

# Pwll Du Cave Management Group

Minutes of the meeting held via Zoom on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024 starting at 8.00pm.

## Present

Les Williams (LW)	Chair
Sue Mabbett (SM)	Secretary
Dan Thorne (DT)	Permit Secretary
Josh White (JW)	Conservation Officer,
Rich Smith (RS)	Survey Officer, Webmaster and BEC
Ali Garman (AG)	Fixed Aids / Draenen Diggers
Peter Smith (PS)	Biological Recorder
Isaac Neale (IN)	Aberystwyth CC
Thomas Beech (TB)	Cardiff University CC
Chris Seal (CS)	Chelsea SS
Rich Hill (RH)	Gagendor
John Sheehy (JS)	Gwent CC
Barry Hill (BH)	Hereford CC
Steve King (SK)	Shepton Mallet CC
Vince Allkins (VA)	South Wales CC
Frank Tulley (FT)	Wessex Cave Club
Christina Byrne (CB)	Natural Resources Wales
Martin Laverty	Observer

## 1. Apologies

Clive Owen (Treasurer / UBSS), Chris Howes, Morgannwg CC; and Stuart France, Caving Wales Conservation Officer.

## 2. Approval Minutes from Last General Meeting

### 2a. Approval of Minutes from last general meeting held 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024

The minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting, with all corrections sent to SM completed.

PS noted correction on page 6, his example was mountain bike cycling not motorbike scrambling, correction made. CS raised hand for further corrections but his microphone was not functioning, when he re-joined later in the meeting it was agreed his minor corrections could be completed after meeting as no change to context or meaning.

No further corrections were identified.

These minutes were proposed by SK and seconded by AG, the vote was abstentions: 1 (not present at meeting) and remainder for approval, therefore these minutes are approved as true record of the meeting. SM will arrange for LW to sign minutes once minor corrections from CS completed.

### 2b. Matters Arising from the Minutes NOT Covered Elsewhere in the Agenda

PS raised point on top of page 7, on SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) PDO (Potentially Damaging Operations) conditions. Since the last meeting he had researched SSSI PDOs and found that a PDO27, which applies to woodland around Ogof Tarddiad is almost universal for lots of SSSIs and not an unusual condition and does not specifically ban access by foot across the land; as was reported at the last meeting by CB and recorded in the minutes of that meeting. PS thinks minutes are correct, but as a matter arising most SSSI have PDO27. CB commented the information she reported at the last meeting is as she was given by her NRW colleagues in June, therefore the minutes are accurate. CB only looks at geological sites to which this doesn't apply, so it is based on what she was told. CB does note there is an addendum for this site about upland woodland. PS commented this one did not specifically cover walking across site, this woodland site condition was similar to others. There is no

further information on this matter and no changes required to the last meeting minutes. This anomaly is noted at this meeting.

### 3. Officers Reports

#### 3a. Secretary

SM had issued a report before the meeting as detailed below:

##### Secretary's Report for the PDCMG Meeting Nov 2024

At our last meeting, we heard details of new entrance to Ogof Draenen via Ogof Tarddiad. This new entrance is located on a SSSI, and we heard from Christine from NRW about the PDO conditions for this SSSI.

As a group we decided to take no action on this new entrance as we did not wish to inadvertently upset landowner relations with those managing access via this new entrance, apart from verbally asking our Club members not to go rushing in via this entrance as the SSSI conditions may affect access. At that meeting Richard Hill who is on the Caving Wales committee did promise to take the information relating to the SSSI back to other members of Caving Wales. This was done and the access arrangements for Ogof Tarddiad have been updated to ban digging at this new entrance and to recognise the entrance is within a SSSI.

An excerpt of the access conditions (as exported in Sept 2024) is copied below.

