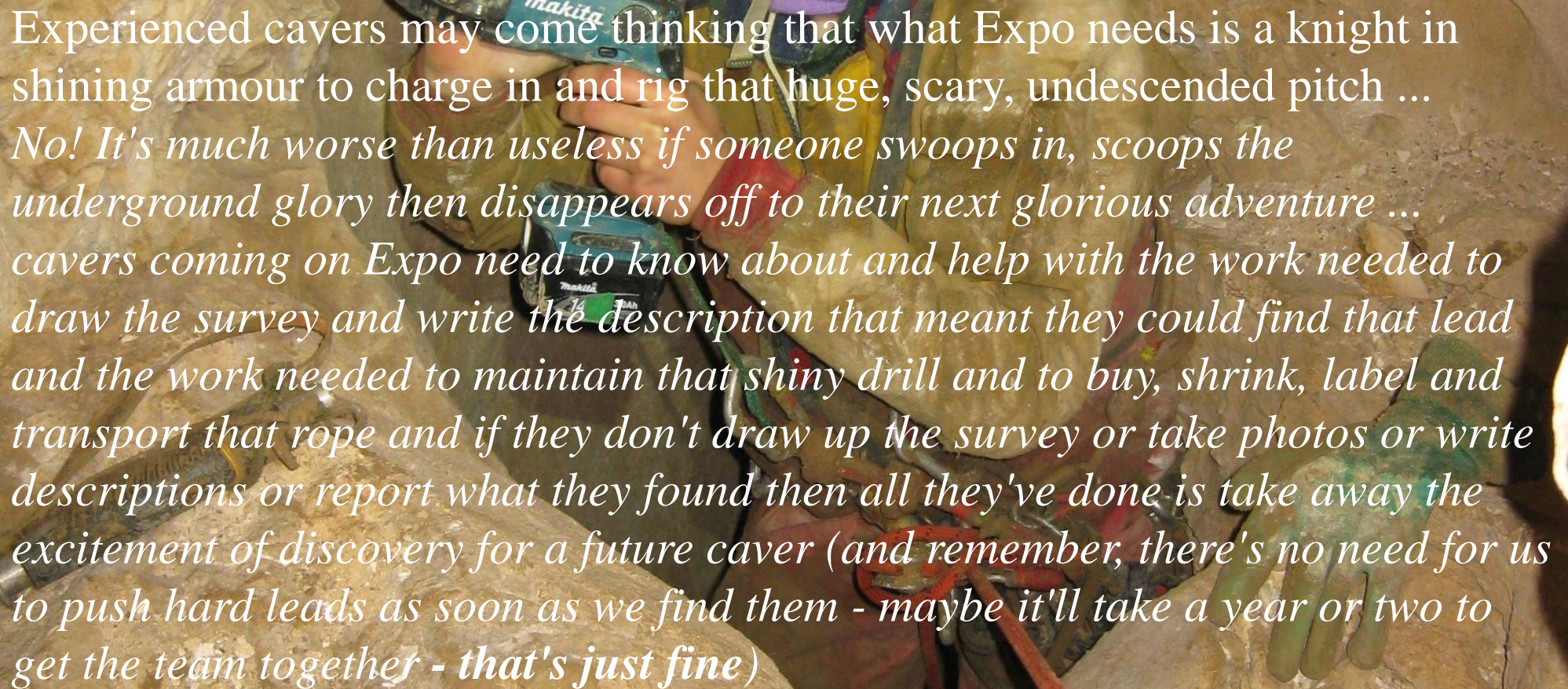
If you've not been caving on Expo in the last 3 years you need a sponsor

Your named sponsor must:

- only have one sponsee
- be at Expo for at least the first 2 week that their sponsee goes
- ensure their sponsee doesn't have a shit time on Expo (that they have trips they are happy to go on, that they know what to bring and how to prepare, that they understand what to they need to do during and after)

Example: Holly Bradley and Noel Snape introducing ULSA cavers

Has Expo been mis-sold? No more heroes

A photograph of a caver in a cave. The caver is wearing a red helmet with a headlamp, a purple balaclava, and a harness. They are using a blue Makita power drill on a rock surface. The cave walls are made of rough, brownish rock. The lighting is dim, with the primary light source being the headlamp.

