



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Places of worship to re-open for individual prayer [England only]

Places of worship across England will be permitted to reopen for individual prayer from Monday 15 June, the Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick confirmed today ...

This decision follows discussions between the Government and representatives of major faiths through the Places of Worship Taskforce which the Communities Secretary has chaired.

This move recognises the spiritual and mental health benefits for people being able to pray in their place of worship, and that for some people this cannot be replicated by praying at home.

New guidance will be published shortly to ensure the limited re-opening of places of worship can be done safely and in line with social distancing guidelines. This will recommend the thorough cleaning of shared spaces, hand cleansing at entry and exit and asking worshippers to bring their own items such as a prayer mat or religious text instead of sharing or using communal ones.

Individual prayer will be permitted from 15 June, but communally led prayer, worship or devotion such as services, evensong, informal prayer meetings, Mass, Jumma or Kirtan will not be possible at this stage. ...

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said: Ensuring places of worship can open again, beginning with individual prayer has been my priority. Their contribution to the common good of our country is clear, as places of solace, comfort, stability and dignity. And the need for them is all the greater as we weather the uncertainties of the pandemic.

... People of all faiths have shown enormous patience and forbearance, unable to mark Easter, Passover, Ramadan or Vaisakhi with friends and family in the traditional way. As we control the virus, we are now able to move forwards with a limited, but important return to houses of worship.

Faith Minister Lord Greenhalgh said: Religious communities have shown enormous resilience and sacrifice in celebrating significant spiritual moments like Easter, Passover, Ramadan, Eid and Vaisakhi at home during these extraordinary times.

The Government has determined that this is the right time to begin re-opening places of worship for individual prayer.

It's our hope that this is the first step in places of worship reopening fully, when the science supports it. ...

Places of worship still have discretion over when they consider it safe to open and may decide to remain closed or reopen at a slower pace if they wish.

Under the existing regulations, funerals are allowed in places of worship where it is possible to do so safely. Other gatherings and services such as baptisms, weddings, supplementary schools, meetings and classes are not permitted. Also places of worship may open for ministers of religion to film or record a service for broadcast, for the hosting of essential voluntary activities such as homeless services, for registered early years and childcare providers and for blood donation sessions. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/places-of-worship-to-re-open-for-individual-prayer>

Welsh Parliament Written Answer

Discussion with Faith Communities

Darren Millar (Conservative) [WQ80406] What discussions, if any, did the Welsh Government have with faith groups prior to the publication of its proposals for the future of religious ceremonies as included in Unlocking our society and economy?

Deputy Minister and Chief Whip: The Wales Faith Communities Forum is well established. The current terms of reference and membership can be found at:

<https://gov.wales/faith-communities-forum/terms-of-reference>.

The Welsh Government works closely with the forum on matters relating to faith in Wales.

Since the start of the pandemic, I have chaired a meeting of the forum twice and my officials have been in regular contact with forum members. Re-opening places of worship was discussed at the forum on 29 April and will be discussed again on 3 June. I am grateful to faith communities across Wales for their engagement and written submissions over the past weeks.

A task and finish group has been convened to consider the feedback received and to advise on a protocol for safely re-opening places of worship. I have committed to develop the Welsh Government approach to unlocking faith practice in partnership with the Wales Faith Communities Forum.

<https://record.assembly.wales/WrittenQuestion/80406>

The proposals referred to above can be read at

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-05/unlocking-our-society-and-economy-continuing-the-conversation.pdf>

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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>

YouthLink Scotland Briefing for youth workers

<https://actiononprejudice.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2020/06/Hate-Crime-Bill-for-Youth-Workers.pdf>

Post-mortem Examinations (Defence Time Limit) (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/post-mortem-examinations-defence-time-limit-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