

Government announces further measures on social distancing

- Measures to close entertainment, hospitality and indoor leisure premises across the country to take place from the end of trading hours today (Friday 20 March) to limit spread of coronavirus
- New measures will further limit people's sustained social contact as we tackle the spread of coronavirus, guided by scientific evidence
- Public urged to stay at home and limit all but essential travel – people who can work from home should do so

To delay the spread of coronavirus, the government has instructed some businesses and venues including all pubs, bars and restaurants to close from tonight.

This follows expert advice that more needs to be done in order to tackle the spread of infection – following the call to action to isolate or socially distance.

The closures will help limit the spread of coronavirus by helping to stop non-essential contact and unnecessary travel, in line with the public guidance announced earlier this week.

The measures will be reviewed on a monthly basis, and are being implemented across the whole of the UK in agreement with the devolved administrations. If needed, the government will enforce these measures by law.

This will not affect supermarkets or retailers that supply fuel, medicines and other vital goods, which will continue to be open as normal for the public.

The following businesses and venues have been asked to close:

- Food and drink venues for consumption on-site, such as restaurants and cafes.
- Drinking establishments, including pubs, bars, nightclubs.
- Entertainment venues, including cinemas, theatres, concert halls, and bingo halls.
- Museums and galleries.
- Spas and massage parlours.
- Casinos and betting shops.
- All indoor leisure and sports facilities, including gyms.

This measure will not impact the relaxation of planning rules announced earlier this week which will allow pubs and restaurants to operate as hot food takeaways during the coronavirus outbreak, which will help to support people who are staying at home through this period.

The government has also urged the public to take further steps to protect

themselves and the wider population from the coronavirus, including:

- Everyone to stay at home unless they need to get essential supplies such as food and medicines.
- All those able to work from home to do so, unless their work is essential.
- Only traveling if absolutely necessary – while public transport won't stop, this should only be used for essential travel – for example by key workers to travel to and from work.

The closures announced today will not impact the running of public transport, and government continues to work closely with transport operators to ensure that people who need to get to work can continue to do so.

Yesterday, the government and rail industry agreed a plan that will see a gradual reduction in train services across the country to reflect lower passenger demand as people change their travel patterns to help reduce the spread of coronavirus, while keeping vital rail services running.

The decision to introduce further measures has been taken based on the latest advice from the world-leading health and scientific experts advising the government.

When infection rates come down, the government will remove measures as soon as it is safe to do so, guided by scientific advice.

The government is working urgently to further improve testing and monitoring, which will also help in relaxing the measures as soon as possible.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We will do whatever it takes to protect people across this country as we tackle the coronavirus outbreak.

While people have responded well to calls for social distancing and self-isolation, we must go further if we are to be able to stop the spread of the virus and protect the most vulnerable people in our society, and our NHS.

That is why we are now telling entertainment and hospitality premises to close temporarily, and people to only travel if absolutely essential, to help protect each other from the further spread of the virus.

We stand behind businesses and their employees and are offering an unprecedented range of support as we tackle this huge challenge together.

Isolation guidance for residential educational settings

New guidance has been published to provide household isolation advice for children and young people who live in residential educational settings, and the staff that support them.

As part of the Government's response to the coronavirus outbreak, this latest advice is targeted at those living in a range of different homes including residential special schools, residential children's homes, state and independent boarding schools, further education colleges and university halls of residence.

The publication provides more information on managing isolation should they or a member of staff begin to show symptoms of coronavirus.

The new advice confirms that children's homes, special schools and colleges, other residential Further Education provision and mainstream boarding schools should all be considered as households under the government's household isolation policy.

There is also more practical advice for how to manage issues that have arisen from coronavirus for those who care for children and young people with more serious illnesses or special needs in special schools and colleges.

Children's Minister Vicky Ford said:

There are many children and young people that live in different kinds of households whether that be children's homes, boarding schools or university halls of residence. We need to make sure that everyone knows how to safely isolate as a household in these challenging times to ensure we are protecting as many people as possible .

The Department has today issued guidance to confirm which residential settings they consider a household and how children, young people and staff and carers can manage safe isolation if they live in an atypical home.

The new guidance is to support staff and children and young people cared for in:

- children's homes
- residential special schools and colleges
- other FE providers with residential accommodation
- mainstream boarding schools
- university or college halls of residence.

Operational update: Coronavirus

How Natural England is operating now that national coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions have been lifted

Natural England continues to operate largely as normal, providing a full range of services and advice.

In our activities, both outdoors and indoors, we will be adhering to the government's updated [guidance](#), ensuring that, in progressing our full programme of work, we assess all relevant risks (including COVID-19-related risks) and that we take all appropriate measures to address these risks. Our staff will however not attend our offices, face to face meetings or carry out site visits if they test positive or have Covid-like symptoms to minimise the chance of them passing infection on to others.

