

COVID-19

Engagement guidance: volunteering, training, family and education events



Introduction

We are now slowly returning to our face-to-face engagement at Gwent Wildlife Trust. Returning to this form of engagement must be carried out in a planned and measured way. This guidance outlines the processes and actions that need to be considered to ensure activities involving volunteers and the public are adequately controlled with regards to activity management and communication. As an organisation, we must protect people from harm. This includes reasonable steps to protect workers, volunteers and participants from COVID-19. We must:

- Identify what work activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus
- Think about who could be at risk
- Decide how likely it is that someone could be exposed
- Act to remove the activity or situation, or if this is not possible, control the risk

Following the procedures detailed in this guidance will ensure that the well-being of both the general public, volunteers and staff is well considered and maintained.

Communication is key as engagement activities begin to start, ensuring that extra frustrations and pressures are avoided as much as possible and ensuring the risks relating to both the activity and coronavirus are understood. It is important to clearly define and communicate to participants why an activity has been permitted, and the benefits as a result. Different levels of engagement may vary due to local conditions (if there is a shutdown in one area but not in another) and GWT will follow Welsh Government advice.

Important note: It is a natural human instinct to move close to people to talk and interact. When concentrating on a task this often happens automatically without conscious awareness and will result in the raising of risk of coronavirus transmission. For this reason, the role of the person leading an activity is of particularly high importance at this time.

Guidance on Covid-19 symptoms and self-isolation are below. Please make yourself aware of this in light of any engagement activities taking place.

Symptoms (from NHS website)

- A high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- A new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If you develop one of these symptoms you should:

1) Self-Isolate

You must self-isolate at home for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started. Anyone you live with should also not leave your home for 10 days. See <https://gov.wales/self-isolation-stay-home-guidance-households-possible-coronavirus> for more information on this. **AND**

2) Apply for a coronavirus test here - <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> and see <https://gov.wales/apply-coronavirus-covid-19-test> for more information.

Government Advice

This guidance is underpinned by the regulations, guidance and advice from the Welsh Government. The approach to lockdown and easing of restrictions is changing regularly so the review of this document will happen on a regular basis to ensure the guidance is kept up to date.

The risk of the coronavirus being passed on to others outdoors is considered to be low as long as people maintain social distancing. The Welsh Government has issued two policies that cover scenarios for Gwent Wildlife Trust engagement activities: [Creating safer public places: coronavirus](#) (updated 23rd October 2020), and [Taking all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus in workplaces and premises open to the public](#) (updated 26th October 2020).

Number of Participants

Current guidance remains that across Wales, no amount of people can congregate together outdoors. When we began returning volunteers and other engagement activities, GWT recommended keeping group number at 6 or less for a period to allow covid-safe practices to bed in. In recent weeks staff have become comfortable in ensuring covid-safe practices, and therefore GWT will now allow up to a maximum of 6 people (including staff) to be involved in an essential engagement activity or essential work task at one time, should it be safe to do so. As the event organiser we have a duty of care to risk assess such activities and take all reasonable measures to minimise risk of exposure to coronavirus.

Only work tasks designated as essential can take place, these include, safety work e.g. removal of fallen trees, animal welfare e.g. animal checks, and funded work may take place, with a maximum of 6 people including staff.

Volunteers who have underlying health conditions, or who would rather shield do not have to take part and arrangements to replace them in any rotas should be carried out ASAP. Additionally, volunteers who live in a Tier 3 areas in England are not allowed to travel into Wales and are not allowed to take part in work tasks. Please let your volunteers know of these stipulations in advance to avoid unnecessary travel.

Key Considerations

Steps that will usually be needed or considered before deciding to run an engagement activity:

- Tools and equipment should not be shared; therefore, each individual should be given their own equipment for the task. Consider how many you have and how to prepare, distribute and identify it.

