

Statement on Coronavirus (Covid-19)

Wednesday 22nd April 2020

This statement is to ensure all schools, trip leaders, parents/guardians, students and others due to visit the centre are up to date on the present situation at Plas Pencelli.

Plas Pencelli is open from Monday 15th June 2020.

The centre had to be closed at the end of March as at that point it was quite clear that we wouldn't be able to host school groups for a significant amount of time. We reacted quickly and decisively in line with government advice but also to aid schools in their decision making and to eliminate any ambiguity. During this period, although some schools have made alternative bookings, the centre has stood significant financial losses unilaterally. We are now entering a different phase where it is not clear what the future holds. The indications are that many organisations will commence operations in the next period of time. It is therefore possible that we will be in a position to offer an outdoor education service by the middle of June. We are therefore obliged to declare the centre open from that time. Our thoughts are with those particularly hard hit by the current crisis. However, we continue to look forward to balance government guidance and where possible safeguard the future of Plas Pencelli.

We were due to visit Plas Pencelli between now and 14th June 2020. What should we do?

It's best to contact the office (note new contact details below) as soon as you are able. We'll be able to talk through further options. For some, you may consider transferring your booking until later in the year from September 2020 onwards. This is unlikely to be possible for some students. Year 6 students for example. We do have vacancies and remember, for bookings between December and February, there is a £20 reduction per student. We have effective 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. Some schools have decided to bring two school years for their visit next year instead (2021).

We have a booking for Plas Pencelli in the June 15th to August 28th period. Is that cancelled?

No it isn't. **The centre is due to be open from June 15th onwards.** We want to remain available for schools who have bookings in that period. Because we all rely on government decision making and because only limited notice is given, in line with this we are now only able to give notice according to the government advice we receive. This may be only a week or so as appears common at present..

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

We certainly expect it to. As with all we can only react to the government advice we receive. There is no indication at present that we wouldn't be operational from September onwards.

We would like to rearrange the trip for later in the year but it's 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 respectfully remind schools that booking conditions do apply. They are set out on the back of the booking form. For any booking a deposit is non refundable within 12 months of the course start date. For those cancelling within 3 months of the course date the full course fee is chargeable based on minimum numbers of students. These are typical booking conditions for providers allowing commitments to be made with staff and suppliers to guarantee that courses go ahead safely and to a good standard. We understand that school finances are always a concern as Plas Pencelli has similar concerns. We would not want schools to face financial difficulty and that is why you are urged to contact the centre to discuss alternative arrangements. Firstly, I would recommend that any schools wanting to cancel their booking should look at their insurance arrangements in the first instance. It may be that losses are recoverable. If that doesn't prove possible then we can discuss moving the booking to, not just later in the year, but to the following year. Alternatively we can discuss transferring the deposit to a booking in the future. I do have to point out though that deposits are non refundable within 12 months of the course date. Where we can't link this to a future booking it will likely be forfeited. I recognise the financial pressures all schools are under and so urge all that contact be made so that we can ensure that penalties can be avoided. Thanks for your understanding.

Is the future of Plas Pencelli secure?

We are all primarily concerned about the health of the nation at this time. However, we also look towards the future when we can once again make a positive contribution to the lives of young people using the outdoors as a medium for development. We will look to minimise the deficit in this financial year by laying staff off and making savings wherever possible. The support of schools in accessing insurance funding, rescheduling bookings, “doubling up” next year and transferring deposits will all help. Thank you for your continued support.

Contact Details until Further Notice:

Office hours: Monday to Friday 9am-3.30pm

Email: Office@plaspencelli.co.uk

Post: Plas Pencelli Outdoor Education Centre, Pencelli, Brecon, Powys LD3 7LX

Telephone: Office number 01874665241 (maybe a message). Alternative mobile number: 07507 963127

The centre is closed but occupied for administration & security purposes. Staff and centre resources have been made available to assist with the well-being of Swindon residents and the local community at this time.

Thank you