



**CYNGHRAIR AWYR AGORED
OUTDOOR ALLIANCE**

Post Covid-19 Recovery Plan for the outdoor sector in Wales

Compiled by Outdoor Alliance Wales

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Version 1.2

i. Executive Summary

Outdoor Alliance Wales is working with its membership to establish a coordinated 'pathway to recovery' (in line with current guidelines and legislation) to support Welsh Government (WG). As restrictions are lifted it is vital that the outdoor sector works with national and local government to enable people to return to outdoor recreation and provider-led outdoor activity, in line with current regulations.

This document highlights the value of such a coordinated approach and demonstrates a willingness and desire for an effective and appropriate phased pathway to recovery.

In summary:

- The outdoor sector is wide and diverse by its very nature and crosses many directorates, including tourism, education, sport, safety, the environment and health so is well positioned to be able to work alongside WG to alleviate issues arising from the lifting of restrictions.
- The National Governing Bodies (NGB) for each outdoor activities have comprehensive recovery plans in place. Whilst we only make reference to four of these NGBs in this document, many more, who are members of Outdoor Alliance Wales have their recovery plans in place and totally support and endorse what this document sets out to achieve.
- National and local government, the tourism sector and outdoor sector can work together to provide clear and consistent safety messaging for outdoor recreation. AdventureSmartWales/UK already have specific messages in place for the current situation as well a suite of messages and resources for us all to use.
- The outdoor activity providers in Wales, of which there are 800+ are used to risk managing activities and situations and have highlighted how they can manage infection control to enable a return to work in the early recovery phase.
- The outdoor sector and its workforce of 8,000 FTE are there to support schools and other education settings when they reopen.

The ask is that WG give us sufficient time as a sector (a minimum of seven days) so that we can make the necessary preparations.

NB. This is a fluid document that is subject to change periodically to reflect any changes to/ lifting of restrictions made by WG

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

For some time prior to 2018, key individuals and organisations have been collectively considering the scope of the outdoor sector in Wales and how it can better promote its values, benefits and principles, which led to the establishment of Outdoor Alliance Wales.

Regional and national engagement events during 2016 & 2017 demonstrated a clear desire for a single network to unite the sector. One that would:

- represent the shared values of the outdoor sector
- better communicate the real contribution of the outdoor sector across several platforms including economic, social, health and culture
- improve communication within the outdoor sector
- encourage cross sector projects to deliver against a common goal
- provide a platform with which external sectors and organisations can engage
- facilitate knowledge sharing amongst the outdoor sector
- provide research opportunities to further showcase the benefits associated with the outdoor sector
- act as an advisory forum on issues and opportunities associated with the outdoor sector

The outdoor sector, through consultation and engagement concluded that the most effective model would be to form an 'Alliance' of existing organisations that could come together through a 'portal' to use the combined ability of all the organisations to promote the sector and collaborate on projects.

Outdoor Alliance Wales was established on 26th February 2018 to enable more effective outdoor sector co-ordination to better promote its values, benefits and principles and more efficient cross sector partnerships. (See Appendix 6.1 for more information about Outdoor Alliance Wales). As of May 2020 Outdoor Alliance Wales has 42 member organisations (Appendix 6.2)

1.2 Our statement of intent to support the Covid-19 'pathway to recovery'

Outdoor Alliance Wales is working with its membership and Welsh Government, to establish a coordinated 'pathway to recovery' (in line with current guidelines and legislation). As restrictions are lifted it is vital that the outdoor sector works with national and local government to enable people to return to outdoor recreation in line with current regulations. Issues which need to be addressed are:

- Increased demand for access to the outdoors particularly in designated landscapes, with a particular concern around honeypot sites.
- The need for consistency and clarity in messaging around the safe and responsible enjoyment of the outdoors; to include generic and activity specific safety messages.

- The impact on the emergency services (specifically Mountain Rescue & the RNLI) who may have to deal with increased demand while struggling with reduced response capacity.
- The impact on the outdoor recreation industry which is a mainstay of the local economy in many rural areas.
- Confusion around the interpretation of differing restrictions across the home nations.

2. The impact on the emergency services, specifically Mountain Rescue and RNLI, following the easing of the Covid-19 restrictions

The Outdoor Alliance Wales have worked very closely with Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW) and the RNLI to ensure the recovery plan reflects their current thinking. Below are statements offered by both MREW and RNLI, to assist the Outdoor Alliance Wales in its coordinated approach for the outdoor sector in Wales to re-start.

2.1 Mountain Rescue England & Wales - the current position (12.05.2020)

Mountain Rescue teams in both England and Wales are anticipating an increase in callouts as lockdown regulations are eased. This is already an issue in England with the changes announced on Sunday (11.05.2020), and teams are aware that it could come later in Wales if the situation changes.

“We’d like to thank everyone who has stayed at home and kept themselves and MR volunteers safe in recent weeks,” said Mike France, SEO (Senior Executive Officer) of MREW, “but we know that this is going to change as lockdown is reduced. On call outs, our volunteers will still need to take precautions with every casualty, assuming them to be positive with COVID-19. They need to do this to stay safe and well themselves and to ensure that teams are available when needed through the summer.”

“Any surge in visitors and call outs is going to put a huge additional pressure on mountain rescue volunteers, in addition to the extra work of using PPE and stringent cleaning of kit and vehicles. Our National Parks are sending out clear messages about staying safe and being respectful of rural communities - we would reinforce those. **It is essential that everyone heading for the hills takes responsibility for their own safety and should be aware that mountain rescue response times will be longer because of the additional preparations needed.** Ideally, just because the government says you can go out, it doesn’t mean you should.”

In recent years, mountain rescuers have played an important role in spreading the #BeAdventureSmart messages. These focus on planning ahead for forecast weather conditions, wearing and carrying the right clothing and equipment and having the skills and expertise for a planned route. These will be even more important this summer and with an additional factor.

“No matter how much exercise people have been taking at home, in their gardens or local to home during lockdown, most of them may not be as hill fit as they were three months ago,” said

Mike. “Anyone planning a day out in the hills needs to break themselves in gradually, not do too much and plan a route that is well within their current capabilities.

“Basically, in England there is a change from stay at home to stay alert and we would say Stay Safe. People can travel to undertake exercise, whilst in Wales the regulations have not changed and although you can exercise more than once a day it is only from your home. **This difference is really important to understand**”.

Key messages

- **It is vital that anyone planning a day in the outdoors is #BeAdventureSmart.** Everyone needs to think about their skills and capabilities, anticipate the weather and have the equipment and clothing to stay safe.
- **Mountain rescue volunteers are doing everything they can to stay well** and keep an effective rescue service available in the weeks and months ahead. We ask for the public’s support in doing this.
- **Any call out to an injured walker, climber or cyclist could involve a large number of volunteer team members, especially if a stretcher carry is involved.** This means using PPE and risking the volunteers’ own health and that of their families.
- **In Wales you are not permitted to drive to a place of exercise.**

2.2 Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) - current position (12.05.2020)

Here is their media statement issued across the RNLI in UK and ROI in response to Government guidelines: <https://rnli.org/news-and-media/2020/may/12/rnli-urges-people-to-take-extra-care-following-changes-to-government-guidance>

And here is a beach specific safety message issued in their online magazine, mainly to coincide with the easing of the England Restrictions: <https://rnli.org/magazine/magazine-featured-list/2020/may/your-watch-stay-safe-at-the-seaside>

The RNLI covers the whole of the UK, the Republic of Ireland and the Channel Islands. Below clearly identifies the current position in Wales.

2.2.1 Lifeboats

In Wales, the situation is that a 24/7 Search and Rescue service provided by lifeboats remains available. All 30 lifeboat stations in Wales remain on service and ready to respond, albeit with adjustments to some operating procedures to ensure the safety of casualties and crew and the compliance with Covid-19 guidelines. Despite remaining available, there is increased pressure on the service and risk to the volunteer crew members in the current environment, so anything which limits the demand on our lifeboat service is welcome.

2.2.2 Lifeguards

At present there are no RNLI lifeguards on beaches anywhere in the UK.

The RNLI normally patrols over 240 beaches around the coast at peak season including more than 40 in Wales, however, rollout of the normal seasonal lifeguard service was paused at the end of March due to the measures put in place by the UK Government to control the spread of Coronavirus.

The charity is currently working with local authorities and beach owners in the hope that it can provide a lifeguard service on around 30% of the beaches the charity usually covers this summer.

Re-establishing this infrastructure and distributing equipment to beaches will take time. We must also make sure that conditions are safe for our lifeguards to provide an effective service – our priority remains to be the safety of our people and the public.

2.2.3 Safety messaging

The main message to people using the coast is to stay within the limits of government guidance in your area and to take extra care in understanding the risks and how to keep yourself safe in, on and around the water.

