

PWLL DU CAVE MANAGEMENT GROUP

Minutes of the Meeting held at the Salisbury Hall, Govilon, on Saturday 23rd November 2013 commencing at 7.30pm.

Attendees:

Mick Day		Chairman
Fleur Loveridge	Oxford UCC/Red Rose CPC	Secretary
Sue Mabbett	South Wales C.C.	Permit Secretary & Club Rep
Henry Patton	Aberystwyth C.C.	Club Rep & Conservation Officer
Ali Garman	Draenen Diggers	Club Rep & Fixed Aids Officer
Andy Farrant	Chelsea S. S.	Geological Recorder
Peter Smith	Chelsea S. S.	incoming Biological Recorder
John Stevens	Chelsea S. S.	Survey Recorder
Owen Clarke	Cwmbran Caving Club	Club Rep
Chris Densham	Oxford U. C. C.	Club Rep & Trustee
Peter Talling	University Bristol S.S.	Club Rep
Dan Thorne	Gagendor	Club Rep
Chris Seal	Chelsea S.S.	Club Rep
Tim Barter	Westminster S. G.	Club Rep
Malcolm Reid	Brynmawr C.C.	Club Rep
Charles Bailey		Trustee
Bernie Woodley	Cambrian Caving Council	
Stuart France	Chelsea S.S.	
Paul Hartwright	Hereford C. C.	
Huw Durban	Brynmawr C. C.	
Fraser Stephens	Brynmawr C. C.	

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Spencer Drew (Treasurer), John Pybus (Survey Secretary), Rhian Kendall (outgoing Biological Recorder), Morgannwg CC, Rich Hill (Gagendor) and Les Williams (Wessex C. C.).

2a. Minutes of the last Meetings (6th June 2012)

There were two changes to the minutes from the minutes from the last meeting. One a typographical error; the second the omission of MCC from the apologies list.

The minutes were then signed as a true and accurate record by the Chair.

2b. Matters arising not covered elsewhere in the Agenda

There were no matters arising which would not be covered later in the agenda.

3. Officers Reports

a) Secretary

The Secretary's report is attached with the minutes.

The recently recurring padlock problems were discussed. It was agreed that the Group needed to move to a cheaper lock to minimise the costs of these problems to the PDCMG. SM agreed to look into this. In the meantime a standby combination lock would be procured along with a new lock of our current specification (action SM). The idea being that the combination could be stored locally (with FS) and quickly put in place as a standby measure should we lose another lock. FL to talk to the landowner about this strategy. While it was agreed that all would like to return to a combination lock again in the future, this matter would clearly need landowner approval.

In addition, FL to look into reaching out to the culprits, possibly via an intermediary.

Progress is now being made on Drws Cefn again, refer to the report.

b) Treasurer

The treasurer sent his apologies due to last minute unforeseen circumstances. He reported the balance to be £217.21.

All clubs were reminded of their expected £20+ donation.

A full report subsequently followed and is appended to the minutes.

c) Permit Secretary/Access Officer

The Permit Secretary presented the caver data up to October 2013:

Trips Recorded in Ogof Draenen Nov 2012 to Oct 2013

	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13
Parties	1	9	7	4	5	14
Persons	3	33	29	13	18	41

	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-12	Dec-12
Parties	2	4	4	4	6	5
Persons	4	13	14	15	23	20

Total = 226

Caver numbers are less than last year, but comparable with 2011.

d) Conservation Officer (Acting)

All major trade routes are well served by tape, although there are currently some bats hanging on the tape in precarious places. There are also some lesser routes which would benefit from re-taping. The acting conservation officer has been approached by the CCC conservation officer about participating in a trial of new tape, the same as currently being used in Reservoir Hole. The tape is white and much cheaper. This move was supported.

e) Survey Secretary

The Survey Secretary sent their apologies and did not have any activity to report since the June meeting.

f) Survey Recorder

The Survey Recorder advised that he had been in touch with Andrew Atkinson about the BCA survey data repository. It was expected that this will be running early the following week and the Grade 2 data could be deposited there. However, there are concerns about depositing the Grade 5 there due to security issues.

g) Biological Recorder

The Biological Recorder sent her apologies.

