Conservation & Access Report - CSCC Meeting 16th November 2026

Please find below the Conservation & Access Officer's Report. This covers the period since the last meeting in August 2026.

Stock Hill Woods



The Forestry England Ranger responsible for Stock Hill Woods has advised that work is now underway to improve the security of the lid on Stock's House Shaft. As a result, cavers have been asked to avoid the mine until the work is complete.
Considering that the 20 m deep shaft lies only a few metres from the main Stock Hill Woods car park and was, until recently, protected only by a section of roadside railing and a rusty chain, these improvements are both welcome and long overdue.
I remain in regular contact with the Ranger and have offered whatever assistance I can provide.

St Cuthbert's Swallet



A pleasant August evening was spent undertaking repairs to the upper dam outside St Cuthbert's Swallet. The dam had been leaking for some time due to animal burrows compromising the integrity of the structure.
The dam wall was dug back, the liner extended and a clay lining applied to restore the dam's effectiveness.

The majority of the work was carried out by BEC members Ben Holdstock, Adrian Miles and Pete Hellier, whose efforts are gratefully acknowledged.

Cheddar Caves – Longleat Access Agreement

The Cheddar Caves Access Agreement has now been in place for a year and an annual review meeting was held with the Longleat Estates team.
The meeting was very positive, with no issues reported by either party. All those present expressed their satisfaction with the agreement and were happy for it to continue in its current form.
This represents a successful first year for the agreement and reflects the positive working relationship that has developed between the caving community and Longleat Estates.The caving trip statistics for this first year were:-

Cave	Trips	Cavers
Gough's Cave	12	49
Spider Hole	11	23
Reservoir Hole	31	109
Totals	54	181

Reservoir Hole

Following the discovery of the Frozen Deep in Reservoir Hole, approximately 2 km of conservation tape was installed to help safeguard the cave's delicate formations and sediments. After 15 years underground, the securing pins had suffered significant corrosion, causing many of the tie-wraps supporting the tape to fail. While a number of temporary repairs were undertaken last year, a comprehensive refurbishment of the entire system was needed.

Equipped with more than 1,000 replacement tie-wraps, a team of three spent six hours systematically checking, repairing and renewing the conservation tape throughout the Frozen Deep, High Country, Topless Aven and Grand Gallery. Thanks are due to Matty Dredge and Yvette Mayo for their hard work, assistance and perseverance in completing this valuable conservation project.

Pressure Washers

The CSCC pressure washers are currently on loan to Chris Binding who has been making good use of them in Grebe Swallet.

Before :- After:-



Fairy Cave Quarry



Unfortunately, sometime on 24th or 25th October 2026, persons unknown cut off the padlock securing the cavers' car park at Fairy Cave Quarry and fly-tipped a significant quantity of stripped cable sheathing. The Fairy Cave Quarry Management Committee is working to have the material removed; however, in the meantime, parking capacity is somewhat restricted.

Swildon's Hole



The recent autumn storms (Storm Austen and Storm Boelo) have taken their toll on the decaying ash tree beside Swildon's Hole. A large section of the tree has now fallen across the path leading to the blockhouse. The remaining trunk is in very poor condition and is likely to collapse further.

Cavers should not attempt to enter or exit the cave via the rift within the tree's roots. Access should be made using the blockhouse entrance only.

Pig-Tail Risers



We now have a stock of stainless steel pig-tail risers. Please get in touch if you need any. Many thanks to Murray Knapp for supplying these.

CSCC Access Guide

A number of minor updates have been made to the CSCC Access Guide, including:-

- Added an entry for Home Close
- Added an entry for Stock's House Shaft

Future Priorities

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

1) Progress the Spider Hole digging application with Longleat
2) Keeping in touch with Forestry England at Stock Hill and assisting them where possible
3) Progress the new lids for Home Close and Stock Hill Mine Cave

If anyone has anything else they would like progressing then please let me know.

Wayne Starsmore
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CSCC