3. Safe responsible engagement with the outdoors

It is likely that as restrictions are lifted there will be a dramatic increase in the number of people heading to the outdoors. This will raise a number of issues:

- Many of those heading to the countryside will have low skill levels and little experience.
- Many will want to attempt activities and locations which are beyond their abilities.
- People's fitness levels will have changed during lockdown making it difficult for people to assess their current ability.
- Behaviours which will limit the further spread of the Corona virus will need to be promoted.
- The number of people at certain locations such as honeypot sites will make social distancing difficult.
- A predicted increase in the number of people taking part in outdoor recreation.
- Reduced capacity of the emergency services (specifically Mountain Rescue & the RNLI) to respond to incidents due to increased training requirements and infection control measures.
- Concerns within local communities that tourism and outdoor recreation will pose an infection risk.

3.1 The role of AdventureSmart

There are lessons to be learnt from the confusion arising from uncertainty regarding messages during the lockdown period. Clarity and consistency of messaging are crucial during the lifting of

restrictions. A number of approaches have been made to ask if AdventureSmart can play a role in developing messages, which would enable a consistent voice.

3.2 What messages should we focus on?

The Outdoor Alliance Wales has worked together to identify a set of generic messages which sit within the AdventureSmart campaign. These are as follows:

Be Adventure Smart: Make your good day better

Follow government guidelines

Guidelines for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland differ. Check government websites for the area you are visiting and comply with them

Know your limits

Stick to activities and locations which are within your comfort zone

Plan your day

Ask yourself 3 questions before you set off:

Do I know what the weather will be like?

Do I have the right gear?

Do I have the knowledge and skills for the day?

Emergency services are under increased pressure at this time and responding to emergencies puts teams at risk. AdventureSmart.uk has the info you need to help you have fun and stay safe.

Protect local communities

Be prepared to find some car parks, toilets, shops and other local amenities closed. Plan your trip well and respect local residents

Keep your distance and keep your hands to yourself

Stay 2 m away from others at all times, sanitise your hands frequently and avoid touching gates, stiles etc.

In addition to this generic messaging more detailed messaging will be required for different activities, these are being developed by NGBs and NGOs in the outdoor sector.

3.3 How do we disseminate the messages?

Outdoor Alliance Wales believes that the sector should speak with one voice regarding the messages to promote safe and responsible outdoor recreation during the recovery phase. Benefit would be gained by national and local government, destination managers, tourism associations as well as the outdoor sector all using the same messages. Key audiences need to be identified as well as the optimum interception points to ensure messages reach people at those moments when they are researching, planning, traveling, embarking on their activities. In this way the potential for people to act upon the messages they receive will be maximised.

Potential mechanisms for the sharing of messages include:

- Partner organisations working together to ensure consistency of message. Sharing via their online, social media and print publications.
- Via a webpage similar in function to www.covid19outdoors.nz, which would allow communication of the differing approaches across the home nations.
- AdventureSmart.UK initiatives; such as A3 washroom posters and Nexus digital screens at gateway motorway services on M6, M5 and M4. Matrix signs.
- Collaborative projects such as short films, light projections of 'Be Adventure Smart' at key locations, working with celebrity patrons.

4. Recovery plans to enable outdoor recreation and outdoor businesses to re-start

A number of the Outdoor Alliance NGB & NGO members have established their own activity specific recovery plans, taking into account current thinking and legislation. A summary of these recovery plans can be found below and the full recovery plans can be found in the appendices of this document.

4.1 Pathway to recovery for outdoor activity providers in Wales: re-introducing provider-led outdoor activity

4.1.1 Introduction

This section of the recovery plan has been developed by members of the Outdoor Alliance in Wales to advise the Welsh Government on measures that could be taken to re-introduce

‘Provider-Led’¹ adventurous outdoor activities at the earliest possible opportunity in the recovery from the current Covid-19 lockdown.

Some outdoor exercise (including the ‘adventurous’ activities of hillwalking, mountain biking and watersports) is now being permitted in England for individuals and family groups (and “with up to one person from outside your household”) [1] and may soon follow in Wales. This is likely to lead to a sudden increase in the number of people taking part in outdoor activity in Wales and a consequent increase in pressure on emergency services. The re-introduction of Provider-Led adventurous activity sooner rather than later could help to mitigate pressure on the emergency services – and is critical to the survival of the Adventure Tourism and Outdoor Education sector in Wales, as reported in a recent UK-wide survey by the Institute for Outdoor Learning [2]:

“The public have been encouraged to undertake beneficial physical activity daily – this is necessarily outdoors in the absence of gyms, leisure facilities and traditional sports. Many individuals and families have enjoyed purposeful time together outdoors and discovered new, healthy, therapeutic and cost-free ways of keeping mentally and physically fit. Our sector can support the continued and developing use of the outdoors with local action, enabling access to places and activities just beyond what many can lead themselves. Ideas and resources for extending and enriching outdoor experiences can be shared through structured sessions, outdoor centre visits, residential and courses according to prevailing guidance.”

Guided walking / hillwalking – and some other activities such as mountain-biking and paddlesport for clients who can provide their own, individual equipment – are obvious candidates (since participants will be self-contained in terms of transport and equipment; and social distancing is straightforward). However, other more equipment-intensive activity (including canoe, boat and bike hire operations) should still be possible in early recovery phases if appropriate measures are taken to mitigate infection risks.

Furthermore, “Our sector has a powerful offer to make to support schools [and other education settings], young people, families and communities:

“Support for Schools – Direct help with the delivery of outdoor learning on / close to school sites. Indirect support in upskilling school staff and supporting curriculum and system development. This will enable more schools to effectively utilise outdoor space as well as being the first stage in a progressive effort to encourage schools back to centres and residential settings when appropriate.

“Support for Key Workers – Key worker teams and individuals have experienced trauma and intense pressure for some weeks now, with consequent risks to mental health, general wellbeing and effectiveness. Our sector can offer various solutions from carefully designed interventions and programmes to team activity breaks and retreats.” [2]

¹ “Providers” means persons and organisations who provide outdoor activities in Wales for the benefit of the public or their own members, whether for profit or not-for-profit.

This section therefore suggests ways to mitigate the risks inherent in re-introducing Provider-Led activity, with a view to enabling its re-introduction in the earliest possible recovery phases. Further advice will be needed in due course for later phases of recovery, as lessons are learned both about the disease and the impact of changing restrictions (while continued financial support from Government to businesses and the workforce will be needed until a ‘full’ recovery has been achieved).

National Governing Bodies are working separately on advice for re-introducing individual activities (the British Mountaineering Council has already published advice for climbing and hillwalking [3]). It is not our intention to duplicate or contradict their advice, but to provide additional advice relating specifically to the risks of Provider-Led activity.

4.1.2 Welsh Government Principles

In preparing this advice we have been mindful of the principles identified in the Welsh Government’s *Framework for Recovery* [4]:

1. **To what extent would easing a restriction have a negative effect on containing the virus?** While we acknowledge that there is some risk to containment through the increased social interaction inherent in re-introducing Provider-Led outdoor activity, we believe that pragmatic application of existing infection control measures can mitigate this risk – and will secure identifiable public health gains by enabling the wider re-introduction of well-managed outdoor activity.
2. **Is the measure at the low end of risk of further infection?** We suggest that the re-introduction of Provider-Led outdoor activity in carefully phased steps would be in line with the easing of other public restrictions and is communicable in such a way as to avoid confusion about its extent and its limits. These steps would need to include easing of the restrictions on where and with whom the public may exercise; as well as the gradual re-opening of Access Land, footpaths and other areas of the Welsh countryside that are currently closed – as well as the controlled re-opening of schools, etc. if we are to provide support in education settings.
3. **How can it be monitored and enforced?** We are not proposing that Provider-Led activity should go beyond that which would be permitted to the ‘unguided’ public. Provider-Led activity is more readily ‘controlled’ than general public activity, since many adventurous activity Providers are already subject to licensing arrangements; are accustomed to operating within defined industry codes of conduct; and have well-established regional and national communication networks.
4. **Is it capable of being rapidly reversed if it has unintended consequences?** A general reversal of public access to the outdoors for exercise – or closures of specific sites by landowners or managers – would apply automatically to Provider-Led activity; or the Government could specifically request the closure of Provider businesses or their

involvement in schools, etc. if more targeted reversal was necessary. Existing industry networks (e.g. WATO and its regional members²; AHOEC³, BAPA⁴, IOL⁵, OEAP Cymru⁶) would allow for rapid communication to Providers of any reversal decision.

5. **Is it a measure of relatively high positive economic benefit?** Enabling Providers of outdoor activity to resume operations as soon as possible, even to a limited degree, will start to get the sector back to work; reduce the likelihood of business failures before the next winter season; and reduce the dependence of outdoor businesses and individuals on financial support from the Government. If an option is pursued for Providers to support local schools, etc., more children would be able to access places with the result that more parents would be able to return to employment.
6. **Does it have a high impact on social and psychological well-being?** By enabling more people to participate safely in outdoor exercise it will provide both physical and mental well-being benefits without imposing a significant burden on emergency services (since Provider-Led activity comes with its own safety management systems and rarely requires support from emergency services even when things go wrong).
7. **Does the measure have a high positive equality impact?** Enabling more people (including, potentially, more children) to safely access outdoor exercise through Provider-Led activity will offer immediate opportunities for widening participation for all groups in society.