**Caving Wales obtained landowner permission to explore in OTPD to open access into Ogof Draenen. That has been achieved and hence landowner permission for cave digging has expired. Any further digging at the caves would require new landowner permission.**

**What remains is landowner permission for access on foot to the caves by bona fide cavers. That is the only permission. The caves are located within woodland that is part of Gilwern Hill SSSI. There is no permission to do anything other than walk directly to the caves. The habitat within the SSSI is legally protected and any action other than accessing the caves on foot would require specific permission from the landowners and NRW.**

This new entrance was reported to the Pwlldu Conservation Limited, landowners for the current entrance, as per the requirements of our access agreement. See excerpt below:

2.10 not to create any additional entries into the System without the Owner's prior written consent and to notify the Owner immediately upon becoming aware of any entries created to the System on any adjoining land

At the last meeting I reported I had not heard from the landowner, a follow up email after our meeting in June, identified the landowner had replied, but unfortunately it went to my Spam/Junk folder and I didn't spot it there. Anyway we corresponded and we met face to face in September (our holidays meant an earlier date was not possible) to discuss the new entrance to Ogof Draenen and other issues concerning the landowner. At this meeting the landowner was understanding on the situation for the entrance, as PDCMG had not been informed of this new entrance, we had been unable to manage access via this new entrance. The landowner will wait for PDCMG to update them on how the new entrance affects access via the original entrance. As this new entrance leaves us in a bit of limbo, we did not discuss any possible update to our current access agreement between Pwlldu Conservation Ltd and PDCMG.

The land owner did wish to thank James Waite for his conservation work in the cave as reported in last meeting minutes.

On the matter of issues concerning the landowner, the main area of concern is the continued use of Nunnery Entrance, as they have not given permission for this entrance to be used. They would appreciate suggestions on further action we can take to discourage cavers from using this entrance.

## PDCMG Meeting Minutes for 27 November 2024

On other matters, Rich Smith has updated the entrance policy published on the website, as at the last meeting we noted the old 'single entrance' policy was on the website. I have also notified the solicitors our progress with Company Ltd by Guarantee is on hold.

Sue Mabbett 18 Nov 2024.

From this report, firstly it was noted SM had inadvertently missed a 'not' in above report, on 6<sup>th</sup> line, 'members to go...' was corrected to 'members not to go....'

SM commented the landowner has been amazingly understanding with us, considering the issues over the years, including additional entrances.

It was noted the main concern from the landowner is use of the Nunnery entrance by cavers. SM asked those present if they had any ideas to stop use of Nunnery entrance by cavers. SM has discussed with other cavers what the current status of the condition of this entrance is, they all said the entrance is little used and is not an obvious entrance. LW suggested we asked the landowner if there anything we can do on the surface to prevent damage to the hillside around the entrance. CS commented that Chris Densham, OUCC has previously flagged the appearance of the Nunnery entrance area on the hillside, however due to a lack of regular use at present it is not in a poor state.

Options were discussed including posting a notice in the caving press, and placing a notice at this entrance. It was noted that this entrance (and others) is little used, as estimated by the caver counter report from SF detailed in the Permit Secretary's report below. It was determined that to post a notice in the caving press would advertise it still exists as an entrance and probably encourage more use. Any notice left at the Nunnery entrance would likely be removed as was found with previous notices. On the PDCMG web site it already states that the entrance agreed with the landowner PCL is only point of access on PCL land. It was noted by CS these entrances are documented in the Cave Registry held on the Caving Wales (previously known as Cambrian Caving Council) website, it was agreed to ask Caving Wales to update their directory on these entrances to state these entrances are not to be used to access Ogof Draenen System.

ACTION SM to feed back to the landowner outcome of this discussion, and ask if there is anything around the Nunnery entrance we can do.

ACTION SM to contact Caving Wales to request update their directory, to state which entrances are not to be used to access the Ogof Draenen system.

### 3c. Permit Secretary

DT had sent a summary of caver data to SM and this had been circulated prior to the meeting and the data for 2024 is copied below:

2024	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24			
Partys	5	5	3	3	5	3	2	4	1	1	3		35	Total Partys	
Persons	14	14	6	8	19	16	8	16	3	4	9		117	Total Persons	

DT reported he was going to Japan, from January for work. DT was happy to continue issuing keys as most requested keys are collected from the key safe in his garden. This method can be used during his time in Japan. Friends will be visiting his property to check on things, RH agreed in event of issue with key safes he can pop in, however this is unlikely to be required as key safe system works well without issues. Everyone agreed that DT will continue as Permit Secretary, with RH available in event of unexpected issue with the key safe only.

