

Members’ Briefing

30 March 2020

**Public Safety at active, inactive and disused sites during coronavirus restrictions**

**Background**

With leisure centres, swimming baths, many parks and nature reserves restricting access, members of the public will be seeking other places to walk, enjoy nature or have some fun. Whilst people are required to isolate themselves, some may seek to meet in places where they are less likely to be observed. Disused quarries and active sites that have been temporarily closed, particularly those with water, may seem a very attractive option.

If the period of enforced isolation continues beyond a few weeks and the weather gets warmer, young people may be tempted to find remote sites where they can meet with friends. This is more likely in sites close to urban conurbations or with an existing history of uninvited visits by members of the public.

Many disused sites are already open to the public. While for active or recently closed sites, members of the public may have to undertake some form of criminal damage to gain access before they are breaking the law. However, it remains the responsibility of the manager / landowner to ensure that appropriate signage is in place to warn of hazards and, if close to a public highway, to have taken steps to ensure that members of the public cannot simply walk over an unprotected face.

[QNJAC Information Sheet 6: Abandonment or Ceasing of Operations at Quarries](https://www.safequarry.com/hotTopics/QNJAC%20Geotech%20Abandonment%20or%20ceasing%20-%20Final%20December%202014.pdf), states: *‘The HSE does not need to be formally notified of temporary closure of quarries lasting up to 12 months. It is, however, helpful if quarry operators advise the local inspector in these circumstances.’*

**Key issues in relation to public safety**

Given the current exceptional circumstances, MPA would therefore urge members to consider public safety at all sites, whether operational or inactive.

1. Ensure the public safety risk assessment for the site is up to date, and reflects the change of circumstances
2. Identify who is responsible for the management of public safety on the site
3. Ensure this individual is in the same role or available to undertake this responsibility
4. Determine whether the activity on the site, or any other significant factors, are likely to have changed since the last risk assessment was made
5. Consider that the emergency services are likely to be overstretched and unable to undertake normal duties or be delayed when responding to emergencies
6. Consider how points 4 and 5 might impact on the risk assessment
7. Identify what controls are in place to mitigate the hazards identified in the risk assessment
8. Ensure these controls been put in place and are being checked:
* Are there appropriate warning signs in place?
* Is appropriate fencing in place and is it intact?
* Are further measures required, such as regular security checks?
1. Determine when these checks should be made and how frequently
2. Ensure the individuals undertaking site checks are trained to engage with members of the public:
	1. Always be polite and respectful
	2. Never be drawn or provoked into confrontational situations
	3. Never become involved in situations that would put health, safety or lives at risk
	4. Adopt a slow, deliberate, calm but firm approach to all eventualities
	5. Display the highest standards of behaviour when dealing with the public
	6. Maintain 2m separation between individuals at all times in accordance with Government advice to minimise risk of transmitting the coronavirus infection
3. Ensure they know what to do if they encounter someone in difficulty
4. Where necessary, provide resources to the individuals undertaking site checks to highlight the hazards and key safety messages
5. Ensure the checking of sites, signage, fencing, public trespass is being recorded together with any action taken
6. Ensure up to date contact information is displayed at the site:
	1. How to contact your company
	2. How to contact the emergency services
	3. Details of the location that would assist emergency services if called to the site
	4. Information about access points to the sites
7. Ensure the emergency services are:
	1. Aware of the site
	2. How to access the sites
	3. Where to obtain keys for locked gates etc.
	4. Points of access to water bodies

**Resources associated with public safety**

Please find attached links to the following that may be of assistance

[MPA Guidelines on Management of Public Safety](https://www.safequarry.com/hotTopics/MPA%20guidelines%20for%20management%20of%20public%20safety%20-%20updated%20March%202020.pdf)

[MPA leaflet for operators, security etc. with key messages for members of the public](https://www.safequarry.com/resources/MPA%20Community%20Water%20Safety.pdf)

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