

## **Conservation & Access Report - CSCC Meeting 19 Nov 2021**

### **Cheddar Access**

I have managed to reopen negotiations with Longleat and they are positive about wanting to get an agreement in place, but there are some major issues that need to be resolved.

There are quite a lot of problems, but liability and insurance is by far the biggest. I believed we had this covered in that I arranged for them to speak directly to the BCA insurance brokers, however that was all related to visiting the caves in their 'natural state' and they weren't aware, and there was a lack of understanding that in the process of digging and exploration we build walls, fit steelwork, install bolts etc etc. The caves manager specifically mentioned the 'walls' in Reservoir as an example. This immediately caused panic and raised a number of questions with respect to who does the work, materials use and inspection. Steelwork was also mentioned ... and then the discussion moved onto bolts and the installation, inspection and testing that they regularly undertake on the ones they have installed for their climbing (abseiling) wall.

As a direct result we need lists of all fixed aids and installations in all the caves and detailed records kept of everything. They want to know the approval process and inspection requirements etc. Martin Grass has provided an inventory for Reservoir and one is being prepared for Spider. Lists are also required for all other caves. This is all new and Longleat want the agreement modified to include all this. This has also raised additional insurance issues and discussions have been held with Howdens and BCA. Howdens are currently consulting with the insurance company and we are awaiting feedback.

Who will be signatories to the agreement is still to be resolved and Longleat are still working on the basis that it has to be in the name of four individuals, however they have agreed to refer this back to their solicitors.

I managed to get agreement for the Spider diggers to retrieve their equipment from the cave and a Longleat representative met us on site to give us access and confirm compliance with their requirements.

For interest they are currently working towards having their Cheddar operation back up and running in the Spring.

### **Singing River Mine**

There are some delays relating to insurance issues but hopefully these can be sorted with feedback from Howdens. Discussions have been held with various parties on how trips are to be booked etc and this fed back to the owner for agreement.

### **Daffodil Valley Mines**

Some clearing and preparatory work has been done on the entrances and the gates ordered.

### **Ubley Warren Reserve**

Following my report to the last meeting three more locks, plus the one that had been repaired, have been damaged with attempted (unsuccessful) break-ins. All these locks are in exposed positions and it is proposed to make up some housings, which can be bolted in place, to protect them. Funds need to be allocated for this and I would suggest £300 initially.

### **Box Mines**

I was given the name of the 'correct' person to contact but having made approaches it appears that it is someone else's responsibility and he has passed on my request for the opportunity to

discuss access. It seems to me that no one in particular wants to take any formal responsibility for the site. I will continue to pursue this.

### **Misc gates etc**

Further progress on various sites including Manor Farm, Star Mine, Stoke Lane, Fern Mine etc is pending delivery of the gates from the fabricators. Unfortunately they have a number to make at the moment but other work has taken priority and they have made no little progress on our work. They tell me the situation will improve very soon.

There is nothing to report on other matters.

Graham Price  
19/11/21