

Pwll Du Cave Management Group

Minutes of the general meeting held on Wednesday 26th November 2025 on line via Zoom.

Present

Les Williams (LW)	Chair
Sue Mabbett (SM)	Secretary / Morgannwg CC
Clive Owen (CO)	Treasurer / UBSS
Isaac Neale (IN)	Conservation Officer / Aberystwyth CC
Ali Garman (AG)	Fixed Aids Officer / Draenen Diggers
Rich Smith (RS)	Survey Officer / BEC
Chris Seal (CS)	Chelsea SS
Barry Hill (BH)	Hereford CC
Steve King (SK)	Shepton Mallet CC
Frank Tulley (FT)	Wessex Cave Club
Deepesh Patel	Cardiff University Caving and Canyoning Club
Vince Allkins (VA)	South Wales CC
Huw Jones (HJ)	Morgannwg CC
Nick De Gare Pitt (NP)	Brynmawr CC
Rich Hill (RH)	Gagendor CC
Stuart France (SF)	Conservation Officer, Caving Wales
Christina Byrne (CB)	Natural Resources Wales

1. Apologies

Chris Densham OUCC & trustee.

2. Approval Minutes from Last General Meeting

2a. Approval of Minutes from last general meeting held 15th June 2025

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

No further corrections were identified.

LW asked whether those present at the last meeting could confirm the minutes were a true record and approve them. The six people (SM, CO, FT, CS, BH & SK) present at last meeting and present now voted to approve the minutes as a true record. All others abstained as not present at last meeting.

SM will visit LW to obtain signature on those minutes confirming they are a true record.

2b. Ratification of decisions made at meeting on 15th June 2025 – this meeting was not quorate

SM summarised the only decision taken at last meeting that required ratification were the new committee.

Firstly, SM asked those voted on to the committee in June and not present at that meeting to confirm they accepted the role they were voted in for. IN, RS, and AG confirmed they accepted their respective roles. Dan Thorne had confirmed by email previously he was happy to continue as Permit Secretary. All PDCMG members present and entitled to vote, voted unanimously to ratify the decisions made at that meeting.

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

None.

3. Officers Reports

3a. Secretary

Secretary's Report to PDCMG Meeting - Nov 2025

Our last meeting in June was not quorate, so this was a short meeting and detailed discussions on any matter limited and postponed to our next meeting, so hopefully will be quorate. As we also need to ratify the decisions made at the meeting in June 2025.

On completion of the draft minutes from that meeting these were sent to the landowners and PDCMG members, committee and other representatives who attend meetings. I also sent a copy of our approved meeting minutes from the Nov 2024 meeting to the landowners. My only other correspondence with the landowners has been in regard to the Rescue Practice that took place in September 2025. This correspondence was to notify them of the practice and to ask if there were any restrictions / requests for this practice. The only restriction / request was to ensure the access to the Lamb House (was Lamb & Fox), Pwlldu Adventure Centre and Pen-y-Galchen Farm are kept clear at all times. This was a recognised potential issue before this request was received as the SMWCRT rescue practice met at the Keepers Pond car park to minimise vehicles heading along the road to Ogof Draenen entrance.

From the last meeting I had an action to review Caving Wales access page to see what it says, if access is not detailed as restricted for other entrances (e.g. Nunnery) on PCL land then request update to Caving Wales Access page, SM to contact secretary of Caving Wales for update if required.

I have reviewed the CW Access page and under the heading Ogof Draenen access via gated entrance there is a link directly to the PDCMG website on how to obtain access. Our Access page clearly states: -

[Access Licence agreed between the PDCMG member clubs and the landowner \(Pwlldu Conservation Ltd\). The landowner only permits access through the main entrance as described above.](#)

[Two additional known entrances that have been dug open on the landowner's land without permission remain open. We request cavers follow the landowner's wishes and do not attempt to use these in order to maintain good relations with the landowner and avoid jeopardising future access permission.](#)

I personally believe this is sufficient and no further action needs to be taken with regard to changes to Caving Wales Access page.

