

Gorge Users' Workshop



South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group

19 August 2020



**South Wales
Outdoor Activity
Providers Group**

Welcome!

- Thanks for joining us
- Some tips on using Zoom:
 - Please keep yourself 'muted' when not speaking (to avoid distracting background noise)
 - 'Rename' yourself if necessary (so we know who's attending) – just right-click on your current *Zoom* name and hit 'rename'
 - Please make use of the 'Chat' function – type your questions or comments in here and I'll make sure we address them
 - If you want to speak, wave at us or type a chat message (we might not be able to see you all the time!)
- We shan't be recording, but I'll be trying to make notes as we go along, as well as sharing my screen and keeping an eye on the Chat!
- Roger Lee will Chair the proceedings...

Introduction

- **Aim:**
 - Review and share experiences and ‘good practice’ around the precautions that Providers are taking to prevent the transmission of Covid-19 in gorge-walking and canyoning activities
- **Programme**
 - Updates on gorge access
 - Summary of requirements for preventing Covid-19 transmission
 - What this means for Providers in the gorge environment
 - Suggestions for ‘good practice’
- **Ways of Working**
 - We want everyone to be heard!
 - We’ll go round in turns from time to time
 - And use the Chat function if you have something to add!

Who's Here?



- Please introduce yourselves, very briefly (!)
 - Name
 - Business / organisation
 - How much you're currently using the gorge(s)
- Representatives attended the following businesses / organisations:
 - Blue Dot Adventure
 - Call of the Wild
 - Hawk Associates
 - Maes y Lade Centre
 - NPTC Group of Colleges
 - Parkwood Outdoors Dolygaer
 - School Camp
 - Storey Arms OEC
 - SWOAPG
 - UWC Atlantic College

Updates on Gorge Access (1)

1. “We’re Good to Go”

- Now a requirement from NRW and BBNPA for all gorge groups



2. Mellte bridge at Dinas

- Powys CC will be closing the bridge for repairs for a couple of weeks in September
- They’ll try to maintain pedestrian access
- We’ll pass on more detail in due course

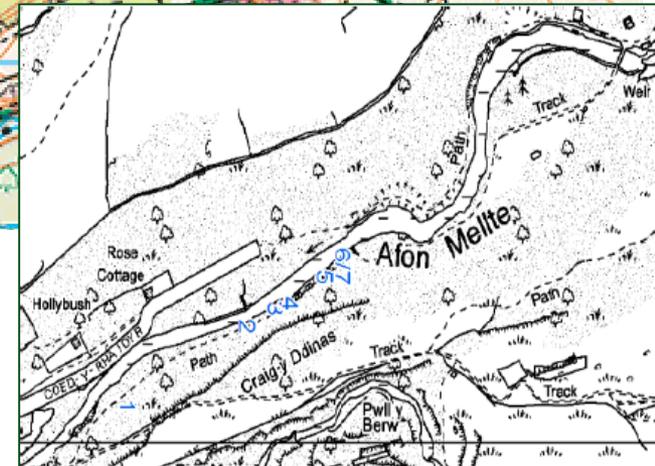
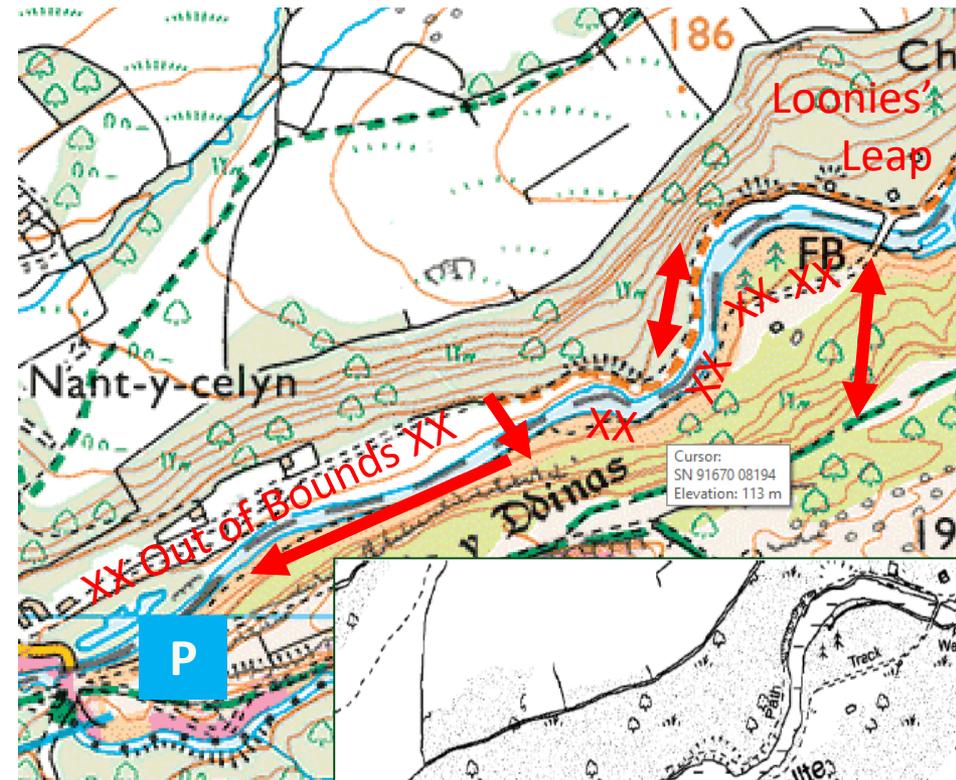
3. Loose stone at Loonies’ Leap

- Isn’t really ‘loose’ – but it does move a tiny bit under pressure, so please take care!

