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**From:** Fairweather, Anne  
**Sent:** 02 November 2020 15:18  
**Subject:** Outdoor sports from 5 November

Dear Secretary of State

As you consider the COVID-19 regulations for arrangements from 5 November, we ask for your support to keep these important outdoor activities open, within strict social distancing and Covid-secure protocols.

The lockdown in March showed how valuable our open space is. We had to close these sports and activities in March and as we approach more restrictions and a colder darker season, we are very keen to keep them open. Over the summer these facilities have been very well used. This has led to significant increases in participation and more people walking, running, swimming, playing tennis and golf, using our athletics track and our brilliant trim trails, effectively increasing their physical and mental health and well-being. In particular we ask you to consider:

- Outdoor swimming: Hampstead Heath has 3 swimming ponds and a lido. We have sold nearly 2000 season tickets this winter. Cold water swimming has well documented mental and physical health benefits and many find the release of cold water swimming helpful in these difficult times. With outdoor changing, and room for social distancing in the venues and the water, we believe we can run these venues safely for the benefit of swimmers. We have also put in place one way systems, hand sanitizers at the entrances and, most importantly, have employed stewards to inform and enhance the swimming experience. They make sure all customers are aware of all the rules on the heath and ultimately making their experience a safe and worthwhile one.
- Tennis: our tennis courts on Hampstead Heath, Golders Hill Park and Queen's Park have never been busier. They are all run through the LTA online booking system to allow for trace and trace and social distancing.
- Running track: we had to keep this open air facility closed in the first lockdown, even though running on the Heath was allowed. We support pre-booking and limiting of numbers at this venue and are keen to keep this open from 5 November to support running clubs and individuals train.
- Golf: golf is hosted on Epping Forest and there is a pitch and putt facility at Queen's Park. This sport has been very popular as we come out of lockdown and allows for as much social distancing as walking with others, for example. We support pre-booking at these facilities.
- Outdoor gym equipment: it would be helpful if we could keep this equipment open given the difficulties in fencing it off, the open air environment, and the huge desire to train on the open spaces which we have seen since the March lockdown.

Do let me know if you need any further information on these venues.

It would also be incredibly helpful to understand how any sporting restrictions apply to children and young adults. The Heath supports over 180 sports clubs and its been good to see children training on the Heath again. Wanstead Flats is home to up to 60 pitches for football matches of all sizes.

Many thanks for your consideration

Kind regards

Anne Fairweather  
Chair, Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood  
& Queen's Park Committee

Graeme Dosh-Smith  
Chair, Epping Forest and Commons Committee

Cc:

Jane Nickerson, CEO, Swim England  
Scott Lloyd, CEO, Lawn Tennis Association  
Joanna Adams, CEO, UK Athletics  
Jeremy Tomlinson, CEO, Golf England



**Anne Fairweather CC | Chair Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park**

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# Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

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Ms Anne Fairweather  
[Anne.Fairweather@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:Anne.Fairweather@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

12 November 2020  
Our Ref: TO2020/24405

Dear Ms Fairweather,

Thank you for your correspondence of 2 November, regarding guidance for sports. I am replying as a member of the Ministerial Support Team for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

The government understands that sport and physical activity are incredibly important for physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus.

Nobody wanted to be in the position of having to introduce further national restrictions. However, as the Prime Minister said, with the virus spreading faster than expected we cannot allow our health system to be overwhelmed. Therefore, from Thursday 5 November until Wednesday 2 December indoor and outdoor sports and leisure facilities will need to close and activities will need to stop. This includes leisure centres and gyms, swimming pools, tennis and basketball courts, golf courses, fitness and dance studios, climbing walls, archery, driving, and shooting ranges.

The National Restrictions are designed to get the R rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions. In order for these measures to have the greatest impact, we are asking everyone to sacrifice doing some things they enjoy doing, for a short period of time. As soon as we're in a position to start lifting restrictions, grassroots sports will be one of the first to return. Information on the new national restrictions, including their impact on sport and exercise, is available here: [www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november).

National restrictions now apply to England. There are differences in the guidance for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For more information on restrictions see here: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).

People are still allowed to leave their homes for exercise and recreation outdoors, with your household or on your own, or with one person from another household or support bubble. However, we have not introduced further exemptions because it's important that the restrictions are simple to understand. The difficulty is that, when you unpick one thing, the effectiveness of the whole package is compromised.

The advice for the playing of all sports evolves in line with the COVID-19 situation. You would be advised to check the latest updates on this webpage, as it is updated continuously: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation).



Finally, do note that this department does not produce guidance for every sport. Instead, you would be advised to refer to the National Governing Body for each relevant sport, for the latest advice. All National Governing Bodies for sports in the UK are listed in the section entitled: 'Sports and governing bodies that we recognise', on this webpage: [www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/national-governing-bodies?section=the\\_recognition\\_process](http://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/national-governing-bodies?section=the_recognition_process).

If you are a sports business looking for government support, you can check to see what support is available here: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support).

More information on funding available from Sport England is available here: [www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/our-funds](http://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/our-funds).

We are continuing to work with organisations to understand what they need and how we may be able to support them.

I hope you find this reply useful.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Downing  
**Ministerial Support Team**