

Pwll Du Cave Management Group

Minutes of the meeting held virtually via Zoom on Wednesday 30 Jun 2021 commencing at 7.30pm.

Present

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Les Williams (LW) | Chair |
| Sue Mabbett (SM) | Secretary |
| Barry Hill (BH) | Hereford CC |
| Clive Owen (CO) | Treasurer / UBSS |
| Josh White (JW) | Conservation officer / Aberystwyth |
| Chris Densham (CD) | Trustee / OUCC Rep |
| Peter Smith (PS) | Biological Recorder. |
| Rich Smith (RS) | Webmaster / BEC |
| Rich Hill (RH) | Gagendor |
| Frank Tully (FT) | Wessex CC |
| Martin Hoff (MH) | South Wales CC |
| Ali Garman (AG) | Draenen Diggers (arrived ~ 7.45pm) |
| John Stevens (JS) | Survey Officer |
| John Sheehy (JSh) | Gwent CC |
| Chris Seal (CS) | Chelsea Speleo Soc |
| Steve King (SK) | Shepton Mallet CC (arrived ~8.30pm) |
| Allan Richardson (AR) | Cambrian CC (CCC Secretary) |
| Stuart France (SF) | Cambrian CC (CCC Conservation Officer) |
| Christina Byrne (CB) | Natural Resources Wales (NRW) |

Apologies

Dan Thorne, Permit Secretary and Steve King apologised for late arrival at ~ 8.30pm.

Post Meeting Note: Morgannwg CC sent apologies SM missed e-mail.

1. Opening Remarks

LW welcomed everyone present, and thanked them for joining the virtual meeting. LW suggested meeting was recorded but this was not possible due to conditions of Zoom licence SM held however SM was recording on phone. LW asked everyone to introduce themselves and which group / role they were representing for the meeting.

2. Minutes from Previous Meeting On 30 Jun 2019

2a. Approval of Minutes from last meeting

LW questioned if anyone had any corrections for the minutes. SM commented she had completed all corrections previously identified by SK reviewing minutes in 2019 and recently by RS. No further corrections were identified.

The minutes were proposed to be accepted by RS and seconded by CD, there were 4 abstentions due to not being present at meeting, all others present in favour of accepting the minutes as a true record of the last meeting.

Post meeting note SM will arrange for signature from LW on these minutes to confirm true record.

2b. Matters Arising from the Minutes not covered elsewhere in the Agenda

SM stated she had some actions, which she has reported on in her report. There were no other matters arising that will not be covered elsewhere on the agenda.

3 Officers Reports

3a. Secretary

Copied in Attachment 1 is the secretary's report as circulated prior to the meeting.

SM stated that the Covid pandemic had brought a lot of things to a halt, SM did not progress on some matters as she did not wish to bother Peter, the landowner. However as in her report all key actions had been completed.

SM reported that Peter on behalf of Pwlldu Conservation Limited (PCL) had replied to RH's request to use Ogof Draenen for BCA training and assessments of Cave Leader and Cave Instructors; Peter was seeking further external advice before making a decision. RH asked if the reply added any further detail on 'external advice', SM reported the reply simply stated 'external advice'. RH reported that he and/ or the new BCA access / conservation officer, Will Burn were willing to discuss the proposal or any concerns over the proposal with PCL. SM said she would send this information back to PCL.

Actions

SM to e-mail PCL to inform them of RH's and Will Burn's offer to discuss use of Ogof Draenen for training and assessment of BCA Cave Leaders and CICs, including any concerns PCL may have.

3b Treasurer

Copied below is short report from the Treasurer as circulated prior to the meeting.

PDCMG Treasurer's Report June 2021

Since the last AGM on 30 June 2019 there has been no expenditure.

Total income has been £40, comprising £30 for keys and a £10 donation from UBSS.

The balance in the account currently stands at £585.17.

Clive Owen Treasurer

There had been no expenditure as all outstanding costs had been paid before the new treasurer, CO took over. CO thanked SM and JW for their patience and support as the transfer of signature to the new treasurer had taken additional effort (the bank 'lost' earlier mandates).