Additionally DT reported there had been only 2 key requests in the last 8 months. The log book data showed there were 2 months with only one party visiting. This low level of caver use aligns with the Footfall Study completed by SF and circulated before the meeting and copied below:

**OGOF DRAENEN FOOTFALL COUNTERS**

Automatic cover counters were installed in recent years close to some entrances and in passages that divide the cave internally into logical zones. These devices detect light to evidence covers present. Covers do not move fluidly so it is not practical to separate out *individuals*. As the cave footfall is so low, it is expedient to assume any hour with any activity represents one *group* and that the average group now has 3.0 members (it was 3.75 pre-2000) and that the group reverses its inward route when leaving the cave and gets counted again. Thus a counter may see one hour in the morning with activity and another hour thus in the afternoon. This is interpreted as the same 3 people going in and out, so we can sum the activity hours and multiply by 1.5 to estimate the number of individuals. Of course groups can also do through trips, in which they would be counted twice but at different entrances, assuming that all entrances have counters – which they do not – so this is only an approximation, but a realistic one for obtaining insight into footfall generally.

HOURS PER QUARTER WITH RECORDED ACTIVITY (PROXY GROUPS EITHER IN OR OUT)							
	n/a - not available			Dries Cefn - not monitored			
Cover estimate assumes 3 per group and double counted (in and out the same way)							
NUMMERY	Y2018	Y2019	Y2020	Y2021	Y2022	Y2023	Y2024
Q1	n/a	18	13	4	19	34	18
Q2	6	17	13	19	24	10	24
Q3	7	9	13	9	10	21	n/a
Q4	33	25	6	13	25	21	n/a
GROUPS	45	69	45	45	78	68	42
CAVERS	68	104	68	68	117	102	63
PERS PASS	Y2018	Y2019	Y2020	Y2021	Y2022	Y2023	Y2024
Q1	n/a	18	13	6	13	18	20
Q2	11	15	6	16	21	6	n/a
Q3	19	13	10	6	13	18	12
Q4	31	19	5	13	18	24	n/a
GROUPS	61	65	33	34	65	66	32
CAVERS	92	98	50	51	98	104	48
MIDWINTER	Y2018	Y2019	Y2020	Y2021	Y2022	Y2023	Y2024
Q1	n/a	14	8	6	14	18	n/a
Q2	n/a	13	0	18	n/a	10	n/a
Q3	n/a	8	4	13	n/a	n/a	n/a
Q4	18	17	6	16	n/a	n/a	n/a
GROUPS	18	51	18	44	14	28	n/a
CAVERS	27	77	27	66	21	42	n/a
STATION 13	Y2018	Y2019	Y2020	Y2021	Y2022	Y2023	Y2024
Q1	13	4	0	3	1	0	3
Q2	8	6	0	8	4	2	3
Q3	1	6	1	3	1	4	n/a
Q4	9	1	0	3	7	2	n/a
GROUPS	31	17	1	17	13	8	6
CAVERS	47	26	2	23	20	12	9
TARDOLVAD	Y2018	Y2019	Y2020	Y2021	Y2022	Y2023	Y2024
Q1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	15
Q2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	14
Q3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9
Q4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
GROUPS	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	38
CAVERS	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	57

PDCMG Meeting Minutes for 27 November 2024

The PDCMG entrance was not monitored and neither was Drws Cwfn. The Nunnery entrance provides access to various circular tours as well as 'out-and-then-back' visits to Midwinter Chambers and onward for Snowball, MSD, WOW etc. Through trips from the Nunnery to any of the other entrances, or vice versa, are also possible.

Overall, cave footfall is extremely low considering the size of the system, the proximity of car parking and its position near Welsh and English centres of population. This is confirmed by the low amount of footpath erosion on the grassy paths leading to the entrances.

Assume footfall at the PDCMG entrance and the Nunnery are roughly equal, then that of the awkward Drws Cwfn entrance adds a further 10%, all prior to the Tarddiad connection being announced in 2024. Thus for the years 2019-23, which included the Covid crisis, the annual total footfall for the cave system is of the order of just 200 people.