Updates on Gorge Access (2)

4. Path on river left now open to groups

- **One-way only, from lower footbridge to Dinas Rock (not between the 2 bridges)**
- Single-file only, no overtaking
- Beware of areas with sensitive species



Requirements for Preventing Covid-19 Transmission: Welsh Government Regulations



<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-legislation-and-guidance-law>

“The person responsible for work carried out at premises [including car parks & visitor attractions]...must

- a) take all reasonable measures to ensure that a distance of 2m is maintained between any persons on the premises (except between two members of the same [extended] household, or a carer and the person assisted by the carer)
- b) take any other reasonable measures for that purpose, for example measures which limit close face to face interaction and maintain hygiene such as...providing or requiring use of personal protective equipment [or even] ceasing to carry out certain activities
- c) provide information to those entering or working at the premises

and have regard to guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers about those measures”

“No person may, without a reasonable excuse, participate in a gathering outdoors that consists of more than 30 people

Requirements for Preventing Covid-19 Transmission: Welsh Government Guidance



<https://gov.wales/sport-recreation-and-leisure-guidance-phased-return-html>

- For Outdoor Organised Activities
 - Guidance must be implemented by NGBs and activity must follow NGB advice
 - **For “any organised outdoor activity outside the direct oversight of a sport NGB the organising body [i.e. the Provider] is responsible for implementing this guidance”**
 - 2m rules may “be breached in the narrow circumstances required by each sport during competitive play” – i.e. not for adventurous outdoor activity

• Also:

<https://gov.wales/workplace-guidance-employers-and-employees-covid-19>

- “Where people are unable to observe the 2m distancing rule and where closer working is required, take all reasonable measures to minimise exposure...for example by:
 - limiting the level of face-to-face interaction.
 - using physical barriers.
 - increased hygiene, environmental cleanliness and providing reminders about the importance of hygiene.
 - washing hands well for 20 seconds with soap and drying thoroughly, or using alcohol-based hand gels, before and after close contact”

<https://gov.wales/tourism-and-hospitality-businesses-guidance-phased-reopening>

Requirements for Preventing Covid-19 Transmission: Welsh Government Guidance



Sport, recreation & leisure guidance covers:

- Social distancing & hygiene
- Equipment cleaning
- Test, Trace, Protect; self-isolation
- Appointment of Coronavirus Officer
- Risk Assessment
 - “Where multiple sports/clubs are utilising the same training site/s all Coronavirus officers should share their risk assessments and operational plans, to ensure alignment and avoid any potential conflict between plans”
- Injury treatment
- Spectators
- Information for participants

Requirements for Preventing Covid-19 Transmission: Social Distancing with under-11s



(This slide added later in response to a question asked in the workshop)

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance>

- “In circumstances where young children mix with others, it may not be practical to attempt to maintain continual 2 metre distancing (between children, or even between children and adults). This is in part because it is harder for younger children to understand the concept of physical distancing, and in part because appropriate support from carers will often require closer contact.
- "For young children (those of primary school age or younger), it is in any case less essential to attempt to rigidly maintain continual 2 metre distance between them, or between the children and any adults outside their household or extended household. Studies have found that young children are less likely to transmit the virus, whether to other children or to adults, and the virus appears to take a milder course in children than in adults for most cases.
- "However as young children can still transmit the virus, parents of young children should still exercise their good judgement and take care especially to encourage their children to follow hand hygiene measures and keep close contact to a minimum wherever possible."
- We *think* this means that:
 - you're unlikely to be accused of breaking the law if you don't rigidly enforce social distancing with under-11s; but
 - to protect public health, you should still try to minimise the amount of close contact with and by under-11s.

