



Introduction

The following COVID_19 Best Practice Guidance is for **Day Boat Operators** in Scotland. The focus of this document is on the operation of Small Commercial Vessels carrying up to 12 passengers. Whilst larger vessels will have more deck space and therefore may not need to be as prescriptive with customer seating/ zones, much of the guidance is still relevant.

At the time of publishing, it assumes that the operators are working to the [Scottish Government Guidance for Transport Operators](#), which states “this guidance is also applicable to those operators in the tourism sector who provide transport services which are available to the public” allowing the following physical distancing on board vessels:

Vessel	Distance between each household/ social bubble on board
Open RIB with fixed seating	1 metre
Cabin RIB	1 metre
Traditional boat with forward wheelhouse and open decking aft	1 metre

The below guidance supports businesses through the visitor journey from the moment the visitor discovers them online through to booking, disembarkation and follow-up, taking into account the safety of staff and consideration of the local community.

The aim of this guidance is to support day boat operators who already operate with stringent guidance to operate safely and securely for the benefit of themselves, their staff, their visitors and the wider public.

We recognise that this guidance will not enable all day boat operators to operate to full capacity. However, it is essential that all activity is in accordance with Scottish Government Guidance relating to the Strategic Framework.

The suggestions within this document are not meant to be definitive or finite, they are there to aid everyone to make sensible decisions within their own operations:

- The guidance overlays the national guidance and legalisation around travel and social mixing
- The guidance has been created with industry input from a range of Wild Scotland boat operators.



- It is critical that there is a consistent approach to guidance for day boat operators. This avoids confusion and supports a safe and viable return to trading late spring and into the summer season.

Day boat operators for tourism are made up of the following:

- Skippered short day-trip voyages undertaken to visit destinations or to undertake wildlife watching.
- Diving and snorkelling operated from the vessel. The guidance below is relevant to the boat operation and not the diving activity (*see Appendix E*).

Contents:

- COVID-19 Guidance and useful links
- Best Practice for Day Boat Operators
- Additional information (*Appendices A-G*)
- Wild Scotland Disclaimer

COVID-19 Guidance and Useful Links

The below guidance has been collated from a number of sources including NGBs, National Parks, Emergency Services, UK & Scottish Government and other useful websites/ links.

We recommend that you follow and respect guidance from Scotland's Rescue Services and are fully aware of any restrictions that may be in place due to COVID-19 before you plan and head out:

- [Royal National Lifeboat Institution](#)
- [Scottish Government Advice and FAQ](#)
- [Wild Scotland Guidance](#)



- [Guidance for Transport Operators](#)
- [Tourism and Hospitality Guidelines](#)
- [Protect Scotland Contact Tracing APP](#)
- [Return to Boating Guidance](#)

Best Practice COVID-19 Guidance for Day Boat Operators – Scotland

The Operator journey from receiving booking through to customer departure is detailed below. The customer journey/ experience should reflect all the points below and no part of their journey should come as a surprise to them. The operator should ensure that the customer communication, whilst concise, covers everything the operator expects of the customer and the procedures the customer will experience.

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1. Pre-booking and Booking

Topic	Action
Appoint COVID officer	Operators should appoint a COVID Officer responsible for ensuring all procedures are carried out (for example see the sportscotland eLearning for COVID Officer).
Risk Assessments	- Risk assessments with COVID-19 mitigating actions to be carried out and updated. - Clear guidance to be prepared for the team regarding cleaning protocols, first aid and emergencies, waste disposal and touch points. - See appendix A for risk assessment examples.
Advanced Booking facility	- Advanced booking facility is offered where possible. - Ensure all customer details are stored for track and trace. - Advance payment ensures cashless transaction
Clear information on all publicity material online and print	- Ensure all government guidance in relation to physical distancing is clearly detailed on website, online and any published material. - The operator website and social media channel must clearly outline operator COVID procedures including cancellation policy and what is expected from the visitor to ensure protection of other visitors and the crew.
Terms & Conditions	- The terms and conditions of booking should include: <i>a disclaimer stating that no member of the group will have displayed signs of COVID-19 prior to travel.</i> <i>If any party member does display signs of COVID-19 the group must not travel and they should contact the operator immediately.</i> <i>the customer agrees to follow the operators COVID procedures in line with Government guidance.</i>
Walk-in bookings	The operator will ensure a procedure is in place for recording track and trace information and the customer is given the same terms and conditions as given to an online booking.

