

Dear Members

## FIELD TRIP PROGRAMME 2020

You will all be aware of ongoing and developing events. Available information suggests that the coronavirus epidemic may be brought under control in the UK within the next three months. At the current time our Government is trying to implement a social distancing policy, to reduce the spread of the virus. Whilst the messaging from Government may not be as clear as it could be the underlying principle of social distancing and minimising contact related to non-essential activities is very clear. Our Government's next response to the virus may well involve more stringent social distancing measures.

Council has been considering the matter of field trips and indoor meetings and has decided that it will be in the best interests of our members to suspend the field trip programme for the next three months, starting with immediate effect and to be reviewed in time for a decision to recommence field trips on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

Our reasoning for this course of action is as follows:

1. To comply with Governments aims and minimise risk to our members. We appreciate that field collecting is an outdoor activity with low risk of contagion but, given that it is a non-essential activity, there is no valid reason for members to take any risk at all in our view;
2. Similarly, there is no justification for taking any risk that could increase the work of the NHS, no matter how small that risk may seem;
3. For visits to quarries, our attendance would unnecessarily increase risk for quarry workers, not only through direct communication with our hosts but through signing in procedures and use of toilet/ washroom facilities. In addition, quarry management will have their own issues and are not likely to appreciate any extra burden that we might place on them;
4. The complications of managing field trips including excluding those aged over 70 or with underlying medical issues, excluding those who are unwell, actively managing social distancing in the field and in light of the expected rapidly changing situation over the next three months, could lead to ongoing confusion and disruption at a time when most, if not all, of us will have more important things on their mind;
5. Indications are that the virus, at least in some people, is asymptomatic in its early stages, meaning that it can potentially be spread by a person before they are showing the obvious symptoms identified by the NHS. This means that field trip organisers could not be totally sure that they are excluding those who have the virus from a trip.

Council understands how disappointing this approach will be to everyone given the huge amount of effort that our Branch and field trip organisers put into the programme and how much we all enjoy taking part in Society activities. Unfortunately, however, we have been overtaken by greater events and must seriously and diligently play our small part in bringing this epidemic under control.

Council hopes that you will understand this decision and we will get in touch again ahead of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020 with a view to recommencing the field trip and meeting programme as matters become clearer. In the meantime, you should assume that field trips and meetings that are planned to take place after 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020 will go ahead.

On a personal note, Council and I wish you the best of luck and look forward to seeing you in the Summer.

Best wishes

Steve Warren

Hon President of The Russell Society