

Guidance for Cheddar Gorge event organisers

Cheddar is a village known all over the world for its cheese and its fantastic scenic Gorge, which is part of the nationally designated Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This designation is for its great natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and provides opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the countryside. The Gorge is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and includes Scheduled Monuments, all of which are protected by legislation, and some of the land around The Gorge is owned by the National Trust.

Largely due to this national status, Cheddar Gorge is an extremely popular area all year round with families, cavers, climbers, walkers, runners, horse riders and cyclists, who use the roads from early morning to late evening, particularly during holiday periods.

The roads in the village are mainly narrow and winding and do not cope well with large volumes of traffic. The road surface in The Gorge is vulnerable to the weather, regularly requiring repair by Somerset Highways. Sheep and goats graze the roadside and the road itself is a vital route for regular traffic, visitor coaches and emergency vehicles. And from time to time The Gorge does need to be closed due to rock falls, cliff or cave rescues, or for emergency rock safety work.

Therefore, if you are proposing to hold an event that passes through the village and/or Cheddar Gorge, whether on foot, cycle or motor vehicle, please be aware that this may not be entirely straightforward. You should adhere to the following guidelines or your event visitors could be turned away:

1. Plan your event well in advance and allow time to obtain permissions and for proper consultation with other interested parties. For example organised recreation events on SSSI land may require approval from Natural England and any damage caused to the ecological interest of these areas may result in prosecution under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Organised recreation events on Scheduled Monument sites may require approval from Historic England.
2. You may not be aware, but the car parking areas in the Gorge, including along The Cliffs, are privately owned land by Cheddar Gorge & Caves (Longleat Estate). If you wish to hold any gatherings here (formal or informal events), please contact the Longleat Property Department on 01985 845414 or email properties@longleat.co.uk to discuss your requirements and obtain consent from the Estate.
3. If you are expecting large numbers of vehicles or cyclists to attend, please inform Avon and Somerset Police as they may wish to implement traffic management arrangements, particularly if they are aware of another event happening on the same day. You may be asked to change your plans in the interests of public safety so please be prepared with alternative venues or routes.
4. Please check that your event has proper public liability insurance cover.
5. Ensure that your event is compatible with the conservation of the environment. Damage to the landscape or to archaeological sites, and disturbance of wildlife within the AONB is unacceptable. Noisy events will be discouraged.
6. If you would like to make a donation to the Parish or to local charities in respect of any inconvenience to local residents your event may cause, this would be welcomed. Please contact the Parish Clerk for information on how to go about this.

Overnight parking is not permitted in Cheddar Gorge due to rockfall risk, but overnight parking bays are provided in the Cliff Street car park in Cheddar.

You should also be aware that Avon and Somerset Police take a zero-tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour in The Gorge and operate frequent patrols in the area, alongside Cheddar Caves' own security measures. The Parish Council fully supports this approach, and also operates a Community Speedwatch scheme in the village to protect the safety of our residents. The speed limit in the village is 30mph with some stretches of 20mph.

We hope that while you are here you will take care, drive carefully and quietly, look out for wildlife on the roads, respect the AONB, and keep the area tidy by putting your litter in a bin or taking it home. On this basis, we very much look forward to welcoming you to our village and the many lovely pubs, shops, restaurants and of course to see the wonderful scenery that we have to offer.

Cheddar Parish Council

Contact telephone numbers:

Cheddar Parish Council Clerk: 01934 743217

Longleat Property Department: 01985 845414

Natural England: 0300 060 3900

Historic England: 0370 333 0607

Mendip Hills AONB: 01761 462338

National Trust Somerset Countryside Office: 01934 844518

Cheddar Gorge and Caves: 01934 742323

Avon and Somerset Police: 101