

FIRST LADY

Club President **Julia Bradbury** offers a ray of hope in the run-up to campsites reopening this summer



I hope you're all bearing up and coping with the weirdness and uncertainty that the coronavirus pandemic has thrown on all our lives. As I type we might see a return to camping on 4 July, which is the earliest date for stage three in the government's roadmap for easing lockdown, when some venues could partially reopen.

It may not be camping as we know it Jim, but just to be back outside under the stars in some form would be brilliant. And what a Lovely Day to reopen - what would have been the late Bill Withers' birthday! It also happens to be Malia Obama's birthday too - imagine being the daughter of a President of the United States and being born on American Independence Day.

As we continue to learn more about the coronavirus and its impact on our lives, it seems clear that social distancing measures will be with us for the foreseeable future, and that includes on the Club's campsite network. Club Sites, Certificated Sites, and Temporary Holiday Sites - however many are open - will have to follow these guidelines.

Since the easing of some lockdown measures on 13 May, a lot of us have been able to gently edge ourselves back into our local green spaces, to test drive this new normal. And for those of us who enjoy walking, running and cycling, being allowed to pursue unlimited exercise every day has been a relief.

In England, we can now drive further from home, meaning areas we love such as forests, woodlands, nature reserves, beaches, hills, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are once again on our radar. But loads of the well-known destinations that people flock to are asking people to stay away for now. As desperate as they and their local businesses must be for us to get back, they quite rightly don't want to risk the virus taking hold in their communities.

We're all still learning, but we must remember that travelling can have an impact on services; whether it's emergency responders, local food providers, vehicle breakdown services and more. These guys are doing such important work for the country right now, we don't want to be adding to their problems.

That's why for the time being, the Club's encouraging people not to stretch themselves too



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The Seven Sisters seen from the South Downs Way in Sussex

far. Stay close to home if you can, explore what's around you, visit outdoor spaces near your town or city that perhaps you've previously overlooked. I guarantee there's much more in your immediate surroundings than you've ever been aware of. I heard the chef and Bake Off Queen Prue Leith talk recently about being locked down in the Cotswolds; she's lived there for 45 years and for the first time she's been taking a right turn instead of a left turn out of her house and she's discovered wetlands and nature reserves she didn't even know existed.

When I presented Britain's Favourite Walks: Top 100 on ITV a couple of years ago it was amazing how many of them, voted for by the public, were close to major cities and towns.

Number 70 on the list was the Sandstone Trail, a 34-mile north-south trek from the Cheshire town of Frodsham to the north Shropshire town of Whitchurch. It's within easy reach of Liverpool, Chester and Stoke-on-Trent and passes barely more than a mile from our Delamere Forest Club Site, taking in some lovely sights along the way.

It was also encouraging to see some real classics in there too. Number 13 on the list (though far from unlucky for anyone living nearby) is the South Downs Way. Stretching all the way from Winchester in Hampshire, following the natural ridge of the downs all the way to Eastbourne in Sussex, this 100-mile National Trail is no mean feat to walk in its entirety, but it's possible to stop off at one of the Club Sites at Chichester, Graffham, Slindon or Normans Bay to break it up into sections. It's perfect for anyone living around the south coast cities of Southampton, Portsmouth and Brighton.

All of these walks can be found online at theoutdoorguide.co.uk, so have a look and check out what's close to you.

Many of these have Club Sites local to them, and with a bit of luck and careful planning from us all, we hope these will be a holiday option for everyone again this summer.

If you have lost someone close to you during this pandemic or if you or someone you know is going through particular hardship at this time, our thoughts and best wishes are with you and your loved ones.

Stay safe everyone, and I hope we will soon bounce back from this in a big way. 🏠