

Conservation & Access Report - CSCC Meeting 10th February 2025

Please find below the Conservation & Access Officer's Report. This covers the period since the last meeting in November 2024.

Longleat

The formalisation of the Longleat Access Agreement is, unfortunately, taking longer than expected. A first draft of the formal documents was written and submitted to Longleat at the end of November. This has been reviewed by Longleat and their comments were received at the end of January. None of the comments or suggested changes are contentious and a second draft has now been written and submitted. There are two clauses they intend to pass to their solicitors for review and we await the outcome of this.

Totty Pot



Longleat asked CSCC for assistance to secure the entrance to Totty Pot. This site, high on the plateau above Cheddar Gorge, is of more interest to archaeologists than cavers. However, to help foster goodwill with Longleat, the work was undertaken. The existing lid was re-installed using a chain and eyebolts and now has a somewhat "Gangster Style" appearance.

Harridge Woods

The Harridge Wood Nature Reserve access agreement is ready to go but is awaiting CSCC to complete the work required to provide an online permit system.

Waterwheel Swallet



Several reports were received that the padlock on Waterwheel Swallet had seized and could not be opened.

The padlock was inspected the next day and the lock barrel was found to be full of mud. Flushing this out allowed the padlock to be opened and it was changed for a new one. The old padlock has been cleaned, lubricated and put back in stock.

Please could everyone make sure their keys are clean before inserting them into the locks.

Denny's Hole



Andrew Atkinson has very kindly visited Denny's Hole on Crooks Peak and removed the suspect blue polypropylene tow rope from the entrance.

Sludge Pit Hole

The landowner of Sludge Pit has reported that persons unknown had emptied the money from the collection bucket and changed the padlock. This is the second time this has happened, the first being November 2023. He has stated that if this happens again he will seriously consider closing the cave.

Following a lengthy discussion with him, several actions have been agreed and actioned. The padlock has been changed and the money that was in the bucket has been collected and banked. The Cheddar Cave Club have undertaken to empty the money from the bucket on a regular basis. Also the log book has been changed for a waterproof one.

Swildon's Hole

Please note that the goodwill fee for Swildon's Hole has increases to £2.

CSCC Access Guide

Many updates have been made to the CSCC Access Guide including:-

- An updated telephone number for Rocket Drop
- Updating 14 sites to include a link to the CSCC maintained bolts list
- Sludge Pit access information
- Swildon's good will fee

Singing River Mine

The Singing River Mine access agreement has now been in place for 18 months and is running smoothly. During this time there have been 21 trips, involving some 125 cavers.

Wookey Hole Cave

The access agreement with Wookey has run without issue over the past three months. There have been 7 trips since the November CSCC meeting, involving some 36 cavers.

Pressure Washers

The CSCC Pressure Washers haven't been used since the summer. Please email canda@csc.org.uk if you would like to borrow them.

Future Priorities

In the coming months I will be concentrating on the following priorities:-

- 1) Write the formal access agreement for the Caves of Cheddar Gorge

- 2) Arrange and complete the training of Wardens for the Cheddar Caves
 - 3) Finalise the access arrangements (on-line facilities) for Harridge Woods
 - 4) Discuss and agree the required Cow Hole entrance work with the landowner
- If anyone has anything else they would like progressing then please let me know.

Wayne Starsmore
C&A Officer
CSCC