² WATO – Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation, whose core members include South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group (SWOAPG), Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group (POCG) and Snowdonia-Active, who between them represent a wide range of Outdoor Activity Providers across Wales.

³ AHOEC – the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres.

⁴ BAPA – British Activity Providers Association.

⁵ IOL – the Institute for Outdoor Learning.

⁶ The Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) supports Local Authorities, schools and academy groups in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It provides a forum for sharing and developing good practice in off-site visits, Outdoor Learning and Learning Outside the Classroom.

4.1.3 Covid-19 Risks with Provider-Led Activity

We believe that the risks of spreading of Covid-19 which attach specifically to Provider-Led activity (as distinct from individual and family-group exercise – or the risks that would be inherent in Providers working in schools, etc.) could be mitigated in the following ways (NB we are assuming for the time-being that all such activity would require clients to travel to and from home each day and make their own eating arrangements until such time as hospitality businesses are able to re-open; however we are also going to consider the risks relating to accommodation and provision by residential outdoor activity centres, in more detail, in due course):

1. Unrelated people coming together for an activity, with potential for spread of infection between them. This risk could be mitigated by:
 - a. Emphasising that anyone who has symptoms, however mild, or is in a household where someone has symptoms, should not leave their house to take part in activities – and should continue to avoid public transport wherever possible;
 - b. In the first phase of recovery, operating only with individuals or family / ‘social bubble’ groups;
 - c. In subsequent recovery phases, starting to operate only with small groups of ‘unrelated’ people (say 4-6 clients; or groups of children in schools, etc.) and gradually increasing group sizes when appropriate;
 - d. Avoiding crowded areas and respecting legitimate access restrictions and impacts on local communities (e.g. being prepared to change activity venues or timings to avoid crowding, particularly at known activity ‘hotspots’; moving carefully through ‘pinch points’ including car parks, access points, narrow paths, gates and stiles – and/or coordinating venues and timings with other Providers to avoid overlap and liaising with landowners / managers – including Local Authorities, National Park Authorities, NRW and DCWW – and local communities to manage group behaviour where appropriate⁷);
 - e. Maintaining strict hygiene and social distancing measures between clients (e.g. aiming for 2m side-to-side wherever practical), during activities, transport to and from activities (either using clients’ own vehicles or strict hygiene and distancing in minibuses), use of indoor facilities (such as meeting points, changing areas, etc. – all of which should be minimised e.g. by meeting and changing outdoors), toileting (Providers should make appropriate arrangements for clients to access toilets before

⁷ The Adventure Tourism sector in Wales already has experience of working with land managers and local communities to put in place codes of conduct to manage group behaviour, such as those for gorge-walking in Waterfall Country, managed by South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group; coasteering in Pembrokeshire managed by Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group; and paddlesport on reservoirs managed by Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

and after activity⁸, while it is perfectly ‘normal’ for ‘toileting in nature’ during outdoor activity and Providers will already have procedures in place to manage this) and recommending that they wash clothes after the activity.

2. Provider staff acting as ‘infection vectors’, transmitting the disease between clients. This risk could be mitigated by:
 - a. Minimising the number of staff that clients meet, where possible limiting to a single activity leader (where safe to do so) – this would include making as many administrative arrangements where possible in advance by phone, e-mail or online;
 - b. Minimising the number of client groups that individual staff meet (e.g. by segregating separate groups; and allocating individual leaders to a single group during their stay);
 - c. Avoiding all direct physical contact between staff and clients except when essential in emergency situations (while ensuring that staff have access to appropriate first aid PPE such as disposable gloves and CPR masks, which would normally be expected in any activity leader’s first aid kit);
 - d. Keeping activity well-within the physical limitations of both staff and clients, to minimise the likelihood of physical contact being required to provide support, assistance, rescue or first aid (perhaps using only venues with which Providers are familiar)⁹;
 - e. Following *Covid-19 Secure* guidance to maintain strict hygiene and social distancing measures between the Providers’ own staff, both on and off the Provider’s premises; and between Providers and their clients (as above). NB many outdoor activity Providers (particularly coaches and guides) are single-person operations, so it should be relatively straightforward for these micro-businesses in particular to implement the necessary measures.

⁸ Measures to help maintain good hygiene where Providers offer their own toilet facilities might include using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into your arm; providing regular reminders and signage to maintain hygiene standards; providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms; setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible; enhancing cleaning for busy areas; providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection; and replacing hand dryers with paper towels in handwashing facilities.

⁹ Providers should be mindful of – and ensure that clients are mindful of – *Adventure Smart* messaging to “Be Adventure Smart: Make your good day better; *Know your limits*: Stick to activities and locations which are within your comfort zone; *Plan your day*: Ask yourself 3 questions before you set off - Do I know what the weather will be like? Do I have the right gear? Do I have the knowledge and skills for the day?”

3. Activity equipment and shared surfaces (including vehicles) acting as an ‘infection vector’, transmitting the disease between people who have touched that equipment or surface. This risk could be mitigated by:
- a. Wherever practical, asking clients to provide all their own transport and equipment for the activity (including food and drinks) and allowing only themselves (or family members) to touch their equipment;
 - b. Wherever practical, avoiding the need for staff and clients (other than family members) to touch surfaces or one another’s equipment (including equipment issued by the Provider) – and where this is not possible (e.g. where staff or clients need to adjust one another’s PPE, or share the load carrying heavy equipment such as canoes, or transfer equipment to/from vehicles), use disposable gloves and / or hand-washing / sanitiser on each occasion to minimise transmission; and
 - c. Washing / disinfecting (as appropriate) or quarantining for minimum 72 hours¹⁰ all equipment and surfaces (including shared vehicles e.g. minibuses) touched by clients (or groups of clients) before they are touched by another client or group – with staff taking appropriate precautions to minimise infection (e.g. disposable gloves and/or hand-washing) throughout the process of cleaning, storing and issuing equipment.

Provider-Led activities (and the businesses that operate them) are not explicitly prohibited by current lockdown measures, but the following restrictions could be eased at the next lockdown review, with appropriate mitigation measures in place to enable them to re-commence in practice:

- the requirement to exercise either alone or only with other members of the household (or with carers as appropriate), and the requirement not to congregate in public places – at the very least this would need to be extended to permit (as in England) “exercise with up to one person from outside your household”;
- the requirement to exercise only without going a significant distance from home and the overarching prohibition on unnecessary travel – clarification or easement would be required to enable people to travel a ‘reasonable’ distance from home to access Provider-Led opportunities; and
- closure of footpaths, mountain bike trails and land in the countryside – since access to some Access Land and areas of NRW and DCWW managed estates would be required for many adventurous activities to take place (hillwalking being an obvious example).

Any support to the provision of outdoor activity in schools, etc. would, of course, depend on the necessary measures being taken to re-open them and allow access by ‘visiting staff’.

¹⁰ 72-hour equipment quarantine suggested in accordance with <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

Since Provider-Led activities have an excellent safety record and carry a low safety risk (due the stringent measures put in place by Providers to manage safety), easing restrictions to permit them should not result in any increased pressure on the Welsh NHS.

4.1.4 Initial Phase of Recovery

We appreciate that some individual activities will be more easily managed than others, so National Governing Bodies may propose a phased return of activity as the lockdown eases and Providers will be able to use their professional judgement to decide how best to implement their guidance.

However, with an appropriate selection of control measures as discussed above, we suggest that the following Provider-Led operations could be permitted to commence with immediate effect if the Welsh Government, adopts a similar approach to England and allows people to travel for exercise a 'reasonable' distance from home (whether that be 20 miles, 50 miles or anywhere within Wales) - and begins to re-open the necessary land and facilities in the countryside.

1. Hire of canoes, surfboards, other craft and bikes (etc.) for the purpose of unguided exercise and leisure by individuals and family / 'social bubble' groups. The benefit of re-opening this 'niche' business area would be economically significant for those businesses affected – and would open activities other than unguided walking for individuals and families to enjoy. The barriers are relatively low, requiring Providers 'only' to take appropriate measures to manage equipment and transport, so in some respects this form of activity is analogous to unguided walking.

If the Welsh Government also was to allow exercise with up to one person from outside people's immediate household (and extended slightly further than in England so that one 'other' person may exercise with that household group), we suggest that the following Provider-Led operations could be permitted to commence with immediate effect:

2. Guided activity (including training courses) with individuals and family / 'social bubble' groups. Although we believe this is a small proportion of Provider-Led outdoor activity in Wales, it could enable many Adventure Tourism businesses – particularly single-person freelance operators, coaches and guides – to restart operations on a small scale, covering a wide range of activities including hill-walking, outdoor climbing, watersports and mountain-biking.