Sue Mabbett
20 Nov 2025

SM reported that since sending out the above report she had received recently an email from the land owner. The landowner reports they have seen people crossing private land below where the Lamb and Fox used to be and people coming across land with old Pwlldu Quarry. One can only assume coming from Nunnery, direction. The email detailed one event of cavers crossing the land on the Rescue Practice weekend (Sept 2025), Dan Thorne was present, and this was sorted at time. The rescue organiser in earlier e-mail said cavers strayed onto private land, so it is assumed this was an error, and they had no plans to do additional caving trip. An occurrence at beginning of Nov 2025, a group was seen coming across the land from Pwlldu Quarry area, the landowner did not manage to catch up with these persons to speak to them. The other occurrences were on the CHECC weekend, one group on 15th Nov who they didn't speak to, second group on 16th Nov, where the landowner managed to speak to a caver waiting in a car, they said they were from Nottingham University and Sheffield University. SM replied to this email stating that PDCMG have not given permission to anyone to use other entrances or to cross private land, we only give permission to use the gated entrance, and on our website, we clearly state use of Nunnery Entrance is not permitted. SM replied that the matter would be raised at this meeting to see if there is anything we can do.

SM is not aware of any other entrances being opened up in this area. We have discussed use of Nunnery at previous meetings. We agreed placing something in the caving press would advertise the Nunnery Entrance is present and may encourage use. We have also checked Caving Wales website this gives link to our website stating clearly this entrance is not to be used. We have discussed adding signage at Nunnery but thought to be of no benefit as previously defaced or removed.

CS asked if this private land was open access, SM had checked the OS map today, the land around the tramway is open access, but the old quarry area is not open access and there are no public footpaths across it.

HJ commented the Pwlldu quarry area is private land, there was at one time a public footpath across this land but this has been removed on latest maps, SM confirm no footpath showing on latest OS maps; there are two other cave entrances in the Pwlldu Quarry area, Siambur Ddu and Balance Shaft. HJ clarified the Nunnery entrance is on open access land, however shortest route back to cars is across Pwlldu Quarry area and land below the old Lamb and Fox pub. SM commented there maybe new entrance we do not know about, those present agreed most likely reason is people walking back from Nunnery.

SF had further comment about definition of Open Access under CROW act and urban common land under law of property act of 1925 which is quite a lot of the land in the area. Drws Cefn, the Nunnery and Twll Du are all on common land as defined under the 1925 Property Act. There is right to go on this land to carry out air and exercise. SF stated that NRW's internal solicitor had admitted in writing some years ago and in legal proceedings that caving is a form of air and exercise within the meaning of the 1925 Act. The other things to consider are Scheduled Monuments and SSSI land, the Nunnery Entrance is not on either of these. The whole of Pwlldu Quarry is Scheduled Ancient monument. SF believed there was a public footpath, but definitive paths are listed with the county council and you would have to go to Ebbw Vale (Council Offices) to see listing of all rights of way. SF continued describing access rights on each of land.

CS thanked SF for information which was more than he asked for, he recognised we do not endorse use of these other entrances, CS just wished to establish where people were or were not allowed on the land in this area.

LW suggested they were crossing this land to get back to where their cars were parked. CS suggested a map was put up by PDCMG on our website or by Caving Wales simply showing where people are allowed to walk or not allowed to walk. There would be no commentary on any entrance just clearly outlining where the open access land boundaries are and the public footpaths.

SF offered a map / photo showing open access land, SSSI, Scheduled monuments and land with no access, SF was thanked for offer of photo showing boundaries. CS suggest we took this photo to show difference. LW stated it is simple we don't need to know various types of land and the rules of access, we need to simple show which land has that open access rights and which does not. This map does not need to detail any entrances or caves; it simply needs to show where the private land boundaries are. This will help the land owner in minimising people crossing the land. SM will use SF photo or similar map to show which land has access rights across the Pwlldu area. We need to ensure we do not breach copyright of any map/photo we use. It is recognised public have right to walk across open access (CROW) land, opinion on doing any other activities on the open access land varies. LW pointed this is not what the discussion is about, it is about private land that is not defined as Open Access land, where there are no footpaths or other rights of way across it. Everyone in the meeting agreed no-one has a right to cross private land where there are no footpaths and this applies to the Pwlldu Quarry area.

