COVID-19: Advice to cavers regarding access to Dan-yr-Ogof.

As you will be aware, at the moment Dan-yr-Ogof remains closed to both cavers and visitors under the coronavirus restrictions imposed by the Welsh Assembly, which differ from those in England. At the time of writing the showcave complex hopes to re-open on Monday 13 July, and the cave management intend to welcome cavers back at the same time as they are able to open for business. To that end, the Dan-yr-Ogof Cave Advisory Panel (DYO CAP) and showcave management have been holding meetings to establish how cavers will be able to access the 'wild' cave, while at the same time ensuring that the safety of showcave staff and visitors remain the highest priority.

We are now in a position to issue the following guidelines with regard to DYO access, and to inform you of some new and temporary rules that will apply when the cave re-opens:

1. The DYO CAP recognises that while the risk of contracting COVID-19 remains low, some Wardens may not be comfortable with leading groups of cavers from outside of their social circle, and as such may not wish to offer trips to members of visiting clubs that they don't know. Any decision to lead trips into the cave, whether for friends or visiting clubs, remains a personal one for each individual Warden. Please be aware that DYO trip requests may, for the time being, be difficult to fulfil and patience may be required.
2. DYO Wardens have received a letter from the CAP advising them of some temporary changes to access arrangements that it has been necessary to bring in. If visiting the cave, please ensure that you observe the protocols that have been implemented to reduce the risk of infection. In particular, please note that all cavers are to wear masks from leaving the car, in outside areas, and while in the showcave. Cavers are asked to wear gloves in the showcave, and to avoid touching handrails or other infrastructure (with the obvious exception of the gate at the far end).
3. As a *temporary* measure, access to DYO is to be granted to only one caving party per day. Wardens have been made aware of how to book a visit. Please don't turn up 'on spec' and expect to access the cave.
4. As you will appreciate, now is not the time to initiate a cave rescue. Please cave well within your capabilities and do not enter DYO if the weather forecast suggests that water levels might increase during your trip.

The coronavirus pandemic has affected everyone in the UK to an extent that no-one would have dreamed possible just a few months ago. Our working lives, leisure activities and shopping habits have had to change drastically in almost every respect. Dan-yr-Ogof Caves Ltd is a seasonal business that relies heavily on visitor footfall during just a few months of the summer, and that business has already been seriously affected even if they are able to re-open as planned.

Please respect that welcoming cavers back to DYO at the same time as visitors, while operating under difficult circumstances, is a generous gesture that demonstrates the owners' ongoing commitment to the sport of caving, and please do not do anything that might threaten the continued good relations between the showcave management and the caving community. Thanks for your co-operation.

Tony Baker, DYO CAP Wardens' Sec, June 2020.