



Managing Public Parks during Covid-19

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1. Introduction

This guide is intended to help local authorities and other organisations who manage urban and country parks and the wider green space to think through how sites can be managed as the government steadily releases the lockdown state.

It has been produced collaboratively with key input from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Local Government Association, National Trust, APSE, the Midlands Parks Forum and parks practitioners.

Throughout lockdown, the Government has emphasised the need for public parks and greenspaces to remain accessible to the public in order to assist people to take exercise and get fresh air, close to home.

Whilst the majority of urban parks and country parks have remained open many facilities within them have been closed such as children's play areas, multi-use games areas, public toilets, cafes, tennis courts etc. During the first phase of lockdown, many councils have also closed car parks that serve parks in order to try to limit use to those within walking distance.

On 23 May Government also relaxed its advice¹ to allow the opening of ticketed gardens and land maintained for public use as an alternative open space to spend time outdoors, although they con-

firmed that buildings and amenities such as cafes should remain closed and access may be limited to members or those with tickets to ensure social distancing. This means that any ticketed attractions in parks such as walled gardens can now be opened.

Further guidance was issued by DEFRA on 1 June regarding accessing green spaces safely with revised social distancing recommendations².

We are mindful that the situation in England is different to Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland and we hope that the experiences of English local authority parks managers, where lockdown has been released first, will be of help to our colleagues in other countries.

The guide is split into three main areas of:

- Infrastructure and facilities
- Staff and volunteers
- Visitors and activities

Where available we have linked to current guidance from government and other organisations as well as suggestions on worked examples which parks management colleagues have very helpfully shared with us.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-guidance-on-access-to-green-spaces>

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-on-accessing-green-spaces-safely#history>

2. Parks and Covid-19 Framework

We see the stages of closing and re-opening linked to the Government's Covid 19 Alert Levels as shown in the diagrams below.

Stage	Stage 1 Mitigation	Stage 2 Restricted functions	Stage 3 Phased Re-opening part 1	Stage 4 Phased Re-opening part 2	Stage 5 Return to Full Operating
UK Government Covid Alert Levels	5 - Maximum social distancing measures and restrictions	4 - Social distancing measures and restrictions	3 - Gradual relaxing of restrictions and social distancing measures	2 - No or minimal social distancing measures; enhanced testing, tracing, monitoring and screening	1 - Routine international monitoring
Parks open / closed?	Parks closed	Urban parks open but facilities / functions closed. Country parks closed	Urban parks and country parks open and some facilities / functions open.	Parks and country park open and most facilities open	Everything open
FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE					
Car parks	Closed	Open subject to social distancing & managing demand but if government guidance is for local use only then may be closed	Open subject to social distancing & managing demand Consider requirement for traffic management at busier sites Consider the need for additional cleansing of payment machines	Open subject to social distancing & managing demand Consider requirement for traffic management at busier sites Consider the need for additional cleansing of payment machines	Open
Cafes, visitor centres (see guidance 3)	Closed	Closed	Cafés reopened for take away only subject to maintaining social distancing & cleansing standards	Cafés & visitor centres re-opened subject to maintaining social distancing & cleansing standards	Open
Public toilets	Closed	Closed	Closed	Open - subject to maintaining social distancing & cleansing standards Consider disabled access	Open
Childrens play areas (see guidance 2)	Closed	Closed	Closed	Open subject to maintaining social distancing & cleansing standards Water play closed	Open Water play open

Stage	Stage 1 Mitigation	Stage 2 Restricted func- tions	Stage 3 Phased Re- opening part 1	Stage 4 Phased Re- opening part 2	Stage 5 Return to Full Operating
UK Government Covid Alert Levels	5 - Maximum so- cial distancing measures and restrictions	4 - Social distanc- ing measures and restrictions	3 - Gradual relax- ing of restrictions and social dis- tancing measures	2 - No or minimal social distancing measures; en- hanced testing, tracing, monitor- ing and screening	1 - Routine inter- national monitoring
Parks open / closed?	Parks closed	Urban parks open but facilities / functions closed. Country parks closed	Urban parks and country parks open and some facilities / func- tions open.	Parks and country park open and most facilities open	Everything open
FACILITIES & INFRASTRUTURE					
Court Sports (see guidance 2)		Closed	Tennis courts for use by household mem- bers Bowls use where so- cial distancing can be maintained (impact of closed pavilions / toilets?) Basketball MUGAs open for use only by household groups or two individ- uals only from separate households (NB Gov- ernment guidance states courts can open if its is safe to do so – review with Public Health in light of local circumstances)	Re-opening of chang- ing rooms and club houses. MUGA's open for football	Open
Pitch sports (and sports changing) (see guidance 2)	Closed	Closed	Closed	Re-introduction of some pitch sports? Re-opening of chang- ing rooms and club houses.	Open
Other sports (see guidance 2)	Closed	Closed	Angling allowed Outdoor gyms closed Golf allowed Rowing allowed	Outdoor gyms open	Open
Other facilities (see guidance 2)	Closed	Skate parks closed	Skate parks open subject to social dis- tancing	Skate parks open Aerial ropes courses closed?	Aerial ropes courses open