The Secretary indicated that she had written to Lee Knight to thank him for his efforts on the fauna survey. Only War of the Worlds remained to be sampled.

h) Geological Recorder.

The Geological Recorder reported on the new U-series and U-Pb dates for the cave, which show Ogof Draenen to be one of the oldest in the UK. Full details will be available after Chris Smith (who is carrying out the work) has finished writing up his thesis.

i) Fixed Aids Officer

The annual inspection cycle is June to June so there was no inspection information to report.

The issue of the old ladder (at Balcony Pitch) was discussed. It was suggested by SF (and formally proposed by CS) that this be removed. The motion was carried in favour by 4 votes for, with 6 abstentions.

It was also agreed (following suggestion by SF and proposed by CS) to attempt to remove the steel rope near the nunnery. It may be practical to do this through the bat hole, about which the landowner will need to be consulted (action FL).

The issue of steel wire for Indiana Highway was raised by SF. This was discussed, but no urgent cause for action determined as the current system works well at low expense.

4. Election of Officers/Recorders

All the Officers/Recorders stood down for the elections.

a) Secretary

Fleur Loveridge, proposed CD, seconded SM. Votes for 7.

Huw Durban, proposed CS, seconded MR. Votes for 3.

Fleur Loveridge was duly elected Secretary.

b) Treasurer

Spencer Drew, proposed AG, seconded OC.

Spencer Drew was elected unopposed.

c) Permit Secretary/Access Officer

Sue Mabbett, proposed CD, seconded PT. Votes for 7.

Rich Hill, proposed DT, seconded CS. Votes for 3.

Sue Mabbett was duly elected Permit Secretary.

d) Conservation Officer

Henry Patton, proposed CD, seconded PT. Votes for 5.

Malcolm Reid, proposed HD, seconded CS. Votes for 5.

As per the constitution the chairman's casting vote retains the status quo and Henry Patton was duly elected Conservation Officer.

e) Survey Secretary

Those present were reminded of the respective roles of the Survey Secretary (to manage the Grade 2 data, which explorers are required to submit to the Group following any discoveries) and the Survey Recorder (to manage the Grade 5 data and work towards its publication).

John Stevens, proposed CS, seconded DT. Votes for 4.

John Pybus, proposed CD, seconded PT. Votes for 6.

John Pybus was duly elected Survey Secretary.

f) Survey Recorder

John Stevens, proposed SM, seconded MR.

John Stevens was elected unopposed.

g) Biological Recorder

Rhian Kendall, proposed CD, seconded SM. Votes for 2.

Peter Smith, proposed CS, seconded PT. Votes for 8.

Peter Smith was duly elected Biological Recorder.

h) Geological Recorder.

Andy Farrant, proposed CS, seconded PT.

Andy Farrant was elected unopposed.

i) Fixed Aids Officer

Ali Garman, proposed SM, seconded MR. Votes for 6.

Stuart France, proposed CS, seconded DT. Votes for 3.

One abstention.

Ali Garman was duly elected Fixed Aids Officer.

5. Other Group Business

a) Commercial Caving Consultation and Draft BCA Statement.

There was a vigorous discussion about what constituted commercial caving. As a consequence some further points were raised with respect to the draft BCA statement. In particular it was suggested (by CS) that the statement needed to identify which activities were money making and which were not for profit. There may also need to be a distinction between tourist caving and training. BW confirmed that there was still opportunity to provide feedback to the BCA on the statement. FL undertook to do this. All interested parties to provide feedback to

FL within 2 weeks (i.e, by 7th December). When the BCA statement is finalised there will be a further discussion about whether to use this to seek wider access to Ogof Draenen, bearing in mind that all are agreed that it is not a suitable location for “novice taster trips”.

b) Proposed Changes to the Constitution

The proposed changes to the constitution are appended to the minutes. The proposed changes were passed as follows:

Clause 4.4 8 votes for and 2 abstentions.

Clause 4.10 & 5.1 10 votes for.

