

27th May 2020

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson
Office of the Prime Minister
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inspiring the next generation

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Children & Young People need to get out of doors, safely - into the beauty and fresh air of our natural environment to promote well-being and reduce emotional stress

Outdoor Centres should now be allowed to operate safely, to serve schools and youth organisations and enhance the well-being of our children and young people

I am writing with regard to the UK Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy as one of / on behalf of our nation's Outdoor Education and Adventure Centres.

Please be assured of our support for all you are doing to combat this deadly pandemic. We do not wish to see our guests return before it is safe for them to do so but would offer the following observations:

- The outdoors is the **safest environment** in this pandemic: well ventilated, naturally vented and sun-lit (helping activate Vitamin D), with the best scope for social distancing.
- The outdoors is a wonderful setting in which to enable children and young people to flourish, **restore emotional well-being, improve mental health** and rebuild self-confidence and friendships – releasing the 'Nature Vitamin'
- The outdoor education sector is **committed to the safety and well-being** of all those in our care.
- Outdoor education providers are **market leaders in Risk Benefit Analysis** and will have CV19-specific Risk Assessments in place to ensure adequate precautions are taken on all activities deemed to be suitable, whilst also retaining the many health benefits of physical exercise and shared community experience in the beauty and fresh air of the outdoors.
- **Prolonged confinement is putting huge stress on many households**, with genuine risk to emotional health and well-being; often with long term implications, even putting some in danger of physical harm. Allowing children and young people to get away to enjoy healthy outdoor activities (under safe supervision) would benefit not only the young people but also provide much needed respite for the adults in the household.
- Schools are now considered safe to open, with appropriate safeguards. Whilst precautions are essential, it is evident that **children and young people are less at risk of serious infection**.

We acknowledge the recognition by both the Transport Secretary and Deputy Chief Medical Officer that there is a lower risk in outdoor environments (Downing Street Briefing on 14 May).

I am not writing to try to influence the timing of the stages of re-opening which is a matter for your scientific advisers. Rather, **we would urge you to recognise the importance of enabling professional outdoor education and adventure holiday providers to offer appropriately spaced and planned activities for schools and in the holidays.**

At this time I understand that 'Hospitality' is treated as one homogenous group and is scheduled for 're-activation' in Step Three of 'Our plan to rebuild'.

I am writing to ask you to consider the lesser risk of cross-infection presented by **the Outdoor Education sector, which could, I would argue, safely be positioned in Step Two.**

This is also **key to the survival of many outdoor Education providers**, commercial, charitable and LA, and therefore, of course to the livelihoods of many Outdoor Professionals in full-time employment and self employed.

I hope this insight from the Outdoor Education Sector is helpful.

Do come back to me if you need any further information – or would be interested to see an approach to Risk Benefit Analysis and Risk Assessment for Adventure Activities alongside CV-19 Risk Assessments.

Yours sincerely,

Jon Cox
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