



Ein cyf/Our ref HB/00222/20

Rebecca Brough

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16 April 2020

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for your e-mails of 30 and 31 March regarding the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions and Closures) (Wales) Regulations 2020. As you will no doubt be aware, these Regulations were revoked and replaced with a new set of Regulations with similar powers for the closure of open spaces and rights of way, the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020, on 26 March.

Both these sets of Regulations were drafted at very short notice with the Welsh Government, as I am sure you will appreciate, responding as quickly as possible to this health emergency. The Regulations place a duty on local authorities, National Park Authorities, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the National Trust to close certain public rights of way and access land where it is considered that these areas are:

- liable to large numbers of people congregating or being in close proximity to each other, or
- the use of which otherwise poses a high risk to the incidence or spread of infection in its area with the coronavirus.

Decisions on closures under these Regulations have drawn upon the local expertise of the organisations responsible for their management. In making these urgent decisions, they have balanced the need to avoid potential risks to the public – be they members of the public who are taking exercise, or those, such as farmers, who are working on adjacent land – and the need for people to be able to exercise for both their physical and mental wellbeing. Authorities were advised that we were not looking for extensive closures of footpaths (as outdoor spaces close to where people live will continue to be important to general wellbeing), but wish to close specific ‘honey pot’ routes and areas where people may be liable to congregate (often unintentionally).

Authorities have been requested to make the closures clear on their websites and a list of these will be available on the Welsh Government website shortly.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Welsh Ministers are required to keep the need for the restrictions imposed by the Regulations under review every 21 days, and Authorities have a duty to keep their closures under review and amend as necessary. It is expected that following the period of social isolation, path closures will be lifted immediately.

The risk of the coronavirus being passed on to others from people using public paths is considered to be very low, provided people follow the Government's instructions with regards to hygiene and maintaining social distancing. However, the Welsh Government has agreed that in circumstances where large numbers of people are using routes or they pass close by a residence with vulnerable people, landowners may:

- consider temporarily displaying notices that encourage users to respect local residents and workers by following social distancing guidelines and consider using alternative routes that do not pass through farmyards, or
- offer an additional, alternative route around farmyards where it is safe to do so, making sure the route is safe for users.

Guidance has been developed and issued in conjunction with Natural Resources Wales in respect of outdoor exercise that has emphasised key messages of not travelling and staying home as much as possible. This guidance and notification of the Regulations has been communicated to key stakeholders via the National Access Forum Wales, in order for them to disseminate the messages to their respective members. It is also available on the Welsh Government website <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-stay-active-stay-healthy-stay-local>

I have also issued a statement appealing to people to exercise responsibly in the countryside, follow the Countryside Code and reminding dog-owners of the need to keep dogs on leads in the vicinity of livestock. Further messaging around responsible recreation was issued in the lead up to the Easter break.

Yours sincerely,



**Hannah Blythyn AC/AM**

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol  
Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government