

Dear Community Councils

Covid - 19 and Public Access

Issued 9th April 2020 – subject to change with further Government Advice

Further to our letter issued 8th April 2020 Scottish Government advice was issued this morning (9th April 2020) and this is why we are writing to you again. If further changes are issued we will of course keep you updated.

We have posted guidance on our website (on path and outdoor access pages) and are keeping this updated in line with the latest Government advice. Please see the current version for information below in a format which may be useful to print out and place on site for public information.

A statement by Scottish Ministers on what exercising rights of access responsibly under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 means during the COVID-19 emergency was issued earlier on today (9th April) and is as follows:

The Scottish Government's introduction of a right of responsible access for all remains one of the most successful and popular provisions passed by the Scottish Parliament. These rights continue to apply, and exercise remains important for people's physical and mental wellbeing during the current crisis. The idea of responsibility in exercising access rights has, however, always been at the core of that policy, as set out in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

This statement sets out what that means in the context of the COVID-19 emergency. Further, more detailed guidance will be produced by Scottish Natural Heritage in consultation with key stakeholders.

- *The current outbreak of COVID-19 is an unprecedented national emergency and is a challenge for everyone. Staying at home has become the only way of slowing the spread of this virus and giving our NHS the chance to cope and save lives.*
- *Under current guidance, it is only permitted to leave your home for specific reasons, including to take exercise, alone or with other members of your household, and no more than once a day.*
- *Essential workers, including farmers who are helping to maintain the nation's food supply and have important animal welfare responsibilities, must be allowed to go about their business without interference or fear of unnecessary exposure to COVID-19*
- *It is a requirement of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code that we all behave in a responsible way that is considerate of other people. This means that, during the current emergency, everyone should:*
 - *Stay local – please do not travel in your car to take exercise; please make use of the paths, open spaces and quiet roads in your own local area*

- *Maintain your distance – please stay at least 2 metres away from other people and if possible try to avoid busy times on popular paths or places*
 - *Respect the health and safety of farmers and others working the land – please follow all reasonable requests and signs to avoid particular areas, such as farmyards, fields with pregnant or young livestock, and other busy working areas*
 - *Keep your dog under control – please put them on a lead or keep them close at heel and do not let them approach other people or livestock*
 - *Avoid contact – try to avoid touching surfaces and if possible plan a route that does not require you to open gates*
- *The Scottish Outdoor Access Code requires that people walking dogs act responsibly, take notice of any signs, and prevent their dogs from scaring or attacking any livestock.*
 - *Farmers and other land managers are entitled, and indeed encouraged, to put up signs when they have pregnant or young livestock in a field.*
 - *If threatened by cattle, release your dog and take the shortest route out of the field. As always pick up and remove all waste.*

This is a temporary situation and it is more important now than ever to maintain good relationships between neighbours and within communities. This is not about restricting the general right of responsible non-motorised access to land but it is part of the wider approach to prevent COVID-19 deaths and preserving the nation's food supplies.

Exercising access rights responsibly means respecting the needs of other people, and you will need to adapt your behaviour accordingly in the national effort to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Land managers should respect access rights, which are particularly important at this difficult time. If necessary, use helpful signs to highlight issues to users and suggest reasonable alternative routes.

If you have any specific worries or concerns regarding this please contact Community Greenspace on 01738 476476 communitygreenspace@pkc.gov.uk to discuss them.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Community Greenspace