

ORGANISATIONAL RISK ASSESSMENT

EXPOSURE TO AND CONTRACTION OF COVID-19

The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales (and its subsidiaries) are fully committed to the health, safety and general comfort of our staff, volunteers and visitors, including contractors and temporary workers, as well as any members of the public who might come into contact with our operations. We are committed to playing our part in managing the current situation. We understand that people have concerns and the Trust will not expect any staff or volunteers to undertake activities that put them at unreasonable risk, or that causes them stress or anxiety as a result of C-19.

What is the hazard?

C-19 is a novel strain of Coronavirus first identified in humans in Wuhan City, China in January 2020. It rapidly spread and developed into a worldwide pandemic. A new variant identified in late 2020 is now circulating everywhere in Wales. This new strain of the virus is up to 70 percent more transmissible than the original virus.

The illness affects the lungs and airways. Common symptoms of coronavirus are a cough, a high temperature and shortness of breath. It should be regarded as a very serious hazard.

Who is at risk?

C-19 can make anyone seriously ill, but for some vulnerable groups of people, the risk is higher and some may die from the disease.

Clinically vulnerable people include those aged 70 and over, those with specific chronic pre-existing conditions, and pregnant women. A further group of people with specific serious health conditions, are defined as clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus on medical grounds. Others who may not be in these categories may share homes with those that are. In addition, the C-19 crisis has caused many people considerable mental stress.

Two vaccinations were approved for use in late 2020 and a mass vaccination program began in January 2021, prioritising vulnerable groups and key workers.

How is it spread?

The disease is spread mainly from person-to-person, usually via close contact. That could be via physical contact, like shaking hands with a contaminated person or touching contaminated surfaces. Simply being near an infected person who coughs, sneezes, or talks can expose you to their infected respiratory droplets.

It can survive on surfaces for a period after transfer (depending on such things as the surface type, its moisture content and temperature.)

Importantly some people, including children, young adults and those who have been vaccinated, may be capable of spreading it to others even though they don't have any symptoms.

Statutory control measures to limit transmission

WTSWW closely follow the Welsh government guidelines, including those relating to increased restrictions as the Alert Levels are raised. We expect everyone to follow these guidelines.

During the course of the pandemic there have been many updates to the Government's health and safety guidance, but to date no specific information has been provided on whether additional measures should be taken to protect employees from the new variant. However, the main rules around handwashing and social distancing have not changed.

Social Distancing - stay 2 metres away from people outside of your household.

Handwashing and respiratory hygiene - wash hands more often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser. Especially when in contact with surfaces / equipment touched by visitors or other team members, when you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, eat or handle food. Washing of hands should also take place prior to work commencing, before leaving site and on arrival home.

Reporting a self-isolation - Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 must immediately self-isolate and book a test. Staff and volunteers should inform their line manager as soon as possible.

Engineering controls

Site and activity specific Risk Assessments cover all WTSWW buildings and staff and volunteer activities.

Mitigation is focused on 'touch-points' and shared equipment and tools, pinch points (where people could congregate in confined spaces) and face-to-face contact. Offices, workshops and shared spaces have been re-organised to gradually allow more people to return to work as Alert Levels allow, whilst keeping staff apart, BUT only if they cannot continue to work from home.

Offices: single occupancy, assigned workstations, one-way systems, back-to-back or side-to-side working and face-coverings in shared spaces.

Travel: Vehicles should not be shared; staff use their own vehicle to travel to/from work (not public transport) or a Trust vehicle. Active transport is encouraged and facilitated.

Activity risk assessments cover tools, separate tool storage areas, allocation of personnel activity related PPE and how staff and volunteers can work together safely.

Administrative Controls

All activities are constantly reviewed and will reinstated or suspended in line changes to the National or local Alert Level system.

Working from home remains the preferred option. In cases where working from home is not possible, measures are in place to ensure compliance with the 2m social distancing guidelines. We continue to facilitate flexible working arrangements and the use of video conferencing for meetings. Additional cleaning regimes are in place for shared facilities, including vehicles.

Cafes at the Welsh Wildlife Centre and Parc Slip remain open for a take-away only menu with limited hours. Toilets and carparks will also be open. CBMWC, Lockley Lodge, Skomer and Skokholm Islands remain closed.

Unsupervised volunteering activity and group activities under the direct supervision of a member of staff have been risk assessed. Group activity will only proceed where we are confident that social distancing can be maintained and we can comply with the government's Track, Trace, Protect system. All activity is subject to the Alert Level in place at the time.

Personal Protective Equipment

Where staff and volunteers already use PPE in their work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, this should continue.

The use of face-coverings and gloves (PPE) to protect against C-19 infection is a last resort. Only where all other controls are impractical is PPE included in the written risk assessment. The use of PPE does not guarantee that an activity can proceed.

Monitoring and Reporting

Reduced supervision and oversight of working practice will be a direct result of implementing social distancing measures, an increase in lone-working and the furloughing of staff. Buddy details are regularly checked and updated. Line managers will stay in contact with staff by telephone/videoconference, request feedback and monitor staff well-being.

Decision Making

Welsh Government updates the national position every three weeks. However, guidance from stakeholder groups is received daily as Covid-19 restrictions change. As a result, our activity and site specific Risk Assessments are regularly updated via the H&S Working Group and considered by the senior management team when necessary.

Communications

Public information will be updated on the WTSWW website and site social media channels. Changes to site opening arrangements will be clearly communicated (what facilities will be available to visitors?) The approach will be for a phased re-opening with only essential messaging in recognition of local sensitivities. Staff will continue to update volunteer groups locally.