

## Update for Schools **Tuesday 1st December 2020**

(please refer to previous statements)

### **What is the latest situation with attending an outdoor education centre in the United Kingdom?**

The group representing the outdoor sector, **UK Outdoors**, has been lobbying Government during the last few months to help the sector survive and reopen. As a result, and as promised, the Secretary of State for Education has considered the campaign to reopen residential outdoor education centres and released the following statement:

*“We continue to advise against domestic (UK) overnight educational visits. The department recognises the enormous benefits overnight residential educational visits can provide for children. In February 2021, we will review the possibility of changing our advice for overnight residential education visits to resume from Easter 2021 on the proviso the scientific evidence supports any such change. This advice will therefore be reviewed and updated again in February 2021.”*

### **What does this mean?**

We understand that schools can't operate outside of government guidance and so those with bookings will not be able to attend Plas Pencelli until Government guidance allows this. This statement indicates that Plas Pencelli is **likely** to open again “from Easter”, though this is subject to review “in February 2021”. So unless there is an unexpected change Plas Pencelli is **likely** to be unavailable for schools on a residential basis until **2nd April 2021** and the start of Easter.

### **We have a booking for Plas Pencelli between now and Easter. What should we do?**

It is now very unlikely that schools will be able to attend before Easter. For this reason and for surety at this stage you may want to cancel your booking shortly. This will remove some uncertainty at this time which otherwise may be problematic for students, parents and staff. If you decide to do this please contact the office to undertake this. We may be able to offer you alternative dates in the future or enter you on a reserve list in the event a week becomes free later in the year. Otherwise through the whole pandemic no school has been penalised for cancelling their booking due to coronavirus reasons. There will be no penalty for canceling before Easter and deposits can be returned or reassigned to other bookings you may have for which deposits are now due. For those booked in March you may want to wait for now before cancelling in the unlikely event that the government's guidance is changed at an earlier stage. We just need 4 weeks notice to run any course and again cancellations before Easter won't incur penalties.

### **We have a booking for Plas Pencelli after Easter 2021. What should we do?**

Government statements now strongly indicate a return at Easter and it also appears that coronavirus vaccines are about to change the outlook of the pandemic. It is now **very likely** that Plas Pencelli will be open from **April 2nd 2021**. We are now contacting schools for payment of deposits having relaxed the normal 12 month requirement. We collect deposits to ensure that schools are committed to the booking they have made. Where schools cancel at short notice it's often difficult to find another school to occupy the slot. It means recruited staff can't be deployed and the shortfall in income risks the long term survival of Plas Pencelli. We do ask that all schools booked from Easter onwards pay their deposit promptly so that we can go ahead with commitments to ensure the same high level of service. The deposit can be paid with the confidence that in the unlikely event that coronavirus forces further cancellations the deposit will be returned. We have a number of schools on a reserve list for a booking in the very popular, but presently fully booked, April to July 2021 period.

### **A Safe Environment at Plas Pencelli.**

Once open we will create an environment for young people at least as safe as back in school and in line with soon to be established national standards for the outdoor sector. We will liaise closely with each school before any visit. We will adjust arrangements where we can to operate in line with arrangements back in your school. All areas of operations will be risk assessed. 130 beds, 35 or so bedrooms, 2 dining areas, numerous showering and toilet facilities with 17 acre grounds provides a great deal of space for all to safely socially distance. Much of the day will be spent in the outdoors where transmission is much more unlikely.

**Is there anything else we can do?**

Yes. Please feel free to liaise regularly with Plas Pencelli ([Office@plaspencelli.co.uk](mailto:Office@plaspencelli.co.uk)) to receive updates along with checking our website ([www.plaspencelli.co.uk](http://www.plaspencelli.co.uk)) for major updates. Also do please support the **Save the Outdoors** campaign and the work of **UK Outdoors** by sharing social media postings, talking to friends, family and colleagues so that the message is spread far and wide. I think we would all agree that we need a future where young people are able to benefit from these life changing outdoor educational experiences. We know that outdoor education is very successful in the positive development of young people and contributing to general well being. Never more so than at this time. We also know that many centres like Plas Pencelli must resume operations soon if they are to survive. Once it's gone it's gone. Included separately here is a statement from **UK Outdoors**, further endorsed by the National Association of Head Teachers. This explains the steps that have been taken to highlight the benefits of outdoor education and to save the outdoor sector.

Thank you

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