LW asked about cost of repairs to gate. The gate was still awaiting repair, but once repaired the invoice would be forwarded to the treasurer. LW was just concerned in case this expenditure was large.

3c Permit Secretary

No report from DT, he sent his apologies. DT had been unable to collect data from the log book since the start of the Covid pandemic due to restrictions in place and he has been working away from home since Sep 2020. The log book in the cave has also gone missing so DT will be unable to generate data for the time the log book has been missing.

SF was then asked to summarise his findings from caver counters in the cave entrances. SF had collected data from caver counters in the cave and this is presented in the report circulated prior to the meeting and is attachment 2 to these minutes. SF asked how many members of committee had been in Draenen since the last meeting. Most had not been in due to Covid lockdown. RS and JSh had been in. SF then summarised his general findings. SF only had a full data set for the Nunnery Entrance for April 2018 to May 2021. The caver counter in the main entrance had been sabotaged and moved, the caver counter in Drws Cefn had been removed from the cave (stolen). SF had two six-month blocks of data for the main entrance from which some estimates could be made. In summary use of Drws Cefn is historically very low. There was a 50/50 split between using the main entrance and the Nunnery. There were 24 days with visits recorded for the Nunnery entrance and 25 days with visits recorded for the Main Entrance. Overall, the footfall through cave was very low. The data since March 2020 shows that the Covid lockdown and restrictions had a major impact on footfall through the cave. Those living locally had been able to enter the cave during some periods of Covid Lockdown as exercising locally was

permitted. Most cavers that normally visit Ogof Draenen had been unable to do so due to the various Covid restrictions since March 2020.

On some days there was only activity recorded for 1 hour at an entrance suggesting possible through trips. CS asked if the number of through trips could be counted, SF commented it could only be surmised through trips had occurred, not definitive numbers due to the caver counter issues. A more detailed review of historical data could be done outside meeting. Further analysis of this historical data may give better estimate types of trips and entrances used in Ogof Draenen, but the missing damaged counters meant accurate assessment not possible for period since June 2019.

Following on from the missing log book, SM offered to send in a notepad and pencils this weekend (03 Jul 2021) to be a temporary log book, as there was a trip planned from her house, until more waterproof paper log sheets could be taken in.

3d Conservation Officer

JW had not issued a report before the meeting. The Covid pandemic restrictions had prevented him from visiting Ogof Draenen, for 18 months. He is planning visit later in the July to review current status. JW reported he had received no reports from other cavers of any issues since June 2019, a friend living local to Ogof Draenen had visited and had not identified any issues.

3e Survey Officer

Copied below is short report from the Survey Officer as circulated prior to this meeting.

Survey Officers Report June 2021

After the last physical meeting we had it was pointed out that the last set of survey data I had received was for my personal use and archive and not for the PDCMG data archive. I then looked at the previous receipts of data I had received since becoming the Survey Officer. They all were my use only. After becoming the Survey Officer, I would have expected to be handed the PDCMG survey archive. I had seen that a cut down data version exists on the web, but that's not an archive. So I asked the secretary to contact the previous Survey Officers for this information. Eventually I also found emails for the previous two officers. Both have failed to get back to me. So at present there is no archive to look after and update. It seems all the original notes or photocopies, permissions, correspondence and data has been lost.

John Stevens

JS was attempting to obtain the archive data, there was no historical data handed over to him when he took over from the last Survey Officer. CD asked what archive data?

JS explained that when he took over as Survey Officer none of the original data, or copies of that data, with any associated permissions, that was used to create the Grade 2 line survey (held on the OUCC website) had been forwarded to him by the previous Survey Officers, so this was the data he was trying to obtain and did anyone know its location.

AG reported that back in the early days, about 25 years ago, when multiple major finds were being made; the exploration teams completing the Grade 2 survey (centre line plot only) sent their data electronically via e-mail to the person (Tim Long) co-coordinating the survey at that time. The notebooks holding that data were never held by survey officer, the only data that exists is in the form Survex files. There were 20 – 30 survey groups adding data to the pool at that time, by sending the data in they were implicitly giving permission for that data to be used to create the centre line drawing of the cave. SF commented this data was centre line only. LW confirmed the only requirement at that time was for centre line data and we accept this is a limited survey. AG commented, notes from any data sent in to this pool, including surveyors initials, were placed in survex file headers that were added to the survey on Survex. CS asked if any records existed, e.g. e mail records. LW and AG believed the e-mails had gone. AG suggested a request was sent out to original contributors for any of the original data for the Grade 2 (Line) survey.