Experienced cavers may come thinking that what Expo needs is a knight in shining armour to charge in and rig that huge, scary, undescended pitch ... *No! It's much worse than useless if someone swoops in, scoops the underground glory then disappears off to their next glorious adventure ... cavers coming on Expo need to know about and help with the work needed to draw the survey and write the description that meant they could find that lead and the work needed to maintain that shiny drill and to buy, shrink, label and transport that rope and if they don't draw up the survey or take photos or write descriptions or report what they found then all they've done is take away the excitement of discovery for a future caver (and remember, there's no need for us to push hard leads as soon as we find them - maybe it'll take a year or two to get the team together - that's just fine)*

Expo doesn't feel open and welcoming

- lots of non-CUCC cavers do come on Expo - brilliant - but, like me, they don't feel they fully belong ... and maybe because of this they don't feel invested, they (mostly) don't help with Expo work when they're not in Austria and they (mostly) don't keep coming back

Solution - everyone is equal

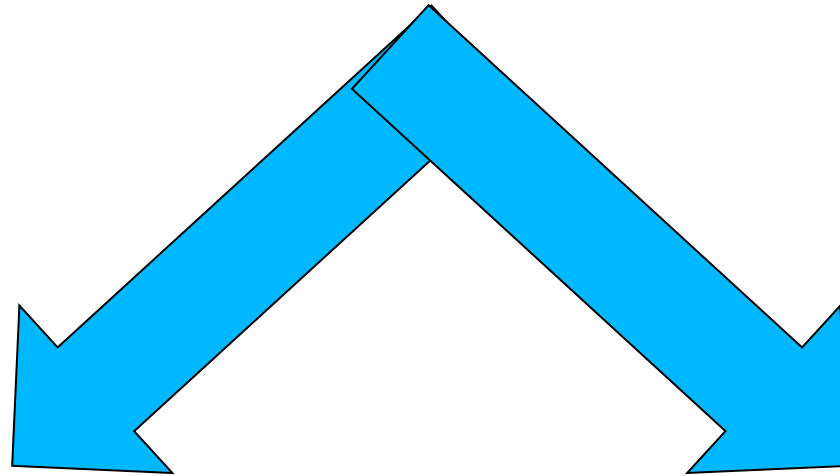
- explicitly change who does what job and who chooses this (perception that big Expo jobs are not going to be given to non-CUCCers)

- proper, face to face meetings
- easier if the practical links to Cambridge are reduced so gear belongs to Expo and is kept in Austria and there is an Expo tackle master responsible for maintaining gear (at least be transparent)

Non-CUCCers need **ownership + agency**

Expo should own its own gear

Expo has different needs to CUCC (needs lots of long ropes, hangers and big tacklesacks), poor monitoring (did nobody notice the missing km of rope and other stuff that was left in Balkon all this year???) and better care if things belong to Expo. Two possibilities:



Expo sponges
off CUCC

That's not fair;
Expo should pay the
true costs of its gear

CUCC sponges
off Expo

That's not fair; students
from poor Uni clubs
shouldn't subsidise CUCC

We're intelligent ... so why do we act so dumb?

- we make life hard for ourselves (not leaving rope in the cave)
- we don't think about the psychology (feeling agency, ownership)



- how do we decide objectives? I don't get asked this year ... why don't we have that conversation? We *used* to, down the pub or on caving meets ... but that doesn't happen now - we need to meet up more, to know each other and to talk!

We're intelligent ... so why do we act so dumb?

