

GUIDANCE ON THE RETURN TO PADDLESport ACTIVITY

Limited return to paddling for exercise

Issued 3 June 2020 (Red Guidance, version 3)

Getting back on the water

The Welsh Government has advised that paddlesport should return 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. Wales is currently in the **Red** phase for a return to 'Exercise, playing sport and games', which for paddlers means that there is a **limited return to paddling for exercise only**. You can find more information about each phase in the Welsh Government's [published road map](#) which explains the traffic light system and in our COVID-19 Recovery Plan for Paddlesport.

Please check back on our website regularly to stay current with any changes to this guidance.

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 our local communities across Wales.

Key changes in Welsh Government guidance

On 29 May 2020, the First Minister announced the following [important changes](#) which took effect from 1 June 2020:

- In order to allow people to see family and friends, people from two households can now meet up outdoors;
- You must stay close to home, which for most people means you should not drive further than five miles.

We have adjusted the guidance below to reflect these changes. We continue to advise most clubs, outdoor centres and commercial providers to remain closed until further notice and all events are cancelled until at least 30 June 2020.

However, we have been advised by Welsh Government that the regulations do allow for private instruction provided:

- The instructor is only providing instruction to one household at a time (the instructor counts as the other household);
- Both the instructor and the clients stay within the travel restrictions (five miles for most people);
- There is no sharing of equipment, so the clients must already have their own paddling equipment and transport it themselves to the launch site.

Therefore, if you can meet these narrow criteria, we advise that you can resume some very limited commercial paddling activity. You should read our Guidance for Activity Providers and complete a COVID-19 risk assessment before you resume any commercial activity.

General guidance for 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 in the next section about how to assess which locations and activities are appropriate;*
- You should only paddle with members of your household or one other household;
- Stay at least 2m from other people outside of your household, including anyone you arrange to meet to paddle together — the only exception to this rule is possibly in a rescue or first aid situation;
- You should use safe launch points in your local area, which for most people means within five miles from your home. If there are no suitable launch points in your local area, you should stay local and use another form of exercise;
- Before you leave home, check that the waterway and launch point you wish to use are both open;
- Respect any local restrictions and do not paddle if a waterway or launch point is closed; *See the additional advice below about what to do if a launch point has been closed;*
- Avoid areas that you know will be busy, and have a back-up plan to go somewhere else in your local area if you arrive at a launch point and find it busy;
- Launch and land as quickly as possible;
- Do not share equipment outside of your household;
- Wash your hands 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;
- 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 and take your card with you;
- Bring a copy of this guidance with you so you can show it to any local officials who may not be aware of our current guidance.

Keeping risk to a minimum

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 competent to paddle at this location, bearing in mind that we may not have paddled for more than 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, safety equipment and a means of communication, and do we know how to use it?
- How will we deal with an incident which requires a rescue, i.e. do we know who to contact and how?
- How far will we be journeying?
- Are the access or egress points open to the public?
- Have I told someone else where we are going and when we will return?

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 waterways, venues or launch points which are closed. Please be aware that a significant number of car parks and paddling locations continue to be closed to the public.

If you arrive somewhere and find access is restricted, 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 where appropriate 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 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. The Welsh Government has advised that the next review will take place on 18 June 2020, when they will consider whether more managed outdoor sites can reopen, amongst other possible changes. 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.