**Briefing for Peak Climbing Club Evening Meets during the Covid Period**

Issue 2 – 05/04/2021

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1. **Introduction**

Peak Climbing Club intends to resume evening climbing from Tuesday 6 April 2021 and then meet every Tuesday and Thursday until the end of the outdoor climbing season (with the last session on Thursday 23 September 2021). This briefing is to help club members to climb safely and responsibly during the period when the Covid-19 coronavirus is still prevalent.

The current Covid Regulations limit groups outside to six people but there is an exemption for organised sport, which we are using to organise evening meets.

Before you can attend an evening meet with Peak Climbing Club you will be asked to read four documents and sign to say you have read them. These documents are:

* The BMC Covid guidance
* This briefing document
* The PCC climbing risk assessment

**You will only need to read these documents once** (unless there are updates, which we will tell you about.)

**You will need to sign up for each meet**, and we will be using Google Docs for this.

We appreciate this is not the usual way to arrange attendance at meets but this is a requirement to comply with the guidance, and is necessary to ensure evening meets can continue.

This briefing tries to cover the most likely situations, but it cannot be exhaustive nor take into account every member’s personal circumstances. **You must carry out your own assessment of the situation and climb only if you feel it is safe to do so.** This should include the practical aspects of climbing, you and your climbing partner’s personal circumstances, how exposed you have both been to Covid-19, and what would be the impact on you or on people living with you, should you contract Covid-19.

**If you or anyone in your household displays symptoms of Covid-19 you should not attend the climbing meet.**

We have drawn on available guidance from the UK government and from the BMC. As the guidance changes, new information will appear and we will gather more experience, so this document will be reviewed and updated.

1. **Relative Risks**

Climbing should be generally safe with regard to Covid-19. Transmission outdoors is considered to be much less likely than transmission indoors or on public transport. The most likely route of transmission will be touching contaminated surfaces, although close face to face proximity for an extended period creates risk from airborne virus.

Person to person transmission is more likely if you are in face to face contact with someone for more than 15 minutes. The times you will be in close proximity to a partner are when spotting or topping out as a second. When spotting you are unlikely to be facing someone. When topping out the close contact should only last a few seconds.

There is a much greater risk of serious injury resulting from poor climbing safety than from contracting Covid-19. For example, a leader setting up a belay to one side of a top out, or far back from the edge, to avoid contact with your second for a few seconds would risk your second swinging from a fall at the top out, or running into difficulty and you not being able to see and help out. **Your first priority as a climber should always be to climb safely.**

Many Club members will not have climbed in months. Please therefore take your time and make sure you are using the correct procedures for tying in, belaying safely, setting safe runners, setting up safe and secure anchors, lowering off safely from sports routes and setting up mats for bouldering. Please check your climbing partner’s knots and procedures. If in any doubt, please ask another climber for advice. It might be sensible to start with grades a bit easier than your previous ones until you are back in the groove again.

1. **Selection of crags for Club meets**

For the season we have selected crags that are large enough so that climbing teams can spread out and stay 2 metres from each other. We have avoided those crags where there are a limited number of routes at accessible grades. Unfortunately, this means that there will be more repetition of crags than in a normal season.

The latest Health Protection Regulations state that gatherings of over 6 people (or two households) are not permitted (raising to 30 people on 17 May 2021). However, we will be operating under an exemption, as we are considered “organised sport”. In order to be covered by this exemption we must follow the BMC guidance.

We have been advised not to exceed 30 people at a crag, as this may give the impression we are not complying with the Regulations.

1. **Before the climbing meet**

As a member, you will need to read the following documents:

* BMC guidance
* PCC briefing (this document)
* PCC risk assessment

You will only need to do this once.

You will need to sign up for each meet. This is a requirement for contact tracing.

Where possible try to limit the number of climbing partners this season, ideally climbing with those in your household, a single partner or a small number of regular partners if not.

For those not able to arrange a climbing partner themselves, the Membership Secretary will be able to assist matching climbers up based on their home location, usual climbing grades and any previous connections.

1. **Travelling to the crag**

As lockdown eases many people are coming out to the countryside for walks and other non-climbing activity, putting pressure on car parking. Please be considerate and minimise the pressure you put on the car parking areas. Car share if you can from within your household. Car sharing outside your household is not permitted. If possible, come by cycle or by foot. (Reminder: if you are using public transport you will need to wear a mask.)

Please be considerate to local residents, do not block them in and try to avoid parking on and damaging verges.

Have a back-up crag option if the car park is full or if the crag has significant numbers of other climbing teams already present.

1. **At the crag**

The Club will designate someone as Meet Leader for each meet and will advertise their name and contact details. Please be aware of the leader for each meet you attend. Details will be included on the meets list and the sign-up sheet.

Avoid swapping climbing partners part way through a climbing meet.

Please make sure you know the full name and contact details of the person you are climbing with. This may be required for contact tracing.

Some crags have pinch points (narrow paths, several routes starting from the same area, etc.) where keeping a safe distance will be difficult. As far as possible, we will try to avoid crags with these pinch points, but if there are any please avoid leaving bags and other equipment in these areas and be mindful of pinch points when selecting routes.

Avoid touching gates and other path furniture as much as possible.

If possible keep at least 2 metres away from anyone outside your household, including your climbing partner, other than occasions like the leader setting off, when spotting may be necessary, or the brief period when the second tops out.

Take hand sanitiser with you and use it at the start and end of your climbing session, and after each climb. Boulderers will be using the same holds repeatedly. We recommend you use hand sanitiser before and after each attempt at a problem.

If trad climbing, we recommend to bring your own gear (or gear from your household), including ropes, and use them on your lead. Avoid sharing gear when possible. When belaying consider using gloves or hand sanitiser before and after the belay.

If sport climbing, consider using your own quick-draws and strip the route after every lead, even if your partner wants to do the same route.

You should bring your own small first aid for minor issues. Committee members have volunteered to assist in giving first aid and will have extra facemasks, gloves and hand sanitizer.

Do not put gear or ropes in your mouth!

Climb within your limits to minimise the risk of any incidents that may require close contact, or the risk of having to call mountain rescue.

When completing the route congratulate your partner in a socially distanced way.

Do not share food or drink.

1. **After the climbing session**

The hospitality sector is currently closed, so there will be no pub visits after climbing for the present time.

Climbers are invited to bring their own refreshment and after climbing have a drink or eat at the base of the crag or at the car parking area, to retain at least a part of the social side of evening meets.

1. **At home after the meet**

If your climbing partner has been from outside your household, you should take steps to ensure your gear and ropes does not carry the virus.

You may want to sanitise your gear or your ropes with soap and water. Please be mindful, if sanitising, that you **do not use a cleaning product that can damage your climbing gear**.

The BMC recommends quarantining your gear for 72 hours after your climbing session.

1. **Feedback and future guidance**

The Club committee will keep this guidance under review. If Club members encounter situations which this guidance does not cover, or where it is unclear or unhelpful, please bring it to the attention of a Committee member so we can adjust the guidance as necessary.