



South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group

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c/o Bryn Bolgoed, Libanus, Brecon LD3 8EP

07989 412415

mail@swoapg.com

swoapg.com

26 June 2020

Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS
First Minister of Wales
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear First Minister,

Recovery of the Adventure Tourism Sector in South Wales

Your announcement on Friday 19 June about the potential loosening of lockdown restrictions for tourism (and the subsequent re-opening of much of Brecon Beacons National Park) were most welcome to everyone involved in the sector. However, the adventure tourism sector is still at the cliff-edge in terms of its future unless further clarity is forthcoming in the next couple of weeks.

Our Members – who provide outdoor adventurous activities for a wide range of client groups – are desperate for more certainty on the restrictions that will be lifted on 6 July, so we are not put at a competitive disadvantage with England in terms of advance bookings. There is no prospect for most of our Members trading viably this season if the 5-mile restriction remains in place and while they may work only with single households with 2m social distancing. If these restrictions remain, our Members will struggle to earn enough money to sustain them through the winter and into 2021 (and even then are likely to need ongoing financial support to tide them over).

We therefore urge you to provide further clarity as a matter of urgency, so that we can inform our Members and help them prepare for re-opening their businesses:

- a) that travel restrictions will be eased on 6 July;
- b) that the 2m rule will be relaxed in Wales to 1m, at least for outdoor activity; and
- c) that groups from multiple households will be able to meet together, sooner rather than later, for the purposes of organised outdoor activity with appropriate social distancing and hygiene precautions put in place by organisers.

We also ask you to ensure that Visit Wales begins immediate, positive messaging that Wales will be 'open' as of the 6 July and that visitors are welcome – otherwise England again will steal a march on us and business will be lost.

Anticipating that restrictions will be eased on 6 July, those visitors who do come will expect the best possible experience. If we only have a partial opening of the sector, the visitor experience will fall short of expectations, reducing the likelihood of repeat visits in the future. When making holiday choices, why would someone choose Wales over England when they would perceive there to be a better experience in England, with more attractions able to open, more activities able to take place, and the hospitality sector open with only 1m social distancing in place?

The situation is still critical for our members and, with only a 'partial opening' and a shortened tourist season (or non-existent season for those that work in the education / training sector), we fear for the future of many of our Members' businesses who will have not managed to build any reserves to get them and their staff through the winter and into next year. We would therefore welcome your reassurance that ongoing financial support will be available for this sector over the coming months.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Rayner', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Steve Rayner OBE, Coordinator

cc.

Ken Skates MS, Minister for Economy and Transport

Dafydd Elis-Thomas MS, Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism