



30 September 2024

Dear colleagues,

Along with some members of the Geoheritage Specialist Group I visited the South Harz sulphate karst in 2018 and was very impressed by the landforms and their setting. In 2023 I was able to visit some of the hypogenic caves in the same area which are developed in both anhydrite and gypsum. The caves are of very high scientific interest and amongst the most spectacular that I have ever seen, not for speleothems or huge passages but for the morphological variety and the beauty of the rock in which they have formed.

In 2021 the GSG and CKWG, ProGEO and others wrote to the Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz objecting to the draft of the Lower Saxony Regional Planning Programme because it did not consider protection of geoheritage in general and the South Harz gypsum karst in particular. This was successful in that the government withdrew the plans. However, there is now a proposal for drilling of exploratory boreholes which are likely to be followed by gypsum mining. The German Speleological Federation (VdHK) are sending a letter to the authorities setting out their objections and a copy which has been translated into English with help from myself is attached. Baerbel Vogel, who is President of the VdHK as well as being Secretary of the CKWG and a member of GSG, is co-ordinating the campaign and if like me you feel the South Harz sulphate karst is an area that needs protecting then please could you send an email to vorsitz@vdhk.de saying that you support the letter and oppose drilling of boreholes / quarrying of gypsum in this internationally important area.

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