

# Pwll Du Cave Management Group

**Minutes of the meeting held at Salisbury Community Hall, Govilon on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> Nov 2018 commencing at 10:00am.**

## **Present**

Les Williams (LW)	Chair
Sue Mabbett (SM)	Secretary
Ali Garman (AG)	Draenen Diggers
Josh White (JW)	Conservation officer / Aberystwyth
Clive Owen (CO)	UBSS
Chris Seal (CS)	Chelsea Speleo. Soc.
Frank Tully (FT)	Wessex CC
Barry Hill (BH)	Hereford CC
Steve King (SK)	SMCC
Peter Smith (PS)	Biological Recorder
John Stevens (JS)	Survey Recorder
Dan Thorne (DT)	Permit Secretary / Gagendor
Stuart France (SF)	Cambrian CC
Christina Byrne (CB)	Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
Mary Rogers (MR)	GOG

## **Apologies**

Chris Densham Trustee / OUCC; Rich Hill, Gagendor; Martin Hoff, SWCC; Charles Bailey, Trustee; Dave Glover, MCC; Tom Williams, Brynmawr and ex-Fixer Aids Officer; Chris Howes, MCC; Spencer Drew; Treasurer, Rich Smith (BEC).

### **1. Opening Remarks**

LW welcomed everyone present and thanked them for coming.

### **2. Minutes from Previous Meeting (10 Jun 2018)**

#### **2a. Approval of Minutes from last meeting**

LW questioned if anyone had any corrections for the minutes. None received.

The minutes were proposed to be accepted by CO and seconded by AG, there were no objections, LW signed the minutes as a true record.

MR asked for copy of minutes as not on website. SM explained there were issues with current website, which had prevented any information being uploaded, this is why there are no minutes of the last two meetings, or notices/ agenda for this meeting, resolution of this issue with the website was now in hand.

#### **2b. Matters Arising From Previous Minutes Not Covered In Agenda**

None, all issues will be covered by items in the agenda

### **3 Officers Reports**

#### **3 (a) Secretary**

SM had circulated her report prior to the meeting.

SM also circulated reports from Cadw and land owner. These are copied below.

#### **Secretary's Report issued prior to meeting:**

#### **PDCMG Secretary's Report Nov 2018**

##### **New Entrance on the Garnddyrus Forge and Hills Tramroad**

At our last meeting, I reported the Cadw had received the Bat Survey report which confirm no bats were using this entrance, so would be able to progress with repairs to the damage caused by the new entrance. The progress with repairs did not progress as quickly as initially intended, due to funding issues, however funding was obtained by Cadw. The repairs were effected, the entrance was closed and sealed in early October, following a second bat survey to confirm no bats using the entrance. All activity related to repair to the tramway was managed by Cadw and although as secretary I did receive some information from Cadw, as stated at our last meeting the entire matter was Cadw responsibility and not within the remit of PDCMG.

##### **PDCMG / Ogof Draenen Website**

Things have not progressed as hoped on this matter. Although Tim Long had gained control of the website address he did not have time to re-build the site or to find a new location for our website. As a 'Luddite' in these matters I did not realize there were 2 parts to the updating our website, however things are now moving again as Rhys Garman (son of Ali is helping out) Ali mentioned at our last meeting that he had this offer of help, but at that time I thought progress was being made. Now we are progressing and hopefully soon we will be able to add up to date information including contact details for our current Permit Secretary, as the updated information did not go on when I requested last November when I took over as secretary.

##### **Other Matters**

At the last meeting we discussed the Caving Clubs / Groups that make up PDCMG. I have contacted Westminster Speleo Group who will consider our invite to renew their interest in Ogof Draenen and PDCMG at their next committee meeting. The only Club I have not heard from recently now is Cardiff University Caving Club, so if anyone has a current contact please let me know.

Sue Mabbett

## Reports issued at meeting from Cadw and Landowner:

Statement from the landowners Pwlldu Conservation Ltd.

For your information:

As landowners of the entrance(s) to the Ogof Draenen cave system we wish to thank the caving community in their support of CADW in closing this latest unauthorised opening to the cave system. From the outset it had been our wish that this hole, known as Twll Du, was closed permanently and with no access for cavers into the system below.

Open access land has additional responsibilities for a caves landowner including the minimisation of risk to the public and other users. The location of this hole was of particular concern due to its closeness to a well-used path for walkers, and their dogs, and the danger it posed to grazing livestock, in addition to the long term effect on the scheduled ancient monument.

