

Statement from Mountaineering Ireland & Mountain Training Board Ireland to voluntary & commercial leaders of hillwalking and climbing operating in Northern Ireland.

The UK government lockdown restrictions allow travel within Northern Ireland and up to 10 people from 2 different households to meet in Northern Ireland, (see, [Northern Ireland](#) for further guidance.

- *Travel in Northern Ireland permitted.*
- *If you're travelling from Northern Ireland to other regions of the Common Travel Area and staying overnight, you should take a rapid lateral flow device test (LFD) before you begin your journey home. You should only travel if the test is negative. After you return home you should take an LFD test on day two and day eight. You're also subject to the rules of where you're travelling to.*
- *Groups of up to 15 people can take part in structured outdoor sports training.*
- *Maintaining hand and respiratory hygiene practices.*
- *Maintain physical/social distancing of 2 metres as per government guidance.*
- *You should also enforce strong hygiene measures. This might be cleaning any equipment rigorously in line with wider guidance on hygiene, for example by using antiviral spray and washing hands thoroughly before and after use*

Mountaineering Ireland & Mountain Training Board Ireland has considered the guidance above and believe it may be possible for volunteer & commercial leaders to engage in **limited** led activity in Northern Ireland, whilst following the government guidelines of **travel and group size x15 people (including trainers/coaches/leaders)**.

At all times, you should continue to adhere to strict social distancing guidelines when you are outside your home, particularly ensuring you are two metres away from anyone outside your household.
It is really important that everyone continues to:

- Follow the advice being offered by the Government based on medical and scientific evidence, including the current 'stay at home' advice while that remains in place.
- Wash our hands regularly and in line with the best practice guidance.
- Have good respiratory hygiene in terms of coughing or sneezing into a tissue or the crook of your elbow.
- Follow the social distancing guidelines and stay two metres away from those outside your household whenever possible.
- Use face coverings (mouth and nose) when you are in enclosed spaces where social distancing cannot be maintained. For example, when using public transport and while in shops.
- Abide by the need to self-isolate either because you have symptoms or because you have been in touch with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive for coronavirus. This includes if contacted by the contact tracing arrangements in place.
- The NI Executive also ask those in society with responsibilities to exercise them in line with up-to-date public health guidance.

Activities do lend themselves to involve overnight stays (including camping). The use of indoor venues for briefings or debriefs is permitted and must adhere to hygiene measures and social distancing.

Climbing walls and centres are open for 1 to 1 coaching and group exercise.

To make any decision on whether to go ahead with an activity, please consider the usual factors and include those additional factors brought about by Covid – 19 including government guidance, parking, mountain rescue service capacity. Our [guidance on safe practice in the outdoors](#) issued to Mountain Training Association members may also prove useful. Leaders are responsible for the safety of their staff and group, need to have satisfied their own risk assessment about Covid-19 as well as having appropriate insurance cover in place.

Although MI & MTBI appreciates that leaders have a genuine need to return to work and will be keen to get back to leading a cautious approach will be necessary to both limit the spread of infection and respect local sentiment. As such providers in Northern Ireland should take note of local information and advice from organisations such as their own membership organisations (AMI, BAIML, BMG and MTA), Mountaineering Councils (MI, the BMC, MS), National Park Authorities, National Parks & Wildlife Services, Mountain Rescue Teams and local Tourist Boards. Leaders must consider the reputation of our sector or group and act accordingly.

It is important that our network of leaders maintain the quality of what we do. We are presently considering how we can further support leaders during these challenging times and welcome dialogue.

I have created an email group of service providers and award holders. If you wish to be added to this email list, please confirm by return.

Finally, please note once again that this currently only affects leaders in Northern Ireland. As the situation develops in other countries, we will issue further coordinated updates. The guidance for Northern Ireland may change in line with the Government's advice and may need to be reversed if required. Please contact Jane Carney to discuss further as required.

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