Potential future changes to the constitution were also discussed. These would include changing to the “Wildlife & Countryside Act, as amended” in Clause 4.3, considering the required course of action in the absence of the regular Group Chair (as occurred in June), considering voting for the Survey Recorder and Survey Secretary.

It was observed that the most up to date version of the constitution may not be on the website. FL to investigate.

6. Applications for membership

None received.

7. Applications to become keyholders

Shepton Mallet CC’s request to become a key holder again was discussed. They had not quite achieved their intended trips, but had been caught up in the padlock problems of the spring. In these circumstances it was proposed (by AG, seconded by MR) that SMCC be accepted again as a key holder. This motion was passed unanimously.

8. AOB

The Group would like to record their gratitude for the work done on their behalf by Elsie Little. She was active within the group since its inception and will be sadly missed.

Meeting closed at 10.05pm

Next meeting to be held on Sunday 22nd June 2014 at 2pm. Please note the trial change to a Sunday afternoon.

Secretary's Report

Padlock Problems

On Thursday 31st October Gagendor member carrying out a mid-week trip reported that the padlock on the cave had been switched again. Plans were put in place to rectify this situation and change to our spare padlock on the subsequent weekend. However, in the event it proved to be a false alarm and the trouble Gagendor had with their key was merely due to the lock being very stiff rather than it being changed. As a result the lock was changed to our spare and the original sent back for servicing. In the meantime, however I had already reported the incident to both the police and the landowner, but was subsequently able to reassure them that nothing was amiss after all.

However, this is not the end of the story, as Gagendor's mid-week trip this week also reported unusual conditions: this time that the padlock was missing rather than switch. Our spare will be back from servicing on the Saturday morning of this meeting so can be replaced soon after. However, wider questions are now raised about how best to deal with those determined to cause trouble again. As has been suggested before it may be time to (very sadly) move to a more stringent system of key access. This is something we must discuss at this meeting, given the padlock costs of £90 per time and £270 already spent on new locks this year (excluding the current lost lock).

Drws Cefn

I have been liaising with our bat specialists recently about the licence application for Drws Cefn. As commented at the last meeting, this had previously stalled meaning that we were unable to do any works this summer. However, we have drawn up a programme to complete the paperwork this winter, for works to proceed next summer. Encouragingly it is reported that Natural Resources Wales have recently reduced the paperwork required for the application which should help matters. There are actions on me to renew our contacts with NRW to ensure smooth processing of the licence and to proactively monitor the progress by our specialist.

Access and Commercial Caving

As discussed at the last meeting and over email we have been participating in the BCA consultation on "Access and Commercial Caving". In June (after our last meeting) the BCA put out a proposed statement which I circulated. I had only a little feedback, but what I did was generally supportive and suggesting that we should try and obtain none level 1 (ie non novice) commercial access for Draenen. Clearly this is something we should discuss at this meeting.

The feedback I sent to the BCA by email was thus the following:

I have received little feedback on the draft statement and leaflet, with the main suggestion being that:

"The proposed publication text needs an ending - a summation that is encouraging to landowners, that we take their best interests into account, we are insured, we're

good people and responsible, blah blah, and we hope that they will consider a course which will permit [what we want]."

So generally I think the statement and leaflet would be supported and there seems to be a view that we could try and use this to gain non level 1 access to Draenen. This would clearly need to be discussed in our next meeting and may or may not be supported by the landowner, but I think a leaflet of the suggested sort could only help the case. Rich Hill from Gagendor is clearly very keen in this respect, and as your training officer has probably already made his feelings known.

The BCA were appreciative of our input, especially as they have seen obstructiveness rather than helpfulness from some quarters.

I have also since seen the response from the CCC, which was:

- *The CCC Committee were generally supportive of the aims and content of the proposed statement*
- *Whilst some concern was expressed that the document might be too detailed for some landowners, it was noted that in Wales all of the largest systems are administered by Access Control Bodies and that it is, in the first instance, these ACBs who need to be convinced rather than the actual landowner. In this case, we felt the level of detail to be about right.*
- *In para (4) "Guiding", the document refers to parties being "expertly led". We felt that just because a leader is being paid, it should not automatically imply a higher level of expertise. Changing the wording to something like "professionally led" would ensure that the distinction is about financial reward, not level of expertise.*
- *With reference to para (5) "Workshops for Club Cavers", in Wales these are usually provided by professional instructors on an unpaid voluntary basis. We felt this to be outside scope of Commercial Caving.*

I have not heard any more from either the BCA or CCC since this correspondence last month, but as indicated above consider that we should come to our own conclusions about our particular circumstances so that we are ready to deal with this issue when the final BCA statement comes out.