The wider caving community has benefited from nearly twenty years of free access to Ogof Draenen as a result of the license between us and the Pwll Du Cave Management Group, PDCMG, with regard to the management of access to the cave system and its conservation for the benefit of current and future generations of cavers.

We find it hard to understand how having multiple entrances into the cave system will aid conservation.

We continue to support the PDCMG and in conjunction with the previous supportive statements from the CCC and BCA, regarding respecting a caves landowner wishes, we hope that the CCC and BCA will also support this action to conserve this precious wilderness for future generations.

Peter Jones  
Brian Lewis  
Pwlldu Conservation Limited

Received 30 Oct 2018

E-mail from Amelia Pannett, Cadw

## **ILLEGAL OPENING EXCAVATED THROUGH SCHEDULED MONUMENT IS SEALED**

I am writing on behalf of Cadw to thank the caving community for their support in rectifying the damage caused to Hills Tramroad, which one of Wales' most significant monuments, located within the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.

The unauthorised access made into the Ogof Draenen caving system had damaged a section of this protected monument and destabilised the structure of the surrounding tramroad. Located immediately adjacent to a popular footpath, the excavated hole was clearly dangerous, being around 1m in diameter and leading to a vertical drop of over 20 metres. In liaison with the with the landowner, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Torfaen County Borough Council, Natural Resources Wales, Gwent Police, Pwll Du Cave Management Group and the Cambrian Caving Council I am pleased to confirm that the hole was permanently sealed earlier this month. The works were undertaken with advice from Natural Resources Wales and followed a series of bat surveys that concluded that bats were not using the hole to access the caving system. This was confirmed by a further survey carried out immediately prior to the works commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> October, and therefore no bat licence was required. I am pleased to also confirm that recent allegations that Cadw committed a wildlife crime by undertaking the works are unfounded and have been dismissed by Gwent Police\*. Furthermore, the work had the benefit of scheduled monument consent. The work was completed on 5 October with the hole filled with a mix of concrete and steel bracing to stabilise the ground, preserve the monument and safeguard walkers who use the footpath. The modern materials used to fill the hole now form part of the wider protected monument and it is an offence to undertake any works, damage or destroy any part of the monument, including the closure, without Cadw's consent. As you will know, any such action could result in a criminal prosecution.

I am delighted with the outcome and grateful to all concerned that have made this possible. Thank you again for your support.

Amelia

**Dr Amelia Pannett**  
**Warden Henebion Maes / Field Monument Warden**  
**Cangen Amgylchedd Hanesyddol / Historic Environment Branch**  
**Cadw**  
**Llywodraeth Cymru / Welsh Government**

\* Clarification sent as below.

Dear all

My apologies, I misunderstood the situation regarding the investigation by Gwent Police. The investigation is still on going. Cadw have provided all the information that we were asked for and are co-operating fully with the investigating officer. We are confident that we followed all necessary procedures to establish whether bats were using the illegally excavated hole or not prior to the works being carried out. We are hopeful of a resolution to this matter soon.

Best wishes

Amelia

SF and others reported that these reports issued at meeting had been published in other locations. CS asked what support PDCMG had given landowner and Cadw as describe in the new reports, SM commented that PDCMG had not been obstructive and recognised that closure of Twll Du was matter for Cadw and landowner; not the business of PDCMG as reported to the last meeting. SM also confirmed that there had been no requirement for funding the repair, Cadw had met costs. SM at one stage in summer thought she may need to contact PDCMG members but in the end this had not been required. PS asked if SM had any information on the investigation by Gwent police, SM had been informed this was now with CPS but had no additional information.

CS had concerns SM had not mentioned the reports she had received from the Biological Recorder which indicated bats were present. SM reports had not mentioned these other reports of bats being observed. SM stated she had only issued a limited report as she wanted to present additional information at this meeting. SM stated in her opinion and as stated at last meeting closure of Twll Du was matter for Cadw and not PDCMG.

SF stated he had also reported see had observed bats in area of Pwll Du. SM had issued limited report as she wishes to present this additional meeting at the meeting. AG stated it was not up to SM to give in her report the reports from other officers. CS accepted this point but as Secretaries report occurs before the Biological Officers report then all reports on bat observations should be mentioned here.