JS asked if the original data was checked for transcription errors. As this was 25 years ago we can only assume some level of checking occurred but how much is unknown. AG agreed checks for errors was limited. The reason JS would like this data is to allow him to check for transcription errors. LW offered to contact Tim Long for any information on the original data. Those present were not aware of the location of any original data records.

There was some discussion on limitations of this data as it did not create a full survey. After all this time LW commented "we are where we are" so, we can only move forward with data we have now. JS was asked if there was any particular data he was hoping to track down. JS has data of his own that does not match Survex data but he is not interested in one particular area just an overall review. It has to be accepted the only data we have is the Survex data, LW will contact TL and if someone volunteered then the original contributors to the survey could be contacted to see if they still had the original data they recorded and request a copy. No one volunteered at meeting.

Action LW to contact Tim Long for any information on historical raw data that was used to create the centre line plot.

3f Biological Recorder

The Biological Recorder's (PS's) report was circulated prior to the meeting and is copied in attachment 3. PS was glad of clarification from last meeting that part of remit of biological recorder is to carry out biological surveys and give permission to others to carry out surveys. PS can now carry out Bat Surveys in the cave.

Since last meeting PS has received occasional reports of bat sightings.

There have been no licensed bat surveys completed apart from survey in 2014 following the entrance being opened up along the historic Tramway. Passive surveys of the entrances had been completed by SF. PS would like to complete a bat survey in the cave making use of all entrances, (Main Nunnery and Drws Cefn). Under current access agreement use of other entrance is not possible. PS asked if permission could be sought for him to complete a bat survey using all entrances. For clarification this is stated at the end of his report which is:

"I request that PDCMG agrees that is appropriate to use whatever entrance to the Ogof Draenen cave system is most convenient where the purpose of access is to carry out a systematic underground bat survey. This would allow, for example, Nunnery Passage to be counted on the way in and Drws Cefn on the way out while minimising potential disturbance to bats with each passage being traversed once only"

As PDCMG cannot give permission to use other entrances SM agreed to contact the landowner and request permission for PS to perform survey as requested above.

SF asked why SM had not distributed the Bat Surveys he sent to her this year and last year. SM had received a Bat Report earlier in June 2021 from SF; this report considered use of various entrances by bats across Ogof Draenen vs other caves in the Usk catchment. On this Bat Report, SM replied that, as she had stated in an e-mail reply to SF, this survey covered other caves (including Ogof Craig-a-Ffynnon & Agen Allwedd) and thought it more appropriate for CCC to circulate, but if time allowed it could be brought to this meeting. SF asked why SM had not circulated the report he sent to her last year. SM apologised but she could not remember receiving a report; on further review (during meeting) of her e-mail records SM could find no e-mails from SF last year with a Bat Report.

SM was willing to circulate the recent bat report she received in June 2021 to PDCMG if those present wanted that, and for it to be upload on the PDCMG website. CS found a location on the PDCMG website a tab called science with an area for Biological Records, which seemed a suitable location. The meeting agreed for the Bat Report to be circulated and uploaded onto the PDCMG website in a suitable location.

Finally SM asked for clarification on permission required for biological surveys. It is understood permission is specifically required for bat surveys due to licence requirements however other small biological surveys (e.g. nymphs in water courses) do not need permission but large biological surveys as completed by Lee Knight some years ago would require permission. It would be preferred if any person doing a biological survey contacted PS and / or PDCMG before doing survey. Copies of any reports

generated from biological surveys in Ogof Draenen, from full PhD thesis to report in caving club journal, should be forwarded to PDCMG.

Actions

SM to contact the landowner, PCL, for permission for PS to complete a bat survey making use of all entrances to Ogof Draenen.

