

**Minutes of Ogof Ffynnon Ddu Cave Advisory Group  
meeting at South Wales Caving Club on the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022.**

**The meeting was held in person and by Zoom**

**Present**

Andrew McLeod (zoom), Duncan Hornby, Jill Brunsdon, Andy Dobson, Dave Dobson, Claire Vivian, Vince Allkins, Luke Ashton, Gary Vaughan, Allan Richardson.

**Apologies**

Paul Dummer, Tom Partridge.

**Chairmans opening comments**

Gary Vaughan opened the meeting and explained that as Hywel Davies had just been elected as the Cave Advisory Group (CAG) chairman he was unable to be present, so he was standing in for him.

**Appointment of new wardens**

Jill Brunsdon, Duncan Hornby and Andrew McLeod were welcomed as new OFD Wardens. Tenure needs to be sorted out. Ready for the December meeting.

**Action Secretary/Chairman**

**Correspondence received**

None

**Chairmans Report**

None

**Hon. Secretary's Report**

Nothing to report

**SWCC Permit Secretary's report**

- This is my first report as SWCC Permit Secretary. I have been in the role since 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022 so am still finding my feet and this report may be a little shorted than previous issues.
- I have inherited many tasks since taking the role of permit secretary including the updating of documentation, see list below:
  - Annual and Date Specific Permits (Update to access advice)
  - OFD Access Document (overdue for review, top priority)
  - Annual Permit Application form

As part of this update, I have included the 'Minimal Impact Caving Guidelines. document provided by the BCA/BCRA/Natural England to all permit application responses as a replacement for the outdated 'Cave Conservation Code' document.

[http://british-caving.org.uk/wiki3/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=conservation\\_access:micg.pdf](http://british-caving.org.uk/wiki3/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=conservation_access:micg.pdf)

- The development of an electronic permit application form and key issuing system has been initiated. This will ensure data that is collected is complete, easily transformed into reports moving forward and supports the updating of the permit application process. I am

attempting to tie this in with promoting the use of the DDB (Digital Destination Board) application.

- SWCC has navigated a difficult course through the pandemic and still remains in a state of development and change with respect to its systems and protocols. Due to the Pandemic, it has not been possible to administer a duty officer from the HQ to administer cave keys and thus an alternative system is in development. This system has been in place since the end of the March - June 2020 lockdown. In simple terms it is an extension of the old midweek access system. Any permit holding caver can simply request a cave key by e-mail, text or phone. Codes are issued which enable the caver to access the changing facilities and showers at the SWCC HQ and to retrieve a cave key 24/7. The use of the key is logged on user sheets designed to keep records sufficient to comply with any usage statistics that may be required in future and with SWCC's legal responsibilities as a manager of premises under current Covid related requirements.
- Cave usage statistics are currently limited to 01/12/2021 – 22/05/2022. This is the only data collected and electronically transcribed up to now. The previous data is still held by the previous permit secretary and is due to be handed over. This is previous data has not been electronically transcribed.
- There has been no issues or extraordinary circumstances with permit issuing or access since my time in post.

Luke Ashton  
30/05/2022

### **Period 01/12/2021 – 22/05/2022**

Number of cavers total – 1219

| <b>Year</b> | <b>No. of Date Specific Permits Issued (to date)</b> |
|-------------|--|
| 2022        | 10 (data incomplete)                                 |
| 2021        | (no data)  |
| 2020        | (no data)  |
| <b>Year</b> | <b>No. of Annual Permits issued</b>                  |
| 2022        | 27   |
| 2021        | 20   |
| 2020        | 36   |

### **Conservation Officers Report**

Work has continued on re-taping, formation cleaning and removal of boot and hand prints etc. The usual thanks go to Andy and Brian for their stalwart assistance, with occasional help from other club members.