Bat surveys completed on behalf of Cadw had not observed bats moving in or out of Twll Du prior to its closure, PS had observed bats moving in and out of Twll Du when he completed a survey in September full details in his report below. These reports contradict each other.

SM had report from Charles Bailey this will be issued when we discuss New Trustee under item 5.1 below.

SM had action at last meeting to write a letter to Cambrian Caving Council (CCC). SM had been pondering on how best to write this, she had now drafted this letter and will give to Club reps at the end of the meeting and circulate to missing Clubs reps after the meeting.

LW asked if there was any other matter to discuss under the secretary's report. The website was mentioned and agreed to discuss here.

#### **PDCMG Website**

SM asked AG to update the meeting. AG reported as we all knew the current PCMG website is outdated and Tim Long was asked to bring it into 21<sup>st</sup> century. He was overload so Rhys Garman (AG son) had written updated site. TL needs to switch from old domain to new domain. CS asked is there policy to review content before issuing up date? AG confirmed content is the same content just updated to improve layout. There were some updates e.g. Permit Secretary's (DT) contact details were added to replace SM details. The new content will be transferred soon. The other items to add include minutes of last 3 meetings SM will forward these for upload.

LW asked if officers could add information to website? AG reported currently, no webmaster could be sent to him or for upload.

CS asked if there was e -mail for group set up for PDCMG that could be have links from the website. CS volunteered to set up e-mail group for committee and members. Asked if this could be linked from website. LW suggested this was investigated so committee could be contacted via website.

#### **ACTION Points**

SM to send final minutes and reports from last three meetings ( Nov 16, Oct 17, Jun 18) to AG for up load.

SM to send e-mail contact list to AG and CS.

CS/AG to set up e-mail group for PDCMG

CS/AG investigate enable committee to be contact via email links from website.

CB raised matter on request she had sent to SM and asked if should be discussed here. SM apologized for not remembering and suggested covered here.

## **The request was for: - Collecting calcite samples from British caves, including Ogof Draenen**

CB summarised the request, an academic wishes to sample calcite samples. Similar request sent to Mynydd Llangatwg and permission given. This site is not SSSI, PDCMG would be group to be intermediary between landowner and those requesting scientific studies in the cave, in this case to collect small samples of cryogenic calcite (mg quantities) in Ogof Draenen. The request from Gina Mosely from cryogenic calcite samples, it is destructive testing so only small samples are collected.

No impact even it is in SSSI. CB suggested restrictions as applied for Mynydd Llangatwg are also applied to Draenen. The study (Gina) would collect 10-20 crystals only, taking a maximum of half of the crystal from each location.

SM trusts restrictions at Mynydd Llangatwg should be acceptable to PDCMG. A representative from should see the conditions prior to final permission being given Gina. Is it within group remit to give permission, the consensus was yes as other scientific studies in the past had taken place, where PDCMG had given the permission. The licence permits scientific study, so direct permission from landowner not required but SM would inform him out of courtesy.

SF raised issue of other landowners with parts of Ogof Draenen under their land. After some discussion decided irrelevant as access point is key, also mineral rights believed to be with Coal Authority still. AG commented it is the multiple landowners for which Ogof Draenen is underneath that has been major obstacle into making Ogof Draenen a triple SSSI. There are SSSI above the cave but these are for biological factors and not linked to the cave so no impact on this request.

CB asked about access for Gina and other cavers to collect samples, e.g. Do they need to be accompanied? SM asked if Gina was a member of Caving Club. CO confirmed she was a member of UBSS therefore she had a right of access through that Club. In conclusion Gina could apply to DT for a key or use the UBSS key.

Questioned about crossing tape, someone has already identified location so must be within reach. It was believed some locations were not taped, however as this calcite is very small taping is probably not appropriate unless other calcite formations present.

SM proposed to be pragmatic and give permission assuming equivalent conditions to Mynydd Llangatwg. It was suggested JW, as conservation officer is prime contact. CB will communicate with JW. The conditions of the PDCMG constitution checked, any study write up / report has to be submitted to PDCMG.

SM proposed agreement be progressed, proposed by AG seconded by JW, all for no abstentions, none against.

### **Action Points**

**JW** to communicate with Gina and NRW via CB

### **3 (b) Treasurer**

No report received from the treasurer, he had been unable to make the meeting at short notice.

SM reported on SD behalf that the changeover of signatories was taking longer than anticipated due to the bank belatedly asking for additional identity information for the new signatories.