SM to send out SF bat report, June 2021

RS to upload the Bat Report from SF onto PDCMG website

3g Geological Recorder

Still no-one in post therefore no report. LW asked all to consider who may fill this post. CD suggested contacting Mike Sims, others thought Mike Sims would not be available. Then someone suggested Chris Bryne as possible Geological Recorder for PDCMG, CB stated that due to her job with NRW it would not be acceptable for her to be on the PDCMG committee. SM had received an e-mail from another caver stating they did not wish to be Geological Recorder just in case they were suggested. SM could not remember the name nor could she find e-mail in the meeting. *Post meeting note, the e-mail was from Ian Wallace.*

LW suggested we just let it be known in the caving world PDCMG need a Geological Recorder.

3h Fixed Aids Officer

AG had not been able to check any Fixed Aids. The last Fixed Aids check was due in June 2020 but this could not be completed due to the Covid lockdown and restrictions. The on-going Covid restrictions meant he had not been able to do any checks. He knows the ropes in the cave are due for replacement. RS had reported to AG that the 'Daren' style ladder that was on Balcony pitch has been removed, it has been replaced with a fixed rigid ladder in the same location. The location of the removed Daren style ladder was unknown, nor was the state of the ladder that had replaced it known. AG asked if anyone had any knowledge of where the ladder came from or about the removal of the 'Daren' style ladder. No-one present had any information.

AG aims to complete Fixed Aid checks over this summer.

4. Election of Officers

LW commented the list of officers for re-election did not include the chairman; SM clarified the chairman is not elected they are in position until they resign or some other compelling reason. SM suggested, that as previously, if there was only one willing nominee for a post then there would be no voting; those present agreed.

The table below shows who was proposed and seconded for each post. There was only one person nominated for each post and therefore no elections took place.

| Role | Person proposed to fulfil role | Proposer | Secunder |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|---|---------------|
| Secretary | Sue Mabbett | Chris Seal | Josh White |
| Treasurer | Clive Owen | Sue Mabbett | Ali Garman |
| Permit Secretary | Dan Thorne** | Chris Seal | Peter Smith |
| Conservation Officer | Josh White | Chris Densham | Rich Hill |
| Survey Officer | John Stevens | Chris Seal | Peter Smith |
| Biological Recorder | Peter Smith | John Stevens | Rich Hill |
| Geological Recorder | No-one nominated | Meeting agreed that if a person was found to fulfil the role, this person could be co-opted | |
| Fixed Aids Officer | Ali Garman | Chris Seal | Chris Densham |

** DT confirmed with SM before meeting he was will to continue in this role.

SM asked whether we should consider the Webmaster in voting even though this role was not a committee role in the PDCMG Constitution. LW suggested the webmaster was considered under next item on the agenda, PDCMG Website. This was accepted by all.

5. Other Group Business

5.1. PDCMG Website

Rich Smith was nominated to continue as webmaster, proposed by Chris Seal and seconded by Chris Densham.

Since the last meeting RS has set up new website, a short report from RS was circulated before the meeting and is copied below:

At the last meeting I volunteered to fix and update the PDCMG website (located at <https://pdcmg.org.uk>). A small budget was allocated for hosting, but on talking to BCA, it turned out that BCA provided free web hosting for access bodies. I created a website and hosted it using the free BCA-provided hosting. Thanks to Tim Long and Cookie for twiddling DNS settings etc. The new website contains most of the content of the old website, except updated a bit and modernised. I've also set up email address redirects for officers to have a @pdcmg.org address. There have been some compliments and requests for minor changes, which have been made. I've also updated the website with news, minutes and so on when available. I have received no recent correspondence regarding the website so I assume everyone's happy with it. (Or at least not unhappy enough to actually complain!) If anyone has any suggestions for the website or content to add to it, please contact webmaster@pdcmg.org.uk.

LW commented there was common call from all webmasters please send in information.

Prior to the AGM, RS had uploaded the Agenda and draft minutes of the June 2019 meeting. SM asked for general opinion on whether we should upload draft minutes in future as previously minutes were only published on website following approval of those minutes at the next meeting. It was agreed by those present that draft minutes of meeting could be uploaded, as long as they were clearly identified as draft (e.g. with 'DRAFT' watermark). SM said she would send the minutes for upload once the draft minutes had been checked and corrected for typos and other errors by those present at the meeting.