Stage	Stage 1 Mitigation	Stage 2 Restricted functions	Stage 3 Phased Re-opening part 1	Stage 4 Phased Re-opening part 2	Stage 5 Return to Full Operating
UK Government Covid Alert Levels	5 - Maximum social distancing measures and restrictions	4 - Social distancing measures and restrictions	3 - Gradual relaxing of restrictions and social distancing measures	2 - No or minimal social distancing measures; enhanced testing, tracing, monitoring and screening	1 - Routine international monitoring
Parks open / closed?	Parks closed	Urban parks open but facilities / functions closed. Country parks closed	Urban parks and country parks open and some facilities / functions open.	Parks and country park open and most facilities open	Everything open
STAFF & VOLUNTEERS					
Volunteer	Volunteer activities paused	Volunteer activities paused	Limited volunteer activities (individuals) as approved by organisation as "necessary" work	Increased volunteer activity (small groups)	Full volunteer activity
Staff	Safety inspections only	Safety inspections Limited maintenance Site patrolling and police liaison	Safety inspections Increased levels of maintenance Site patrolling and police liaison	Addressing backlog of work Normal maintenance levels resumed	Full workforce

Stage	Stage 1 Mitigation	Stage 2 Restricted func- tions	Stage 3 Phased Re- opening part 1	Stage 4 Phased Re- opening part 2	Stage 5 Return to Full Operating
UK Government Covid Alert Levels	5 - Maximum so- cial distancing measures and restrictions	4 - Social distanc- ing measures and restrictions	3 - Gradual relax- ing of restrictions and social dis- tancing measures	2 - No or minimal social distancing measures; en- hanced testing, tracing, monitor- ing and screening	1 - Routine inter- national monitoring
Parks open / closed?	Parks closed	Urban parks open but facilities / functions closed. Country parks closed	Urban parks and country parks open and some facilities / func- tions open.	Parks and country park open and most facilities open	Everything open
FUNCTIONS					
VISITORS AND ACTIVITIES (see guidance 1 and 2)		Informal use of parks for exercise and by household groups / groups not exceeding 2 No sunbathing Benches and bins may be out of use Signage and infor- mation installed on key sites Maintain 2m wide access where possible Monitor visitor num- bers and useage – particularly pinch points / access, moni- tor user group con- flicts	Informal use of parks for exercise and by household groups / meeting with 1 other person. Use for sunbathing, picnicking, sitting al- lowed subject to social distancing Signage and infor- mation installed on key sites Monitor visitor num- bers and useage Consider additional resource needed to effectively manage park visitor numbers and enforce social distancing	Signage and infor- mation installed on key sites Monitor visitor num- bers and useage Consider additional resource needed to effectively manage park visitor numbers and enforce social distancing	
Events & Activi- ties (see guidance 2)		No site based activi- ties – on line activities and learning only	No site based activi- ties – on line activities and learning only	Small events and activities of less than 100 people? Where social distancing can be maintained	Larger events allowed

3. Infrastructures & Facilities

It is very likely that reopening will be a phased, gradual process.

The principles for a safe re-opening must include;

- ensuring team, volunteer and visitor safety
- ensuring your asset is ready
- ensuring your teams are ready and
- ensuring government standards and customer expectations are met.