This had delayed payment to the permit secretary, DT for supply of water proof paper and a new lock and to the secretary, SM for hire of the hall. It is hoped the issue will be resolved soon so that payments to those owed can be made.

The action point for from the last meeting for SD to check liability insurance cover for PDCMG, trustees, officers, recorders and Club representatives, had been completed, SD confirmed all were covered via e-mail to SM.

### 3 (c) Permit Secretary

DT had sent out a report to prior to the meeting this is copied below:

Trips Recorded in Ogof Draenen April 18 to 20th November 18								
Log book Stolen from 3rd May 2018 (date replaced) until 24th September 18 (when replaced) probably taken 12th August								
	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Total =
Parties					2	3	3	8
Persons					5	6	8	19

The log book and padlock were stolen sometime in August, SM had received e-mail while in New Zealand, SM had emailed DT suggesting contact other Clubs to see who had visited. DT confirmed that the stealing of the log book and padlock by persons unknown had prevented a full record for the period since the last meeting. DT's and C Howes were on holiday so delayed replacement of padlock until Sept. DT confirmed the spare padlock for the cave now resided with him in Crickhowell.

The loss of logbook questioned is breach of data protection act, SM stated that information from Girlguiding website had confirmed names only was not breach of data protection, it requires a name with contact details e.g. phone number, address or e-mail, so no data breach. CS suggested put note in log book names are held for historical records. This raised question if SM had asked landowner to remove names from records he received, SM stated no, as on receiving information from Girlguiding UK, she believed this was now un-necessary. It is condition of access agreement to be an accurate of those entering the system and provide that information to the landowner.

Access agreement condition:- To keep an accurate record of persons entering into the System and to submit the record to the Owner on request but in any event on the agreed day each year stating the responsible club, the leader of the group, the number in the party and the date of entry into the system.

This information had always been given to the landowner, the leader was '1<sup>st</sup> legible name' listed. CS suggested we still asked landowner if he wants name. DT stated he will put this note on the logbook and fact information given to landowner. CS asked if SM was hesitant, SM said yes as we have caused a lot of hassle to landowner. CS suggested it would remove requirement on landowner to hold records, so SM will ask landowner.

SF stated this loss of logbook was a problem for any future analysis of data for trends and visitor numbers. SF suggested estimated from previous year's results. This led to general comment there had been a general presentation of statistics year on year numbers, trends in places visited, etc. DT was will to do this, although suggested this should occur every 2 years at the biennial meeting, to provide sufficient data worth reviewing. This was accepted by those present. Those present agreed this was suitable period for this presentation. In addition the use of caver counters will help identify footfall within the cave in event of log book loss or assessing if the other two entrances were in use.

There was lack of information on use of other entrance, Drws Cefn, SF had had counters in there and he stated usage was very low on 2 in last few years. It was difficult entrance to use so not in use by cavers.

#### Action points

**SM** to ask landowner if he wishes to keep the name of the leader on the records he received; club name, numbers, dates would remain in records handed to the landowner.

**SM** to provide historical data in spreadsheet format to Dan.

**DT** to analyse caver data for presentation to group at Biennial meeting.

DT then raised the point he was uncertain of his role on the PDCMG committee. Others stated they were also confused. SM commented we are looking after a cave, people assumed we need multiple meetings but we looking after one cave, so additional meetings were not necessary. SM had as permit secretary issued keys, recorded cave data and presented that to meetings. If lock went missing or other issues were reported she would request if key holders could check with club members to identify when event happened. If she had any queries if a request for key was acceptable then she bounced that off other members of committee. This was all she did. LW commented he had glanced at constitution prior to meeting and found that any decision that need making between meetings the secretary and chair should be contacted and if necessary request comment from Club reps; therefore there is mechanism in place to cover issues. There is history of where a relevant officer / recorder was not contacted on an issue relevant to their role. This is history and moving forward SM had previously stated she would seek opinion as necessary. The constitution does not call for executive to call meetings it only requires secretary to contact Club representatives is an issue requires meetings.

There was some discussion on previous history , LW commented the Club representatives / members attend general meetings and responsible for controlling committee.

LW concluded the officers are responsible for disseminating information as required, but this group should not be micro managing the officers. If the officers do not perform role then at the biennial meeting someone else should be selected. LW took up this role on condition to resolve previous history and bring this group together. DT believed role had been clarified, LW stated most information could be circulated but there will be sensitive inform that would not be circulated and finally any trivia or matters not requiring urgent decision can wait to next meeting.