Furthermore, we suggest that the following Provider-Led operations could commence in the earliest possible recovery phase, as soon as the Welsh Government is prepared to allow groups of unrelated people to meet in the outdoors (with appropriate social distancing etc.) and / or takes the decision to re-open schools, etc.:

3. Guided activity (including training courses) with groups of 'competent' adults (perhaps initially limited to those known through testing to be non-infectious). We believe that this is a significant proportion of Provider-Led outdoor activity in Wales and people will be keen to get outdoors again quickly, so re-starting these operations (initially with small groups)

would have positive benefits across the board. Since participants in this scenario could be expected to manage their own equipment and transport, the risks are relatively low and manageable for a wide range of activities including hill-walking, outdoor climbing, watersports, mountain-biking, gorge-walking / canyoning and coasteering.

4. The outdoor sector could potentially play a role sooner rather than later in supporting local schools, etc. and key workers. Throughout Wales there are a wide range of outdoor education providers who have expertise in educating young people in the outdoors. Many of these providers are accredited and have a wealth of experienced staff who are qualified to lead adventure activities in the outdoors. This experienced, qualified workforce and their employers could assist schools, etc. close to their locations in making further use of their own school grounds and local outdoor environments for learning. This has the benefit of assisting schools, etc. in providing additional staff and giving pupils further opportunities for outdoor learning and the benefits it can provide by taking pupils outdoors. Using coaching and teaching methods of delivery, with lower-level activities over several weeks, Providers could progressively develop even young children to a point where they become self-sufficient enough to undertake some adventurous activity without relying on direct contact and support from staff.

We suggest that the following Provider-Led operations should be reserved for at least a second phase of recovery:

5. Guided activity (outside the school setting) with groups of children and 'less competent' adults. While this probably accounts for the majority of outdoor business it could be more complex to manage infection risks because some participants can do less for themselves, so social distancing is more difficult or even impossible (participants needing help with putting on boots and PPE; packing / checking bags; carrying heavy kit; needing to use minibuses etc.); therefore the 'infection vector' problem could be significant.
6. Leading on from this, we will in due course consider how residential outdoor centres can operate following the government guidance. There are many of these businesses that operate in Wales and provide employment in our rural communities. Staff are employed in domestic, catering, maintenance, activity teaching and administrative roles. These centres rely on local supply chains to operate and therefore prolonged enforced closure affects all the business in that supply chain – including food, fuel, transport and buildings maintenance. With regards to residential stays, Providers would need to follow government guidance and put appropriate measures in place to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. This could include working with groups from only one school or client group at a time and limiting the amount of staff that meet them, alongside adopting strict hygiene and *Covid-19 Secure* measures.

In all cases, Providers would need to be able to demonstrate appropriate risk mitigation measures (as described above) to persuade staff, where appropriate, that it was safe to return to work; and clients that it was safe for them to participate in the activity.

NB: we have also not considered at this time guided activity in confined spaces, including indoor climbing and caving, where social distancing will be more of a challenge; these activities will be the subject of further advice in due course.

4.1.5 References

[1 UK Government, *CP239 Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy*, 2020.

[2 Institute for Outdoor Learning, "Covid-19 Impact Surveys for Outdoor Learning Organisations and Professionals," May 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://www.outdoor-learning.org/Covid-19/Covid-19-Impact-Surveys>. [Accessed 13 May 2020].

[3 British Mountaineering Council, *Covid-19: Recovery plan for climbing & hill walking*, 2020.

[4 Welsh Government, *WG40614 Leading Wales out of the coronavirus pandemic – a framework for recovery*, 2020.

4.2 Hillwalking and Rock Climbing

The British Mountaineering Council (BMC), in consultation with the UK Mountain Training bodies, has established its Covid-19 Recovery Plan for climbing and hill walking.. The basic principles have been set up to apply across all subsets (Hill walking and scrambling; Bouldering; Sport climbing; Top rope climbing & Traditional climbing) of their activities as they begin to be phased back in with the easing of the regulations. They include:

- Stay at home if you are showing symptoms of C-19 or should be self-isolating from contact with someone suspected to be infected with C-19.
- If you fall within a high-risk group consider carefully if you wish to risk infection through joining others, even though it is outdoors and with special measures in place.
- Bear in mind that you may be asymptomatic and act accordingly, maintaining social distancing and be vigilant with hand hygiene when touching surfaces.
- Scale back your ambitions - undertake any activity at a level well within your ability to reduce the small risk of accident, which could put rescue services at risk of transmission.
- Until better data is available, assume the virus is resilient outdoors and take measures to avoid transmission. In particular, use gloves or alcohol gel/wipes after contacting any surfaces (e.g. gates, stiles or between climbs).
- Some areas or specific sites may require special measures when re-opening compared to others – please bear this in mind and follow site specific requirements.

Its key considerations reflect current thinking & legislation and how these can be implemented within the context of hill walking and climbing activities. They include:

- Maintenance of social distancing
- Hygiene

- Travel
- Pinch points
- Accommodation and other local services
- Honeypots
- Consistent messaging across the UK

Their recovery plan highlights a potential road map for the re-introduction of hill, mountain and cliff-based recreation and associated work through a phased approach. In doing so, it:

1. Acknowledges that the inherent personal risk from the activities have not changed as a result of C-19, therefore focussing any phasing on those individuals they participate with, in any type of activity to take place across the spectrum of hill walking and climbing.
2. Makes strong recommendations to participants alongside this to scale down ambitions and encourage all participants to operate well within their personal abilities.
3. It notes in the case of any instructed or led activity, competent leaders, instructors and guides are well equipped to scale down the level of the chosen activities.

First: limit activities to people in own household



Next: if the social bubble concept is developed, only go with people in your bubble



Then: group to comprise people who are known to be non-infectious or have immunity when suitable testing procedures are available and in widespread use



Finally: everyone/anyone except those clearly ill

It takes an activity-based approach which:

- Considers the risk of transmission for each of the main sub-activities within climbing and hill walking with the idea being to allow recommencement of each activity as appropriate when we begin to move away from full lockdown.

- Acknowledges that for those who are able to climb or walk with others within their household or social bubble (if this concept is adopted), any activity would be possible following the basic principles laid out earlier in this document as social distancing will not be required within your group.
- Acknowledges that most social distancing issues with climbing can be resolved by choosing a single regular partner, a measure which is often the norm anyway but which could be included as a strong recommendation in BMC C-19 advice.

The highlighted 'phasing' considers: hill walking, scrambling (*walking and non-technical rocky terrain which does not require rock climbing equipment on hills and mountains*) and bouldering (*climbing 'problems' on boulders and low rock faces, no ropes required as it is carried out low to the ground above crash mats*) in the first phase, sport climbing (*roped climbing using fixed bolt anchors in the rock to clip the rope to as progress is made up the rock face. Once the route is complete the climber lowers back to the ground from a fixed anchor and the climber and belayer swap roles*) and top rope climbing (*climbing using a rope above the climber to protect against any falls, connected to an anchor at the top of the cliff which can be reached by walking to the top*).in the second phase and traditional climbing (*roped climbing using removable rock anchors placed by the lead climber to clip the rope to as progress is made up the rock face and removed by the second climber as they follow*) in the third phase.

4.3 Paddlesport – kayaking, canoeing, stand up paddleboarding etc.

Canoe Wales, the NGB for paddlesports in Wales have established guidance on the management of Covid-19 risks for paddlesport activity and provides information on how to paddle safely under the current government regulations (13.05.2020). It takes a 'phased' approach and at present considers Phase 1 only – Limited return to low-risk activities. In considering getting back on the water, its general guidance for this phase is as follows:

- You should not paddle (or leave your house) if you or any member of your household are displaying any of the signs or symptoms of COVID-19 now or in the previous 14 days;
- Stay well within your capabilities.
- You should only paddle with members of your household.
- Stay at least 2m from other people outside of your household — the only exception to this rule is possibly in a rescue situation.
- Where possible, you should use safe launch points within walking distance of your home. If you have to drive to your nearest safe launch point, you must stay in your local area. If there are no suitable launch points in your local area, you should stay home and use another form of exercise; *See the Welsh Government's guidance on what they mean by 'local'*.
- Avoid any location that would require a shuttle.

- Avoid areas that you know will be busy.
- Launch and land as quickly as possible.
- We do not recommend paddling on your own.
- Do not share equipment outside of your household.
- Wash your hands and all equipment before and after each activity and after touching any gates or other surfaces.
- Avoid public toilets where possible.
- Respect rural communities and other water users.
- Respect access points and local restrictions; *See the additional advice below about what to do if an access point has been closed.*
- Be sensitive to the environment – after weeks without paddling, wildlife may have moved into certain areas and you should avoid disturbing nesting birds and other wildlife.
- Follow Check Clean Dry protocols.
- Ensure that your Canoe Wales membership is current so that your insurance cover is valid.

Phase 1 focuses on keeping risk to a minimum and asks paddlers to restrict their paddlesport activities to environments well within their capabilities. In doing so, it further asks:

- Are we all competent to paddle at this venue, bearing in mind that we haven't paddled for over seven weeks?
- Have I checked the current conditions for the location I want to paddle?
- Have I checked the weather forecast?
- Do I have the correct clothing and safety equipment?
- How will we deal with an incident, which requires a rescue?
- How far will we be journeying?
- Are the access or egress points open to the public?
- Do we have a back-up plan for an alternative venue if we arrive at our chosen venue and find it is busy or closed?