It was agreed draft minutes clearly labelled as draft may be uploaded onto the website once corrections on initial draft were complete.

PS asked if links to committee members emails were working. BH reported last year the link to PS did not work as he had to find his email address via another route. RS said he would run some checks to make sure the e-mail links to PDCMG officers worked.

There was a short discussion on whether for a virtual general meeting the link to meeting should be published on the PDCMG website. For this meeting, the Agenda for meeting went on the website, SM had asked RS to state a link was available from the secretary if someone from outside the group wished to attend. Some thought a link should be present; others commented Zoom and other virtual meeting platforms struggle with high numbers of attendees. It was agreed to continue as for this meeting with message that link was available from secretary rather than publishing the link to any future meetings on the website. LW hoped there would be no meetings in future via Zoom, meetings in person were much better.

5.2 EGM Plans for Vote on Entrance Policy

CS shared his screen and put up the proposed updated entrance policy. This policy is copied below:

Draft Policy (as of 30/6/21) – for circulation to PDCMG club / CCC for comment, discussion at their committees.

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Ogof Draenen is one of the largest cave systems in the UK and may warrant more entrances to facilitate further exploration, discovery or research. At the same time there is a need to consider many other factors before adopting any entrance as a recommended route. This policy states PDCMG's approach to adopting any new or additional entrance as one that the PDCMG helps manage or recommends for use.

Each entrance will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the PDCMG Committee and a recommendation will be put forward to the PDCMG member clubs for a final vote (e.g. at a general meeting, or EGM). The PDCMG Committee's recommendation will be based on consideration of the following factors,

- location in relationship to surface features and entrance accessibility.
- location inside the cave in relationship to other entrances.
- conservation needs in respect of the area inside the cave that the entrance facilitates access to.
- the benefits of the entrance to promote further exploration, surveying, discovery and other research activities

The Committee may announce an interim policy on a new entrance until a vote has taken place.

Should an entrance be recommended and/or accepted for adoption, the PDCMG will approach the landowner(s) where necessary and if applicable any regulatory body for permissions.

Should PDCMG membership vote not to adopt an entrance, then PDCMG will request that its membership and the wider caving community do not use that entrance. It does not automatically follow that an unadopted entrance will be closed by PDCMG; there could be good reasons why an entrance must remain open, in which case PDCMG will look at what alternative measures can be taken to discourage its use (e.g. remove / not support fixed aids on that route). Ultimately any decision to close an entrance lies with the landowner(s) and/or a regulatory body. PDCMG will if requested advise landowner(s) and if applicable regulatory bodies on the best options for unadopted entrances.

The decision on whether any adopted entrance needs a gate / barrier will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Should a gate be required then access will be granted to all bona fide cavers as per current access conditions.

CS summarised that a new entrance policy had been drafted in Dec 2019, this draft had been circulated in early 2020 to some of the committee members, including the secretary (SM), treasurer (CO), chairman (LW), Fixed Aids (AG), Survey Recorder (JS) and Biological Recorder (PS). This group had been purposefully kept small but selected to cover both sides of historical opinions on entrances for Ogof Draenen. CS asked SM to comment.

SM commented that as the Covid pandemic has delayed the EGM vote on an updated policy it was deemed appropriate to share this draft updated Entrance Policy with those present at this meeting and the PDCMG members. We believed this proposed updated entrance policy met with the outlined requirements from our last PDCMG Meeting it did not specify a number of entrances but defined how we would assess whether a new/additional entrance should be adopted or not. As this new policy was written to meet the requirements previously outlined then we did not expect Clubs to request a major re-write, but just to find typographical or grammatical errors or parts that were ambiguous or that need clarification. CD asked if we could amend this policy, CS confirmed this is the purpose of circulating this policy, so amendments could be made but we hope these do not require a complete re-write as we thought it met the outline requirements of the last meeting.