### **3 (d) Conservation Officer**

The report from JW had been previously circulated and is copied below.

## **Conservation Officer Report**

### **November 2018**

There is very little to write about in this half of the year. Taping has progressed from the Snowball to the Reactor and I am happy to say that all the tape is in good condition between the entrance and the reactor now. I would like to thank Barry Hill for finishing off the tape in Forever changed and taping the Y Gwter Fawr Streamway a couple of weeks ago.

I would also like to thank Cambrian Council for funding supplies for the conservation work. I have plenty of pegs now, however I do not have enough tape (still got over 1km). I only know of one supplier (what is worth buying and using) and I bought all of his supplies of orange tape couple months ago. They had no plans to buy in any more for us. With little spare time and no quick solution, it resulted in me not using all the money in the pot, sorry.

I also put a call out for photos of Draenen to produce a collection of photos. To start I had a few emails of pictures from cavers, however not enough to produce an in-depth record of the cave. So, if you got any photo you like to share with me, it would be much appreciated.

I am planning on doing a trip to visit the Haggis Basher on the weekend 26<sup>th</sup> January 2019 if anyone would like to join let me know.

Many Thanks,



## Conservation to do list for Draenen

Job Number	Job name	Priority	Done	Information
1	Re-tape Gilwern Passage		1 Done	
4	Re-tape Snowball		1 Done	
9	Produce a project outline		1 Done	
17	Re-taping midwinters Chambers		1 Done	
15	Taping MS&D side passages	1		Tapping Clique and Screaming Like A Stuck Pig. Not tapped at all. 80 pegs and four rolls at drinking spot.
8	Organise Conservation weekend		2 Done	
13	Write camp report for descent		2 Done	x2 and darkness below
18	Re-taping Nunnery		2 Done	
21	Taping Haggis Basher	2		
3	Camp removal Big Beauty Junction		3 Done	
11	Camp removal War of the Worlds		3 Done	
12	Camp removal Luck of Draw		3 Done	
16	Re-taping for forever changed		3 Done	Last 20 meters to do
10	Reporting mechanism	3		
20	Camp removed in Tea Junction		4 Done	
19	Clearing up Yellow Van dig area		5 Done	
5	Removal of rubbish in MS&D	6		Out of the Blue!. Started
7	Review conservation assess doc.	6		
2	Monitoring Program	7		
6	Video production with Andy Freem		8 Done	
22	Last sandwich fungus removal		3 done	Tried my best

-----Since the last meeting-----

23	Collect archive Photos		6	started, need more photos
24	write statement for photos		3 done	
25	Tape In Y Gwter Fawr Streamway		8 done	
26	Taping between snowball and the reactor		5 done	
27	Taping in Wyvern Hall		3	

JW, reported that he planned the next conservation working event to be 26<sup>th</sup> January 2019 to replace taping and check status of protected areas. SF reported CCC offered another conservation grant in 2019 to PDCMG (to Josh) on the same terms as the grant provided in 2018.

SM on behalf of all would like to thank JW for all his hard work on completing work for benefit of all, and continuing to ensure protection of the cave, all those present also support this thank you. SF commented he would make sure CCC grant to reach JW for purchase of conservation materials pegs and tape.

### 3 (e) Survey Secretary

John Stevens reported he had received no new survey data. JS confirmed SM has correct e-mail address for him as he had received e-mails. SM wondered if cavers knew JS contact e-mail to send data, and maybe this is why he had received no new data. JS believed his contact details were known.

### 3 (f) Biological Recorder

The report from PS had been circulated, this is copied below.

## Biological Recorder Report to PDCMG

November 2018

### Bats at Twll Du

Together with Stuart France, I carried out a bat activity survey at the Twll Du entrance to Ogof Draenen on the evening of 11 September 2018.

The results were that: one Myotis bat, probably *Myotis nattereri*, emerged at 20:27; one lesser horseshoe bat entered at 20:36; and one lesser horseshoe bat entered at 21:23.

Lesser horseshoe bat activity was also recorded several times from bats inside the cave flying close to the entrance (via an ultrasound microphone lowered 3 metres down into the entrance), but these bats did not then emerge at the surface during the observation period.