When considering the location to go paddling, the guidelines provide a clear message as to what to do if a launch point has been closed.

Canoe Wales, in its guidelines, make reference to the next phase but awaits further direction from Welsh Government before it commits to publishing Phase 2.

4.4 Mountain Biking

As representatives of the mountain biking (MTB) community, OpenMTB and Cycling UK are keen to see riders acting responsibly in order to mitigate risk of spreading Covid-19, and also modifying their riding styles and behaviours to avoid putting any undue pressure on the emergency services, as the countryside and trails reopen.

Mountain biking is a healthy and enjoyable form of outdoor recreation and engenders greater engagement with nature, while also strengthening rural tourism. We believe that opportunities for mountain biking and off-road cycling, particularly in peri-urban areas actively increases both the number and diversity of those who benefit from fresh air and green exercise, particularly by increasing opportunities for people with disabilities and those living in towns and cities.

OpenMTB and Cycling UK propose a phased approach to the re-starting of mountain biking in Wales and in doing so have identified four segments:

4.4.1 Trail cycling

- Using rights of way and other access routes, including shared paths, forest roads and sustrans routes - this activity has continued throughout the Covid-19 lockdown, though has been subject to general access restrictions in some geographical areas. OpenMTB and Cycling believe that the first phase of recovery should allow riders to travel beyond their local area and travel 'to' destinations in order to ride.
- Guidance for travelling to, and riding in these destinations would mirror guidance being issued for hillwalking by the BMC and the Ramblers Association.

4.4.2 Trail Centres

Most Welsh trail centres are on Natural Resources Wales (NRW) or private land, and have been closed to the public during the crisis. OpenMTB and Cycling UK believe that the first stage of recovery could include the reopening of these facilities (the trails themselves and the car parks), since low levels of risk exist and the trails are clearly graded. Permitting travel to these areas by car in order to participate would certainly be a great help. It is expected that the reopening of facilities at trail centres, such as toilets and cafe's is likely to occur at a later phase, in line with Welsh Government guidelines and the general rules of such facilities.

4.4.3 Bike Parks

OpenMTB and Cycling UK believe that gravity-orientated bike parks where an uplift service is commonly used, may be achievable at an early phase, in line with the reopening of trail centres trails and car parks, but without the reopening of ancillary facilities such as cafe and toilets. It is suggest that uplift services could reopen with the onus on the facility to find ways to operate with strict social distancing rules and additional hygiene steps where appropriate.

4.4.4 Racing & Events (Including both Cross-country and downhill race events and mass participation off-road sportive events)

OpenMTB and Cycling UK believe that the risk profile for both the continued spread of the disease (in the case of mass events) and, physical risk of injury, is high for such events and that their reopening should only be considered towards the later phases of the recovery period.

OpenMTB and Cycling UK offer some specific guidance for the mountain biking community:

- Slow down early and leave extra room when passing other users in order to ensure social distancing
- Be sensitive to rural communities if considering travelling further from home to ride.
- Avoid activities that may result in injury or require emergency services support, especially in remote locations.
- Be aware that popular locations like National Parks or the coast may be very busy, making social distancing difficult. Consider riding early or late rather than in the middle of the day.
- Plan ahead, as some sites and facilities may be closed or have restrictions.
- Observe general rules on hygiene, including regular hand sanitising, and not handling equipment belonging to others.
- Isolate if you show any symptoms of the disease.

Additional general guidance can be found in the full document from OpenMTB and Cycling UK in Appendix 5

4.5 Boating - sailing, yachting, cruising, powerboating, windsurfing etc.

Royal Yachting Association (RYA) Cymru Wales offer their current position statement as of 11.05.2020, which states:

Following the UK Government announcement last night (10.05.2020) on easing restrictions of lockdown, RYA Cymru Wales notes that watersports will be able to resume in England on Wednesday, 13th May 2020. RYA are waiting on further clarity on the level of boating that will be allowed in England ONLY.

Welsh Government's position (Announcement on Friday 8th May, 2020) hasn't changed and therefore any boating activity, including access to boats, clubs, training centres, marinas, ports, harbours and inland waterways must remain suspended for now.

On-going work on the 'Return to Boating' plan is taking place, however clear guidelines in Wales means that exercise can only start and finish local to your home, with travel deemed only for essential shopping and work. RYA Cymru Wales are currently working alongside the RYA on guidance on the 'Return to Boating' plan which when released this week will only be relevant to England, but learning from this will allow us here in Wales to adopt swiftly once we're released back on the water.

RYA Cymru Wales understands that a number of boat owners live outside of Wales, and have been given guidelines they are allowed to travel any distance to exercise, however boats, clubs, marinas in Wales will be governed by Welsh law and that applies to all nationalities crossing the Welsh border. Therefore it is NOT permitted to visits boats, marinas or clubs in Wales.

In addition, RYA Cymru Wales alongside the RYA and the other Home Countries have extended the suspension of Organised Activity and Events until the 30th of June.

RYA Cymru Wales are working alongside their key stakeholders of Sport Wales, Welsh Sports Association, Outdoor Alliance Wales, AdventureSmartUK and the RYA to work with Welsh Government to promote safe boating.

In addition, RYA have established a guiding principles document for its membership, which sets out the principles that support the RYA's return to boating strategy, therefore guiding and facilitating a diverse stakeholder group without being prescriptive. The principles aim to help participants, clubs, class associations and training centres to think ahead and prepare for the return to the water. They include:

4.5.1 Always follow and only follow the government's guidance.

Government COVID-19 measures are vital to protecting health and wellbeing and to minimising pressure on front line services. The RYA does not have additional specialist knowledge and so will not add to, or elaborate upon those measures.

- **Application of measures:** The RYA's role is to provide interpretation and advice, showing our stakeholders how the latest measures on social distancing, hygiene, travel can be applied to boating so that an appropriate level of activity can resume.
- **Local guidelines:** Within the UK, the Home Country governments may issue their own phased plans and measures. Additionally, as we have seen to date, local authorities, harbour authorities or marinas may also interpret guidance differently. Where the application of government guidance is unclear, we will seek clarification.

4.5.2 Apply the three C's: Considerate, Conservative and Consistent

The 3 C's work together to ensure that boating resumes safely and without putting unnecessary pressure on front line services.

- **Considerate:** be mindful of the potential impact that you could have on the RNLI, front line services and other water users.

Consider the local area and whether there is a risk that you could put extra pressure on the RNLI or front line services. For example are you in a very remote location? Is the area very busy?

Look out for others, for example families on beaches or people on other boats and think about how your activity could help or hinder them. For example wind or kite surfers who

launch from the beach should give extra space to beach users. Boaters should keep an eye out for others, and be ready to assist if trouble arises.

- **Conservative:** help to minimise risk by taking an extra conservative approach to safety.

The RYA guidance on safety remains unchanged: know your limits; look after yourself; keep in touch and above all have a plan. As we start to get back on the water, we advise boaters to take an even more conservative approach. Boaters can err on the side of caution for example by setting additional wind limits or restricting their journeys.

- **Consistent:** Stay consistent to the existing safety protocols and treat others consistently. We adapt, versus rewrite, to meet the needs of the current situation.

For example a club would not need to change their safety boat protocol, but may need to apply an additional layer of guidance, for example that crews come from within a single household.

A boater would continue to apply the RYA's safety advice, but with additional consideration and conservatism.

And finally, Clubs and Centres should think about maintaining consistency across all participants and candidates, ensuring that people are treated fairly.

4.5.3 Prioritise the health and long term interests of boating

We never lose sight of the need to preserve the long term interests of boating, RYA's purpose or its values.

- **Facilitate versus prevent:** The RYA's role is to facilitate members, clubs and training centres in their return to boating. They will guide and give advice on how activity can resume within the parameters of the government's guidance, however they will never mandate additional restrictions.
- **Preserve long term interests:** The RYA work constructively and collaboratively with agencies, government departments and industry partners to ensure that our longer term ambitions for boating can continue to be met. We should all be mindful that our conduct now will set an example to others and may have a lasting impact on the longer term interests of boating.

5. Conclusion

This document clearly highlights the value of a coordinated approach and demonstrates a willingness and desire for an effective and appropriate phased pathway to recovery.

In summary:

- The outdoor sector is wide and diverse by its very nature and crosses many directorates, including tourism, education, sport, safety, the environment and health so is well positioned to be able to work alongside WG to alleviate issues arising from the lifting of restrictions.
- The National Governing Bodies (NGB) for each outdoor activities have comprehensive recovery plans in place. Whilst we only make reference to four of these NGBs in this document, many more, who are members of Outdoor Alliance Wales have their recovery plans in place and totally support and endorse what this document sets out to achieve.
- National and local government, the tourism sector and outdoor sector can work together to provide clear and consistent safety messaging for outdoor recreation. AdventureSmartWales/UK already have specific messages in place for the current situation as well a suite of messages and resources for us all to use.
- The outdoor activity providers in Wales, of which there are 800+ are used to risk managing activities and situations and have highlighted how they can manage infection control to enable a return to work in the early recovery phase.
- The outdoor sector and its workforce of 8,000 FTE are there to support schools and other education settings when they reopen.