We were also very aware we did not want a future vote on an entrance policy to be close, a Brexit type outcome (an analogy used in previous meetings). We need to ensure that we carry the majority of the group with the final proposal, so we need a policy that the overwhelming majority will accept and approve.

We also need to be sure that those voting in an EGM do represent the opinion of their Clubs so we need time for the Caving Club committees to review and comment on this proposed draft Entrance Policy. Historically we have required a letter or e-mail to confirm the person present at the meeting represented their Caving Club.

JS asked whether the wider caving community should be consulted on this proposal. At this stage as this is only a draft it should be kept within this group. After some discussion it was believed the vote should remain within those that had expressed interest in Ogof Draenen, i.e. those within the PDCMG. At the EGM other people outside PDCMG would be welcome to comment. Also, other caving clubs could apply to join PDCMG. It is hoped the EGM can be held 'face to face' to enable full discussion in a suitable forum; if it has to be a virtual meeting then this can be discussed nearer the EGM time. After discussions on potential timing of an EGM, time required for this policy to be reviewed by caving club committees and the policy to be finalised ready for an EGM; the following actions were agreed.

Actions

CS to send the new draft Entrance Policy presented at this meeting to SM for distribution to PDCMG member Clubs ASAP.

SM to distribute the new draft Entrance Policy to PDCMG Clubs, Organisations, Trustees and committee asap so that Clubs could review it at committee meetings. This draft policy is to be kept within PDCMG members and not to be circulated at this point.

All PDCMG Caving Clubs to send any comments/ suggested improvements / clarifications to CS directly by the beginning of September.

5.3 Access Agreement

At the last meeting it was agreed to progress with the option to use a Company Ltd by Guarantee as no one was willing to be a trustee. SM had contacted Ursula Collie for more information which she had received in Jan 2020. SM had reviewed this information but the Covid pandemic had led to this progress going on hold. SM had recently circulated this information to the 2 current trustees, CD and Tim Long (TL), and CS who had volunteered to be third director of a Company Ltd by Guarantee, to enable a new access agreement to be set up. CS, TL and CD had all responded to SM with further comments on how we should progress with this option. How Cave Access Ltd, who manage access to Mines in North Wales was assessed by CS.

SF then summarised the differences between how Cave Access Ltd (CAL) and Charterhouse Caving Company (CCC) Ltd function. Both these organisations are companies limited by guarantee, set up to manage access to mines in North Wales and caves in the Mendips respectively. CAL is managed and controlled solely by its three directors, of which SF is one of those directors. It was set up originally to enable caving clubs in the Cambrian region to access mines in North Wales, but there is no input or control from the Cambrian Caving Council. Charterhouse CC Ltd was set up by agreement between Mendip caving clubs to administer access to several Mendip Caves. The Charterhouse CC Ltd is still managed and controlled by those Mendip caving clubs.

The meeting agreed it was the 'Charterhouse' model that we wish to follow where the PDCMG committee / members may have input; and not the CAL model where the three proposed directors have sole control. It was noted Ursula Collie (UC) had help set up CCC Ltd. UC and LW with knowledge of Charterhouse CC Ltd would be consulted for assistance on our new agreement.

The setting up of a new access agreement will require amendment to our current constitution as this referred to trustees. Once a proposal for the new model of Access Agreement using a company limited by guarantee had been finalised then an EGM would have to be called to approve the required changes to the PDCMG constitution. In summary setting up this new agreement will not be as simple as first thought, and therefore not as quick as originally hoped for.

Action

SM, CS, CD and Tim Long to continue to work together to progress a Company Ltd by Guarantee based on the "Charterhouse Model" consulting Ursula Collie and LW for advice and help to enable a new Access Agreement to be created.

6. Applications for Membership

There were no applications for membership received.

7. Applications to become key holders

There were no applications to be a key holder only.

8. Any other Business

8.1 SM asked that SMCC were added to the list of PDCMG member clubs on the website. SK reported he thought SMCC were only Key Holders, not a member. SM believed they had moved up to member status.

Action

SM and SK to check meeting minutes to confirm the SMCC status in PDCMG. If a member, then RS to add SMCC to the list of member clubs on the website.