This confirms that the Twll Du entrance to Ogof Draenen was used by both lesser horseshoe bat and Myotis bat (probably *Natterer's* bat). Echolocation recordings showed that the latter species was day roosting within the entrance area of the cave, probably concealed within rock crevices. I am happy to forward copies of my report to members who would like to see it.

**Plainly the above bat survey result changes the assessment of "no use by bats" that was made by Cadw's bat consultant and is reported by Sue Mabbett in her PDCMG Secretary's report for Nov 2018.**

I sent my report to Cadw and to Sue Mabbett to forward to the landowner on Monday 1 October and as a full report on Wednesday 3 October 2018. On hearing late on the Wednesday that contractors were sealing the entrance, I arrived on site early on Thursday 4 October 2018 and was soon joined there by Stuart France. The contractors were commencing to fill the entrance with concrete. As they had no bat licence and were not leaving bat access and refused to stop works, I called the police, who attended site later the same morning. Representatives of the contractors, the Coal Authority and Cadw attended site, but refused to stop works. The case was passed on to a police wildlife crime officer and as a result, a police investigation into the sealing of the bat entrance is underway.

**It would have been helpful if I had been informed of Cadw's plans to seal the entrance so that I could have seen the urgency of sending my report to them sooner and so let them know before contractors arrived on site.**

Environmental Information Regulations requests have revealed that Steve Wadley of AVA Ecology Ltd was the bat consultant, but as yet Cadw has not released copies of his Twll Du bat survey reports. The EIR requests indicate that three bat activity surveys were carried out in April and early May and one on 30 September by Cadw's bat consultant. Though methods have not been revealed, it appears that no underground bat survey was carried out.

### Bats at The Nunnery

I was concerned that persons may try to seal the Nunnery entrance to Ogof Draenen without adequately investigating whether it is used for access by bats, and then making no provision for suitable bat access. Therefore, together with Stuart France and Phil Morgan, I carried out a bat activity survey at the Nunnery entrance to Ogof Draenen on the evening of 23 October 2018.

We all observed one lesser horseshoe bat emerge about 22 minutes after sunset and one lesser horseshoe bat enter about 1 hour and 52 minutes after sunset. This confirms that the entrance is used by lesser horseshoe bats to access their underground roosts there. Thus, it is important to ensure that suitable bat flight access is maintained at this entrance to avoid committing an offence under wildlife legislation. I have received some recent Nunnery bat records from Stuart France, showing continued used.

### Other bat records

I have received a copy of an email report that Stuart France sent to NRW in March 2018 in which he reported casual bat sightings in Ogof Draenen that he observed in early March 2018. These include observing two lesser horseshoe bats in passages just below Three Amigos, seven in Midwinter Chambers

and one in Station-13 passage to Gone in the Years, so in the vicinity of Twll Du; and many lesser horseshoe bats in the areas of the Nunnery and also Drws Cefn.

I would welcome casual bat sightings from other cavers. Obviously, any deliberate bat survey would require a bat licence and landowner permission for the survey and coordination to be sure that a bat survey (with potential attendant disturbance) was not already scheduled about that time in that area. However, casual observations by passing cavers can be useful, even if the record is just "a bat seen in passage A" or "perhaps 20 or more bats seen in area B".

Dr Peter Smith

22 November 2018

PS reported he had a bit of bat survey data had come in to him, on bat observations. PS commented he was uncertain of whether he had permission to complete bat surveys in cave or permit other to complete a survey, without the land owner's direct permission. It was condition of anyone with bat licence completing a bat survey in cave / confined area required permission from landowner. There was some discussion on the matter, the condition in the licence permitted scientific studies, also surveys had been completed in 2008. The landowner also has the right to give permission for someone complete a bat survey. This group remit is limited to activities within cave.

SM commented there are also other types of biological survey other than bats.

In conclusion we believed this group has right to give permission for people to perform scientific studies including biological studies, and the biological recorder can give this permission or bring it to the meeting as appropriate for example the survey completed by Lee Knight on invertebrates. The question still came back as to whether someone with bat license needed specific permission for each bat survey.

#### **Action Points**

SM to check minutes as to action taken in ~2008 when last survey was performed to determine permission sought last time.

SM to clarify with the landowner the interpretation of condition in licence for scientific studies. This includes other biological species.

PS to work with SM to draft question for landowner.

Final item SM questioned if opening a new hole / entrance is as much of a 'sin' as closing a hole due to potential new draft. PS commented dependent on length of passage, in Ogof Draenen passage is extensive so in his opinion not an issue.

