



## Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI) Coronavirus Update for Volunteers

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is having a profound impact on how we go about our lives as individuals and as a society. In the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative the health, safety and welfare of our volunteers, staff and wider public is our top priority and we follow the latest advice from Government as to what we should and should not be doing as part of the collective effort to manage the spread of COVID-19.

We also recognise that there is value in maintaining outdoor and volunteer based activities at this time where these activities can be undertaken safely. Therefore, we have produced the initial guidance below in light of the current Government advice as to how we propose to work.

Should Government advice change in the future this may affect our ability to continue to offer volunteering opportunities and require change in our position.

You can find our latest response to the coronavirus on our website [www.invasivespecies.scot/news](http://www.invasivespecies.scot/news) .

You can also follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/SISI_project) (@SISI\_project) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SISIproject).

### **Group activities, events and outreach work**

We must operate in a socially responsible way and not put ourselves or others at potential risk. So, with immediate effect all SISI group events and activities will be postponed.

This includes all outdoor and indoor group sessions, school groups, talks, guided walks, meetings and training events.

### **Volunteering opportunities**

Our conservation work to control invasive non-native species will be continuing at the present time. We recognise that outdoor volunteering has many positive benefits for both physical and mental wellbeing and will continue to try and provide these volunteer opportunities if we are able to safely do so and where they are consistent with Government advice.

In this context we ask that -

### **All volunteers**

- Are vigilant with regards to the Coronavirus symptoms and not to attend any activities if you display any of the symptoms.
- No person in any of the groups identified as vulnerable (currently those over 70 years old, with underlying health issues, who are pregnant or who have a weakened immune system)) should attend any volunteer activity.
- Respect the social distancing guidance and avoid physical contact with others - including shaking hands and hugging.

More information about COVID-19, including symptoms, vulnerable groups and social distancing is available here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

### **Mink raft and trap volunteers**

Monitoring a mink raft or trap generally involves lone working in a remote location and does not pose a significant COVID-19 risk. Volunteers should follow existing health and safety precautions whilst participating in our mink control project and at all time follow current government and NHS guidance on social distancing, social isolation etc.

If your personal circumstances require it or if you are uncomfortable continuing with the mink project at present monitoring activity can be suspended at any time. Your health and wellbeing and personal wishes always come first.

In the event of a mink capture a Project Officer will, as currently, attend to despatch any caught mink. In the event of our Project Officer being required to self-isolate or being unavailable and where we are not able to set up an alternative despatch arrangement, we will contact those volunteers who monitor traps and ask them to suspend all trapping activity.

At present we are happy to take on new mink raft volunteers. However, this requires a face to face meeting with a Project Officer to ensure that the equipment and its legal operation is understood by the volunteer. To allow these meetings to take place safely they will take place out of doors (generally at the raft deployment site) and we will ensure that safe distances are maintained and good hygiene practice followed.

### **Plant volunteers**

The plant control season will be due to get underway in April. Further guidance about volunteering to assist with plant control will follow.

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If you have any questions or concerns about your volunteering activities, please contact your local Project Officer or email us on [sisi@nature.scot](mailto:sisi@nature.scot)

*Updated; 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020*