8.2 Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting date provisionally set for Sunday 21 Nov 2021, assuming face to face meeting. If face to face meeting not permitted then a virtual meeting to be held on a week day in week running up to 21 Nov 2021.

Meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Approved as an accurate record of the
meeting
DR Williams
Chairman 1/12/2021

PDCMG Secretary's Report Jun 2021

The first thing to report that some of the items I was tasked with in June 2019 went on hold firstly due to my family bereavement, then due to Covid Pandemic. The uncertainty that the Covid pandemic created meant I did not wish to concern Pwlldu Conservation Ltd with Ogof Draenen matters as this was inconsequential compared with Covid pandemic impact.

Items I did achieve promptly after the last meeting:

I sent a condolence card to Carol following Brian Lewis's passing.

I forwarded the letter from Rick Hill to Pwlldu Conservation Ltd re-access to the cave for Cave Instructor Assessment. I have resent this recently but I have had no reply from PCL.

Access following 1st Covid 'Lock Down'

I did write to the landowner as restrictions eased in June, asking if there were any issues with us allowing access to Ogof Draenen. There were no problems with re-entering the cave as restrictions lifted only a request to park with some consideration as some parking areas had been blocked off, meaning spaces were limited. This information I forwarded to PDCMG members and permit secretary for info to be sent out with the keys. Following 1st lockdown a trip at the end of August reported damage to the entrance gate someone had taken an angle grinder to the part of gate the padlock looped through. This was report to permit secretary who started to progress how to repair this gate but then we went into another lockdown as end of Sep locally in Wales, then rest of UK Dec 20 through to April 21 and due to difficulties in effecting a repair this has not progressed.

Ogof Draenen Access Agreement

From last meeting I immediately sent e-mail to Charles Bailey bringing him up to date on current situation, basically as the access agreement has not been renewed the access agreement from Jan 2000 remains in place.

I sent e-mail to Ursula Collie asking for more detailed information on Company Limited by Guarantee which is the option we, the PDCMG, decided to progress with in June 2019. The information came through in Jan 2020, by time I reviewed this info Covid pandemic hit and this got placed on hold.

I have now sent this information onto the three people who were identified as our future Directors for this Company Ltd by Guarantee, i.e. our two trustees Chris Densham and Tim Long, Chris Seal who volunteered at our last meeting. We have quickly realised this will not be a quick switch but progress is now being made and I have informed PCL of our wishes to move to a new access agreement where we wish to use Company Ltd by Guarantee option rather than trustees.

Other Matters

Thanks to Rich Smith, I have successfully made contact with Cardiff University Caving Club.

Sue Mabbett
30 June 2021

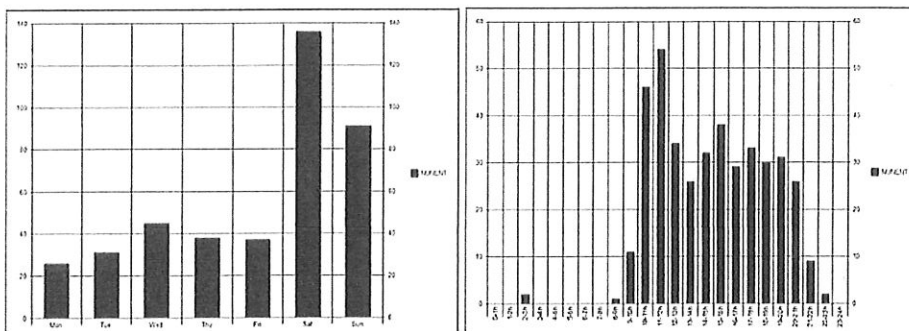
Attachment 2 Caver Counter Report from SF.