ALL DRAENEN	Y2019	Y2020	Y2021	Y2022	Y2023
FOOTFALL	228	149	149	257	224
AVERAGE	201				

The above figures can be scaled under different assumptions such as an average group size of four. But that would make no difference to the inevitable conclusion that PDCMG is managing an average of at most one experienced caver per day in a system with 70kms or more of passages. This does not call for much management, and it is also unarguable that conservation or footfall issues exist anywhere in this cave or on the approaches to it unless having negligible footfall at the longest cave system in Wales is seen as a problem.

As to internal cave footfall, the table on the previous page shows, for example, footfall averaging one or two people per month heading in the Big Country direction via Station 13 Passage. The equivalent figure for people reaching Midwinter is two to four per month to continue possibly to Snowball and massive passages well beyond it. All of these cavers would pass along the strategic Perseverance Passage, assuming they did not use Drws Cefn or incorporate a round trip, both of which are unlikely combinations.

Turning to very recent results, nobody visited Perseverance at all in July 2024 and it was used on only one day this October; in the 5 months from June to October 2024 it was visited on average only 2 dates per month. After an initial 'surge' of interest in Ogof Tarddiad in May when visitors came on 7 dates, its footfall has fallen back to the same level as the norm for Perseverance Passage with an average use of 2 dates per month being observed in the 5 months from June to October 2024.

Stuart France

From this report it was noted Pers Pass is Perseverance Passage and Station 13 is a junction on way to the Snowball. It was queried if only 2 key requests where did other cavers obtain a key? DT report ~99%of trips into Draenen are from cavers in Caving Clubs that hold a 'permanent key'.

### **3d. Conservation Officer**

JW had nothing to report, as he had not had chance to visit Ogor Draenen. IN who is stepping in for JW also had nothing to report, he had visited the cave and it was still there. It was noted nobody had reported any conservation related issues to JW.

JW no longer had time to do conservation work in Ogor Draenen, so IN was now covering the role. LW commented any officer does not necessarily have to do all the work, they can pass the work to others to do the actual work with the officer simply co-ordinating activity, as we are all busy people.

### **3e. Survey Secretary**

RS reported he has a lot to survey and many years of activity ahead. He was trying to contact people for data that can be published including the grade 2/3 data as this can provide a basis to start the survey and is better than starting with no data. He has started surveying, and it is on-going, anyone who wish to help please get in touch. CS asked if he had contacted John Stevens, RS reported he had previously but not had a reply, however he would try again.

LW asked if he was looking for grade 5 data or whether he was interested in grade 2/3 data, RS is looking any data to support new survey although grade 2/3 is of limited use, this said any data is better than no data. LW said he would attempt to find the data the WCC had from their discovery of Wessex Series. Oxford have a repository of most grade 2/3 data, which RS will try access.

### **Webmaster Report**

As RS is also the Webmaster so report listed here. RS had sent in report but only that morning and SM had not circulated as busy.

RS has uploaded New Entrance policy under Entrance policy section of PDCMG website, he noted it was on website before the last meeting, but not under Entrance Policy tab. He asked in future if anyone noted an issue they reported when it was spotted rather than at a meeting. Those present at last meeting noted the issue with Entrance Policy was only identified at the meeting when reviewing the information on Ogor Tarddiad in Descent and not before the meeting. The approved minutes of Dec 2023 meeting and draft minutes of June 2024 had also been uploaded.

LW asked why he was missed from reports list. As Webmaster not an official officer role, SM keeps forgetting to include it as an item in list of reports. SM said as he was not an officer so not listed on under officer reports, maybe at the next meeting we could have constitutional amendment to add Webmaster as an official post.

### **3f. Biological Recorder**

PS had nothing to report, no new biological records sent to him since June 2024. Lee Knight, completing biological (scientific studies into insect life / mini beasties) survey, had been in contact previously but not recently.

### **3g. Fixed Aids Officer**

AG had issued fixed aid spreadsheet and excerpt copied below. His recent check confirmed all in good condition.