MR raised question on bat survey for Twll Du SM commented that this was discussed at last meeting. Cadw sent out a request for quotes for defined bat survey, 2 companies submitted a quote; PS's company and another. The other company got the contract.

#### **3 (g) Geological Recorder**

No new Geological recorder had been found since last meeting. SM asked Gina Mosely lived in Bristol, answer was no, she lives in Austria, so not available to be Geological Recorder. SF suggested we all tried to identify someone. SM commented this was action from last meeting. SM will list same action again.

#### **Action Point**

**All Club Reps:** Try to identify Geologist to fulfil the role of Geological Recorder.

### **3 (h) Fixed Aids Officer**

Tom Williams had sent an e-mail to SM at the end of Oct, resigning from the role of Fixed Aids Officer from immediate effect.

AG was asked by the meeting to step back into this role until the next elections of PDCMG officers. AG agreed to step in and reported he believed ropes made needs replacement next autumn.

It was reported the ladder with missing rungs had been removed from Balcony Pitch, those present believed it had been left at the bottom of the pitch. There was a rope with new ladder on other side of pitch.

LW recommended that volunteers were found to remove the old Balcony pitch ladder from the cave, AG offered to find the old ladder and arrange its removal. Also to arrange removal of old cable present at the end of the Nunnery passage.

### **Action Points**

**AG** to arrange removal of Balcony Pitch Ladder and cable from bottom of Nunnery from the cave.

### **4 Election of Officers / Recorders**

Although N/A for this meeting as the two yearly elections had been held in October 2017, SM wished the group to clarify when the next two yearly election should occur as the elections that occurred in Oct 2017 were postponed from a meeting that was due to take place in June 2017. There was some discussion on the matter however the constitution refers to any constitutional amendment to take place in June at the biennial meeting; therefore it was agreed by those present that the next election of Officers and Recorders will take place in **June 2019**.

### **5 Other Group Business**

#### **5.1 Nominations for New Trustee.**

Firstly SM circulated letter from Charles Bailey, the resigning trustee. This is copied given below

So, if you could please –

- a. Give my apologies for the meeting. I really wanted to sign off with a physical visit, but sadly, I can't.
- b. Advise formally of my resignation as trustee.
- c. Publish the following in the minutes of the meeting.

Again, I'm sorry I can't make it.

Best regards

Charles

#### **Charles Bailey, Trustee, note to PDCMG meeting, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2018.**

As I communicated via Sue at the last meeting, I will be stepping down as trustee from this meeting. I had planned to deliver this in person, but complications from a shoulder operation prevent me from travelling.

The rationale for my decision early this year related to pressure of work, the prospect of being out of the country for significant periods of time and living now in Derbyshire. Whilst work has eased in the meantime, time away has and will continue to increase. The shoulder problem is hopefully transient, and is not a factor.

However, what is an additional factor is that I believe a change of personnel is healthy in any organisation, and the timing (with new secretary and chairman ) opportune. My view is that fresh blood would be a welcome step, but I understand the decision to appoint or not lies with the meeting.

I will resist the temptation to rake over 20 years of history and definitely resist preaching from afar. However, permit me a few final words.

My involvement with PDCMG spans those 20 years, and I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to those involved in assisting with managing the cave over the years.

Sadly disruption to the workings of the group go back just as far. Yes – the second entrance and survey disputes started last century ! Politics, back stabbing, clandestine activities and undermining the group has been a feature which those carrying out the business of PDCMG have had to deal with ( who after all are just a bunch of volunteers trying their best ), as well as the incredibly tolerant landowner. Of course cavers are driven, passionate people, and a variety of views are inevitable and welcome to get balance opinions, but the behaviour of some beggars belief.

Positions have become entrenched, trust low, and ( as Brexit reflects ) intransigent positions feed more intransigence. It is easy to say that progress will only be made and trust established by compromise and collective working. I firmly believe that the way forward has to be via bringing along the majority of cavers, and winning the hearts and mind of those is key.

We have an absolutely fabulous world class cave in our hands. If only 20% of the effort expended on politics, undermining and clandestine activities was spent on good landowner relations, conservation, exploration, and good PR projects we'd all be in a much better place.

How would you like the next 20 years to play out and what would you like your legacy to be ? It's in your hands.