Key Current Guidance

[Guidance for the public on the phased return of sport and recreation](#)

[Safer public places - urban centres and green spaces](#)

[Guidance for food businesses on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): advice on accessing green spaces safely](#)

[COVID-19 Recovery Planning Guidance: Working practices for landowners and Countryside Managers](#)

As part of the phased re-opening, it will be important to ensure there is an effective communications campaign to explain which facilities will be opened and which may take longer to open with clear reasoning behind these decisions to ensure public understanding and compliance with the re-opening stages.

3.1 Car Parks

Car parks were initially closed when the UK government stated that parks were only for local recreational use (Stage 2 on the chart) but were re-opened once it was announced that people could travel for recreation.

Things to consider when re-opening car parks are:

- Pay and display car parking machines – consider requirement for (additional) cleaning, 2m markings on ground for queuing customers
- Provide signs at points of arrival to remind members of the public to observe social distancing guidelines
- Where possible payment transactions should be by card only or using phone-based payment systems
- Providing additional (overflow) car parking to allow social distancing on busy sites
- Whether all of a car park will be open or introduce phased openings/capacity restrictions in order to control visitor numbers/social distancing
- Need to ensure disabled bays are available and adhered to particularly if reduced parking capacities are in force
- Need for traffic management in place to deal with any queuing issues into the site
- Update risk assessment for staff to cover Covid 19
- Need to consider actions to prevent illegal parking around the park if car parks become full
- Enhanced cleaning regimes for car park ticket machines but, due to the potential for re-contamination after every customer, this is considered impractical. Consideration could be given to the provision of hand sanitizers or anti-bacterial wipes but not if these are likely to be removed by visitors

Equality Impact Assessments should be considered for car parks in parks and green spaces as closure clearly affects people with disabilities who would ordinarily arrive at the park by car as well as young people, parents with young children, carers, older people etc.

3.2 Site Infrastructure

Site infrastructure such as paths, benches, bins and signage can provide contact points.

- Paths are dealt with later under social distancing, but the main issue is the need for necessary markings on the surfaces relating to social distancing and also managing grass alongside paths to try to provide 2m wide routes as well as consideration of pinch points.
- Benches have been the subject of debate with some organisations initially preventing their use, and now to consideration of how to enforce social distancing. In Stage 3 the preferred management option is to allow people to use benches and assume that they will adhere to social distancing guidelines. Some local authorities have entirely removed benches to stop people gathering but this needs to be done with consideration for el-

derly or less able visitors.

- For litter bins, initial options in Stage 2 included blocking off or removing bins as staff who would normally empty them had been redeployed, but most parks services attempted to keep emptying bins with reduced staffing and occasional, informal volunteer support.

3.3 Children's Play Areas and Outdoor Gyms

At the time of writing there is no Government published current guidance on the re-opening of children's play areas or outdoor gym equipment. It is believed that Public Health England are looking at this.



3.4 Ball Courts

Key Current Guidance

[Guidance for the public on the phased return of sport and recreation](#)

The above guidance allowed people to play tennis and basketball subject to social distancing guidelines. See notes below under section 3.5 relating to re-opening sports courts.

Also see The Lawn Tennis Association guidance [here](#).

This has led to management issues when there is a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) present which, once opened for basketball has led to young people playing football and not observing social distancing guidelines. Hence some local authorities have taken the decision not to reopen MUGA facilities, as is the case in most London authorities.

3.5 Sports Activities

Key Current Guidance

[Guidance for the public on the phased return of outdoor sport and recreation in England](#)

[Sport England: Coronavirus: what happens next?](#)

The above guidance states:

You can only exercise alone, with members of your household, or with 1 other person from outside your household while keeping 2 metres apart at all times.

For example, this means that you cannot have 5 people from 1 household plus 1 person from outside the household playing sport together. But you can have 2 people, from 2 different households, as long as they are staying a minimum of 2 metres apart.

And

Outdoor sports courts and other outdoor sporting activities are permitted to reopen if those responsible for them are ready to do so and they can do so safely, following public health guidance. Indoor

facilities such as clubhouses should be kept closed, apart from toilets and throughways. Clubhouse bars and restaurants can also offer take-away services (see below for more detail).

Outdoor gyms, playgrounds and outdoor swimming pools will remain closed.