PDCMG Meeting Minutes for 27 November 2024

Ogof Draenen Fixed Aids - 24/11/2024									
Pwll Du Cave Management Group									
									Inspection 21/11/24 - AG
No.	Location	Identification	Specification	PPE	Installed By	Installation Date	Inspection Due	Rigging Comments	Inspection Comments
1	Entrance Climb	1st backup Eco hanger furthest from pitch head	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	24/11/2025	Un-used	OK
2		Middle Eco hanger	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	24/11/2025	Rope tied directly into Eco hanger	Hanger rotates slight. Loaded perpendicularly so not a concern
3		Main hang Eco hanger	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	24/11/2025		Resin does not completely fill the hole flush to the surface
4		MR for 3rd Eco hanger	10mm Long Open MR	Yes	AG & JC	28/11/2021	24/11/2025		Some minor corrosion
5		Traverse and knotted handline	11mm Edelrid Performance Static	Yes	AG & JC	28/11/2021	24/11/2025	Knotted	OK
6	Indiana Highway	1st Eco hanger from Indian Highway end	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	24/11/2025	Tied directly into Eco hanger	OK
7		2nd Eco hanger	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	24/11/2025		OK
8		MR for 2nd Eco hanger	10mm Long Open MR	Yes	AG & JC	24/04/2010	24/11/2025		Consider replacing with Stainless Steel MR
9		3rd Eco hanger	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	24/11/2025		OK
10		MR for 3rd Eco hanger	10mm Long Open MR	Yes	AG & JC	24/04/2010	24/11/2025		Consider replacing with Stainless Steel MR
11		4th Eco hanger	DMM Eco hanger	Yes	CCC	??	24/11/2025	Tied directly to Eco hanger	OK
12		Traverse line	11mm Edelrid Performance Static	Yes	AG	28/11/2021	24/11/2025		OK

SM queried state of 3 MRs as two listed with note consider replacing with Stainless steel MR and one noting minor corrosion, AG reported 3 MRs on Indiana Highway need replacing on next inspection but all is safe and nothing urgent.

#### 4. Submissions for Adoption of Additional Cave Entrances

No submission on any new entrances, despite update to Entrance policy.

##### a. Update on access via Ogof Tarddiad

At our last meeting we were concerned how access would possibly change due to the information we received about the SSSI from CB, in which Ogof Tarddiad is located. Since September at least, the access arrangements for Ogof Tarddiad detailed on the Caving Wales website, cave registry section, had been updated to recognise the entrance is located in a SSSI, and all digging is banned but access on foot is available.

At last meeting it was suggested Caving Wales was managing access to Ogof Tarddiad (OTPD), SF had sent an email saying this was not the cases. Email read out to meeting as below:

“The permissive path to reach OTPD is controlled and managed by its landowners. Permission to use the path has been granted to bona fide cavers and so Caving Wales (CW) is not in the role of an ACB (Access Controlling Body) like your group is with keys, handling applications and issuing permits. CW is acting as a conduit for information and I am monitoring usage on a voluntary basis. NRW may have misunderstood both that and the actual level of interest.”

This email was sent 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024 to SM and it clearly states CW are not the access controlling body for Ogof Tarddiad (OTPD). LW raised that our initial concern was that historically Caving Wales / Cambrian were not an access controlling body, in fact, it was not permitted under their constitution. The current constitution does permit controlling access to cave sites and CW manage access to Ogof Capel, Ogof Daffyd and are currently hosting the Mynydd Llangatwg committee. SM commented the Cambrian CC (now CW) constitution previously said they couldn't interfere with organisations within Cambrian CC, whereas the current constitution simply

states it shall respect the autonomy, or words to that effect, of the caving clubs and access controlling bodies within its organisation.

As there is no access controlling body for Ogof Tarddiad SM questioned who took responsibility for ensuring the landowner has public liability insurance for cavers and caving activity. LW confirmed BCA public liability insurance is automatic for all landowners who give permission to cavers to enter caves on their land. So public liability is not an issue.

SM then asked about checks on the ladder in Ogof Tarddiad, no-one has publicly taken responsibility for this ladder, persons unknown are checking the ladder; however everyone is responsible for checking a fixed aid in a cave before they use it.

CS asked what do we consider the role of PDCMG, is it only look after cave under PCL land who we have an access agreement or do we look after the whole cave? LW commented that legally we are only responsible to cave under land for which we have agreement with the landowner, so we are technically 'trespassing' when cavers underground go outside this land. This happens with a lot of caves so tends to be irrelevant.