The ask is that WG give us sufficient time as a sector (a minimum of seven days) so that we can make the necessary preparations.

NB. This is a fluid document that is subject to change periodically to reflect any changes to/ lifting of restrictions made by WG

For further information, please contact Paul Donovan (Chair - Outdoor Alliance Wales)

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6. Appendix

Appendix 1

6.1 About Outdoor Alliance Wales

6.1.1 Our Vision

The Outdoor Alliance can and will play a vital role in creating and sustaining a strong sense of advocacy for and to the outdoor sector in Wales. Through collaborative engagement, the membership of the Outdoor Alliance will share the common values in a way that they will make a significant contribution to the economic, health & well-being, social, cultural and environmental developments of Wales. The vision subscribed to by Outdoor Alliance Wales is:

‘Sustainable, active, appreciative outdoor practices for a resilient, healthy Nation’.

6.1.2 Our Mission

The Outdoor Alliance aims to develop a more coordinated approach within the wider pan Wales outdoor sector by harnessing the experience, skills and knowledge of its key stakeholders and the people they reach to facilitate sustainable economic, health, social and environmental change, for a resilient Wales.

6.1.3 Our Core Aims

Within the scope of the Mission Statement, 13 Core Aims have been identified. All that the Outdoor Alliance does should be contributing to fulfilling one or more of the Core Aims:

1. Elevate the status of the outdoor sector within Wales to give it the recognition it deserves.
2. Lead the way internationally as an example of a country who innovatively supports the health, wealth and wellbeing of a nation.
3. Give consistency to a single voice through the promotion of common values.
4. Be the interface between policy and activity.
5. Ensure that the protection and enhancement of our basic resources – the natural environment – is a material consideration in all our work.
6. Ensure the sustainable growth of the outdoor sector by working more closely with other sectors.
7. Provide greater internal and external communication resulting in a more informed sector.
8. Promote best practice.
9. Be a ‘one stop shop’ to which external agencies can engage.
10. Improve collaboration on training and CPD.
11. Encourage greater access to the outdoors by clarifying the opportunities available and empower organisations to work more closely together to address key issues in society.

12. Develop an evidence base to enhance knowledge and inform future policy.
13. Establish a Portal that:
 - Disseminates and archives knowledge and best practice;
 - Brings all interested stakeholders into the conversations
 - Increases transparency within and outside the sector;
 - Avoids projects being duplicated or developed in silos.

Appendix 2

6.2 Outdoor Alliance Membership

1	Adventure Activities Industry Advisory Committee (AAIAC)
2	Adventure UK
3	Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC)
4	Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI)
5	British Mountaineering Council (BMC)
6	British Mountain Guides (BMG)
7	Cambrian Caving Council
8	Canoe Wales (CW)
9	Cardiff Metropolitan University
10	Cycling UK
11	Field Studies Council (FSC)
12	Glandŵr Cymru Canal & River Trust
13	Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL)
14	Mountain Training Cymru (MTC)
15	National Coasteering Charter (NCC)
16	National Trust Cymru (NT Cymru)
17	North & South Wales Mountain Rescue Association
18	OpenMTB
19	Open Spaces Society
20	Outdoor Education Advisory Panel Cymru (OEAP Cymru)
21	Outdoor Industries Association (OIA)
22	Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum (PCF)
23	Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group (POCG)
24	Plas Menai / Sport Wales
25	Plas y Brenin (PyB)
26	Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)

27	Royal Yachting Association Cymru Wales (RYACW)
28	Ramblers Cymru
29	Snowdonia Active (S-A)
30	South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group (SWOAPG)
31	The Outdoor Partnership (TOP)
32	Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation (WATO)
33	Wales Council for Outdoor Learning (WCfOL)
34	Water Skills Academy
35	Welsh Cycling
36	Welsh Sports Association (WSA)
37	Welsh Triathlon
	Observer Members
38	Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's)
39	Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA)
40	Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
41	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA)
42	Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA)

Appendix 3

6.3 BMC Recovery Plan



Covid-19: Recovery plan for climbing & hill walking

Introduction

The British Mountaineering Council (BMC) is the representative body for climbers and hill walkers in England & Wales, with over 85,000 members (both recreational users and professional instructors) and a communication reach far beyond into the wider walking and climbing community. We also work closely with all UK Mountain Training bodies who represent instructors in the sector and are supportive of this plan.

The Covid-19 (C-19) crisis has underscored the huge demand for access to the outdoors and never has it been clearer how important spending time outdoors is for our physical and mental

wellbeing. 8.9 million people are active outdoors in the UK ¹¹ with 3.3 million people in England alone going climbing or hill walking twice a month or more ¹² - to give this some context, 73% more people go climbing and hill walking than play football.

Our activities also contribute significantly to the rural economy with BMC members spending on average £60 per day on a weekend visit to an outdoor destination ¹³. Indeed, a Welsh Government commissioned report found that the annual contribution to economic activity in Wales from outdoor activity tourism was £481m¹⁴ per year. Businesses benefitting from climber and hill walker spending are numerous, from accommodation, shops and restaurants to specialist retailers, walking leaders, climbing instructors and guides (volunteer and professional leaders enable more than 1.5m days of young people and adults climbing and walking per year¹⁵). Once businesses are allowed to re-open in rural areas, they will need customers. Climbers and hill walkers will form a good proportion of these and in some cases these businesses are wholly reliant on them.

Since the onset of C-19 in the UK, the BMC and our partners have been very successful in communicating messages to our networks, starting on the 23rd March with advice that climbing and hill walking should be put on hold for the time being, and continually updating and reinforcing our messaging since. Reports from around the UK suggest there has been widespread adoption of our advice, with recognition from local authorities and large landowners (e.g. National Trust) that it has been working.

Many climbers and hill walkers rely upon their activities as much for the sense of clarity, calmness and mental release they provide as the physicality of the activity itself. However, we, and our partners in the outdoor sector along with many other sporting and recreation bodies are starting to see increasing frustration from those we represent, wanting confirmation that they will be able to re-commence some form of these activities in a safe way as lockdown eases. At the same time, currently ambiguous regulations are causing confusion. In particular, as local walking is already permitted, and many people live near hills and moors a considerable grey area exists as to what is acceptable.

A plan of action for how lockdown will phase out is crucial. This will help the BMC, other representative bodies, landowners, National Parks and local authorities (amongst others), formulate plans and guidance for each phase of easing, and communicate this ahead of any changes. Having a clear way forward will help manage the rush to the hills and gain buy in from the public in general and rural communities in particular.

¹¹ Source: Sport England and OIA "Getting Active Outdoors", June 2015

¹² Source: Sport England "Active Lives Survey"

¹³ Source: BMC "Outdoor Survey 2015-16"

¹⁴ Source: 2014 Miller Report

¹⁵ Source: Mountain Training England Impact Study 2019

Activity risk (safety) and risk of transmission

Public perception of climbing and hill walking is often that they are high risk activities. However, the reality is very different, with participants skilled in carrying out continuous, dynamic risk assessments and adjusting behaviour and actions as needed. This is borne out through UK accident data, of which we have included some headline numbers for context:

Sport	Injuries / million hours
All mountaineering activities	40
Cycling	43
Jogging	50
Horse riding	100
Football	1300

The latest annual data from Mountain Rescue England and Wales (2017) shows that, the number of rock climbing incidents was 52 and hill walking incidents was 559. The total number of participant days for these activities is unknown, but bearing in mind the participation levels stated in the introduction and the much higher levels on a less frequent basis, they are likely to account for tens of millions of participant days per year. The inherent risk to the individual of these activities has not changed, and there are measures which could be used to reduce the small risk further whilst allowing activities to commence.

The key aspect during the current crisis is the risk of transmission to others, however there is currently no evidence that rock climbing or hill walking carry a greater risk of transmission of C-19 than walking or cycling. Areas where there is a potential (but unproven) increased risk of infection include car parks (where there is the possibility of a greater density of individuals at any one time) and gates and stiles, where there is the possibility of the virus remaining on surfaces. Neither of these risks is particular to rock climbing or hill walking and the risk of transmission through participation in those activities is potentially less than for walking or cycling due to the wide distribution of locations where climbing and hill walking take place.

Not all climbing and hill walking activities are the same in terms of risk of the activity itself and more importantly, the risk of transmission of the virus. These factors will be key in establishing which forms of climbing and hill walking can begin to take place safely again as the situation develops.