In terms of specific sports, it states the following can re-open:

- Sports courts including basketball and tennis
- Bowling greens
- Golf courses

Angling and water sports undertaken on open water including open water swimming

The following cannot currently open:

- Outdoor swimming pools and lidos
- Outdoor gyms
- Playgrounds

Local authorities are working closely with bowls and other sports clubs to ensure adequate risk assessments are in place and that social distancing can be maintained. Local authorities are also actively trying to support clubs through the provision of rebates as are Sport England who are providing funding:

[£195 million package to help sport and physical activity through coronavirus](#)

Things to consider when re-opening sports courts:

- Complete a risk assessment
- Install signage / visitor information regarding safe use
- Use booking systems where available to regulate numbers and allow time between bookings for safe entry / exit of users
- Consider removal of net winders from tennis nets
- Brief staff to monitor usage
- Ground markings at entrance gates
- Remove any unnecessary equipment or items from courts (e.g. benches, brooms etc)
- Consider frequency of cleaning for any contact points

- **Changing rooms and indoor facilities** are to be kept closed. Public toilets are dealt with under 3.7 below
- **Water sports** are allowed under the guidance and managing organisations may wish to consider whether they want to re-open any hiring of related equipment in such circumstances
- All **Parkrun** events are currently suspended – find out the latest [here](#)
- GoApe are intending to reopen courses subject to local approval and new methods of working – find out the latest [here](#)
- Also, for skateboarding see [here](#)



Parkour area cordoned off in park in Rugby

3.6 Leases and Concessions

Key Current Guidance

[Guidance for the public on the phased return of sport and recreation](#)

[Safer public places - urban centres and green spaces](#)

[Guidance for food businesses on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Covid-19 – Guidance for Parks and Green Space Managers](#)

All indoor eating facilities are currently to remain closed. In Stage 2 all café's and food outlets were also closed, however in Stage 3 these have begun to re-open as take away facilities (see 3.8 below).

In terms of outdoor concessions

- Fairgrounds and other pop up attractions are unlikely to return until Stage 5
- Ice Cream – in order to re-open it is a usually a local authority requirement of vendors to provide risk assessments on how they will ensure social distancing when queuing as well as provision of (additional) waste bins

Key things to consider for ice cream vans (*adapted from Parks for London guidance*):

- The ice cream van should be fitted with a screen to protect vendor and customers
- The vendor will need to provide an updated risk assessment and food hygiene information
- The vendor should operate alone, or can do so with a member of the same household
- Social distancing measures must be implemented
- Take card payments only
- Have clear signage
- The Council may revoke the licence if social distancing measures are not adhered to under the terms of the licence, which may include that the vendor not cause a nuisance or contravene any legislation

3.7 Public Toilets

In Stage 2 and 3 public toilets remain largely closed. Some local authorities have trialled re-opening in order to assess the management implications and learning from these is incorporated in the text box below.

At the time of writing there is no published guidance on the re-opening of public toilets. Related guidance exists at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

Things to consider for re-opening public toilets:

- Update risk assessment for staff
- Safe method of working guidance for staff
- Establish a daily cleaning schedule to include enhanced cleaning requirements clearly identifying any Covid targeted cleaning such as contact points
- Establish a minimum frequency for cleaning / sanitising contact points
- Exclusion of members of the public during cleaning operations (including signage, barriers etc)
- Signage about safe use for members of the public
- Provision of enhanced PPE and cleaning materials for staff – including safe disposal procedure
- Countryside sites may well need to re-open their toilet facilities earlier than urban parks as the majority of users are likely to be driving to site
- Prop open doors where possible to provide natural ventilation and reduce contact with door handles/push plates

NOTICE OF APPROPRIATE SOCIAL DISTANCING

WHILST QUEUEING TO USE THE PUBLIC CONVENIENCES - PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU MAINTAIN THE **TWO METRE SOCIAL DISTANCE RECOMMENDATION BETWEEN YOURSELF AND THE PERSON IN FRONT OF YOU.**



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
CO-OPERATION.**

3.8 Cafés and Food Outlets

Key Current Guidance

[Guidance for food businesses on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Food delivery and takeaway guidance](#)

[Covid-19 – Guidance for Parks and Green Space Managers](#)

Cafes in parks were closed as part of the Stage 2 initial social distancing measures and restrictions. Government guidance published 18.5.20 allowed for the re-opening for takeaway only.

Also, it has been raised that a café which previously did not offer a takeaway may need to consult the relevant planning authorities.

