**THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES**

**CORONAVIRUS – COVID19**

**GUIDANCE ON OPENING CHURCHES FOR VISITORS**

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 permit visitor attractions, museums, galleries to be open to the public. Places of Worship can, therefore, be legally open for visitors outside of private prayer, worship and occasional offices. There is specific guidance for opening for worship and occasional offices on the Church in Wales website, but this guidance focuses on opening churches to permit general visitors to the church.

Such opening must be conducted after the preparation of written risk assessment setting out the precautions that will be put in place to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. This risk assessment should be approved by your Archdeacon.

The principles of these are the same as for opening churches or any other building: maintaining two-metre physical distancing between people, ensuring regular hand washing/sanitizing and regular cleaning of premises especially surfaces. However, opening for visitors presents particular challenges as numbers of attendees are difficult to predict and may come from a wide geographical area. You are obliged by law to take all reasonable precautions to prevent the spread of coronavirus as such you need to be able to demonstrate that you have adequate systems in place. Government guidance is key to deciding what to do in each circumstance. Reasonable precautions are explained in detail at <https://gov.wales/taking-all-reasonable-measures-minimise-risk-exposure-coronavirus-workplaces-and-premises-open>

Welsh Government has provided detailed guidance for re-opening visitor activities at:

<https://gov.wales/culture-and-heritage-destinations-and-venues-guidance-phased-return>

NB It should be noted that the current version of this guidance references places of worship in the context of former buildings used for visitor opening. However, we believe the guidance is relevant to all places of worship who seek to open to visitors and should be followed.

**General Considerations**

You are encouraged to consider opening for visitors but there is no obligation to do so. Only open where, following a careful risk assessment, you have the capacity to manage risks effectively and where it is worthwhile to your mission.

Your opening arrangements must be planned around the capacity of your building to hold people at safe 2-metre distancing and your organisational capacity to ensure that distancing and other precautions are maintained.

The general guidance for opening churches for worship etc ([Amber Guidance](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/test-trace-and-protect/)) is a useful starting point to consider the key issues involved in opening your church.

Our general advice is that if you are to open for visitors, it should only be done where stewards can be on duty to manage access and encourage correct behaviour. However, there may be circumstances where, through your risk assessment, you can show that risks can be managed and visitors protected with no one in attendance. Open air sites and remoter places where visitor numbers have historically proved very low (say, up to 12 a day). This is not an easy judgement as opening churches for visitors should not, inadvertently, create an invitation for people to gather either.

You should carefully review the Track Trace and Protect guidance referenced in the Welsh Government guidance. NB Regulation 12 of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020 places a duty to collect contact information from each person at the premises or, in relation to persons from the same household, from one of them, and retaining it for 21 days for the purpose of providing it to the Welsh Ministers or to a public health officer upon either’s request. A consent form and privacy notice can be found on the Church in Wales website.

The new NHS COVID-19 app is intended to help in this process but is not mandatory.  The system  involves the creation of a site specific QR code which allows people visiting to use the App.   See [https://gov.wales/nhs-covid-19-app-guidance-businesses-and-organisations](https://gov.wales/nhs-covid-19-app-guidance-businesses-and-organisations%0d)  This system does not replace the physical recording of attendance set out above.

It is recommended that all public church premises (including churches, halls, offices etc) should display such a QR code.

Where you intend opening on a regular basis for visitors, or visitors forms a significant part of your mission and income, it would be worth considering registration for the Good to Go scheme which gives you an on line risk assessment tool and certificate to re-assure visitors you have taken sensible precautions. See

<https://goodtogo.visitbritain.com/your-business-good-to-go-wales>

If you operate a Café as part of your visitor offer, these can be re-opened. Detailed guidance can be found at <https://gov.wales/tourism-and-hospitality-businesses-guidance-phased-reopening>

