



Press Release

23 March 2020

For immediate release

Stay clear of the hills!

Mountaineers and hill-walkers urged to stay at home

Walkers and climbers have been asked to avoid unnecessary mountain activities and to consider their social responsibilities.

Mountaineering Scotland and Scottish Mountain Rescue have joined forces to urge people to abide by Government advice and avoid unnecessary travel – which includes journeys to the hills.

Mountain Rescue Teams have already warned that they are working below normal capacity and have no adequate protective equipment for dealing with people with suspected COVID-19. Yet the past weekend saw a number of rescue call-outs.

The Glen Coe Mountain Rescue Team has issued a stark statement to tell hill-goers that only seriously injured people, or those unable to walk will be rescued – and even that will be carried out with a bare minimum of team members.

Team Leader Andy Nelson said bluntly: “My first priority is Glencoe Rescue team members’ safety. My second priority is to help stricken mountaineers.”

He said anyone uninjured, lost, or benighted will be asked to wait until morning, and/or better visibility to extricate themselves. Even “walking wounded” will be asked to consider extricating themselves from the mountain.

Mr Nelson said: “This is contradictory to everything we believe in, but I must look after team members in order for them to help casualties who really need it.”

That message was backed up by Damon Powell, chair of Scottish Mountain Rescue, who said: “We do not have PPE within teams for COVID19 – quite rightly the NHS staff and others must be prioritised – and this is putting many team members in a genuine dilemma. They are all volunteers. Should they do what they always do and respond, putting loved ones at home at greater risk? Many team members will have people they live with who are classified as vulnerable, is it fair to take that risk? Also, many members of teams are self-employed and already facing hardship.

“Our NHS services in the mountain regions are already stretched; don’t add to their load. The mountains will be there next year and the year after, let’s make sure we all are.”

Mountaineering Scotland, which speaks for mountaineers and mountaineering in Scotland, has already urged its members to take their exercise locally as long as the Government recommends that.

Stuart Younie, Chief Executive Officer, said: "It's not just our own health we are risking, it's the health of others, many of whom may be much more vulnerable.

"As responsible members of the outdoor community we should avoid travel and recreational mountain activities and consider our social responsibilities to ourselves, friends, families and those rural communities who are rightly concerned about the impact of visitors to their areas. It's such a hard thing to say, to urge people NOT to go to the hills, but now really is the time to avoid unnecessary activities in the mountains.

"Remember, this is temporary, and we do ask that people put their own wishes aside for now and avoid unnecessary travel and contact with others."

Ends

Notes for editors:

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About Mountaineering Scotland:

- Mountaineering Scotland is the national representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.
- The Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 14,500 members and is funded through a combination of membership subscriptions, non-governmental grants and investment from sportscotland, which supports public initiatives and services in mountain safety, mountain training and the development and promotion of mountaineering activities.
- Mountaineering Scotland also acts for 75,000 members of the BMC or British Mountaineering Council on matters related to Landscape and Access in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland landscape and access work is supported financially by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC
- Mountaineering Scotland also runs the ClimbScotland initiative to encourage young people to participate in climbing and support their progression.
- Mountaineering Scotland is the national governing body for sport climbing. It offers pathways to climbing coaching, organises and promotes a range of regional and national climbing competitions, and manages the Scottish climbing and bouldering teams. It contributes to the management of the GB teams with the ultimate aim of seeing a Scottish athlete achieve a podium position in the Olympic Games.

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