



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

New taskforce developing plan to reopen places of worship

... Faith leaders and government have agreed to develop a plan to enable the phased and safe reopening of places of worship when the evidence shows it is the right time to do so, Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick confirmed ...

This follows the first virtual meeting of the new Places of Worship Taskforce which includes leaders and representatives from all the major faiths.

Earlier this week the government set out its ambition to reopen places of worship in step 3 of its plan to lift restrictions, which is expected to be no earlier than 4 July subject to further scientific advice.

In recognition of how difficult it has been for people of faith to not be able to practice their religion with their community, members agreed to work together to consider whether some forms of worship, such as individual prayer, might be permitted in places of worship before they fully reopen in step 3, where appropriate and safe to do so in line with social distancing guidelines.

Members of the taskforce also agreed to consult their faith communities on the measures being considered and to support ongoing engagement with their communities on this important work as it develops. The Communities Secretary also confirmed today that Faith Action will receive £125,000 to consult and engage with different community groups and places of worship up and down the country to ensure their views are represented at the Taskforce's meetings.

The Communities Secretary was clear places of worship will only be opened when the government is confident that people can use these spaces safely and will not put themselves or others at risk.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said: During this pandemic, significant spiritual moments such as Easter, Passover, Ramadan and Vaisakhi when families, friends and congregations traditionally gather together, have been celebrated at home.

I realise how challenging being separated from their communities has been for people of faith. That's why I have convened the Places of Worship Taskforce to establish how religious practices can safely resume outside the home as soon as possible. ...

Faith Minister Lord Greenhalgh said: Places of worship serve such an important role in supporting and providing spiritual leadership for this country's diverse communities and in

bringing communities and the generations together, but this also makes them places that are currently particularly vulnerable to the spread of the pandemic.

We realise that practical issues such as the size of both physical buildings and congregations are significant but we are determined to find a way to safely reopen places of worship as soon as possible, ensuring that people are not put at undue risk. ...

For the time-being, churches and places of worship must remain closed as set out in law. However, funerals are still able to go ahead in places of worship and in crematoria where possible to do so safely.

Members of the Taskforce that met [on Friday] include:

- The Archbishop of Canterbury
- Cardinal Vincent Nichols,
- Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis
- Imam Asim Yusef, Board of British Scholars and Imams
- Rajnish Kashyap, Hindu Council UK
- Jasvir Singh, City Sikhs
- Daniel Singleton, Faith Action

Other faith representatives and government officials may be invited to attend future meetings depending on the Taskforce's priorities. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-taskforce-developing-plan-to-reopen-places-of-worship>

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Holocaust

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-21766 Mary Fee (Labour): Romani Resistance Day – That the Parliament recognises that 16 May 2020 is Romani Resistance Day, which is an annual event commemorating the courage of 6,000 Roma and Sinti prisoners of the Auchwitz-Birkenau concentration camp who resisted SS guards on 16 May 1944; understands that, by using weapons made from rocks and scraps of metal, they managed to force the guards to retreat, delaying the inevitable Roma genocide; acknowledges that this is a day to recognise the dignity and strength of the Romani people when they were faced with the ultimate adversity; condemns the reality that members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community continue to face discrimination in Scotland every day, with the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey revealing that 31% of people in Scotland would be unhappy if a close relative married a member of the GRT community; believes that anti-GRT discrimination is the last form of acceptable racism, and resolves to redouble its collective effort to secure economic, health and social equality for the GRT community in Scotland.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-21766>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/assisteddying.html>

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/divorcedissolutionandseparation.html>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/educationassemblies.html>

Genocide Determination Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/genocidedeterminationbill.html>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageandcivilpartnershipminimumage.html>

Scottish Parliament

Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/112997.aspx>

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

Protecting places of worship (closing date 28 June 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protecting-places-of-worship-consultation>

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill (closing date 24 July 2020)

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/115038.aspx>

Legislative proposals for religion, values and ethics [Wales] (closing date 28 July 2020)

<https://gov.wales/legislative-proposals-religion-values-and-ethics>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438