We will continue to check in with our partners and customers on their needs and on their comfort in engaging with us in normal business – whether field visits or meetings. As we have been through the pandemic, we will continue to happily adjust our ways of working to meet specific needs, for example through virtual/remote methods of communication where that is preferable.

The COVID-19 crisis has continued to show us that a thriving and accessible natural environment is vital to the nation. We continue therefore, to progress the government's key policy ambitions for the environment, such as the 25 Year Environment Plan, the commitment to move towards net zero and the role of nature in mental and physical health/well-being, as well as ensuring that environmental law is maintained through our regulatory activities.

All Natural England-managed National Nature Reserves (NNRs) welcome visitors to connect with nature and enjoy our awe-inspiring wildlife, habitats and landscapes, but do check with your local site before you visit in case of any local car park closures or other restrictions. You can find more details on the [NNR pages](#).

We have employed additional seasonal wardens in some reserves to ensure they are safe and welcoming places to visit. When visiting our reserves or other outdoor spaces please follow the [Countryside Code](#) to enable all to enjoy, value and respect the natural environment.

Our levels of COVID-19-related absence are currently low and reducing – should this change in such a way as to impact key services for customers, we will of course advise on any short-term implications.

Our offices are now all open, with some adjustments in place to ensure safe working. Natural England will continue to operate its flexible working policy

– with our staff operating from a range of locations, in the field, at partner locations, at home and in our 25 offices across England. If you need to contact an individual member of staff, please use electronic communications which can reach them wherever their whereabouts.

At this time, we would like to thank all our partners and customers for their continued support over the past year and more. Together, we have delivered a lot of excellent work to benefit the natural environment. Over the coming months, I am pleased to say that we expect to bring forward a set of new and exciting projects which will further assist in reversing the decline of nature and in helping people to enjoy the countryside with all it has to offer.

Moving forward

We remain committed to our mission to build partnerships for nature's recovery, which the nation will need more than ever. We continue to work in partnership, even if in different ways, safely and enthusiastically.

Marian Spain,
Chief Executive

[New arrangements for MHRA Good Practice \(GxP\) inspections due to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

As part of our response to the coronavirus outbreak, we have decided to conduct only essential Good Practice (GxP) inspections of Laboratories, Clinical Trials, Manufacturing, Distribution and Pharmacovigilance until further notice.

Other MHRA inspections will be deferred to a later date.

Our Good Practice inspections monitor compliance with the MHRA's UK standards in sites engaged in laboratory studies, clinical trials, manufacturing, distribution, and pharmacovigilance (safety monitoring of medicines). They are conducted both in the UK and overseas.

We are expecting organisations to maintain GxP compliance, and will support the industry and NHS to focus on service continuity by using alternative approaches for routine regulatory oversight, such as office-based assessment and the sharing of information within the international regulatory network.

We will prioritise essential on-site inspections linked to the UK Government's COVID-19 response or any other potential serious public health

risk, where these sites cannot be assessed remotely. Essential clinical trial authorisation applications will not be affected by this change and will remain prioritised.

We understand current challenges, and are acting in line with UK Government recommendations to minimise the impact of any such inspections on industry and agency personnel wherever possible.

This situation remains under review and we will provide further information as it becomes available.

If you have any questions on GxP-related issues, please email:

North Shropshire Electricity Distribution Network granted development consent

Development consent has been given for the installation of a new 132kV overhead line Trident design, comprising of 3 conductors supported by mostly single wood poles. The site is located from Oswestry Grid Substation to Wem Primary Substation.

The application was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration by SP Manweb on the 12 November 2018 and accepted for examination on 10 December 2018. Following an examination during which the public, statutory consultees and interested parties were given the opportunity to give evidence to the Examining Authority, a recommendation was made to the Secretary of State on 20 December 2019.

The Planning Inspectorate's Chief Executive, Sarah Richards said:

This is the 82nd nationally significant infrastructure project to have been examined and decided within the timescales laid down in the Planning Act 2008. The Planning Inspectorate is committed to giving local communities the opportunity of being involved in the examination of projects that may affect them. Local people, the local authority and other interested parties were able to participate in a 6-month long examination. The Examining Authority listened and gave full consideration to local views before making their recommendation.

The decision, the recommendation made by the Examining Authority to the Secretary of State and the evidence considered by the Examining Authority in

reaching its recommendation is publicly available on the [National Infrastructure Planning website](#)

ENDS

Journalists wanting further information should contact the Planning Inspectorate Press Office, on: 0303 444 5004 or 0303 444 5005 or email:

Press.office@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Notes to editors:

The Planning Inspectorate, National Infrastructure Programme of Projects details the proposals which are anticipated to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as applications in the coming months. It can be viewed at <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>