CS asked about the location of the fixed aids we do inspect in relation to land ownership. We only have fixed aids on the entrance climb and Indiana Highway and these are all under PCL land, this was confirmed by AG. We no longer inspect Balcony pitch, after another ladder was installed by persons unknown, but this is also under PCL land; we only inspect those listed. The ladder in Ogof Tarddiad entrance also falls under items not inspected as installed by persons unknown and is not on our list.

As Fixed aids were not an issue, CS then asked about conservation, we are responsible for conservation across the whole cave, everyone agreed this was the case, and SM confirmed we have a conservation policy. It is agreed the new entrance does not change this.

LW asked about the location of Ogof Tarddiad in relationship to PCL land. Although Ogof Tarddiad is located in land owned by another land owner, it was asked how far into cave it was before it is under PCL land? It was estimated ~10m before you were under PCL land and 20-30m before you are in known passage of Ogof Draenen. So CS questioned what our current opinion is on function of PDCMG? The meeting discussion moved onto SSSI status and potential impact.

RS asked how do we address issue of Ogof Tarddiad on the website, what do we say?

LW asked what current status is between NRW and the landowner with respect to the SSSI. CB reported the landowner is selling the estate. CS asked if this is due to the SSSI issues and Ogof Tarddiad. CB commented this is for economic reasons not due to the SSSI.

PS asked if any further action is being taken against the landowner with respect to the SSSI. CB reported NRW are not looking to prosecute the landowner currently, as action had been taken following issue of an enforcement notice in June 2024, therefore no further action is being taken by NRW and the matter is considered closed. This does not mean in future that there may be action against landowner or occupier due to damage to the SSSI site. It should be noted any action for any breaches of the PDO is with the landowner and any occupier, so unless Caving Wales is judged to be an occupier then no action can be taken against them.

LW asked if there was now an agreement in place between NRW and the landowner about access to Ogof Tarddiad by cavers. CB said no; the trampling by cavers walking across the site is potentially an issue, so it is on-going. The stile entrance area may be considered to be an issue, and NRW may complete an impact assessment but this would be next spring and only if funding was available.

LW asked CB if the SSSI issues are now closed and therefore there are no issues with cavers crossing the land? CB said she could not answer this as she is a geologist and not an expert in this area. CB said she could not offer any conclusive answer in relation to cavers going to Ogof Tarddiad.

LW commented that as Caving Wales have stated the landowner has given permission to cavers to access Ogof Tarddiad then we assume all is okay. CB commented she is surprised at this permission as it is cavers accessing Ogof Tarddiad that caused the issues earlier in the year and the enforcement notice from NRW.

PS stated that in the management advice, issued when the SSSI was declared, under heading of recreational use, it states access to the cave systems is allowed on the discretion of the land owner. CB confirmed with PS this was the Site Management Statement (SMS), but this document is not legally binding, so she would not trust the wording in one of those documents. CS asked what is legally binding. CB replied; the citation, the map and the PDO list. CB said NRW were re-writing the guidance on how to write a SMS as there are poorly written ones out

there. CB said the SMS for this SSSI was written in a hurry in 1992. The caves the SMS covers are those in the quarry at top of the hill in the Gilwern SSSI. Although Ogof Tarddiad was known at this time. These reports written in 1992 were completed in a rush as 1000 sites had to be covered in a short time.

CB commented that based on previous legally binding PDO citations it may be that access may be limited to winter only, to prevent damage to the flora in the woodland, but this is only a possible hypothesis.

LW said in conclusion there is nothing further we can do in relation to Ogof Tarddiad unless someone asks us (PDCMG) to adopt the entrance, and then it will be up to landowner to grant or not grant access through PDCMG. It is recognised a new landowner may or may not grant access across the SSSI to Ogof Tarddiad. CS asked whether the enforcement notice on the current owner would transfer to the new owner. CB confirmed it would not transfer but they do issue all the documents related to the SSSI to the new landowner and are sometimes involved in pre-purchase discussions. LW commented that any new purchaser's solicitor would pick up on any SSSI on the land and the conditions which apply, CB confirmed this should be found in a basic search by a solicitor.

