

Easing Covid-19 restrictions on WBCT Work Parties, Updated end-June 2020

After discussing the IWA guidance notes (below), Trustees agreed on 29th June 2020 that work parties for maintenance and restoration could resume, subject to the following conditions:

1. All attendance must be voluntary
2. Before a work party is permitted the Work Party Organiser (WPO) must complete the COVID Risk Assessment which must include a statement on how the 2m social distancing is to be applied and maintained
3. This Risk Assessment is to be submitted to the Health and Safety Officer in advance (at least a day's notice) for approval
4. Where social distancing and the provision of the appropriate PPE cannot be achieved then the work party will not be permitted
5. When work is to take place at a place where public access is normally available, for example on a towpath which forms a public footpath or other Public Right of Way, then this must be closed to the public whilst work is taking place
6. Where the work site is NOT controlled by the Trust by way of ownership or lease, then written landowner permission is to be obtained.
7. All volunteers must take the Government's Personal Risk Assessment (for link, see below) and provide a signed statement of fitness to the WPO before being accepted for a work party.

These guidance notes cover all possible activities that might take place during the summer. There is one important exception, Pewsham Top Lock chamber, where work on the site remains embargoed because it is still under investigation by the Health & Safety Executive.

There are two major differences compared with the IWA's earlier guidance.

- Firstly, the updated version makes no mention of whether a task is 'essential' or not, and thus allows restoration activities to restart if social-distancing measures can be met.
- Secondly, the IWA describes the procedure to adopt if a volunteer develops any Covid-19 symptoms during a work party.

Extracts taken from IWA document: ‘Covid-19 Guidance for Restoration and Branch Work Parties During Coronavirus’, dated 9th June 2020

Before resuming work, risk assessments must be reviewed to take account the change in circumstances. A new specific risk assessment to control the hazard of Coronavirus should be prepared. You should prepare a management plan for your intended restart.

IWA has prepared an example risk assessment to address the specific hazard of Coronavirus, which is available on the website. The risk assessment is for use in addition to any risk assessments already in place for your activities and should be edited to reflect the specific conditions on your site.

Consult your volunteers about arrangements for a return to work; you must consult your workers about matters concerning their health and safety, which is a two-way process and allows them to express their concerns. It allows you to explain the changes that are being made to get their thoughts and ideas on how to make the changes. The discussions will need to be repeated if something changes, such as lock-down and guidelines change, or the changes that have been made are not working.

Subjects that should be discussed are:

- Social distancing;
- Organising your workplace;
- Cleaning and sanitising;
- Information and guidance;
- Wellbeing and support.

The HSE has published a guide – *Talking to your workers about preventing Coronavirus*.

Carry out a review of existing risk assessments and method statements to make sure any changes as a result of the risks associated with Coronavirus have been taken into account. Review your Construction Phase Plan (Project Plan) to take account of the risks associated with Coronavirus, in particular any emergency planning and procedures.

You will need to check with suppliers that anything that you need to restart will be available. Pay particular attention to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Your risk assessment may require that additional PPE items, such as face/dust masks are provided or that PPE should be changed more regularly.

Make sure that you have enough cleaning equipment to allow for a more frequent cleaning regime. Your risk assessment may require that additional PPE items, such as face / dust masks are provided or that PPE should be changed more frequently. Note that face/dust masks are not compulsory but provide extra protection against the spread of the virus. The government has issued guidance on how to make your own face mask.

When deciding on a possible restart you need to consider your volunteer work force and the possibility that they may be in the ‘clinically vulnerable group’ (for reasons of health, age or pregnancy). Volunteers in the ‘clinically extremely vulnerable group’ will have been notified and can leave home but only to meet one other person.

It is recommended that all volunteers take the personal risk assessment available on <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-employee-risk-assessment>, and only volunteer if the assessment allows work to resume – and under which conditions this is allowed.

Consider whether volunteers will need to organise child care. Ensure volunteers do not attend site if they have symptoms of Coronavirus or anybody in their household is self-isolating. Recommend that volunteers take their temperature before leaving home, and if their temperature is above 38°C, they should stay at home.

Travel to the work site should be in separate vehicles, by walking or cycling and avoid public transport where possible. Make sure you will have sufficient numbers of volunteers to carry out your planned activities.

Make sure that any statutory tests and inspections haven't lapsed during the lockdown. If you decide to return to work, you must display a notice that you have complied with the Government's five steps (Appendix 1). Warning signs should be placed to warn members of the public that volunteers are working and that they should maintain a distance of 2 metres.

Volunteers will need to be given an induction setting out site rules to take account of the risk of Coronavirus including:

1. Do not attend the work party if you feel unwell, have a temperature or if anybody in your household is self isolating.
2. Wash hands regularly with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds especially after nose blowing, sneezing or coughing, on arrival on site, before and after eating, after using public transport and when arriving at home. If soap and water is not available, hand sanitisers should be used.
3. Keep 2 metres apart as much as possible (unless face-masks or visors are worn) and keep 2 metres away from members of the public.
4. Minimise contact between volunteers and where it is necessary, limit contact time to 15 minutes or less. Consider the use of face masks (or visors) where contact cannot be avoided.
5. Keep groups of volunteers together in teams that are as small as possible (cohorting).
6. Wash hands before entering enclosed machinery, such as excavators and cabs of dumpers, and again on exit.
7. Keep windows of enclosed machinery open to allow ventilation and advise operators not to touch their face.
8. Clean down the insides of cabs, particularly between operators.
9. Remind volunteers to clean clothes regularly; the virus can stay on fabrics.

Welfare and mess facilities will need to be cleaned after each use. Rest areas will need to be large enough to continue social distancing and should be well ventilated. Staggered rest breaks will limit the size of groups in a rest area at any one time. Any temporary rest areas should be set up away from members of the public or where members of the public have access. Consider what might be touched and where cross contamination might take place. Clean surfaces between use wherever possible. Consider operating a one-way access system for travelling between the work area and rest facilities.

For activities that are carried out in the open, such as litter picking, painting, vegetation control, where it is not possible to follow the social distancing guidelines, you should consider whether that activity needs to continue.

Your first aid provision will need to be reviewed. Additional PPE will be required for first aiders, including face mask, apron and latex gloves. If you need to carry out CPR, do not perform rescue breaths or mouth-to-mouth resuscitation; use chest compression only.

For all activities, you need to consider what you should do if somebody falls ill during the work party. They may need to self-isolate and you should consider where that self-isolation would take place, normally the vehicle they arrived in. The volunteer should be sent home and advised to stay at home.

You need to establish a plan in the eventuality that an ill volunteer needs to be transferred to a health facility. Keep a record of all volunteers and visitors. If a volunteer falls ill during or after your event, you should contact all attendees and visitors ('Test and Trace').

Steve Bacon
Health & Safety Advisor
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
Monday 29th June 2020

Appendix 1: Display Notice



Staying COVID-19 safe in 2020

We confirm we have complied with the Government’s guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19

< five steps to safer working together >

- ✓ We have carried out a COVID-19 risk assessment and shared the results with people who work here
- ✓ We have cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures in line with the guidance
- ✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to help people work from home
- ✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to maintain a 2m distance in the workplace
- ✓ Where people cannot be 2m apart, we have done everything practical to manage transmission risk

(-Work Party Organiser-) Date

For further assistance contact:

(or the Health and Safety Executive at www.hse.gov.uk or 0300 003 1647)

Appendix 2: Work Party Activities during Coronavirus Restrictions