3.9 Visitor Centres

Visitor centres remain closed in Stage 3 and are unlikely to re-open until Stage 4 and probably until Government clearly supports a return to the workplace and that it is safe to travel and visit such destinations. As with all other facilities and functions decisions will need to be made based on public health, staff and visitor safety, finances and local circumstances.

Organisations will need to allow for a lead in period in which to make adaptations, switch on and test systems. Where historic visitor counter data exists, organisations might wish to model what percentage of normal levels comply with Covid 19 guidance, currently some organisations are working on 30% capacity for visitor attractions and cultural sites.



Café converted to takeaway with serving hatch, Bournemouth Parks Foundation



Things to consider when re-opening cafes for takeaway in parks (adapted from Parks for London guidance):

- Cafés should provide a revised risk assessment, to demonstrate that they can:
 - provide a safe and protected working environment for staff, which enables social distancing
 - provide a food safe environment
 - it may be useful for cafes to refer to guidance for food businesses, developed by the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health and the government
 - ensure that customers can be served safely when ordering, paying and collecting items
- The risk assessment should be reviewed by the Environmental Health Department (EHD), any decisions to allow a park café to reopen should be supported by the EHD
- If a café can re-open safely, a queuing system should be put in place to enable social distancing – such as clear markings showing where to queue and the distance from others to be maintained. Marking on paths etc should be agreed between the concession owner / leasee and the park management team to avoid ugly, confusing or irremovable markings being used
- Ensure that queues are directed away from seating areas, if applicable
- Ensure only one person, from a household is in the queue to place and collect an order
- Where a takeaway serving hatch is not in place, ensure that only an appropriate number of people are allowed in the café at one time, to ensure a 2m distance from other customers,
- Customers should avoid queuing near the café entrance if it is also the exit, ensure there are appropriate markings in place
- Prop open doors where possible to provide natural ventilation and reduce the need to touch door handles and push plates
- It may be advisable to take only card payments or phone-based payment systems
- Have clear signage covering:
 - Social distancing
 - Customers should leave the café area after collecting their order, unless there is a designated seating area
 - Do not gather in groups of more than two unless from the same household
 - Seating areas (if applicable) are not sanitised – avoid touching surfaces and wash your hands when you get home (seating should be spaced out to ensure social distancing)
 - Ask customers to return used items and litter to clearly signed designated areas
 - Consider creating a serving hatch for cafes that don't have one. Here is an example from the community run café at Lordship Recreation Ground where they are crowdsource fundraising to create a new hatch <https://lordshipub.org.uk/>
- Consider a reduced offer to support staff and social distancing measures

Things to consider for re-opening visitor centres include:

Infrastructure and facilities

- Using screens / barriers at receptions, sale points
- Deliveries - consider methods to reduce frequency of deliveries, for example by ordering larger quantities less often
- Meeting rooms / conferencing venues - well ventilated rooms, 2m separation layouts, providing hand sanitiser in rooms
- Re-organising workspaces, providing storage away from working areas, reducing sharing of equipment
- Consider adapting or even removing exhibition and interpretation materials

Managing visitor numbers

- Regulating use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts, turnstiles and walkways to maintain social distancing.
- Timed entry - pre-booking systems
- Reduced opening hours, managing numbers of visitors and reducing congestion
- Using markings and introducing one-way flow at entry and exit points
- Management of visitor centre car parks
- Ensure that adaptations do not disadvantage people with disabilities

Safety and cleansing

- Possibility of temperature monitors at visitor entrances
- Using signs and posters to build awareness of good hand washing technique
- Use of telephones / IT equipment - clean between use
- Non-cash payments
- Enhanced daily cleansing regimes including toilet cleansing
- Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection
- Where possible, providing paper towels as an alternative to hand dryers in hand washing facilities (consider disabling hand driers)
- Providing hand washing facilities, or hand sanitiser where not possible, at entry and exit points
- Removal of paper information leaflets and free merchandise from counters/displays to reduce opportunities for contamination
- First aid - appointed personnel to minimise infection risk - avoid contact where possible
- Reducing or preventing use of interactive equipment

4. Staff and Volunteers

The impacts of Covid 19 on staff and volunteers working in parks has been considerable. Authorities will have already put in place new risk assessments and working practices for staff and many have suspended all supported volunteer activity.

4.1 Staff

Also consider discussions / negotiations / agreements with trade unions on all of the factors below.



