

Coronavirus (Covid-19) and reservoir safety

30 March 2020

The impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on all people is widely communicated from Government and through the media. This information notice sets out NRW's view as to the implications the virus may have for you as a reservoir undertaker (owner/operator), your agents and your advisors.

Regulation

We recognise that Covid-19 will impact on your normal operating practices and on ours. Our work to regulate the safety of reservoirs in Wales remains an essential activity, and we want to be clear about our expectations.

As a reservoir undertaker, we expect you to continue to meet your legal obligations under the Reservoirs Act 1975 and that you will put in place contingency plans and appropriate measures to ensure that you can continue to do so. You must inform us if you identify anything that is likely to result in non-compliance or increased environmental risk, at the earliest opportunity.

Maintenance, supervision and inspection are essential activities

The monitoring, maintenance, supervision and inspection of reservoirs are critical activities which help to protect the people, property and environment downstream. Without the correct care, reservoirs deteriorate and may no longer operate safely. The principal safety activities of inspection, etc. often rely on the right people visiting the reservoir to undertake their work. Whilst Covid-19 restrictions are in place, we strongly advise you to take steps to ensure your reservoir remains safe.

The current Government advice is available at <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>. The general advice is to *stay at home* but includes an exception where *essential work* is required to be done. This means work that cannot be done from home, can be done, but you must follow the instructions on social distancing. This is the current Government guidance but it could change. Your approach to managing your reservoir must be done in line with the most recent guidance.

We consider the work needed to maintain reservoir safety is '*essential work*' and that it is important that your reservoir is managed in accordance with the directions provided by reservoir panel engineers, either through their statutory reports and statements or via specific advice.

Adopt precautions

You should consider what precautionary measures are needed to protect the health of yourself, your staff and your advisors. You should keep up to date with the Government's guidance. You should consider:

- Identification and agreement of alternative engineers / advisors to step-in to cover periods of sickness
- The need for qualified advice from reservoir panel engineers to help prioritise "must do" activities
- Staggering visits to reservoirs by different people, or for different reasons, to minimise the number of people on site at any one time
- The number of people *needed* to be present on site at any one time should be minimised, with adoption of physical/ social distancing
- Using photo, video, CCTV, etc. to share information
- Commitment to critical works which affect the safety of the reservoir should only be undertaken where your engineer thinks there is a good certainty of completion without disruption.

Day to day management

The Government direction also includes advice to take exercise, this may include a regular walkover of your reservoir to check for problems. You should consider producing a plan of the site if you don't already have one. Taking photos may also help illustrate the key areas of your reservoir in case you have to ask someone else to carry out the regular walkover if you are unable to do so yourself.

Supervision

If you have a Supervising Engineer, you should contact them to check their arrangements for visiting your reservoir and any alterations that need to be made. Ask the engineer to confirm if they have made any contingency plans in case of sickness or self-isolation, and identify suitable stand-in engineers.

Statutory Inspection

If your reservoir is subject to statutory inspection you should contact your Inspecting Engineer to establish any changes required for their visit or an alternative engineer if they are unable to visit you.

As a result of an inspection, you may have to carry out measures in the interests of safety. This may include the use of external services such as consultants and contractors. You should contact these suppliers to check if their workplan is affected by Covid-19 Coronavirus – they may also be affected by a disruption in their supply chain.

You must take action to avoid critical works being interrupted and a reservoir left in an unsafe condition. If you are unable to start or complete any measures in the interests of safety or maintenance you should take advice from your engineers on what additional precautions they recommend to protect the reservoir. For example, your engineer may

advise to lower the water level. You should act on these recommendations promptly and tell us about them.

Keep informed

In line with Government guidance, we have implemented our Business Continuity Plan and we have modified our working arrangements to take account of disruption to our staff, to accommodate priority work and to respond to the changing circumstances. We will continue to work to help you understand and comply with your obligations.

We advise that you regularly check on the latest Government advice and review your reservoir management plan. There is a lot of uncertainty about how Coronavirus may continue to affect us all. We advise regular contact with your engineers and advisors.

Our Reservoir Regulation Team is continuing to work and will endeavour to respond to your enquiries as normal. The contact person you normally contact may change, or they may be unavailable, subject to potential disruption to our staff availability. If we consider it necessary to visit your reservoir we will contact you first to discuss this. For more information please contact our Reservoir Regulation Team:

reservoirs@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

Reservoir Regulation Team enquiries: 03000 65 4299

Customer Hub and 24-hr Incident Hotline: 03000 65 3000

Welsh Government advice: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>