

Update for Schools Friday 9th October 2020

(please refer to previous statements)

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

All the key representative outdoor organisations in the United Kingdom have for the first time ever come together under the banner of **UK Outdoors**. They have been lobbying Government on behalf of the outdoor sector for the last few months to help ensure its survival. You may have seen some of their social media content recently including **Save Outdoor Education** postings. We do hope you are able to support this cause. Many areas of normal life face cutbacks. We know that outdoor education is very successful in developing young people and contributing to general well being. Never more so than at this time. We also know that centres like Plas Pencelli must resume operations soon if they are to survive. Once it's gone it's gone. Here's the latest statement from **UK Outdoors** for schools attending overnight educational visits:

Statement from UK Outdoors on Government Guidance

"The sector is continuing discussions with Government on the restarting of overnight educational visits. The Government has agreed to a formal review of the current guidance in November 2020, with a view to a managed, safe and Covid-secure return in 2021. The review will provide an opportunity for the whole sector to engage with Government departments and relevant agencies to inform the review, address any remaining barriers and ultimately reopen educational visits.

As valued customers and service users, we would welcome schools support, too, in further stressing the importance of educational visits. Ensuring all children and young people can benefit from these rich and varied educational experiences is imperative to helping students, schools and the education sector recover from Covid."

When will Plas Pencelli be open to schools again?

As outlined in the above statement the Department for Education is still advising against domestic overnight and overseas educational visits. We understand that schools need to operate within government guidelines. In addition the Welsh Government have rules in place that make it very difficult to operate a residential centre for large visiting groups during these times. We await changes but recognise that this is more likely once the latest surge in infection rate is brought under control. The Government has indicated this will be reviewed in November. We have full bookings from January 2021 and are hopeful to restart operations at that time. The centre is ready and in good shape.

A Safe Environment at Plas Pencelli.

Once open we will create an environment for young people at least as safe as back in school. 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. We will only have one school on site at this time. 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.

We have a booking for Plas Pencelli in the Spring term. What should we do?

Schools won't be penalised for cancelling due to coronavirus reasons. We encourage you to wait as long as you can and ideally until at least the Government reviews its advice to schools in November before considering canceling your course. With a month's notice we will have staff and resources in place and ready to go. We encourage you to continue to check these statements and liaise directly with Plas Pencelli over the next few weeks and months.

Is it better just to cancel our course now?

This may feel like the safe thing to do now. However, even Plas Pencelli with the support it receives and its long history isn't immune from closure. We need to maintain as many bookings as we can to enable the centre to survive through 2021. We know that every school's circumstances are different but maintaining your booking for as long as possible is the surest way to ensure that Plas Pencelli will be able to continue to offer the service it does. If you are able to attend during 2021 I'm sure it will be a true highlight of a very

gloomy period of time for all your students and they will undoubtedly carry the benefit throughout the rest of their school career.

Is there anything else we can do?

Yes. Please do 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 all agree that we need a future where young people are able to benefit from these life changing outdoor educational experiences.

Contact Details until Further Notice:

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