Fleur Loveridge, 22/11/2013.

Treasurer's Report

Pwll Du Cave Management Group									
Income And Expenditure Account For the Year Ended 31st May 2013									
		Period 01/06/13 to 01/11/13		Period ending 31/05/13		Period ending 31/05/12			
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income:									
Donations:									
	S Drew		20.00		0.00		0.00		
	F Loveridge		48.00		0.00		223.68		
	SWCC		0.00		0.00		70.00		
	OUCC		0.00		0.00		20.00		
	UBSS		0.00		0.00		20.00		
	CSS (Key)		0.00		20.00		0.00		
	Cwmbran CC (Key)		0.00		20.00		0.00		
	Devon SS (key)		0.00		20.00		0.00		
	Gagendor (lost key replacement)		0.00		20.00		0.00		
	Deven SS (Replace broken key)		0.00		20.00		0.00		
	York Un CC (deposit claimed)		0.00		10.00		0.00		
	WSG		0.00		0.00		60.00		
Refund From CCC	(Insurance)		0.00		50.00		50.00		
Refund From CCC	(Hall hire)		28.00		0.00		0.00		
Refund From CCC	(Administration costs)		0.00		0.00		0.00		
Refund From CCC	(Locks replacement)		0.00		0.00		0.00		
Bank Interest:									
			0.00		0.00		0.00		
			96.00		160.00		443.68		
Expenditure:									
	Llanely Hall Hire	(48.00)		(28.00)		0.00			
	Administration costs	0.00		0.00		0.00			
	New lock and Keys	(272.32)		(62.40)		0.00			
	BCA Insurance	0.00		(50.00)		(50.00)			
	Glo-tape	0.00		0.00		(223.68)			
			(320.32)		(140.40)		(273.68)		
(Deficit)/Surplus of Income Over Expenditure			(224.32)		19.60		170.00		
Notes to the above for the period ending 1st November 2013									
			2013		2013		2012		
The closing balance actually requests the following:									
	Balance in current A/c		217.11		441.43		421.83		
	Balance in reserve A/c		0.10		0.10		0.10		
	Outstanding cheques uncleared		0.00		0.00		0.00		
	Total Funds		217.21		441.53		421.93		
As usual I will try and reclaim as much expenditure as I can from CCC in the coming year.									
The main cost in the last five months has been the replacement cost of the lock and keys. Our funds will not be able to cover another expense like this again.									
Spencer Drew ACA DipPFS BSc Treasurer									

Constitutional Changes

Proposed PDCMG Constitutional Changes

Compiled by Fleur Loveridge, Hon Secretary for consideration at the Biennial General meeting on 23rd November 2013

Clause Number	Proposed Changes	Comments
4.4	Insert the following posts into the list of Officers of the Group: “Biological Recorder, Geological Recorder”	At the 14 th June 2003 meeting it was agreed to add Survey Secretary, Biological Recorder and Geological Recorder to this clause which defines the Group Officers (and hence confers voting rights). However, this change was never implemented in the constitution. The July 2010 meeting agreed that this change should now be formally implemented, but at the last Biennial Meeting the inclusion of the Survey Secretary and Survey Recorder in the list of offices led to the change being rejected. Hence the change is re-proposed restricted to the Biological and Geological Recorders.
4.10 & 5.1	To replace the term “Countryside Council for Wales” with “Natural Resources Wales” and the acronym “CCW” with “NRW”.	To reflect the update to the name of the relevant body. See http://www.ccw.gov.uk/Splash.aspx where we are informed that “A new body, Natural Resources Wales has taken over the functions previously carried out by Countryside Council for Wales.”