



Derbyshire Caving Association Update on Covid-19 & caving activities 1/6/2020

This statement is an update to the DCA information issued on the 12th May.

The current Government guidance can be read [here](#).

As with DCA's previous statements on the Coronavirus, we are putting out this information in response to a request for guidance from local cavers. We are not here to police caving or advise one way or the other if it is appropriate at this time.

In Short...

It is essential that you as individuals weigh up the moral and legal obligations you have when deciding when and where to return to caving and mine exploration. Cavers and Mine Explorers should comply with the Government guidance and take note of any advisory statements from the British Caving Association.

A number of landowners in the area have asked for cavers (and other users) to stay away for the time being. The updated list of closed sites can be seen on the DCA website. Check the access details on the [cave registry](#) pages.

Those who lead others underground (instructors or club leaders) may also need to contact their insurer, develop covid-19 policies inline with the [Covid-19 secure guidelines](#) and ensure landowners consent to their presence. Leaders & instructors should contact the Qualifications Management Committee of BCA for guidance on the area of returning to leading caving.

We ask that if you return to caving that you consider the following:

Does my intended activity fall within the current legally permissible exercise and travel guidance from the UK Government? (e.g. 2m social distancing & max group size)

Am I fit and able enough to undertake this trip? Am I caving well within my ability level to reduce the chance of an accident resulting in the need for rescue?

How can I limit the chance that I will encounter other cavers from more than one other household on this trip? If we do, can we guarantee social distancing from them?

Have I checked the closure list for sites that do not want cavers on their land at this time?

How will the public and rural communities perceive cavers returning to their sport? Discretion on the ground and careful use of social media are needed.

From page 27 of the Government's previous guidance:

"... it is important that everyone continues to act responsibly, as the large majority have done to date. The infection rate will increase if people begin to break these rules and, for example, mix in groups in parks, which will trigger the need for further restrictions."

The full text of the current guidance can be seen on the .gov website [here](#).

In Detail...

Club Huts

Currently, all Peak District based caving club huts remain closed as they are classed as hostels and prohibited from opening (1.1). Some maintenance activities may be permitted now, but clubs should look at the guidance themselves and develop safe working policies if they are considering this.

Travel

1.11 – *“You can travel to outdoor open space irrespective of distance, as long as you can return the same night and do not put others at risk because of services you may need in the time you are away[.....] You shouldn’t travel with someone from outside your household unless you can practise social distancing - for example by cycling.”*

Rescue

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, the mountain and cave rescue teams of the UK have remained on call and available to help those who need them, wherever that may be. DCRO is no exception to that. People wishing to resume caving activities should consider the following points highlighted by rescue teams across the UK.

- UK voluntary rescue teams may have reduced medical capability currently as many Casualty Carers are NHS workers and as such, may not be available for call outs.
- Rescue teams may be operating on reduced numbers owing to team members isolating due to illness or to shield vulnerable people in their household.
- Equipment used on a rescue will need to be disinfected before it can be used again. This means that vital kit that was used recently on a rescue elsewhere, may not be available to you if you need it.
- Even if totally unaware, you or any of the rescue team members could be carrying Covid-19 and act as a vector for transmission to all people present on a rescue.

Recent statements from DCRO can be seen [here](#), the British Cave Rescue Council [here](#), & one from MREW [here](#).

Local Communities & Landowners

The PDNPA’s most recent statement can be read [here](#).

From the PDNPA Chief Executive 29/5/20: *“Sitting at the heart of the nation and with so many communities on our doorstep, it remains important that people do not rush back to provide our national park with the space and time to offer a warm welcome when all our visitor and hospitality facilities can open once again. I ask those who do choose to explore our landscapes – perhaps for the first time – to do so with respect. For the people and wildlife that call it home and for each other as we continue to reduce the spread of the virus.”*

Some areas of the Peak District have seen levels of visitors this last weekend that would be on par with the peak summer season. You should plan your activities so that you are not adding to the crowds or parking problems at honeypot sites.

Most of the cave and mine sites in Derbyshire are on private land. Some landowners have stated that they do not wish cavers (or other members of the public) to come onto their land or approach their houses at this time. We must respect their wishes or risk the good relations cavers and landowners have in the area. As we receive updates on closures, we will update you via the [DCA website](#) and social media channels.

Summary

DCA would urge anyone considering a return to caving to fully consider all aspects of the trip they are contemplating and assess for themselves if that activity meets all the legal requirements of the current Government guidance on exercise and social distancing.

Be safe, stay well and make good decisions - The DCA team.