



Beyond Coronavirus

Weekly update – Weds 29th April

INTRODUCTION

The past week seems to have been pretty busy, with our Work Groups meeting and making progress, phone conferences with both National and International partners and lots of documents to read.

We said that we'd keep our position under review and we're happy to say that nothing has changed, it remains:

The ABC believe that the reopening of the climbing wall industry is unlikely to be dealt with separately by government. Instead it will be linked into the general leisure sector and, specifically, with the fitness industry. There are likely to be restrictions placed on us, but we should aim to influence these where we have a solid foundation. The ABC will seek to put out clear recommendations for walls to implement as they are allowed to reopen.

The work groups are starting to develop their thinking on the protocols and restrictions that we will need to operate under to be both safe and to meet the requirements of Public Health, who will ultimately govern our reopening.

Whilst these are far from finished and we will ultimately pull them together into a single document, we want to share the thinking as it develops. Where we can, we will articulate these as clear guidelines - things to get working on. This information is given to the best of our ability and on the basis of information that we are very confident of. That said, this is a fast moving situation and things could change.

GROUP 1 – FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR WALLS

This group put out its paper setting out the key things that everyone should have done by now in order to preserve their cash flow.

Since then they have been looking at how we can raise money to support the industry as we reopen. A T-shirt fundraising campaign looks like it will be launched in the coming days which, with the support of all of your social media, we think we'll be able to raise quite a bit of cash. This will be spent on a campaign that all walls can use to encourage their customers back into their facilities after we reopen. The T-shirts are in design so more next week.

The group would also like to draw your attention to the [new government loan scheme](#). This should make it much easier to get loans up to 25% of your turnover, or £50K, with a guarantee of 100% provided by the Government.

Very recent information coming out from the government seems to be suggesting that the furlough scheme will not simply be switched off. It is looking like it may be tapered by sector and/or may have the flexibility for us to keep some staff on furlough whilst re-employing others. We'll keep our eyes on this and will report as we hear more.

GROUP 2 – OPERATING SAFELY

Since their last update, this group's thinking is shaping up under three headings. They will make the advice more and more specific as they feed in any guidelines coming out of the work of UK Active and further information from the industry.

Hygiene - for staff and customers

- We are very confident that hand sanitiser will need to be available around your centre. It will be worth thinking through whether you want to put it outside so that people clean their hands before entering the building. Do you have a supply of hand sanitiser?
- You will need to regularly clean things like iPads and door handles. Do you have a supply of sanitising wipes?
- We believe that the principle will be to 'clean the customer not the equipment' - we think this should overcome the problem of cleaning holds, harnesses, belay devices etc.
- Your cleaners will need rubber gloves and aprons. These will need to be disposed of in line with government guidelines. There is some advice [HERE](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings> that relates to cleaning after an infected person has left somewhere which represents an appropriately high standard for us to work to.
- The guidance on masks for staff or customers is still unclear. We will update you on this as it develops.

Capacity Management

We will face restrictions on the number of people we allow into our centres at one time. For some walls this may require them to have customers book slots (RGP can be used for this as no doubt can other software), others may require the means to count customers in or out. Vertical Life are working on an app for this. It's worth starting to think about how you will know how many customers you have in the building.

Discussions have been had about a number of square metres per person. We need to clarify this before we announce it but we hope to have this clear by next week.

Social Distancing

By now our customers are all very familiar with keeping 2m away from others who are not in their household. We therefore believe that Social Distancing will largely require posters and information to reinforce the message that social distancing is as necessary in a climbing wall as it is in the supermarket. At this stage we believe that social distancing will not be something that we police but will be encouraged as part of an individual's sense of responsibility.

There are however some exceptions where social distancing might have to be compromised. For example in rescue or first aid situations. In these circumstances, staff should have appropriate PPE (gloves, airway protection etc) and should not hesitate to undertake these activities.

GROUP 3 – RESEARCH

The work being done in Canada on the efficacy of liquid chalk and the impact of chalk on the virus is continuing. Our Research Group is in touch with the group undertaking this work. A number of producers are trying to ensure that their liquid chalk is of a standard that means it can be considered as a hand sanitizer. More will follow on this.

We are also in the early stages of exploring some research with a UK university.

GROUP 4 – RUNNING COMPS & GROUPS

The question of whether and how we can run groups safely is proving to be quite difficult. We have spoken to a number of international partners and the conclusion seems to be to leave groups until the second phase of reopening, whenever that is.

However, our group has met and shared a lot of information and we are meeting with the Institute of Outdoor Learning who are also looking into this, in order to coordinate our work. Again, we'll update on this in the coming weeks.

GROUP 5 – GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

This group have been working on a fundraising initiative to support climbing walls around re-opening. In Phase 1 we are designing a T-Shirt for sale to climbers. All proceeds from sales will go to support walls through developing a Phase 2 marketing campaign. The purpose of this campaign will be to reassure people that it's ok to come back into walls when they're allowed to do so. We have seen YouGov research which suggests a significant percentage of people will be cautious about returning to public spaces e.g. gyms, restaurants, cinemas. We will create campaign materials for walls to help reassure customers e.g. posters and social media assets explaining the hygiene and safety measure walls and customers are taking to minimise spread.

At this point we'd like to ask for your help in raising the profile of the T-Shirt campaign. Do you have any big-name climbers (with big social media followings!) who you think might be up for supporting the campaign through their channels. If so, please get in touch with kath@abcwalls.co.uk .

We have also been in communication with the climbing press and you should start to see some things come out in the climbing media shortly.

BEYOND THE GROUPS

We joined an international call involving CWA, IFSC, DAV, CEC (Canadian Federation) and FASI (Italian Federation) and have agreed to work together to share information and learning about protocols. We agreed that the detailed work has to be done nationally but will meet weekly for the foreseeable future.

A press release has been agreed following this call and is below.

If there is one word that defines the indoor climbing industry above all others it is community. Many other sports and businesses use this word but very few see it manifest in their everyday interactions with peers, customers, and employees at the same level that we enjoy. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every climbing gym, every owner, every competition, and every climber. What everyone wants to know is: When and how can I get back into my gym? In order to help provide guidance that will make climbers, parents, and employees feel as comfortable as possible several of the world's climbing organizations have joined together to share information internationally.

On April 27th 2020 representatives from the CWA, IFSC, ABC, DAV, CEC, FASI, and several leading national federations held a meeting to discuss creating an international working group to facilitate the sharing of hygiene, social distancing, and operational guidance. These organizations have their own internal task forces working towards developing best practices for their respective localities, however by coordinating information and advice the international indoor climbing industry can deliver stronger and more defensible arguments to local authorities. This work group will meet weekly for an indefinite period of time as each organization works to deliver information in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have a weekly call with BMC, ABCTT, Mountain Training UK and England and our relationship with the Outdoor Industry Association and through them UK Active continues to strengthen.

The IFSC are working on a web page with information on competitions and Covid-19 and it should be launched next week. We'll give the page address in next week's update.

GENERAL

You can find all of our Coronavirus updates on the ABC [website](#).

With many of industry colleagues off on furlough leave, ABC news is not being forwarded around organisations as quickly as it perhaps usually is and we have had people come forward to be added to the mailing list. You and all of your colleagues are absolutely welcome to sign up, so please do invite them to do so and email Kath with their contact details: kath@abcwalls.co.uk.