Basic principles

The points set out below are our proposal for a set of essential basic principles that should apply across all subsets of our activities as they begin to be phased back in with the easing of lockdown:

- Stay at home if you are showing symptoms of C-19 or should be self-isolating from contact with someone suspected to be infected with C-19.
- If you fall within a high-risk group consider carefully if you wish to risk infection through joining others, even though it is outdoors and with special measures in place.
- Bear in mind that you may be asymptomatic and act accordingly, maintaining social distancing and be vigilant with hand hygiene when touching surfaces.
- Scale back your ambitions - undertake any activity at a level well within your ability to reduce the small risk of accident, which could put rescue services at risk of transmission.
- Until better data is available, assume the virus is resilient outdoors and take measures to avoid transmission. In particular, use gloves or alcohol gel/wipes after contacting any surfaces (e.g. gates, stiles or between climbs).
- Some areas or specific sites may require special measures when re-opening compared to others – please bear this in mind and follow site specific requirements.

Key considerations

Below are what we consider key areas which need addressing to allow recommencement of climbing and hill walking in England and Wales as a recreational activity and for outdoor sector businesses, with specific suggestions for how each could be dealt with:

1. Maintenance of social distancing

- All forms of climbing and hill walking could take place within a household group who maintain 2m social distancing from other individuals and groups.
- For small groups outside of a single household, social distancing is easier with certain sub-activities within mountaineering compared to others:
 - Hill walking and scrambling would be easy for participants to maintain 2m social distancing throughout the activity.
 - Bouldering (a non-roped form of low level climbing above crash mats) and top roping could also restart with measures in place to ensure social distancing.
 - Other roped forms of climbing would require additional measures and the BMC is ideally placed to develop these and communicate to members.

2. Hygiene

- Hygiene considerations for climbing and hill walking are no different to current advice for those going on low-level walks on public rights of way from their houses.

- Our advice would recommend use of hand sanitising gel before and after contacting any surfaces whilst outdoors.
- Upon arrival back at home, decontamination should take place by washing hands and quarantining any equipment that has contacted other people or surfaces, for as long as possible outside or in a dedicated area inside.

3. Travel

- Travel should be avoided outside of anyone's local area initially government guidance as lockdown eases should be followed.
- Short journeys for urban residents to reach nearby countryside would allow those who are used to being able to easily access these places with a short drive to do so once again, (e.g. residents on the fringes of national parks and other green spaces).
- If joining small groups outside of a household group, travel to the access point for the activity should be in separate vehicles until government advice changes to allow sharing, or if public transport is the only option, ensuring all government advice is followed.
- Respect for rural communities and landowners by visitors is crucial as lockdown is phased out and helping to keep the communities visited safe would be a key part of any BMC advice and messaging.

4. Pinch points

- The areas of highest risk of transmission are likely to be pinch points where visitors are forced together such as gates, stiles, narrow sections of paths, car parks etc. (See hygiene section for advice on mitigating risk of transmission in these places through contact with surfaces.)
- For narrow sections of path, respect for other users and taking turns to move through these when others are around is key.
- Hill walking routes should be planned with an awareness of pinch points (which should be avoided wherever possible).
- These issues exist now for anyone taking their daily exercise on public rights of way so continuing to use current advice on managing this risk is appropriate whilst acknowledging that it shouldn't prevent resumption of other activities that also use these pinch points. Such pinch points are fewer on the mountains, hills and Open Access land.

5. Accommodation and other local services

- Day trip access to the countryside is not reliant upon accommodation, cafes, pubs, shops etc but overnight trips will require it.
- Initially, to provide some access back into the outdoors and allow improvements to physical and mental wellbeing, day trips only (within stated travel restrictions) would be manageable to avoid issues with reopening accommodation.
- As and when local services are allowed to open for business, visiting climbers and walkers (amongst others), will provide crucial economic input into these areas, and without visitors, recovery of the rural economy will stall.

6. Honeypots

- It is anticipated that the increase in risk of transmission caused by climbers and hill walkers visiting more popular venues can be mitigated through advice to avoid such places for the foreseeable future, although it is noted that no such restrictions exist for walking or cycling.
- Key messages will be to:
 - Stay local initially, don't travel beyond government travel limits as lockdown eases.
 - Take the opportunity to visit new and less frequented areas.
 - Avoid visiting popular venues and have several backup plans so that if you arrive at a busy venue you can go elsewhere.
 - Be aware that closures of certain honeypot areas (e.g. Snowdon in Wales) will likely continue even as other parts of the countryside are opened.

7. Consistent messaging across the UK

- With many walkers and climbers travelling across country borders to carry out their activities (some even when only travelling locally), different approaches to easing lockdown in the four countries of the UK will lead to confusion.
- A united approach across all four home nations is essential to ensure that as people are allowed to travel once again, there is a clear and unambiguous set of measures in place that applies across the UK. (We acknowledge that although outside of our geographical area, activities in Northern Ireland will also need to be mindful of the Irish Government's requirements.)

Potential road map for re-introduction of hill, mountain and cliff-based recreation and associated work

Levels of easing approach

- Acknowledging that the inherent personal risk from the activities have not changed as a result of C-19, this approach allows any type of activity to take place across the spectrum of hill walking and climbing, instead focussing any phasing on those you participate with.
- A strong recommendation would be made to participants alongside this to scale down ambitions and encourage all participants to operate well within their personal abilities.
- In the case of any instructed or led activity, competent leaders, instructors and guides are well equipped to scale down the level of the chosen activities.

First: limit activities to people in own household



Next: if the social bubble concept is developed, only go with people in your bubble



Then: group to comprise people who are known to be non-infectious or have immunity when suitable testing procedures are available and in widespread use



Finally: everyone/anyone except those clearly ill

Activity-based approach

- This approach considers risk of transmission for each of the main sub-activities within climbing and hill walking with the idea being to allow recommencement of each activity as appropriate when we begin to move away from full lockdown.
- For those who are able to climb or walk with others within their household or social bubble (if this concept is adopted), any activity would be possible following the basic principles laid out earlier in this document as social distancing will not be required within your group.
- Most social distancing issues with climbing can be resolved by choosing a single regular partner, a measure which is often the norm anyway but which could be included as a strong recommendation in BMC C-19 advice.

Phase 1

a. Hill walking and scrambling

Description: walking and non-technical rocky terrain which does not require rock climbing equipment on hills and mountains

- Small groups can easily maintain social distance whilst carrying out these activities
- Participants should stay well within their physical and technical limits, being sure of their ability to be self-reliant, navigate and travel across all terrain on their chosen route, manage forecast weather conditions, deal with likely incidents and be appropriately equipped.
- Honey-pot areas with high desirability (e.g. Snowdon/Scafell/Pen y Fan etc) may need significant supervision to manage crowding or even to remain restricted.

b. Bouldering

Description: climbing 'problems' on boulders and low rock faces, no ropes required as it is carried out low to the ground above crash mats.

- Low risk of injury which can be mitigated by avoiding anything other than low problems with good landings that don't require a spotter (a person standing at the bottom who helps direct a falling climber onto the mats).
- Can be carried out solo or in pairs/small groups.

Phase 2

a. 'Sport climbing'

Description: roped climbing using fixed bolt anchors in the rock to clip the rope to as progress is made up the rock face. Once the route is complete the climber lowers back to the ground from a fixed anchor and the climber and belayer swap roles.

- Greater hazard than the forms of activity above due to the potential for short falls, however this should be contextualised by the injury stats listed earlier in the document showing that overall risk of injury is extremely low per participant hour.
- Social distancing could be maintained by adoption of adapted techniques to prevent climber and belayer having to be close together at the start and end of a climb.
- There will be mutual contact with ropes and other climbing equipment but this can be mitigated with use of hand sanitising gel.
- Risk of transmission could be further reduced by each climber bringing a full set of their own equipment, with each individual only using their own equipment.

b. Top rope climbing

Description: climbing using a rope above the climber to protect against any falls, connected to an anchor at the top of the cliff which can be reached by walking to the top.

- Very low risk of injury as the climber always has a tight rope above them to prevent a fall.
- Social distancing can be maintained between both climber and belayer on the ground and whilst climbing/belaying.
- There will be mutual contact with ropes and other climbing equipment (e.g. top anchors) but this can be mitigated with use of hand sanitising gel.

Phase 3

'Traditional climbing'

Description: roped climbing using removable rock anchors placed by the lead climber to clip the rope to as progress is made up the rock face and removed by the second climber as they follow.

- Increased hazard compared to sport climbing, but again in reality a very small number of injuries compared to the number of participants (52 incidents across all forms of rock climbing in England and Wales in 2017), so still low risk of injury.
- The normal techniques used for traditional climbing make social distancing slightly more difficult to achieve; however, there is certainly plenty of scope for exploring new methods which could allow this alongside our partner Mountain Training bodies.

Dave Turnbull (CEO)

Lynn Robinson (President)

Gareth Pierce (Chair)

Appendix 4

6.4 Canoe Wales Guidelines

GUIDANCE ON THE RETURN TO PADDLESPORT ACTIVITY

Limited return to paddling for exercise

Issued 13 May 2020

Getting back on the water

Following the changes to the Welsh Government's guidance on exercise, we are all keen to get back on the water as quickly as possible. However, this process will need to take place in phases to manage the risks to paddlers, the Welsh public and our emergency services.