SF asked about Siambur Ddu, does the PDCMG believe it manages access to Siambur Ddu. Our access licence is for Ogof Draenen; therefore we do not manage access to Siambur Ddu. SM noted she is aware the landowner is not permitting access to Siambur Ddu as Peter Smith was refused permission when he requested access for a bat survey as part of NRW review.

Finally on the reported sightings by the land owner one group was from Nottingham and Sheffield Universities. SM report it was the CHECC weekend and she was waiting for response from CHECC organiser. IN is aware the CHECC representative is following up on this report. It was agreed once we have a map / photo this is sent to CHECC for distribution. LW made final comment we should distribute the map / photo as widely as possible without prejudice that people should stay off their private land this is boundary of private land please do not go there; we do not mention entrances or other types of land.

ACTIONS

SF to send his photo to SM.

SM circulate in the caving world a map clearly showing access rights across Pwlldu land.

3b. Treasurer

CO had issued a report before the meeting as below:

**PDCMG Treasurer's Report to the General Meeting 26 November 2025
(updated 23/11/25)**

There has been one transaction on the account since the last meeting. Here is a summary:

Date	Description	Paid in	Paid out	Balance
15 Jun 2025	Balance carried forward			£634.19
23 Nov 2025	Hall hire (Sue Mabbett)		16.00	£618.19

The balance in the account currently stands at £618.19.

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

At the General Meeting on 15 June 2025 I was requested to report on the costs of the legal work done in preparation for setting up a company limited by guarantee. These stand at £900 and have been met by Susan Mabbett and myself.



Clive Owen
Treasurer

CO commented people have seen his report and the revised report. He has answered the question from last meeting about how much SM and he had paid for legal advice. LW believes the caving world is wealthy enough that individuals should not be paying for legal advice and subsidising the PDCMG. The PDCMG took the decision to do to progress with setting up a Company Ltd by guarantee therefore LW wanted to know what we, the PDCMG, were going to do about paying back these costs to SM and CO. LW believed PDCMG or another caving body should cover these costs. Currently PDCMG has insufficient funds to cover these costs. CO stated on his own behalf he did not expect the monies back that he had paid for legal advice, SM was of the same opinion. LW believes SM and CO should be paid back, he knows there is plenty of money held by both Caving Clubs and National bodies therefore individuals should not be subsidising these costs. People volunteer their time to support the caving organisations they should not be donating their money as well. LW would like to see this precedence overturned at every opportunity. As an example, LW is going to ensure everyone receives travel expense for upcoming national meeting in Birmingham. He knows the large Clubs are reasonably well off, for example he knows Wessex CC has significant funds. PDCMG don't currently have a subscription which would if we were a company, LW suggested maybe we need a subscription. This is his personal view. SM commented that in previous discussions on this matter, it was pointed out the central caving bodies, for example BCA have funds. SM asked if we should apply to them, LW suggested it is worth asking BCA for some money, also in previous times when this organisation (PDCMG) has needed money we have asked the member clubs for a donation. Most Clubs have been forthcoming with a donation; he recognises that the student (University) Clubs are not so rich but well-established Clubs are wealthy. LW feels strongly on this matter and asked if he was the only one, other member Club representatives present said no he was not, those present supported LW in stopping individuals donating large sums of money. SF reported that Caving Wales would not contribute to these costs, as any costs have to be reasonable. Caving Wales can give up to £750 without reference back to BCA and other regional councils. Personally, he believed these costs were unnecessary as a limited company can be simply set up for £50, using 'bog standard' rules available on Companies House website, and no legal costs required. LW pointed out PDCMG had discussed setting up of a company and PDCMG set the terms of reference which included in seeking legal advice. LW asked SM how many Clubs in PDCMG, SM thought it was about 17, was we have groups dropping in and out other the years. CS if we exclude University Clubs, we are 10 or 12. LW said 17 Clubs at £50 each would cover

these costs. CS commented if the bigger Clubs pay more (e.g. £100) and poorer ones pay less then we could meet these costs incurred. CS asked about recognising in our accounts if someone has made a donation to cover, these types of cost should be double entered in the accounts as e.g. £60 coming in and £60 going out. CO commented if CS wanted double entry book keeping (which is complicated) then PDCMG would have to find a new treasurer. CO is happy to record when donations have been made. CS agreed double entry was too much and recognising donation is fine. SM commented she knows AG has previously donated rope when replacement needed on Fixed Aids/ Hand lines, we haven't said what the cost is but have recognised this donation in previous meetings.

After further discussion the meeting agreed we should ask the PDCMG member Clubs to make a donation. The PDCMG had agreed previously to proceed with seeking legal advice so we believed PDCMG should meet these legal costs. LW agreed to be the signatory on the letter to be sent out to the member Clubs asking for a donation to cover the legal costs incurred.

CS proposed PDCMG request donation from member clubs of £50, to cover the legal costs incurred, seconded by RS. CO and SM abstained, and all PDCMG member club representatives voted for this proposal. It was agreed LW will be the signatory on the letter to request this donation. SM will visit LW for sign off of the minutes from last meeting, they will finalise a letter and LW sign this letter at that time.

ACTIONS

SM to draft a letter to PDCMG member clubs requesting donation.

LW to sign the letter to PDCMG clubs requesting donation.

3c. Permit Secretary

SM has not received any email from DT since the last meeting. No report from DT.

DT had visited the UK late summer 2025, RH reported DT is back in Japan for another year. SM asked RH if key safe working well. RH will drop in to check key safe. SF asked if DT had any footfall data. SM stated in DT's last report he had received footfall data from SF, and he was going to combine this with log book data. This has not happened. SF could not remember if a monitor still existed in PDCMG entrance, if present SF will visit Ogof Draenen to collect the data and pass it on. SM asked he sent this directly to DT.

SM will chase DT as it is a condition of the access agreement to provide caver data for Ogof Draenen.

3d. Conservation Officer

IN reported he has only visited a few times, and he has seen nothing bad (damage). He had not completed any conservation work recently. LW pointed out that as Conservation Officer IN does not have to do all the conservation work just co-ordinate it. SM asked if there were any reports of conservation issues in Ogof Draenen, IN had received no reports.

CS asked about a historical list of conservation projects, CS asked if the list still existed. SM asked if he had received anything from Josh. IN had not received a list but he is aware Josh White had plans to re-tape some areas. SK found after search of old minutes, that in the Conservation Officer report of June 2018 a list of items to be done, most of which had been completed at that time.

SM remembered that in reply to the landowner she had referenced the Conservation policy that was last updated in 2010s. SM asked if IN could review current conservation policy, IN said he would, SM will send IN current copy of conservation policy.

ACTIONS

SM send IN current conservation policy.

IN review current conservation policy and recommend any updates.

3e. Survey Secretary (and Web Officer)

RS summarised the report he had sent. The report sent by email to SM is copied below:

Survey / web officer report

I've been offered some route guides along with grade 2 survey sketches by Dave Barrett, and he has kindly agreed to allow us to host these on the website. I've updated the website to display these as in PDF format to view or download. I think these are a useful aid to navigation, whether in lieu of a full survey or in addition to, as they provide a different perspective on the cave.

I've also been promised some new, original survey data. I'm looking forward to adding that to the repository shortly.

I've had some more cavers express an interest in helping survey but I haven't managed to personally organise any survey trips since my last update. I'm aiming to organise some more trips over the winter.

I note that there is a new major project beginning to resurvey Dan yr Ogof which will likely occupy a lot of the surveying expertise in South Wales. I'm unsure whether this is going to be a net positive or negative for generating surveying enthusiasm for Draenen!

LW commented Dan yr Ogof is either getting all his surveyors or training people up ready to help out with Ogof Draenen.

3f Fixed Aids Officer

AG reported the fixed aid inspection was due yesterday this will not be done in December; it should be done in January so within approximately one month of due date. If inspection finds a fault item will be replaced but next rope replacement is due Nov/ Dec 2026. SM asked if AG wanted any volunteers to complete the fixed aid inspection, James Waite (JW) had previously volunteered. AG said any volunteers are welcome on a trip as it allows AG to train up new persons for inspection. DP has contact details for JW if required. CS asked what the cost of a replacement rope is, AG estimated £60-70 for 40m of rope, and also worn MRs may need replacement. The total cost should be less than £100. AG is happy to cover these costs so put in donation to cover cost of rope; this has been his standing method of supporting this organisation over the years. SF suggested Caving Wales could pay for this in future, under conservation and access in remit. AG will discuss this with SF after this meeting.