- The equipment should be disinfected after each use or left for a minimum of 72 hours before being used again – label it to indicate date of last use, or store in a quarantined area.
- Work gloves should be provided to participants if the task requires it. These should be new and retained by each participant for their own use again, after washing. Alternatively, staff can request participants provide their own gloves if possible.
- Consider who is delivering the GWT activity, if they are being put at higher than acceptable risk by doing so and if there is cover available if they need to isolate due to a school outbreak
- Consider the activity you want to undertake and the location (outdoors). Ensure that participants can maintain 2m distancing and work side by side rather than face to face. If 2m distancing is not possible for some of the activity, consider if it needs to happen, or reduce the time spent in close proximity to an absolute minimum and use face coverings. Does the activity need to be altered or stopped from taking place? If 2 metres cannot be maintained then face masks must be worn.
- Consider how volunteers who work independently can reduce transmission of the virus – sanitising hands upon arrival at site and before they leave, wearing gloves.
- Ensure that a suitable distance can be maintained from the public, if you are on a site which is open. Consider using signage or barrier tape to remind people.
- Ensure you have considered how to maintain appropriate hygiene during the activity – hand gel, use of toilet facilities (which will need touch points cleaning after each use). Toilets should not be open to the public, just to those participating in an engagement activity. You may need signs to make this clear.
- Ensure that all participants clean their hands when they arrive, and at regular intervals throughout the activity especially before and after consuming food or drinks and before leaving site.
- Ensure that terms and conditions are in place to reflect COVID-19 specific practices, including notification of an outbreak, refunds or transfers of booking (if applicable) and collection of names and contact details for test and trace purposes.
- Consider what else is happening on the site and communicate with other colleagues when planning your activity e.g. reserve maintenance, other engagement activities. For example, a reserve work task and a family activity day planned for the same time would probably bring too many people to site to ensure safety.

Remember the Welsh Government advice relating to Covid-19, whereby everybody must:

- Always observe social distancing
- Wash your hands regularly
- If you meet another household, stay outdoors
- Work from home if you can
- Stay at home and get tested if you or anyone in your household has symptoms.

Social distancing is a central pillar of Welsh Government communication. In fact, it is a legal requirement in Wales under the Coronavirus Regulations that employers ensure that everything reasonable is done to maintain a 2 metre distance between people while they are working, including in outdoor locations.

Equally, managing this needs to reflect the high degree of personal responsibility that lies with the participant/individual. Any control measures regarding maintaining social distancing should reflect this and need to be reasonable and practicable. Managing social distance may lead to increased lone working for staff and volunteers, as a result of this, thorough risks assessments and the lone working policy must be adhered to.

Communication

As with all activities, communication is key to ensuring good management of activities, risk and participant perception. We need to find ways to inform participants about our Covid-19 precautions, so they know how to behave. The below points are advisory to help support continued strong communication.

22nd December 2020

- Some participants may be keen to start or get back to engaging in the outdoors. However, some will remain very cautious regarding Covid-19, therefore they should be encouraged to consider whether they wish to participate.
- Make participants aware of the limited numbers for engagement due to Covid-19 and the need to book on their session, for both number control and Track and Trace purposes.
- Before the day of the essential activity, communicate to participants the Code of Conduct (at end of this document and saved separately [here](#)) so they are aware of GWT's expectations of them to minimise the risk of coronavirus transmission
- Provide participants with a rationale as to why the activity is being run
- Take the register on the day, explaining that recording who is present is part of our On-The-Day risk assessment acceptance as well as the Welsh Government's Test and Trace strategy.
- Give a safety briefing before commencing the activity, ask if participants have any Covid-19 symptoms, ask participants to inform us if they find themselves symptomatic with Covid-19 or test positive within 10 days of the activity, and finally sign the Covid-19 on-the-day risk assessment sheet to confirm that participants understood the safety talk and are not symptomatic. There are three options here:
 - BEFORE the day, send the relevant risk assessments to the booked on participants and ask them to reply by return email with a confirmation that they understand and will adhere to them
 - Ask participants to bring a pen, then sanitise hands or wear gloves in order to enable them to sign the on-the-day risk assessment themselves.
 - Clearly ask if participants understand and agree to the on-the-day risk assessment and you, the task leader, signs on their behalf.
- When giving the safety briefing, give them the option of reading the risk assessments if they have not been sent in advance.
- Where possible, keep participants within a safe distance but able to hear any communication, or at least be seen, throughout the activity. This means that they can be effectively supervised, and ensures compliance to the on-the-day risk assessment and Code of Conduct
- As participants leave, ask for their feedback on how things were run.
- Encourage post-activity communication
- Face coverings are not required for normal engagement activity taking place outdoors, providing social distancing is maintained, but if participants choose to wear one, support them to do so. AND
- Make participants aware that they can speak to you in confidence if they feel uncomfortable with any situation and if they would like all other participants to wear a face covering if they feel particularly vulnerable or have been shielding.

