

Waterfall Country

Update July 2020



Opening Waterfall Country

The First Minister of Wales' statement has announced an easing of travel restrictions in Wales from the Monday 6th July. This will inevitably lead to an increase in the numbers visiting Waterfall Country from within Wales and further afield.

In light of this, the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Natural Resources Wales have been in discussions about the best way forward and have agreed that from the 6th July Waterfall Country, including all car parks, will re-open. It has been increasingly difficult to discourage visitors during the past few weeks and has taken up huge amounts of resources to do so. With visitor pressures expected to increase it will be easier to manage these when people have access to the footpaths and car parks are available. Car park availability will assist in reducing irresponsible parking that has been seen during lockdown. Powys County Council Highways are now enforcing parking restrictions in the area as often as they are able to given limited resources.

Both Dyfed Powys and South Wales Police will continue to support the Brecon Beacons National Park Warden and Natural Resources Ranger teams at parking sites and across the area especially with issues of anti-social behaviour. There has been a new Countryside Code produced (see article below) that reminds people that we are not back to 'normal', that we still need to behave in a way that protects the community, the environment and each other. Natural Resources Wales will be putting up some new signage to highlight the code.

The coming weeks will be a further challenge for all partners in Waterfall Country, but especially to local residents who may feel vulnerable with people visiting from other areas. All partners will do whatever they can to support the community during this time.

Rambling Rose

There are roses rambling through the hedges and blossoming at this time of year. The dog rose, *Rosa canina*, is a common sight and is an important plant for pollinators in the summer and for its bright red berries or hips that provide food for wildlife during the winter months.



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Traffic Enforcement

Powys County Council are actively enforcing the parking restrictions around Waterfall Country and you will be seeing their Enforcement Officers as often as they are able to given the limited resources available to them.

During the recent good weather, a number of penalty charge notices have been issued to individuals who parked where they shouldn't, especially on the new yellow lines at Comin-y-Rhos and Gwaun Hepste.

It is hoped that the message does get out there that they risk receiving a penalty if they contravene any restrictions that are imposed.

**Traffic & Travel Manager,
Powys County Council**



A New Countryside Code

With the re-opening of Natural Resource Wales' (NRW) car parks across Waterfall Country, NRW has issued a new Countryside Code to encourage people to behave in a way that safeguards communities and protects the environment. Just because these areas are now accessible does not mean things have returned to normal.

The new Countryside Code will be printed onto posters and leaflets to be displayed across the area at car parks and in other locations where we anticipate high numbers of visitors. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority have also adopted this code and their Warden team will be helping to get the message across.

Respect other people

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Park carefully so access to gateways and driveways are clear



Leave gates and property as you find them

- Follow paths but give way to others where it's narrow



Protect the natural environment

- Leave no trace of your visit, take all your litter home
- Be careful with BBQs, and don't light fires
- Keep dogs under effective control
- Dog poo - bag it and bin it, or take it with you

Enjoy the outdoors

- Plan ahead, check what facilities are open, be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs and obey social distancing measures.



Paul Dann, Natural Resources Wales

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Mountain Rescue



The volunteers who provide the Mountain Rescue emergency service covering Waterfall Country, thank all those who have taken heed of notices not to venture onto the mountains or visit the waterfalls during lockdown.

No-one plans to have an accident but when it does happen, Waterfall Country is a very difficult place to evacuate someone from, due to the steep gorges and tree cover, even with assistance from the Coast Guard helicopter.

With lockdown eased, the South Wales Search and Rescue

Association, an umbrella group for six rescue teams, fully understands peoples' desires to get back to the waterfalls, for their physical and mental health, but they urge people to stay within their limits and stick to familiar routes. The waterfalls are going to be there for a long time to come, we don't all need to rush back at once.

Any rescue operation will be more difficult as the teams will be smaller and are required to wear full PPE. This might mean that rescues take longer than in normal times. Please try to be safe, stay safe and help keep us safe.

Dan Mazhindu Press Officer, South Wales Search and Rescue Association

Local Businesses after Lock Down

This time of year would normally be one of the busiest times for tourism and other visitor facing businesses, with accommodation booked up and outdoor activity groups enjoying gorge walking, climbing and caving.

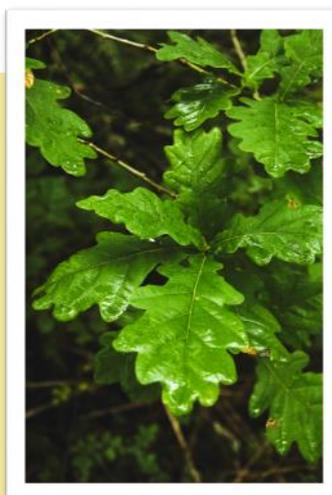
The coronavirus pandemic has meant that these businesses have been shut, just when they were gearing up for the new season, resulting in the a loss of work for employees and freelance outdoor instructors, many of whom are local. This has also had an enormous impact on the supply chain and those other local businesses that service those visitors such as local pubs, restaurants, shops and petrol filling stations.

Brecon Beacons Tourism and the South Wales Outdoor Activity Provider Group (SWOAPG) have been in discussions with businesses to find a way forward that works within the current Welsh Government guidelines to help businesses begin trading again.

The First Minister of Wales has indicated that attractions may open on 6th July, self contained accommodation on 13th July and then camp sites opening soon after. Businesses who can open will need to complete an online assessment and get a UK standard 'Good to Go' badge before allowing visitors to return. There is no indication yet of when pubs and cafes can re-open so this will mean limited services for visitors.

It is looking unlikely that things will return to normal until the start of the season in spring 2021 which means that businesses are facing a challenging second half of the year.

Brecon Beacons Tourism/SWOAPG



If you'd like to be added to the newsletter distribution list please contact: Eleanor Flaherty, Community Development Officer, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority eleanor.flaherty@beacons-npa.gov.uk 07854