3g Webmaster Report

RS webmaster report is included in the Survey Secretary report above.

LW reported the constitution on the PDCMG website is a word version and has review comments in red still present e.g. insertdate or number here. LW said he could have opened from old website, RS confirmed old website had gone, so issue is on our website. SM said we have discussed this previously when CS was looking up some wording in the constitution. Those present agreed that SM should find the original/master Constitution and remove/ accept track change comments if necessary, work with CS to check final version is write, then pdf it and send to RS for publishing on the website. CS asked if last update was in Nov 2013 as on current published constitution SM confirmed it was.

SK asked: - should all documents on website be pdf documents? SM stated all minutes were pdf version. SK listed code of conduct, conservation policy, survey policy and caving policy as being word documents. LW asked why pdf instead of word. Pdf documents are universally readable, the layout / format remain same (word can sometimes mess up format) and although they can be changed it is more difficult. SK commented good for consistency to go with pdf for all. Agreed to pdf all once documents checked to make sure correct.

ACTIONS

SM amend constitution master to remove/ accept track changes, and generate 'clean' pdf version.

RS publish constitution without track changes on website.

RS to replace those documents currently held as word versions with pdf documents once checked for accuracy and correct version.

3h. Biological Recorder and Geological Recorder

There is currently no-one in post for either of these roles.

In June 2025, SM had contacted Andrew Lewington but he has declined the role of Biological Recorder. These will remain vacant until someone volunteers.

4. Submissions for Adoption of Additional Cave Entrances

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

4a. Update on access via Ogof Tarddiad

SM believes this is currently stable and any cavers can enter and complete the log book in the entrance; SM asked for SF to confirm this status. SF confirmed access to Ogof Tarddiad all working satisfactory with cavers accessing entrance by the permitted footpath. The only issue is with NRW, who are concerned about some ferns listed in the SSSI citation. SF with Peter Smith had completed surveys and not found the ferns detailed in the area of woodland crossed by cavers and these are not rare species. SF has cave counters in place to monitor numbers and wildlife camera. SF stated the landowner of this site also welcomes others to visit the woodland. In summary SF commented this entrance is used as much as the other entrance with similar numbers. LW stated for the purposes of this meeting access to Ogof Tarddiad is now stable and uncontested, it is no longer a matter that requires discussion as the PDCMG meetings. NRW has concerns over the ferns, but not aware of any legal action being taken. CB (NRW representative) had no comment on this, CB stated she is a geologist and has no comment relating to plants in this SSSI site.

As access Ogof Tarddiad is now stable, LW stated it no longer needs to be of concern to PDCMG. SM agreed it had appeared on this agenda as only a few people present at last meeting so it was to simply catch up, SM will remove this item from future agendas. CS commented this was originally on agenda as it may concern the Pwlldu Conservation (PCL) Ltd landowner. SM had informed PCL, and they know the other landowner, there are no ongoing concerns. SM will contact PCL landowner about potentially progressing with updated access agreement via company limited by guarantee.

5. Applications for membership

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

6. Applications to become key holders

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

7. AOB

LW went around those present.

- SF raised point PDCMG has ~ £500 in funds could this be used to pay SM and CO, agreed we need to hold a balance for any unexpected costs, so we will wait until donations received before paying CO and SM for the legal costs.
- CO reported our BCA membership has been renewed, we do not pay for this as we are an access control body.
- CB offered IN assistance in updating the conservation policy as she writes conservation documents all the time as part of her job in NRW. IN thanked CB for this offer. SM will forward CB's email to IN.
- SM had just received email from Tom about CHECC, he was very disappointed this had occurred as they advertised the access requirements for Ogof Draenen and they should not have been crossing private land.

No other business raised.

8. Date of Next Meeting

After short discussion it was agreed the next meeting will be on line (via Zoom) on: -
Wednesday 17th June 2026, 8.00pm.

Meeting closed at 9.45pm.