Health and safety equipment

If social distancing is observed, then personal health and safety equipment should not be required for outdoor activities. However, if the relevant Risk Assessment indicates a need, health and safety equipment suitable for the activity/role undertaken should be provided. Remember that once provided to an individual, health and safety equipment will need to be retained by that individual, disposed of after use, collected and disinfected or collected into a bag or box where it can be left for 72 hours, depending on the equipment.

Participant flow assessment and task area management

We need to manage our participants carefully, and assessing where people will walk (participant flow assessment) as well as considering the practicalities of where the activity is taking place (task area management) will help. When planning activities, GWT staff should identify pinch-points and gathering areas where it would be difficult to achieve social distancing. These could include access points from car parks, boardwalks, narrow paths and facilities such as hides and toilets (remember, toilets are not open to the public, just to those taking part in the engagement activity). Staff should introduce practical control measures if required to facilitate social distancing. These might include:

- One-way systems
- Movement of obstructions/cutting vegetation to provide more space and visibility to allow social distancing
- Additional signage and social distance markers to promote social distancing
- A minimum of a 2-metre zone between participants and staff
- Division of area/site into personal activity areas – use of barrier tape
- Activities not taking place if they cannot be completed while maintaining a social distance

Engaging with people: General points

During Covid-19, online engagement has become increasingly popular. As a result, we envisage that online engagement will become integrated into our engagement programmes, with a resilient offer that creates virtual in addition to face to face engagement.

However, it is important that participants are able to access the opportunities we offer for face to face engagement in the natural environment to support Gwent's recovery post Covid-19. Where roles traditionally involve direct face to face engagement with members of the public, risk assessments must be carried out and risk controls implemented to ensure social distancing can be maintained. If participant behaviour causes concern, for example refusing to respect social distancing, then the staff member can ask the participant to leave or withdraw from the situation.

All staff must wear branded clothing so they are easily identifiable and have access to hand-cleaning materials such as alcohol-based hand sanitiser and/or soap, warm water and paper towels. When using engagement materials such as sheets, leaflets etc, staff should present information verbally, or hand out materials that do not need to be returned. Consider how to minimise transmission when preparing these resources to hand out, and consider how you will distribute them whilst maintaining a 2m distance. Any materials that need to be returned, such as questionnaires or feedback forms, should be managed online or returned to a box which is left untouched for 72 hours.

Hygiene - Key points:

- Minimise the number of participants touching/handling points such as door handles, chairs, benches, interpretation materials, engagement materials, tools or other resources.
- A high and visible level of hygiene will reassure participants
- Areas such as toilets and hand washing facilities, and door handles to indoor environments are key areas for regular cleaning - staff should aim to clean these regularly during engagement activities, and at least every 2 hours.
- Where there are regular, unavoidable touch points, hand sanitiser dispensers should be made available.
- Toilets should be maintained through an enhanced cleaning regime during which they are closed to safeguard cleaning staff.
- Toilets must be provided with soap and disposable paper towels.
- Where no toilets are available hand sanitiser must be offered.
- Face coverings are not required for normal outdoor engagement activities where social distancing can be maintained. GWT have provided staff with their own face covering for circumstances where social distancing may be compromised such as administering first aid or helping to manoeuvre a heavy object where the health or safety of that individual would be compromised by not providing assistance. Volunteers and other engagement participants will be encouraged to wear their own face coverings in these situations as well.

Indoor activities

No indoor activities as of 19th December 2020.

22nd December 2020

Risk Assessment Process

Staff should familiarise themselves with the Covid-19 Engagement Activities risk assessment, along with the site and activity specific risk assessments linked to the task(s) planned. Their key information and significant risks should be applied to the on-the-day risk assessment sheet/safety talk which participants must listen to, confirm that they understand, confirm that they have no covid-19 symptoms, and either cleanse hands and use their own pen to sign the sheet or give their agreement to the GWT leader to sign on their behalf, prior to activities taking place. In addition, the full risk assessments can also be presented to participants and available for them to read if requested. An alternative method to signing the sheet on the day is to email the relevant risk assessments in advance of the day's activities and ask for participants to reply and state that they understand and will adhere to the risk assessments. The reply must be stored in the same way that the on-the-day risk assessments are scanned and saved on the Y:drive in the H&S Risk Assessments Folders. If participants refuse to have their signature against the on-the-day risk assessment, or declare covid-19 symptoms, then they are not permitted to commence the activity.