Dave Dobson

### **Fixed Aids Officer's report**

I have just begun in the role as Fixed Aids Officer following the recent SWCC AGM. There have been two issues of note since I started that will be rectified as soon as possible. The first was a simple replacement of a chain on the scaffold bar of Pot 3 in OFD1 as it had become detached. This is now complete, courtesy of Vince, the Dobson's and Paul Quill. The chains had already been acquired by the previous Fixed Aids Officer. The second issue is that repair to the top steps below the Cwm Dwr entrance pipe is required (the entrance is a Fixed Aid). The retaining timbers have become rotten and detached. This needs a repair sooner rather than later, and as a small repair now will not preclude more significant works in the future, this will be done as soon as possible. A plan has been formed for a minimal repair using a small quantity of scaffolding and rebar which should nonetheless stabilise the entrance for some time (and permit climbing on, as the timbers did when installed).

Finally, the Fixed Aids group was instructed by the SWCC Committee to choose between a ladder or Via Ferrata-style steps for Lowe's Chain; the group will in due course evaluate between these options and report back to the Committee with their recommendation as instructed.

I do not have confirmation that Fixed Aids checks were resumed after their cessation during Covid, although I believe some may have been carried out (but do not yet know any details). Consequently, it remains the case (as advertised in current access guidelines) that fixed aids may not have been inspected in the last year and cavers should use their own judgement and make their own inspections when using fixed aids."

Andrew McLeod

Andrew spoke to the report at the meeting.

There will be more work needed on the Cwm Dwr shaft in future, there needs to be new timber work or a ladder at the base of the concrete shaft.

Jill Brunson reported on works that she and Si Lewis did to check and clear the loose rocks on the Columns pitch, after the incident detailed below under AOB.

A laminated rigging topo should be made available to all Columns pitch riggers, highlighting the problem of the loose rocks.

Action Vince

### **Reported Accidents**

None

### **Cave Wardens**

Allocation of Columns duties for 01/01/23, 09/04/23, 30/04/23, 28/05/23, 27/08/23

Action Secretary

### **Cave Management Plan**

#### **Update on safety advice**

Luke is updating with live safety advice each permit and key application.

Action Luke

#### **Possible changes to the TOR's**

1)SWCC has resolved that CAG reviews the MOU and the Terms of Reference in collaboration with SWCC and NRW.

CAG Chairman to produce a 1<sup>st</sup> draft ready for a formal proposal to the December SWCC Committee and the December CAG meeting.

Action Chairman

2)The Fixed Aids review document needs to be clearly laid out in the Terms of Reference.

Action Andrew

3)Requests for filming etc normally need a fast response, the CAG needs to consider how it can respond quicker at times.

Action Chairman

4)There is a need to change the TOR, re the notice to call meetings to normally a minimum of two weeks notice.

Action Chairman

### **OFDCAG Digital interface – update**

Proposal from Allan, 2nd Duncan that OFDCAG has a public facing page on the SWCC website  
Passed unanimous.

Action Andrew

### **AOB**

1)Luke Ashton reported that some clubs were putting more than six names on the log in sheets, Permit Secretary to sort initially.

Action Luke

2)Jill Brunsdon reported on the Columns pitch incident:-

5 UBSS students had booked for the lower entrance to the Columns. Andrew McLeod and Jill Brunsdon were at the top gate when two students pushed past against advice from Si Lewis, John Roe and Peter Dennis (all very experienced cavers) and abseiled the pitch using an Italian Hitch without any SRT kit. This was on an SWCC rope being used by SWCC members. They probably caused the disturbance of the rocks that fell later.

The Wardens need to come up with a best practice for the Columns pitch by next meeting.

Action all

3)Their was a proposal from Andrew McLeod to carry out a review of the above but with no further action to be taken. Passed

Action Andrew

4)Duncan pointed out that there should be a Wardens duties sheet, this should include background info on the cave. He mentioned that there were some good “U” Tube videos on OFD Geology.

Action Secretary/Chairman

### **Next meetings**

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2022, hybrid meeting at SWCC

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2023, hybrid meeting at SWCC