



# Advice on Covid-19 and Undertaking Site-Based Ecological Work

10 July 2020

As UK governments ease restrictions on travel and contact with others, much ecological survey work and Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) work is restarting. In undertaking site-based work of any description, safety should be the primary consideration, not only your safety but that of others that you may come into contact with during and after the activity. Here is our current advice on keeping yourself and others safe.

## Risk Assessment

Firstly, every site visit needs to be risk-assessed using a broad risk parameter approach. Even activities that would normally be undertaken very safely with little required by way of control or mitigation may no longer be safe either for you, your colleagues and/or the wider public. Make sure you are familiar with how the Covid-19 virus is spread and review all aspects of your activity in the light of this information. This includes travel to and from the site, not just at the site.

Can the activity be postponed or are there alternative approaches? At present, it is for individuals and employers to make that judgement call as to whether a site visit should be undertaken but government requirements should be complied with at all times.

Secondly, if you do decide that you can undertake the activity safely, take a Dynamic Risk Assessment approach and keep the risks under review throughout the activity. If a journey and site visit cannot be conducted with minimal and manageable risk, it should not be undertaken.

Where journeys are undertaken, they should be undertaken by car, travelling alone. Using public transport is less safe for you or for

others. If a survey or other site-based activity requires more than one person you should travel separately and maintain social distancing on site at all times. Social distancing should be maintained throughout the activity, not only with colleagues but, if present, with other site workers and the public.

If hire cars are used, you should check that the hire company undertakes a deep clean of the vehicle before use.

If you have a survey team, keep the same surveyors working as part of the same team on the same surveys. Minimising mixing of survey staff will help to control the spread of the virus should a team member be affected.

Although accommodation is reopening, overnight stays and long journeys should be avoided where possible. Instead, wherever possible, use local sub-contractors to undertake site-based work so that it can be safely done without the need for an overnight stay or requiring individuals to drive long distances. We offer a sub-contractors directory (in the members' area of the website) where you can search for other members and opt in to be listed yourself.

Avoid face-to-face meetings where possible. If you do come into contact with other people maintain a safe distance following social distancing principles. Follow government advice on hand washing and hygiene at all times. Take especial care when eating/drinking.

Use (or provide) appropriate PPE including hand sanitizers and gloves (e.g. for use at petrol stations) – but please note gloves can give a false sense of security. Note that hand sanitizer can be flammable.

All equipment used should, of course be thoroughly washed between surveys. Ideally



use only your own set of field survey equipment and do not share with others.

Take as much food and drink from home as possible to avoid having to buy food and drink from shops and risking poor hygiene handling.

Payments for goods should be by card (preferably contactless), avoiding handling cash.

## Survey Techniques

Consider whether you can adapt your survey approach to avoid overnight stays, whilst minimising the impact on the efficacy of the survey results and ensuring the well-being of those undertaking the surveys.

We have published *Guidance on Ecological Survey and Assessment in the UK During the Covid-19 Outbreak* and *Guidance on Ecological Survey and Assessment in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland During the Covid-19 Outbreak*.

These guidance documents have been drafted by experienced ecologists as a tool to help CIEEM members continue to undertake ecological survey and assessment during the restrictions necessitated by the Covid-19 outbreak, where they can do so safely. These documents and further information can be found at: [www.cieem.net/covid-19/](http://www.cieem.net/covid-19/)

A key message is that if you have to adapt your survey technique because of Covid-19 precautions/restrictions, make sure you are up-to-date with the latest relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Body and Local Planning Authority advice first. Justify the approach that you have taken in your report, highlight it as a limitation and explain the implications of the limitations on the conclusions and recommendations.

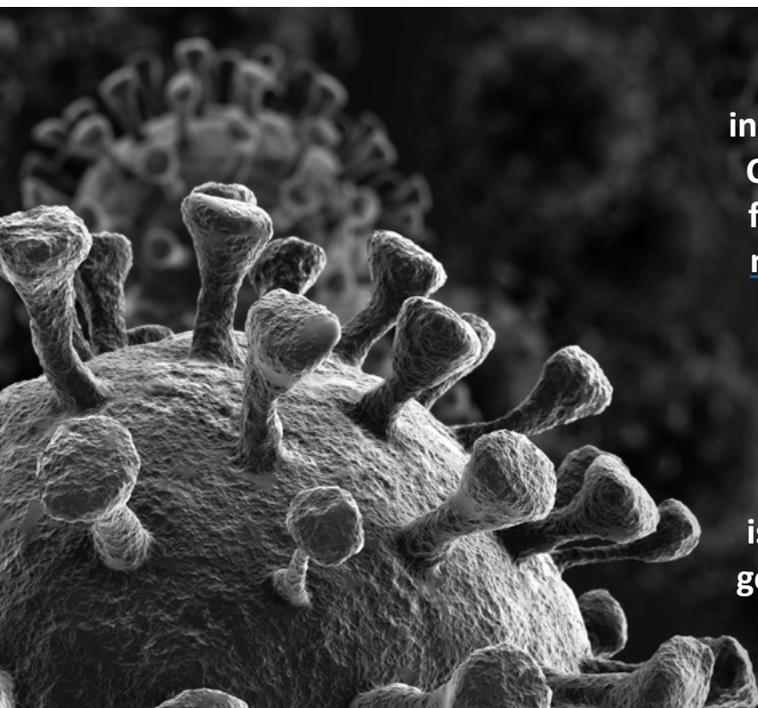
You may need to reflect this in your assessment and recommendations, for example:

- Make assessments on a precautionary basis, for example, assuming presence or assuming the largest likely population size.
- Recommend and undertake update surveys as soon as reasonably practical.
- Recommend mitigation on a precautionary basis designed to deal with any uncertainties.

## Developing Situation

The current situation is one that continues to change. We can all get through this period more easily if we can support each other.

We will update this advice as more information becomes available.



**If you develop symptoms that indicate a possible infection with COVID-19 (e.g. coughing or high fever – see [NHS advice at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)) or have been in close contact with anyone that develops these symptoms, you should stop work, inform your colleagues, and consider self-isolating in accordance with the government guidance in force at the time of onset.**