DRAENEN CAVER COUNTERS

I have a complete run from April 2018 to May 2021 for the Nunnery entrance. On any date when people visit there are usually 2 hours with counts, suggesting it is used as both the way in and out. A much smaller number of dates have 1 hour of usage implying a through trip. There are very few dates indeed having more than 2 hours with any counts which results in the ratio usually under 2.0 in the table below.

| NUNNERY ENTRANCE | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| YEAR | MONTHS DATA | DAYS USED | HOURS USED | RATIO |
| 2018 | 9 | 24 | 45 | 1.9 |
| 2019 | 12 | 39 | 69 | 1.8 |
| 2020 | 12 | 23 | 45 | 2.0 |
| 2021 | 5 | 13 | 22 | 1.7 |
| TOTAL | 38 | 99 | 181 | 1.8 |
| AVG/YEAR | | 31 | 57 | |

The **Days Used** series can thus be considered to be the group numbers. We know the average group size was 3-4 cavers historically, so scaling up 31 gives footfall in the region of 100 people per year split across 31 dates on average. But more groups visited before Covid began than afterwards so calculated averages need to be interpreted in that light.



The above charts show an activity index (not cavers or groups) by day-of-week and time-of-day distributions which look reassuringly like typical caving activity.

There has been sabotage to the counter on the main entrance route, and the Drws Cefn one was stolen which is astonishing given how little that entrance gets used. Someone appears therefore to be on a mission. The other counters have been moved on to new places of particular interest and further Draenen footfall data will not be provided for some while.

Stuart France

June 2021

Attachment 3 Biological Recorders Report

PDCMG – Biological Recorder report June 2021. Since the last meeting on 30 June 2019, the only biological records I have received are reports from Stuart France of bats that he has recorded using passive ultrasound detectors that he has deployed in various locations within Ogof Draenen and his casual observations of bats when visiting the cave. This has confirmed continued use by lesser horseshoe bats of both the Drws Cefn and the Nunnery entrance to the cave system. Casual sightings have included greater horseshoe bats. The above records support the findings of a bat survey I carried out with Phil Morgan and Stuart France on the evening of 23 October 2018 outside the Nunnery entrance to Ogof Draenen, a report of which I emailed to Sue Mabbett, NRW, BBNP and the local records centre on 10 June 2019. In summary, we detected one lesser horseshoe bat active inside the entrance soon after sunset. It emerged 20 minutes later. Ten minutes after that, activity of a second lesser horseshoe bat inside the entrance was heard briefly though it did not emerge. Then one lesser horseshoe bat entered the cave almost 2 hours after sunset just before we finished the survey. Since taking up the Biological Recorder role in November 2013, the only bat sightings from inside the cave submitted to me have been casual sightings by cavers who do not hold a bat licence. To my knowledge, with one exception, no bat surveys have been undertaken anywhere inside the Ogof Draenen system by any licenced bat worker over that time (including during the process to close the Twll Du entrance). The one exception was a survey between the main entrance and Drws Cefn carried out on 07 December 2014 by licenced bat consultants. I was unaware of the survey at the time. I would be pleased to hear if any other underground bat surveys have been undertaken by bat licence holders since 2013. The minutes of the last meeting (yet to be approved), record at item 3a that the landowner does not need to give permission for surveys and that the access agreement shows the group, PDCMG give permission for surveys. At item 3f it is recorded that the group agreed that part of the Biological Recorder role between meetings is to give permission for any biological surveys. Now that this is clarified, pending approval of those minutes, as Biological Recorder and holder of a NRW bat licence, I propose to carry out some bat surveys within the Ogof Draenen cave system over the coming years. Casual observations of bats within Ogof Draenen by cavers are welcomed and should be forwarded to me as Biological Recorder. However, no effort should be made in this regard beyond casual observations made in passing as any deliberate or systematic bat survey effort has potential to disturb bats and will require an NRW bat licence. Progress is slow when carrying out a systematic underground bat survey since a careful search is made for bats that may be present. Ease of access to the area of cave where survey is required can make the difference between passage being surveyed or not. Therefore, I request that PDCMG agrees that is appropriate to use whatever entrance to the Ogof Draenen cave system is most convenient where the purpose of access is to carry out a systematic underground bat survey. This would allow, for example, Nunnery Passage to be counted on the way in and Drws Cefn on the way out while minimising potential disturbance to bats with each passage being traversed once only. I wish to stand for re-election as Biological Recorder for PDCMG. Dr Peter G Smith Biological Recorder, PDCMG, 14 June 2021