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We are publishing these guidelines in order to protect the health of our members, particularly those who may fall into vulnerable groups, to ensure that our club insurance continues to cover us, and to give confidence to members and the wider community that we are acting in a responsible and safe manner. We all have different views on Covid and different attitudes to risk, but the club’s position is that these are not normal times - we expect all members who choose to participate in club activities during this exceptional period to adhere to these guidelines if they wish to take part in a club hike or social event. Don’t wait for someone else to take the lead in encouraging club members to maintain social distancing, say something yourself if necessary.

We are not experts in this area, and we are all learning what the new boundaries are - we will update these guidelines as circumstances change and as public health guidance changes. If you have any feedback on these guidelines, please let us know.

**Before a hike:**

* **You must not attend a hike or event if:**
	+ - **You have suffered from Covid-like symptoms in the past 14 days.**
		- **You have been in contact with someone suffering from Covid in the past 14 days**
		- **You have been outside of Ireland in the past 14 days**
* Include a mask or some other type of face-covering in your rucksack (a neck-gaiter or buff will meet this requirement). Also include disposable gloves in your first-aid kit. These are likely to be required only in an emergency where social distancing may not be possible and is to reduce the risk for anyone coming to your assistance.
* Ideally, include hand-sanitiser in your rucksack.

**While on a hike:**

* Maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from other hikers (or any other distance as advised by the health authorities) at all times.
* Practice good hygiene as advised by the authorities. In particular:
	+ - Wash your hands regularly
		- Cover your coughs and sneezes
		- Do not share drinks or food
		- Avoid touching your face
* If you develop symptoms during a hike, inform the leader and leave the hike in a safe manner.
* Minimise the need to touch gates, fenceposts, or any other infrastructure likely to be touched by others. Consider wearing gloves when opening gates.
* At drum-up, maintain good separation between yourself and other hikers.
* Avoid touching anything belonging to other hikers. For example, don’t hold another hiker’s walking poles when crossing a gate.
* Do not ask other hikers to retrieve items from your rucksack.
* Group photos are unlikely to be possible while safely maintaining social distancing.
* When on a hike, give plenty of room to others who you might meet or pass on a track.

**Additional instructions for leaders:**

* There is a wide variety of views within the club on risk. The club will publish guidelines in line with government instructions, but you are free to take actions to reduce risk further if you feel it is appropriate.
* There must be mandatory pre-registration on all hikes. Do not publish an open invite to attend a hike at a particular time and location.
* Attendees on hikes must self-certify that they can answer “No” to the following questions. Club hikes organised on Wild Apricot will require members to self-certify. Hikes organised through WhatsApp or other forums must find an alternative way to instruct members to self-certify (e.g. as part of the invite, or read out on the day of the hike):
	+ - You have suffered from Covid-like symptoms in the past 14 days.
		- You have been in contact with someone suffering from Covid in the past 14 days
		- You have been outside of Ireland in the past 14 days
* Hikes must be limited to a maximum number (currently 15 as per Government advice). You can choose a lower maximum number yourself if you feel it is appropriate. Our experience has been that 10 is best, although this will vary depending on the hike, the difficulty involved and the participants.
* Keep a list of participants on your hike. This may be required by contact tracers.
* We must reduce the risk of requiring assistance from Mountain Rescue during this period. They will assist if required and you should not hesitate to ring them in an emergency, but please only consider leading low-risk routes where your group can reasonably expect to be able to self-rescue as a first option.
* Consider appointing a ‘Safety leader’ on each hike, or ask your rear leader to take on ‘Safety leader’ duties. This person is responsible for encouraging social distancing amongst participants, and their responsibilities will include:
	+ - Encouraging correct social distancing practices
		- Monitoring for social distancing breaches
		- Monitoring for unsafe practices (e.g. repeated touching of fenceposts)
* It is important that we are seen as a club to take these guidelines seriously - as a leader you should be seen to set a good example. If someone on the hike breaches social distancing, say something. Anyone who repeatedly breaches social distancing, and ignores warnings, should be asked to leave the hike.

**Travelling to and from a hike or event:**

* Car-pooling with members outside your immediate family is unlikely to be compatible with social-distancing guidelines.
* Be considerate when parking, and ensure that access is maintained for locals, farmers and the emergency services.
* Avoid handshakes or similar interactions at the start.
* Plan your route to avoid having to stop en-route to the hike if possible. Get fuel locally to your home.
* Be sensitive to possible safety concerns of local communities.
	+ - Be seen to act responsibly at all times.
		- Do not park near houses.
		- Avoid touching fences, gateposts etc.
		- Use toilet facilities in your own home before leaving.
		- If you are asked to move or leave an area, understand that these are not normal times and people are reacting differently to this situation. Be gracious and move elsewhere.
* When initially congregating before a hike, ensure that social distancing is maintained.
* You may not be welcome in rural pubs. Our recommendation at present is after a hike to leave the area immediately.