**Detailed Considerations**

1. *Review the Guidance:* Take time to work through the specific guidance for heritage attractions from Welsh Government at <https://gov.wales/culture-and-heritage-destinations-and-venues-guidance-phased-return>
2. *Prepare:* Make sure the building is ready for use including maintenance checks, electrical and heating checks, check water systems (e.g legionnaires disease measures). The grounds and access routes should be tidy and safe
3. *Survey and measure:* Survey the building to think about how its layout would impact on maintaining 2-metre distancing. Consider walkways and access routes in and around the building. You need to calculate the safe capacity for visitors to move around the building, inspect different elements and to sit and pause. It is difficult to predict where people might go around your building so a one-way system may be the most effective approach.
4. *Signage:* Ensure signage is in place to remind people of requirements. See <https://gov.wales/safety-and-physical-distancing-signs-employers-coronavirus> and <https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/C19_Safety_posters_v2_-_English.pdf>
5. *Plan your cleaning regime:* The general requirement is that areas of buildings that are used are cleaned before and after use. The section in the Welsh Government guidance headed Cleaning and Hygiene Arrangements is very useful in helping you think about your cleaning regime. You should review your cleaning arrangements to ensure that an appropriate cleaning regime is reliably implemented.
6. *Hygiene:* You should ensure sanitizer/hand washing facilities are available.
7. *Face Coverings:* It is a requirement that all persons aged over 11 gathering indoors should wear a face covering. This applies to all activities and services within the church including visitor opening.

Further guidance for the public is available at:

<https://gov.wales/face-coverings-guidance-public>

and for premises managers at:

<https://gov.wales/face-coverings-guidance-measures-be-taken-employers-and-managers-premises>

The public should be reminded of the requirement to wear a face covering and a standard sign can be found [HERE](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/publications/administration-and-business/COVID-19/)

1. *Toilets:* Toilets are a particular challenge and will need detailed planning. WG guidance is that toilets can be opened providing that physical distancing and hand hygiene guidance is followed. These areas should be cleaned regularly using normal cleaning products with particular attention to areas that are frequently touched such as door handles and taps. Suitable handwashing facilities should be available including running water and liquid soap. Drying should be by paper towels or hand dryers (not communal towels). Paper towels should be in a dispenser and disposed of carefully. Specific guidance is available at <https://gov.wales/providing-safer-toilets-public-use-coronavirus-html>
2. *Record your arrangements (Risk Assessment)*: You must complete a risk assessment before re-opening. This should set out the precautions and mitigation measures you will put in place. This should then be shared with users/activity organisers. You should share this Risk Assessment with your Archdeacon too. A template risk assessment document is attached.

9th November 2020

|  | **Covid-19 Risk Assessment Proforma – Visitor Opening** | |  | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of Church Hall:** | **Address:** | | **Date:** | |
| **Area of Focus** | **Control Measure**  *These are the main themes to consider in opening your hall. They may not apply in each case.* | **Detailed arrangements**  *Set out below the detailed arrangements you will implement under each control measure.* | **Action by?** | **Completed** |
| PREPARATIONS | Maintenance Checks |  |  |  |
|  | Check services e.g water, electrical, heating systems |  |  |  |
|  | Access Routes |  |  |  |
|  | Car Parks |  |  |  |
|  | Airing and Cleaning |  |  |  |
|  | Review Fire Risk Assessment |  |  |  |
| PHYSICAL DISTANCING | Building capacity calculations |  |  |  |
|  | Entry and Exit routes including car parks |  |  |  |
|  | Signage |  |  |  |
|  | One-way systems |  |  |  |
|  | Taped/barriered routes |  |  |  |
|  | Seating arrangements |  |  |  |
|  | Restricted areas |  |  |  |
|  | Group tours |  |  |  |
| HYGIENE | Hand washing sanitising |  |  |  |
|  | Toilet arrangements |  |  |  |
| CLEANING | Cleaning regime |  |  |  |
|  | PPE |  |  |  |
|  | Cleaning team details |  |  |  |
| OTHER | Publicity arrangements |  |  |  |
|  | Liaison/communication with staff and volunteers |  |  |  |
|  | Test, Trace and Protect |  |  |  |