

Statement on Coronavirus (Covid-19)

Monday 23rd March 2020

Given the challenging times we wanted to keep all schools, trip leaders, parents/guardians, students, suppliers and others visiting the centre up to date on the present situation at Plas Pencelli.

Plas Pencelli is Closed at Present

The centre is now closed following government advice that domestic residential educational settings requiring travel should now be closed to groups. Our thoughts are with those particularly hard hit by the current situation. However we must look forwards. Presently we are trying to balance government guidance, the desire to offer sufficient notice to schools to react appropriately and taking sensible steps to protect the centre. On balance we have decided to close the centre **until the end of May at present**. Below are some questions you may have.

We were due to visit Plas Pencelli between now and the end of May. What should we do?

Its best to contact the office (note new contact details below) in the next few days. We'll be able to talk through further options. We're hoping the first option maybe to discuss transferring your booking until later in the year, probably from September 2020 onwards to have most surety. Some schools have decided to bring two school years in their booking next year instead. We do have vacancies in a number of weeks throughout the year. Remember for bookings between December and February there is a £20 reduction. We have good central heating and lots of warm personal protective clothing to loan so visiting in the winter isn't as arduous as some may imagine. There are just the same benefits.

We have a booking for Plas Pencelli in the June to July period. Is that cancelled?

Not at present. Its difficult to predict, even for the government, how circumstances will evolve. We want to remain available for schools who have bookings at least for a reasonable period of time. So far we are looking ahead until the end of May giving up to 10 weeks notice to schools of the decision to close. This is much further ahead than many organisations are willing to commit to. We have a good relationship with schools however, so we are trying to factor in the demands that they will also face. Mindful of the approaching Easter holidays we would look to provide a further update by Thursday 2nd of April, when we will be in a better position to look into the June period and at a later date beyond. I hope this measured approach is acceptable.

We have a booking for Plas Pencelli from September onwards. Will this still go ahead?

We certainly expect it to. However at this stage none of us know how events will develop. As indicated we will continue to give reasonable notice to all schools. We will look to communicate before any holiday breaks in particular and look to give 6 weeks notice as a minimum, but this will be up to 10 weeks for some schools. We hope this represents a good balance between the disappointment of cancelling with the financial implications to Plas Pencelli and providing reasonable notice to students and parents.

We would like to rearrange the trip for later in the year but its not possible. What happens next?

Plas Pencelli is a non-profit making service. As in a school, budgets are finely balanced. However, as a non-statutory service in the present climate a large deficit may bring an existential concern. We have reacted by laying off many casual staff and suspending all but essential spending. We urge any schools wanting to cancel their booking to look at their insurance arrangements in the first instance in case any losses could be claimable. However we recognise the financial pressures all schools are also under and so urge schools to make contact so that we can ensure that penalties can be avoided. Thanks for your understanding of this situation.

Will Plas Pencelli continue to exist in the next year or so?

We are all primarily concerned about the health of all at this trying time. However, we also look towards the future when we can once more make a positive contribution to young people's lives via the outdoors. To this end we will work hard (from home) to ensure all the schools we work with are dealt with efficiently and professionally for those with whom visits have to be cancelled. We will also look to minimise any deficit this year by working hard to make savings at the same time as addressing the many changes to logistics that will

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be required. Your support in rescheduling bookings, “doubling up” next year or managing to access insurance funding will all help. Otherwise we will ensure that schools aren’t penalised at this challenging time for all. I thank you for your continued support.

New Contact Details until Further Notice

Office hours: We aim to be available during the morning each day from Monday to Friday and then intermittently from there onward. This may vary from time to time.

Post: As before to the normal address though there maybe a little more delay in response.
Plas Pencelli Outdoor Education Centre, Pencelli, Brecon, Powys LD3 7LX

Email: As before Office@plaspencelli.co.uk

Telephone: Calls to the normal office number (01874665241) maybe transferred. If not there is an alternative mobile number: 07717 376093. Phones will only be available 9am until 3.30pm Monday to Friday.

Although the centre is closed it remains occupied for security purposes. Staff are offering to use the centre’s resources to assist with the well-being of the local community at this time.

Thank you