Best regards

Charles Bailey

LW proposed our formerly give thanks to Charles for being trustee, and the work he has done for PDCMG and the wider community. SM then asked if anyone had been identified apart from two clubs having reported no-one found, there were no nominations from those present at meeting.

LW asked if there was a deed of trust, there was not a deed of trustee, however the trustees were the signatories on the licence. The licence was signed by the three trustees. The licence was created by Ursula Collie, it does not include clause to change one signatory only.

The licence was reviewed and there are no clauses which allow for individuals replacement, so for the time being Charles would remain on the licence agreement. We have to investigate how to create a new agreement, we should contact Ursula for advice. There was some discussion on various options for any updated agreement with the land owner. It was confirmed in these discussions that all trustees (i.e. licence signatories) were insured under BCA insurance, and LW confirmed this insurance was against any public liability claims.

Various potential options were outlined, but it was agreed legal advice need to be sought from Ursula, who has also helped out with CSCC (Southern Caving Council) on access agreements in their area.

#### **Action Points**

**SM** to write to CB and thank him for being a trustee but point out we were currently unable to remove him from the licence agreement and there has to be legal process to remove him the licence agreement.

**SM** inform landowner, that one of licensee signatories has resigned as trustee and wishes to stand down.

**LW** to send SM Ursula Collie's contact details.

#### **6 Applications for Membership**

Neither SM nor DT had received any applications for membership.

#### **7 Applications to Become Key Holders**

Neither SM nor DT had received any applications to become a key holder.

## 8 Any Other Business

### a. Drws Cefn

SM asked if PS had progressed the action to bring to the next meeting a design for a bat grille to include gate for cavers for Drws Cefn to the next meeting. PS reported his time was taken up with Twll Du so had not progressed this as yet so would be an ongoing action. PS was concerned no action taken on receipt of his report, about bat observations. SM commented the landowner would have received the report too late, PS disagreed as his report would have been received the day before. SM pointed out Cadw had organised the work and had completed their own surveys to verify no bats entering this entrance. SF believed landowner had responsibilities relating to the work also as on his land. The statutory agency, Cadw had required entrance to be closed due to the damage to the historical site and close to public footpath, therefore landowner following their requirements. Cadw had organised the works under taken. Discussion returned to gate to Drws Cefn, CS asked what would happen when a gate was fitted. At last meeting we agreed to design a gate and then determine the access through that entrance once design received. CS believed we need to review decision on putting a gate on the entrance, as did others. There was some discussion on this issue. SF suggesting PDCMG are responsible upholding the wishes of cavers' on access to the cave. SM pointed out it was PDCMG responsible acting in line with the licence requirement and or constitution which enshrine rights and wishes of landowner were abided by. It was also PDCMG aim to maintain access to the cave by cavers, this is achieved by meeting the conditions of the licence, by meeting with the landowner requirements. We can't seek changes if cavers can't abide the current conditions of access. The landowner cannot understand why two entrances would be better for conservation of the cave.

It was recognised our land owners have been very tolerant in permitting continued access due to the on-going issues with cavers and entrances.

The numbers entering the cave via Drws Cefn were believed to be very low, and through the Nunnery. Further discussion believed we should re-visit the Drws Cefn entrance issue, and this needs to be via an EGM. It was recognised a decision could not be made at this meeting, however representatives should go back to their Clubs. CS believed we should go away and determine a clear objective of the EGM. The constitution had various ways to call a meeting, the executive call a meeting, six members of PDCMG call a meeting, or a general meeting agrees to call an EGM. As insufficient time define agenda or topic to be discussed at this meeting. In outline timeline to aim for is call meeting in mid Feb 2019, with meeting taking place in early Apr 2019. LW is not available from mid-April to end of May 2019.

#### **Action point:**

CS to co-ordinate defined proposal, in outline to revisit the decision made in at the EGM in 2009 on the Drws Cefn entrance. This would be sent to the executive to call the EGM. If the executive did not agree then six Clubs could call the EGM.

### b. Survey

SK asked if there had been any progress on JS's offer to progress Grade 5 survey if PDCMG dropped the Grade 2 data as discussed in Oct 2017. JS had not attend last meeting in June 2018 and the matter was not discussed in Jun 2018, so no progress made.

## 9. Date of Next Meeting

After reviewing diaries 16<sup>th</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup> Jun 2019 were proposed. The date selected would depend of LW diary, LW and SM to confirm which date selected at least six weeks before meeting.