Covid-19 is just one of the risks to be considered in engaging with audiences in the outdoors. We must also remember our normal risk assessment processes and control measures.

Activity Priorities

To assist with determining whether an activity should proceed, you should determine its priority or urgency. The greater the priority, the easier it is to define a rationale as to why the activity is required; however, the risk to run the activity needs careful consideration and resources such as correct health and safety equipment and supervision levels need to be in place before an activity can take place.

High priority tasks are permitted to run, but only when the Potential Risk Level is Low. No Moderate or Low Priority activities should take place.

Activity	Definitions & Examples	Priority	Potential Risk Level if risk assessment control measures adhered to
Individual or pairs of volunteers carrying out activities on a GWT site (outdoors)	e.g. sheep checking, species monitoring, fixed point photography, reserve warden	High, particularly sheep checkers	Low – covid transmission and lone working
Group of up to 6 participants on a GWT site (outdoors) engaging in a GWT led essential volunteer activity	e.g. essential group work tasks	High, to enable reserve management	Low – covid transmission
Group of up to 6 participants on a GWT site (outdoors) engaging in a GWT led activity or event <u>Against WG coronavirus regulations so must not take place</u>	e.g. walk, non-certificated training such as simple species ID or photography	Moderate, promoting GWT	Low – covid transmission

Group of up to 6 participants on a non-GWT owned site (outdoors) engaging in a GWT led activity or event <u>Against WG coronavirus regulations so must not take place</u>	e.g. walk or course on Council site, or privately owned site probably that we manage, like Dingestow.	Moderate, promoting GWT	Low – covid transmission
Families visiting a GWT site OR non-GWT owned site (outdoors) engaging in a GWT led activity (up to 6 participants) <u>Against WG coronavirus regulations so must not take place</u>	e.g. family activities at Magor Marsh or ERC, family activities on Council owned site	Moderate, promoting GWT	Low – covid transmission
Adults attending training at a GWT site led by GWT (up to 6 participants) <u>Against WG coronavirus regulations so must not take place</u>	e.g. accredited training such as teacher training at Magor or ERC; NPTC machinery training	Moderate, income generation	Moderate – if some parts are held indoors
Entirely indoor engagement activities, on GWT sites, for all ages and for up to 6 participants <u>Against WG coronavirus regulations so must not take place</u>	e.g. indoor training courses, indoor family activities, office based volunteering	Moderate, income generation or office support	High – covid transmission
Large groups (more than 6) of any ages on GWT owned or non-GWT owned sites, indoors or outdoors <u>Against WG coronavirus regulations so must not take place</u>	e.g. open days	Low, GWT promotion possible through other methods	High – covid transmission

Planning your sessions

Use your usual on-the-day risk assessments alongside the COVID-19 specific risk assessment to keep you and your participants safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please consider the type of activity you are doing.

How many people are allowed? Who is allowed?

- Maximum of 6 participants including staff.
- Staff should consider how busy the site is as well as number of tools or resources and PPE available and the activities taking place, so the group size may as a consequence be smaller.
- Consider any local lockdown restrictions

Publicity and sign ups for group activities

- When publicising your work task or activity, give clear info of the need to sign up in advance to limit numbers and to assist with track and trace systems as well as any restrictions due to Local Lockdowns. Explain that if people turn up without booking in advance they may well be told that they cannot participate on this occasion in order to protect the health and safety of others
- Find out at point of sign up if people are from the same household and can therefore participate together, as well as what local authority they live in.
- Make clear if they are showing Covid-19 symptoms or are feeling unwell, they must not attend
- Children should not attend activities without a responsible adult