Requirements for Preventing Covid-19 Transmission:

“We’re Good to Go” + HSE Guidance



- ✓ Read & Understand Government & Public Health Guidance
- ✓ Covid-19 Risk Assessment
- ✓ Nominated person
- ✓ Working from home
- ✓ Staff training & communication
- ✓ Cleaning
- ✓ Social distancing
- ✓ Communicating to clients



Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020

We confirm we have complied with the government's guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19

• FIVE STEPS TO SAFER WORKING TOGETHER •

- ✓ We have carried out a **COVID-19 risk assessment** and shared the results with the people who work here
- ✓ We have **cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures** in line with guidance
- ✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to **help people work from home**
- ✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to **maintain a 2m distance** in the workplace
- ✓ Where people cannot be 2m apart, we have done everything practical to **manage transmission risk**

WATO Guidelines for Safe Delivery of Gorge Walking and Canyoning



- <https://swoapg.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Safe-Delivery-of-Gorge-Walking-and-Canyoning-post-COVID-19-.pdf>
- Welsh Government Tourism Guidance signposts this via the Outdoor Alliance Wales document: <http://www.wato.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Post-Covid-recovery-plans-WALES.pdf>
- Covers:
 - Pre-delivery procedures
 - Delivery including personal & equipment hygiene, briefing, social distancing, group management / route selection (to reduce likelihood of close assistance), reducing risk (and likelihood of hands-on rescue)
 - Post-delivery including equipment cleaning & quarantine

The Costs of Ignoring the Guidance...



- Threat to Public Health
 - Presents poor image to the public
 - Insurance might be invalidated
 - Providers could be fined
 - Providers - or the entire activity – could be banned by landowners
- ⇒ How can we meet the requirements / what “reasonable adjustments” can we make to ensure public health in the gorges?

What does this mean for Providers in the Gorge Environment?

Comments from Participants



- How have you interpreted the regulations and guidance (in general terms, without too much detail!)?
 - Need to reinforce to staff the need to keep themselves 2m away wherever they can
 - Implications of an outbreak are that businesses could close down while staff self-isolate
 - We need to be able to reassure landowners that we're doing what we need to
 - Use WATO guidelines systematically to prepare risk assessment / procedures, from first point-of-contact; equipment issue; arrival; activity; equipment handling, transport, cleaning, quarantine
 - Need to reduce numbers: single family units or small mixed groups; keep multiple family groups independent of one another
 - Reduce time spent within 2m zone
 - It's easier with 'competent' groups who don't need much physical support
 - Need to think about why we're employing each measure: consider benefits vs. risk in terms both of clients transmitting to instructors and vice-versa
 - Considerations for transporting staff and groups
- What concerns / issues / questions has this raised?
 - Educating customers – they don't always listen or comply, so what do you do?
 - Differences with English rules / expectations
 - Clients turn up in non-bubble groups
 - Do we need to socially distance under 11s? (Mark Drakeford announcement 3 Aug - see earlier slide)
 - Water levels – easier to distance at low levels when less spotting etc. is needed
 - Face-masks don't work in the wet environment; visors alone aren't adequate and they steam-up – but maybe appropriate for use in equipment issue etc.?
 - Taking temperatures of clients – probably not worth it as it isn't a reliable indicator of infection
 - Noisy environment means people move closer to hear
 - Problems at pinch-points, especially with multiple groups

Suggestions for 'Good Practice' (time for the detail!)



- Managing clients & equipment
 - Be vigilant: repeat and reinforce messages (politely!) to clients
 - Use table to separate staff from clients during equipment issue
 - Consider using masks / visors during equipment issue, fitting & return
 - Use clients to load used kit into tubs / bags which get taken to base and cleaned / quarantined with minimal staff handling
 - Cleaning kit – including freelancers' kit – that clients have touched e.g. throwlines, slings, etc. – follow manufacturer's recommendations, otherwise good cleaning protocols using 'normal' cleaning products *may* be adequate – but the only certainty is 72-hour quarantine
- Using the car parks, toilets and changing areas
 - Think about how you park – e.g. don't block the route to the changing screens so that other people can't avoid being 2m from your clients!
 - We'll need to think about how to manage the changing screens when it gets busier: may need to liaise with community and adapt our advice about changing in the open...
 - Consider front-loading sessions with some exercises (e.g. how to 'spot') in the car park – help clients to be able to look after themselves and each other
- Maintaining social distancing in the gorges
 - Consider in advance which are 'better' & 'worse' routes and challenges
 - Move on or go elsewhere if venues and pinch-points are busy
 - Ask yourselves: if you *need* to be close, should you really be doing this? Can you avoid the situation or choose a different route or activity?
 - Reduce the amount of time you need to be within 2m – close assistance, spotting, etc. – use professional judgement to minimise this
 - Get clients to rake responsibility and help themselves / each other
 - Apply appropriate range of techniques e.g. handlines to reduce the need for close assistance
 - Visors and masks – some are using these, although they don't work well in the gorge environment – but they should be available for first aiders and casualties; and *perhaps* other 'dry' / 'static' situations
- Specific issues for Dinas / Sychryd
 - Consider walking back through 'ivy pool' if the tree-root climb requires too much spotting
 - Choose appropriate routes and spotting techniques up the cascade – use dynamic risk assessment and don't just do what you always do!

Final Words!



- We need to convey these messages to those who weren't here this evening
- SWOAPG's role is to promote good practice and protect the interests of the industry as a whole – we mustn't become 'the activity police', but we will liaise with NRW to implement the 'three-strikes' enforcement protocol if we're aware of Providers who aren't complying with good practice
- An on-site workshop would be useful for the start of next season
- Similar events to this would also be useful for caving, climbing, etc.