So RS asked again what should he put on the PDCMG website, LW suggested we simply point them to the information on the Caving Wales website on access to Ogof Tarddiad. Report Ogof Tarddiad links into Ogof Draenen but access is not managed by PDCMG and point to Caving Wales for information.

On completion of all above discussion relating to Ogof Tarddiad, those present agreed PDCMG should continue in its current function to manage access to Ogof Draenen, completing its commitments to conservation of the cave, fixed aid checking, ensuring public liability insurance is in place, etc. We will wait and see what the impact of the land sale and any further action by NRW has on access to Ogof Tarddiad.

We will continue to hold off forming a new company limited by guarantee, until we can fully update the landowner on use of other entrances. The reason we were going for a company limited by guarantee is due to being unable to find another trustee. CS explained his liability concerns were raised with Twll Du opening on the Tramway, this is main reason he was not willing to be a trustee, but he is willing to be a director of a limited company if the PDCMG wanted him in that role. He said he would like to meet the landowner in event the setting up of company went ahead. It was reported that the original trustees did meet with the landowner and were closely involved in setting up the agreement and we would expect the same for new directors of a company set up to hold an access agreement.

It is recognised the landowner, Pwlldu Conservation Limited (PCL), has been very patient and reasonable, considering what has happened over the years since our access agreement was set up with them. SM will report back to PCL.

**ACTION** SM to report back to PCL on latest news about Ogof Tarddiad

## **6. Applications for membership**

SM and DT had received no requests or applications from caving clubs for membership of PDCMG.

## **7. Applications to become key holders**

SM and DT had received no applications to be permanent key holders.

## **8. AOB**

LW went around those present.

8.1 SM asked if Cwmbran CC and Brynmawr CC were still active as they had not communicated with PDCMG recently. JS said Cwmbran and Brynmawr are still active. SM wasn't sure if her contact email were current. JS said he had contacts for Brynmawr he will send to SM after the meeting. RS reported Cardiff Hill Divers are active and he is a member, he asked they could revert to Key holder only. If we go to company limited by guarantee then this might not be option depending on how we set it up.

8.2 CB had an item but not related to PDCMG, but wished raise it in as she had an audience from a number of caving clubs and their representatives. The NRW are re-notifying the SSSI Mynyddoedd Llangynidr a Llangatwg, Cefn yr Ystrad a Chomin Merthyr covering over 7,000 hectares in total. This includes Mynydd Llangatwg and Myndd Llangynidr where there are a number of cave systems and sites. CB wishes to gather all information relating to caves and cave features within this area including surface digs. There are 4 months to complete the assessment of SSSI. In the following discussion CB gave further details to those interested. She will forward full details on the area under consideration and of cave information required to SM, who will forward to PDCMG members and associated organisations.

No one else had any AOB.

## 9. Date of Next Meeting

As the next meeting is the two yearly election of the committee, it was agreed this should be a face to face meeting. After review of the 2025 calendar, it was agreed the next meeting will be Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at Salisbury Hall, Llanfoist. SM commented maybe a constitution update could be proposed to make 'Webmaster' an official post /role. Meeting closed at 10.10pm.

## ADDITION TO THE MINUTES

The agenda omitted a line for the treasurer's report and this was not identified in the meeting. So CO's report is added below as it was circulated prior to the meeting.

### 3b. Treasurer

CO's treasurer's report had been circulated before the meeting, it is copied below.

#### PDCMG Treasurer's Report to the General Meeting 27 November 2024

There have been no transactions on the account since the last meeting. Here is a summary:

Date	Description	Paid in	Paid out	Balance
19 Jun 2024	Balance carried forward			£624.19

The balance in the account currently stands at £624.19.

This balance should be sufficient for normal day to day running of PDCMG. However, the Group has no regular income and donations are therefore very welcome. The easiest way to pay in to the PDCMG account is by bank transfer. The account details are:

Pwll Du Cave Management Group  
52-21-07  
36707473



Clive Owen  
Treasurer

CO was on holiday and sent apologies.

*Minutes approved as true record on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2025, and signed by Les Williams, Chair. Original held on file.*