Signing in and out on the day

- Ask participants if they are showing symptoms. If they are, politely ask them to leave the session and return home
- Have the attendee list written out in advance, recorded on the covid-19 on-the-day risk assessment or viewable on a phone
- Leader can sign people in to avoid sharing pens once the participant has confirmed they have understood the safety talk and that they have no covid-19 symptoms; Alternatively, ask participants to bring a pen and sanitise hands before signing in themselves. A third alternative is to email risk assessments in advance and receive confirmation of understanding via email.
- Ask participants to wash or sanitise hands on arrival at the activity
- Ask participants to let the leader know when they are leaving so they can be signed out

Have all equipment and tools ready

- Tools or other resources should be freshly disinfected if handled within the last 72hrs, especially on handles/ main contact areas
- Have tools or resources ready in a box or tray or similar so that individual tools can be picked up without touching others and in enough space to allow participants to keep 2m apart. If practical, this could be done at least 72hrs in advance of the activity to negate the need to clean them on the day.

During session – social distancing, tools and hygiene

- Social distancing of 2m should be maintained at all times
- Staff and participants should be encouraged to use a face covering if social distancing cannot be maintained for any reason
- Tools to be used by each participant should be identified at the start of the session – consider how to identify these such as coloured tape.
- Tools should not be shared during a session
- Assign gardening/work gloves (if task requires it) to each individual that they keep and don't return
- Remind participants to wash or sanitise hands regularly during the activity, and at very least before and after consuming food or drink.

- After the session, clean all tools or resources thoroughly with soap and water or sanitising spray. If you know they will not be used again for at least 72 hours they can be left in a box or quarantined area and labelled with the date of last use.

During session – staff leader responsibilities

- The staff leader's role is to supervise and maintain 2m social distancing, alongside the normal staff leader responsibilities
- Staff leader focus will be on making sure everyone is working safely, in line with the guidance. They should not be as involved in the task as usual as the first priority is ensuring safety
- Use 'social distancing' hi-viz bibs, hazard tape and fold-away 'social distancing' signs to help remind participants and the public.
- Give a thorough H&S briefing and equipment/tools talk at the start of the session to remind participants of social distancing and measures in place to protect each other, as well as the session plan. Point out to the group if any participants are from the same household and therefore able to work together

End of session

- Ensure participants sign out/tell you that they are leaving
- Ensure participants wash or sanitise hands before leaving site
- Arrange a safe, contact-free drop off space for tools or resources which need cleaning
- Ask participants for feedback on improvements
- Clean tools or resources, or leave in a secure place clearly labelled with date last used

Engaging with the general public

- People may approach the group—be ready to politely remind them to maintain at least 2m distance
- Leader should wear a Hi-Viz jacket to encourage members of the public with questions to only approach the leader

Accidents and first aid

- First aiders to be aware of the information from the Resuscitation Council (UK) <https://www.resus.org.uk/covid-19-resources/covid-19-resources-general-public/resuscitation-council-uk-statement-covid-19>

Refreshments

- GWT staff must not provide refreshments. If it is a hot day this must be factored into pre-activity communication and the on-the-day risk assessment
- Ask participants not to bring food to share. Remind participants to wash or sanitise hands before and after eating their own food

Recommended health and safety list

- Fully charged mobile phone in case of emergencies
- 1 set of gardening/work gloves per person – please take care when taking gloves off not to touch the outer parts (pull off inside out) or your face. Participants should wash their own gloves, or leave them for 72 hours
- Face covering
- Hand sanitiser – and suggest participants bring their own

If participants come down with symptoms after taking part in a session they must [book a COVID-19 test](#) and let the staff leader know the outcome. If the outcome is positive, all to follow the [NHS Test and Trace process](#).



Coronavirus Engagement Code of Conduct

All participants should read and follow these precautions:

- ✓ **Maintain 2m social distancing at all times**
- ✓ **Use a face covering if you are unable to keep a 2m distance from others**
- ✓ **Avoid working face-to-face with someone else**
- ✓ **Sanitise hands regularly**
- ✓ **Maintain hygiene standards defined by GWT staff**
- ✓ **Strictly adhere to the risk assessments detailed by GWT staff**
- ✓ **Come prepared with your own refreshments**
- ✓ **Book beforehand and sign in on the day – test and trace purposes**
- ✓ **Inform GWT if you develop Covid-19 symptoms within 10 days of taking part in any GWT activities**

- × **Do not attend if you are experiencing symptoms of Covid-19 or have recently been in contact with someone who has**
- × **Do not share tools, gloves, equipment or refreshments**