



PRESS RELEASE

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Lower St Michael's Cave Revamp Project Underway

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Climate Change has just completed the first phase of a project to revamp of the extraordinary Lower St Michael's Cave.

Phase one has included a major clean-up of the Cave. The old electrical cabling and conduit system has been removed and new LED lighting has been installed along the main entrance and throughout the Cave. In order to assist them in conducting the tours, guides have been provided with an office and storage facilities for equipment.

The following phases will see information panels at the entrance of the Cave providing details about the history of Lower St Michael's, rock formations and general information. There will also be improved access to the pathway leading up to the entrance of the Cave as well as a new staircase inside the cave at the start of tour.

These are all improvements that will enhance the visitor experience.

Two of the tour guides who have been very involved with this project. Michael Sene and John Barabich (pictured) have voluntarily been giving their time and maintaining the cave over the years. They are dedicating their voluntary work to Raymond Bellido, who passed away last year and was himself a cave guide as well as having been a Sea Scout for many years.

They commented: "We got involved as we originally started helping out with the maintenance of the cave years ago. We are both passionate about this and wish to continue maintaining the cave in memory of Raymond. We do it voluntarily as it is something we enjoy doing in our free time. Our priority is to maintain the conditions in and around the cave to ensure it is always safe for visitors. The Sea Scouts have also been involved in this programme. The Sea Scouts, being the link between the three of us, meant that whenever we can, we involve the Explorers (teenage scouts) into the works which was incorporated into the community responsibility factor that is part of our Scouts programme."

The cave has also been the subject of research into subterranean micro-climate and change by the Cave Science Unit of the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural history Society (GONHS), together

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with Royal Holloway University of London for a number of years. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you and your department for the years of support and assistance in helping the CSU and the Royal Holloway University of London in our endeavours to study our Rock's subterranean micro climate. The study has not only produced a thoroughly detailed report on how the cave system works and behaves, but has also placed Gibraltar at the forefront of Cave Micro Climate studies.

Minister for Heritage, Environment and Climate Change Prof John Cortes commented: "Lower St Michael's Cave shows how we are able to manage a sensitive area to serve both as an attraction for the public and a centre for prime scientific research. It is one of Gibraltar's gems and as such has to be treated with care and sensitivity. I am pleased that team managing the Nature Reserve is certainly doing this, which ties in well with our continuing improvements elsewhere in the Reserve."

Lower St Michael's cave is not open to the public and can only be visited by pre-booking a tour with a qualified guide. Tours normally last around 3 hours.

For more information or to arrange a tour please contact any of the qualified guides listed on the Gibraltar Tourist Board website at www.visitgibraltar.gi