- Ensure COVID mitigations are in place for taking payment for walk-in bookings

2. Pre-arrival and Boat/ Kit Preparation

Topic	Action
Customer Parking	• Customer Parking to be clearly signed (if applicable) with enough distance between vehicles to allow 2 metre physical distancing.
Sanitising	• All customer touchpoints to be sanitised between visits. • Hand sanitiser to be available at customer arrival point and at boarding point. • Cleaning products should include a viricidal chemical / sanitiser with EN14476 certified. Please see a useful list of products in Appendix B. • Lifejackets prepared and sanitised – ensure effective anti-viral solution is used and instructions re: contact times are followed. ○ If stock levels allow, implement a rotation system to allow additional time between uses. ○ Child foam lifejackets to be washed after use in a mild Milton solution – take care to avoid mildew. ○ Manual gas lifejackets can be quickly submerged in fresh water after the full sanitisation process. ○ Automatic gas lifejackets can be sprayed with fresh water after the full sanitisation process – this prevents the lifejacket fabric from the long-term effect of the chemicals used. • Binoculars – advise visitor to bring their own. If the operator insists on providing binoculars for the customer, then they should be sanitised prior to use and not shared amongst customers. • Waterproofs – advise customer to bring their own. If operator is to provide waterproofs, they should, at minimum, be sanitised around all touch points including the face, zips pockets etc. or quarantined for a minimum of 72 hours between uses. Stock should be rotated.
Information booklets	• If information booklets are issued, they should be laminated to allow for sanitising between use.



Boat cleaning	• In addition to the standard boat preparation/ cleaning procedures the boat should be fully sanitised. • An anti-viral sanitising product should be used and instructions and contact times should be followed. • A checklist and sign-off sheet are recommended. • If more than one skipper uses the boat it should be fully sanitised at the end of each skipper shift including all skipper touch points. • The boat must be fully sanitised between each trip when there is a change of customers: ○ OPEN RIBS – Passenger boarding hand rail, all seat hand holds (front and back), seat coverings, side tubes and tube hand holds. Wheel, throttle, VHF, etc. ○ CABIN RIBS – Forward external door and handle, forward grab handles, inside forward door and handle, opening window handles, windows, all seats, flat sills to the side of each seat, flat sill above head height, inside stern door, exterior of stern door. Wheel, throttle, VHF, etc. ○ TRADITIONAL OPEN DECK BOATS WITH WHEELHOUSE – All customer touchpoints including handholds and rails and seating if applicable. Wheelhouse door and handles, toilet (if applicable) outside door and handle.
Boat cleaning cont.	

3. Customer Arrival and Kit Up

Topic	Action
Customer testing	• Operator to consider use of digital forehead thermometer and subsequent procedures.
Customer welcome	• Where possible the customers should be greeted outside in the fresh air.
Kit up area	• Customer to be directed to the “kit-up area” – if more than one household/ bubble kitting up at same time the area should be zoned into “bubbles” 2m apart to ensure groups don’t mix. • Customers to hand sanitise prior to entering kit up area. • Customer kit (lifejackets and binoculars if applicable) can be pre-prepared in a sanitised box / zone for them pre-arrival.



Kitting up	• Customer to be instructed in how to don the lifejacket by team member (maintaining social distance). • Buddy up customers within their group and instruct how to check – should the lifejacket need to be loosened or tightened the team member should first ask buddy to assist however, if needed, the team member should mask up and ensure the lifejacket is safely fitted (standing at customers side rather than face to face).
Boarding preparation	• If more than one group/ bubble to board, customers should be given the order of boarding and which seats/zones have been allocated to them. • Customers should be asked to maintain social distancing from other parties during boarding process.
Vessel departure	• Shore staff (if applicable) to sanitise customer touchpoints once the vessel departs.

4. Boarding

Topic	Action
Pre-boarding	• Customers should be asked to hand sanitise and don their masks immediately prior to boarding.
Skipper briefing	• Skipper to explain safe boarding procedure and consideration should be given to whether a “handy pole” as an extended helping hand should be used to ensure safe but socially distanced boarding. • If handy pole required it must be sanitised between customers. • Skipper to carry out standard safety briefing including additional COVID safety information before departure.



5. At Sea

Topic	Action
Masks	• Masks or face coverings to be worn at all times during the tour. • There should be a pack of masks on board to be used in the event of a loss of mask during the tour.
Seating / Zones	• If allocated seating customers should be reminded to stay in their seats at all times. • Open deck areas should be “Zoned” to allow a specific section for each household/ bubble. • The skipper should explain that in the event of a wildlife ‘sighting’ they will do their best to ensure all zones get ample viewing time by adjusting the boat position to avoid customers either missing a sighting or groups encroaching into another groups zone.
On board toilets	• Where there are on board toilets, if feasible, consider making them not available. • If toilets to be accessible, ensure the provision of anti-viral hand soap and sanitising spray and blue roll. • Consideration should be given to how to sanitise the toilet area after use.
Refreshments	• If refreshments are normally offered on board consideration should be given whether to withdraw this service during COVID times. (due to removal of masks to consume plus additional sanitising requirements).
Sensitivity to environment	• At all times, sensitivity to the environment and wildlife to be in consideration, according to Wild Scotland Best Practice and WiSe training.
Landing customers	• Should a tour include a landing then all local guidelines should be adhered to. • At all times follow the recommendations within Wild Scotland/ Sail Scotland #RespecttheDestination campaign.
Access to Wheelhouse	• For open decked boats that normally allow customer access to wheelhouse – this will be an operator decision as to whether this should be allowed. • If access to the customer is permitted then there needs to be enough space to allow social distancing from skipper plus additional cleaning/ sanitisation protocols will need to be created covering all internal touchpoints