Rugby parks staff preparing food parcels for vulnerable communities

Things to consider for staff:

- Update all activity and site-specific risk assessments and be consistent with prevailing government advice
- Covid 19 safe working guidance
- Training with regard to new protocols
- Remote and lone working - adapt policies
- Safe working practice for social distancing in vehicles
- Staff and volunteers within vulnerable groups must not come into the workplace
- Re-profiling work schedules
- Levels of staffing required to catch up and clear backlogs
- Delaying work (and communicating this to the general public)
- Reducing job rotation and equipment rotation, for example, single tasks for the day
- Staggered start / finish times and break times
- Week on week off rotas
- Using safe outdoor areas for breaks
- Separating sites into working zones to keep different groups of workers physically separated as much as practical
- Hygiene instructions - increased hand washing and surface cleansing
- PPE - consider how such equipment may affect ability to carry out tasks
- Don't share tools and sanitisation of all hand tools, controls, machinery and equipment after use.
- Cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19 then you should refer to the specific guidance.
- Regular cleaning of vehicles that staff may take home
- Regular cleansing of uniforms.
- Safe removal of waste

4.2 Volunteers

At the time of writing it is believed that DCMS are working on guidance for volunteering.

All organised volunteering activity was suspended in Stage 2. It is recognised that in many areas, volunteers have continued some activities such as litter picking and tree watering, working alone.

In Stage 3 organisations are looking at how those not in a high-risk group can return to a limited set of volunteering activities.

Some parks managers are exploring virtual links with Friends groups and local volunteers – e.g. by continuing to hold regular meetings virtually and exploring new roles for volunteers like digital guides of parks, researching their history, writing blogs etc. See [here](#).



Things to consider in developing a volunteering protocol include:

- Provide updated risk assessment / safe working practice guidance and training as required, including not allowing anyone who is in a high-risk group to volunteer on-site
- Define what activities you can support / can provide insurance cover for
- Consider how volunteers will travel to site – don't encourage use of public transport
- Volunteer alone / with members of same household / no more than 1 person from outside household
- Remote and lone working - adapt policies
- Encourage volunteers not to publicise when they intend to do activities so that others do not join them and compromise social distancing
- Consider how volunteers will be able to keep a safe distance from others on site – if the park is too busy then the volunteer will need to go home
- Provision of PPE / hand sanitiser (if hand wash facilities not available)
- Do not share tools
- Sanitisation of all hand tools, controls, machinery and equipment after use
- Using safe outdoor areas for breaks
- Establish agreed working times and geographical areas of work and provide contact number for a member of staff

5. Visitors and Activities

Key Current Guidance

[Coronavirus – guidance on accessing green spaces safely](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer public places - urban centres and green spaces](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): advice on accessing green spaces safely](#)

The essential components of managing visitors and activities relate to

- Signage and information provision
- Managing social distancing
- Managing visitor numbers

At this moment in time government guidance is that people can exercise frequently during the day but must maintain social distancing. Also, sunbathing and picnicking were not allowed in Stage 2 but were subsequently allowed in Stage 3. In respect of public safety the current government guidance specifically covers green spaces.

Some parks managers are exploring new ways on interacting with visitors through digital media e.g.

[Let us know how you love your park, Bournemouth Parks](#)

Also through webcams, Bournemouth Park Foundations heron cam has seen a massive surge of interest and RSPB webcams have seen hits on their websites increase 2,000%

[Wildlife cam campaign](#)

5.1 Signage and Information On Site

It is essential that all major green spaces provide information on social distancing whether that is signage, leaflets or 2m ground markers.

Other things to consider:

- Queue management - ensure signage and markers and “do not join the queue” signs when capacity reached
- Mobile hand sanitizer stations could be needed on some sites
- Need for signs and posters on closed facilities with possible opening dates if known

Whilst path marking etc needs to be weather and wear resistant, thought should be given at the outset as to how markings can be completely removed without damaging surfaces once the crisis is over. Avoid using paint for example on resin path surfaces or porous stone surfaces as it will be more difficult to remove in future.



Heron cam at Hengistbury Head in Dorset, Bournemouth Parks Foundation

5.2 Managing Social Distancing

Recent surveys have shown that the majority of green space users were observing the government guidance with respect to social distancing until the gradual easing of lockdown was announced and warmer weather arrived.