Wookey:

- psychology; be the solution, not the problem; think of the user ... changing one elevation, fun / not fun - repositories
- not fair that Paul and Sam and Michael spent their Expo fighting the printer and doing real work stuff on repositories etc as otherwise the rest of us can't do simplest of tasks?
- it's humiliating and frustrating for the rest of us to have to rely on geeks: think of the emotional effects and try something different (**dignity comes from a sense of worth and purpose and participation - we need to give this to everyone**) dogmatism puts people off open-source ... perception by non-CUCCers that things have to be done the "CUCC way"

Non-geeks

- appreciate the difficulty of the IT / electronic tasks, there will **not be an easy solution** to drawing up a 100km cave system or getting robust solar charging of multiple battery types
- big projects take persistence, effort, skill: where we can we should try hard to be inclusive (Tunnel, survex) but it may not be possible (Troggle)

We're intelligent ... so why do we act so dumb?

Motivating people to do work - some people seem to naturally pick up on what's needed to be done and to want to try to help (Sarah this year) ... but that's not everyone and it's not fair on them if others are slacking

STICK - people may not realise they are skiving ... we should make workloads clearer to everyone (tallies for number of non-personal carries, for shopping trips, non-personal lifts up the hill, cooking, bread-making and washing up) so tasks are shared fairly

CARROT - people are much more invested if they "own" a project, they had the creative buzz of setting it up and they have their name associated with it (Olly with Survex) - so can we make this happen?

Maintenance is crucial but is much less sexy than doing something from scratch (having your name on a project) - Dickon and Homecoming, Michael and Corin in Fishface

We have to work together and look out for each other ...

Your longest trip of Expo is finished, you're changing and putting your curry on - are you missing something?

This matters outside of Expo ...

We are individuals in a community

- we all need to pay the price of being in that community
- we're **not** equal, we have different skills, that's fine
- we shouldn't rank skills
- to each according to their ability
- **SAY THANKS** (too much carping, too little praise)

There will be many things that newby cavers and first timers on Expo can't do (yet) but they should be putting the same amount of graft in **before, during and after** Expo as everyone else

More talking, fewer tears, no shouting: change the culture

- annual Hidden Earth AGM to review Expo, decide next year's Expo committee and agree on Expo changes (eg Alice - dehydrated meals instead of curries) and to excite people about objectives
- all Expoers have equal say (CUCC or not) and are equally welcome
- everyone on Expo signs up to Expo ethos, we need to work as a team
- people coming must know what to expect (everyone new to Expo has a sponsor)
- communicate more and with respect: shouting is never good
- Expo mailing list isn't working - see what other Expos do and try something different
- Tom's suggestion - Expo belongs to CHECC rather than CUCC?

Work spread more fairly and transparently, assigned more intelligently and reduced where possible

- all Expoers take on a pre-Expo job with increased cost of Expo / more jobs for late-signers (early registration and cut off to come) ... planning can't happen if people don't commit and you can't do pre-Expo work if you sign up at the last minute
- people get jobs based on their skills and interests (Fleur)
- during Expo have tally sheets of jobs like shopping, cooking, carries
- Expo meetings at New Year, training meet and every week during Expo plus informally increase caving amongst Expoers (how? Telegram, WhatsApp, fb ...)
- Expo owns its own gear (including Cavelink; no 10mm rope)
- Expo gear left in Austria
- ropes left dry-rigged in caves where possible for ongoing projects
- maximum three or four week Expo with everyone doing either first or last week or both
- scale down Top Camp and Base Camp so quicker and easier to set up + take down

Good in 2019

- reflectors

Bad in 2019

- O-rings
- drill bags and padding
- food

New for 2020

- code of conduct
- GPS session for safety and prospecting: everyone uses the same app and a single download with key locations highlighted (camp, main entrances, reflectored trails) and practice using it

THANKS

- Pete for putting together an initial document
- Crossley and Wookey for pre-Expo organising
- Nat and Dickon for cave descriptions and surveys
- Haydon (and others) for feedback on my ideas