This guidance document provides information on how to paddle safely under the current government regulations.

We all have a responsibility to follow these guidelines to limit the spread of the virus, protect our emergency services and maintain the reputation of our sport. There is a significant chance that if people act irresponsibly, we could see a return of some restrictions. Please continue to do your part for the good of everyone in paddlesport and in our local communities across Wales.

General guidance for a return to paddling for exercise

- You should not paddle (or leave your house) if you or any member of your household are displaying any of the signs or symptoms of COVID-19 now or in the previous 14 days;
- Stay well within your capabilities; *See the additional advice below about how to assess which locations and activities are appropriate;*
- You should only paddle with members of your household;
- Stay at least 2m from other people outside of your household — the only exception to this rule is possibly in a rescue situation;
- Where possible, you should use safe launch points within walking distance of your home. If you have to drive to your nearest safe launch point, you must stay in your local area. If there are no suitable launch points in your local area, you should stay home and use another form of exercise; *See the Welsh Government's guidance on what they mean by 'local';*
- Avoid any location that would require a shuttle;

- Avoid areas that you know will be busy;
- Launch and land as quickly as possible;
- We do not recommend paddling on your own;
- Do not share equipment outside of your household;
- Wash your hands and all equipment before and after each activity and after touching any gates or other surfaces;
- Avoid public toilets where possible;
- Respect rural communities and other water users;
- Respect access points and local restrictions; *See the additional advice below about what to do if an access point has been closed;*
- Be sensitive to the environment – after weeks without paddling, wildlife may have moved into certain areas and you should avoid disturbing nesting birds and other wildlife;
- Follow Check Clean Dry protocols;
- Ensure that your Canoe Wales membership is current so that your insurance cover is valid.

Keeping risk to a minimum

In this first phase of return to activity, you should restrict your paddlesport activities to environments where you and your fellow paddlers are well within your capabilities. This is to reduce the chance of any accidents or incidents which might require the emergency services, which will continue to be under enormous pressure for an extended period of time.

You should consider all of the following:

- Are we all competent to paddle at this venue, bearing in mind that we haven't paddled for at least eight weeks?
- Have I checked the current conditions for the location I want to paddle?
- Have I checked the weather forecast?
- Do we have the correct clothing and safety equipment?
- How will we deal with an incident which requires a rescue?
- How far will we be journeying?
- Are the access or egress points open to the public?

We all have a responsibility to keep risks as low as possible. Although the emergency services have advised us that they will continue to respond to any paddling incidents, a

simple rule of thumb is to consider whether or not you would do the activity if there were no emergency services.

If you need further advice on any of this guidance, you can email Paul Marshall at coaching@canoewales.com. Please include your phone number in your email.

What to do if a launch point has been closed

Check before you leave home and do not visit any venues or launch points which are closed. Please be aware that a significant number of car parks and paddling venues continue to be closed to the public. If you arrive somewhere and find a venue is closed, do not get into any conflicts with the landowner or site manager by attempting to use the venue.

Please report any closures to Canoe Wales with details of the location. In many instances, a venue may have to remain closed for public safety, but in others we will attempt to work with the landowner or site manager to discuss options for it to safely reopen.

If you are already paddling and are challenged from the shore by a landowner/site manager or a member of the public, try to diffuse the conflict and then report the incident to Canoe Wales.

To report a closure or an incident, email Phil Stone: phil.stone@canoewales.com and fill in an incident report form here: <https://www.canoewales.com/report-an-incident>

Please include your phone number in your email and your incident report.

When will we move on to the next phase?

As soon as we have more information about the next set of government guidance, we will publish new advice. Unfortunately, we do not have a timeline for when the next phase might start. In the meantime, thank you for your support and please continue to get in touch with Canoe Wales with any issues or problems you are facing so we can provide assistance.

Appendix 5

6.5 Open MTB and Cycling UK Guidelines

Mountain Biking and Covid-19

Headline:

As representatives of the recreational MTB Community, as the countryside and trails reopen, we'd like to see riders acting responsibly in order to mitigate risk of spreading Covid-19, and also

modifying their riding styles and behaviours to avoid putting any undue pressure on the emergency services.

Mountain biking is a healthy and enjoyable form outdoor recreation and engenders greater engagement with nature, while also strengthening rural tourism. We believe that opportunities for mountain biking and off-road cycling, particularly in peri-urban areas actively increases both the number and diversity of those who benefit from of fresh air and green exercise, particularly by increasing opportunities people with disabilities and those living in towns and cities.

The phased reopening of mountain biking - our proposals:

We believe that, with relevance to the removal of Covid-19 restrictions, mountain biking activity in Wales falls into four distinct segments

1. Trail cycling

Using rights of way and other access routes, including shared paths, forest roads and sustrans routes - this activity has continued throughout the Covid-19 lockdown, though has been subject to general access restrictions in some geographical areas.

We believe that the first phase of recovery should once again allow riders to travel beyond their local area and travel 'to' destinations in order to ride. Our guidance for travelling to and riding in these destinations would mirror the same guidance being issued for hillwalking by the Ramblers Association and the BMC.

2. Trail Centres

Most Welsh trail centres are on NRW or private land, and thus have been closed to the public during the crisis - we believe that the first stage of recovery should reopen these facilities, where risk is low and trails are clearly graded, and once again permit travel to these areas by car in order to participate. **We suggest that the reopening of facilities at trail centres, such as toilets and cafe's is likely to only occur at a later phase, in line with general rules of such facilities, but that the reopening of the trails themselves and the car parks is feasible at an early stage without these ancillary facilities**

3. Bike Parks

We believe that gravity-orientated bike parks where an uplift service is commonly used may be achievable at an early stage in line with trail centres, via the reopening of trails and car parks, but without the reopening of ancillary facilities such as cafe and toilets. **We suggest that uplift services could also reopen with the onus on the facility to find ways to operate with strict social distancing rules and additional hygiene steps where appropriate.**

4. Racing & Events

Including both Cross-country and downhill race events and mass participation off-road sportive events. We believe that the risk profile for both continued spread of the disease (in the case of

mass events) and, physical risk of injury, is high for these events and that **their reopening should only be considered towards the later phases of the recovery period.**

Covid-19 specific guidance for mountain bike community:

- *Slow down early and leave extra room when passing other users in order to ensure social distancing*
- *Be sensitive to rural communities if considering travelling further from home to ride.*
- *Avoid activities that may result in injury or require emergency services support, especially in remote locations.*
- *Be aware that popular locations like National Parks or the coast may be very busy making social distancing difficult. Consider riding early or late rather than in the middle of the day.*
- *Plan ahead, as some sites and facilities may be closed or have restrictions.*
- *Observe general rules on hygiene, including regular hand washing, and not handling equipment belonging to others.*
- *Isolate if you show any symptoms of the disease.*

General advice for responsible mountain biking:

• **Be Nice, Say Hi:**

Show respect for other users by using common sense, drop your speed and give an audible warning when approaching other users, give way to walkers and horseriders (a legal duty on bridleways) and leave plenty of room when passing. Think about avoiding areas that are likely to be busy with walkers at peak times. Be nice, give everyone you meet a smile and a friendly greeting, even if they're being grumpy.

• **Leave No Trace:**

Protect the environment. Consider the net impact of your overall travel plans. Think about which trails you ride, in winter months some trails may be sensitive to heavy use, so consider alternative routes. Mountain biking is great for connecting with nature and seeing wildlife, but please avoid unnecessarily disturbing it, particularly during breeding season. Please take home, or suitably dispose of, any litter. No trail building without landowner permission.

• **Enjoy your surroundings:**

Do take time to learn more about the countryside, farming, forestry and wildlife, without it we would all be worse off. Leave gates as you find them, respect polite notices and if you do time something out of place, from escaped cattle to an obstructed right of way, then please make sure you report it through the appropriate channels. Observe biosecurity rules where

appropriate, which may include washing your bike and kit between venues to prevent the spread of 'chalara' related ash dieback or other diseases.

- **Use your head:**

Ride only on legal trails*, know your own limitations and plan ahead. Learn how to use a map, how to find your location and how to deal with an emergency. When riding in remote areas carry appropriate safety equipment and know how to use it, especially in remote areas. When mountain biking, always wear a helmet.

- **Have fun:**

Mountain biking is a great way to keep healthy and enjoy the countryside, either on your own or as part of a group. Cycle tourism plays an important part in the rural economy, so support local cycle-friendly businesses. Always remember that you are an ambassador for all cyclists, so show respect to other users and be sensitive to local communities both in how you ride on the trail, and how you behave before and after (for example, where you park your car, where and how you change out of muddy kit and your general behaviour).

*bridleways, restricted byways, byway open to all traffic, unsealed unclassified roads (ORPA) permissive trails and cycle tracks, and other paths and access land with an established or customary right to ride.

Getting messages out there?

OpenMTB has limited resources but we can work with Welsh Cycling/British Cycling, Cycling UK, National Park Authorities, NRW and Government to make sure the messages will resonate with the recreational MTB community.