Current [government guidance](#) suggests:

This is what you should be considering for the utilisation of pedestrian space:

- *Footway widening to accommodate distancing between pedestrians, including through use of temporary barriers, changes to parking bays, and cycle lanes.*
- *Reduce unnecessary obstacles, for example planters and add markings/ tape on seating to maintain social distancing. Security considerations and the impacts of measures on people with disabilities and other groups needs to be kept under consideration and may call for a balanced approach.*
- *Signing and communications to remind pedestrians of distance requirements. This could be through spray markings and signing at entrances.*

This is what you should be considering for pedestrian movement:

- *One-way movement of pedestrians to maintain 2 metres (6 feet) distancing.*
- *Signing to encourage pedestrians to wait and allow others to pass at entry ways or along footpaths.*
- *Provide separate entry and exit routes for pedestrian access with clear signs.*
- *Enlarge entrances and exits to minimise queues.*

[Further guidance](#) was issued by DEFRA regarding accessing green spaces safely with revised social distancing recommendations.

It is recognised within the sector that several suggestions above are impractical or could permanently damage the heritage significance of an important historic park or garden. For example, widening paths or widening gateways could damage the aesthetic value of a site, particularly if there is a chance that the cost of removal might mean they become permanent fixtures. Where possible, if wid-

ening of historic paths or gateways is considered absolutely essential, then these should be done in a temporary way so they can be reinstated later. For example, it may be better to temporarily remove a section of railing to a safe store to create a secondary temporary entrance rather than widen an existing heritage gateway feature.

Other things to consider:

- Carrying out site audits to assess how social distancing can be maintained
- Carrying out site audits to assess what issues could arise in times of peak use / increased visitor numbers
- Carrying our visitor flow assessments – looking at pinch points, gathering points
- Ensuring welfare and security of those trying to enforce regulations
- Consider introducing one-way systems
- Consider widening paths by simply close mowing strips on either sides of paths or using longer grass to separate spaces and routes
- Closing restricted entrances
- Working protocols with enforcement staff / police
- Check site Conservation Management Plans before carrying out works that result in permanent changes to the park layout or design



5.3 Managing Visitor Numbers

Most parks managers have reported increases in visitor numbers during the first 6 weeks of the pandemic leading to some pressures and conflicts. The high-profile closure of Brockwell Park in London occurred early in lockdown however subsequent surveys have shown that most park users are now following social distancing guidance.

Larger green spaces have a high carrying capacity giving people plenty of space to spread out, however the easing of lockdown measures and warmer weather have led to serious concerns about the numbers of people visiting green spaces and the consequent impact on social distancing.

Most urban green spaces do not have systems in place to accurately record visitor numbers, so it is not possible to set accurate limits on carrying capacity. Also, many spaces are not able to be completely closed due to permeable boundaries (i.e. a lack of formal entrances with gates). These two factors make it very difficult for urban park managers to be able to limit visitor numbers.

Consider letting people know when key parks may be quieter and therefore safer to visit. The Royal Parks in London are using their website and social media to tell people when parks are generally quieter:- [Royal Parks Latest Updates](#)

5.4 Events

Current advice is that all events in green spaces are cancelled and it is not envisaged that any will be possible until Stage 4 or 5.



Things to consider:

- Installing automated people counters to monitor numbers
- Devising systems for monitoring visitor numbers
- Managing availability of car parking to prevent large numbers of visitors
- Closing entrances
- Encouraging use at different times of the day
- Establish links with the Police to help with enforcement, if necessary, with regards to breaches of social distancing

6. Communications

Throughout all of the pandemic communication is essential with staff, volunteers, user groups, stakeholders, the general public and also to national organisations, governing bodies and central government.

All organisations managing green space need to provide up to date 'pre-arrival' material about whether the site is open, what facilities are open, what activities are allowed and obviously the current social distancing and safe use requirements.

The crisis has meant that some changes in park management have been necessary or opportune. For example, reduced staffing or maintenance budgets has meant that mowing regimes have been relaxed in many parks to the advantage of biodiversity. It is important to ensure the public are made aware of such changes to gain their support.

There is increasing public understanding that wild grass and meadows are highly valuable for urban biodiversity and, if communicated properly, the public will be highly supportive of such changes leading to permanent management changes. Using social media, site signage or local press articles are all easy ways to build public support.

Links to initiatives such as Plantlife's "[No Mow May](#)" can be beneficial in helping to explain changes on site.



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