6. First Aid & emergencies

Topic	Action
Company Policy	• Each operator should prepare a company policy on how to deal with first aid and emergency situation specifically in relation to covid regulations. • This policy should be briefed to the whole team (<i>see Appendix C for examples</i>)
First aid provision	• Additional “emergency” boxes should be on board to avoid unnecessary use/ opening of CatC first aid packs – to include extra face shields, gloves, CPR resuscitation mask, sanitising spray/ gel. • Skippers and crew are trained in first aid however, whenever possible, a member of the same group as casualty to be instructed in administering first aid procedures.
Emergency procedures	• In the event of an emergency (i.e., ‘Man Overboard’ or a serious medical incident) physical distancing may not be adhered to but crew/ skipper will be required to take all necessary precautions (masks/ gloves etc) if time allows.



7. Disembarkation and Departure

Topic	Action
Disembarking	- Customers should disembark the boat as instructed by the skipper, maintaining physical distancing from other groups and crew. - Customers to hand sanitise immediately on disembarking and before removing their lifejackets.
De-kitting	- Customers to be asked to remove lifejackets and place them, along with any company binoculars and waterproofs, into a “sanitisation” area/box – this ensures no accidental “re-use” before sanitisation. - Hand sanitiser to be available before customers depart.
Kit sanitisation	- All lifejackets, binoculars, waterproofs, information booklets to be sanitised as per instructions (ensuring contact time properly adhered to) before being stored away or re-used. - Any item that can’t be correctly sanitised must be quarantined and not used for 72 hours.
Vessel sanitisation	The vessel should be sanitised as detailed in section 2 before any new customers board therefore enough time should be allocated between sailing times.
Rubbish	Customer rubbish, discarded masks and gloves should be bagged and disposed of safely.

8. Follow up

Topic	Action
Follow up communication	- The operator may wish to consider a follow-up email to customers to check if the customer enjoyed the experience and has any comments about the safety procedures. - Include a reminder that if any member of the group tests positive within next couple of weeks to inform the operator.



9. Other considerations

Topic	Action
Pre-season declaration	• Full team to sign a pre-season declaration stating they understand what symptoms to look out for re: COVID-19 and to acknowledge the need to inform the COVID Officer immediately and stay at home. • <i>Please see example in Appendix D.</i>
Temperature checks	• Daily Crew/ team temperature checks – this is not an essential but each operator should consider whether or not to carry out.
Perspex screens	• Where efficient, effective, safe and possible, a Perspex screen should be erected to separate the skipper/ crew from customers (i.e., cabin RIB)



Appendices A-G

Appendix A. Risk Assessment Examples:

- [RYA Risk Assessment Example](#)
- [Other examples](#)

Appendix B: Cleaning product examples:

- [Chemgene HLD4L](#)
- [Ecoworks Marine](#) including hand and other sanitisers/ boat cleaning products that conform to EN14476 and EN1276.
- [Safezone](#)
- [Clinell](#)
- [Delphis Eco](#)
- [Bio Hygiene](#)

Appendix C: First Aid and Emergencies policy example: [See here](#)

Appendix D: Pre-season declaration example: [See here](#)

Appendix E: Diving Operators Specific Guidance:

- [British Sub Aqua Club \(BSAC\)](#) is the NGB for diving and snorkelling in the UK, and the [Scottish Sub Aqua Club \(SCOTSAC\)](#) is the NGB recognised by sportscotland for diving in Scotland:

Appendix F: Terms and Conditions examples: [See here](#)

Appendix G: Useful Links

- [RYA Green Blue for sustainability tips specific to boats.](#)



- [Test and Protect - collection of customer details](#)
- [UK Government Guidance for commercial seafarers and recreational boat users](#)

Disclaimer

This information is provided in good faith as an aide memoire for operators and others to use during this period of Covid-19 restrictions. It is not intended to do anything other than provide a sign post to possible ways of working to make all activities/experiences as safe as possible for staff; clients and the wider public during this time. It is not intended to be a complete list of actions but as an aid to start thought processes for any operators and to make suggestions on areas for consideration.

All operators remain liable for their own actions and for the safety and security of their staff and clients and must continue to ensure that they always have this in the forefront of their minds.

We shall update this document from time to time as and when other information becomes available, but when completing procedures, all operators must check the current requirements applicable to their own operations.

The authors do not accept any liability for the information provided.