

Guidance for churches and cathedrals on access to their buildings for construction work during lockdown

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
12 th May 2020	1	The House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group

Decisions on whether or not to allow construction to take place sits with the PCC or Chapter. This guidance aims to help clergy, PCCs and cathedral Chapters decide whether it is safe and appropriate to allow construction work to begin or re-start on their buildings. Construction work is allowed under government guidance and we are mindful that some contracts may include penalty clauses if access to the site is restricted. Getting construction projects underway again is part of preparing for the eventual re-opening of church and cathedral buildings to the general public.

Separate guidance is available via the Church of England Coronavirus pages for allowing access to a church or cathedral building for other works and activities to maintain, survey or inspect the building and its interior where this is not linked to a construction project.

General factors to consider:

1. Allowing construction work to resume does not mean opening the building to the general public; until churches and cathedrals are reopened for worship, it should be made clear that access is being allowed for construction work only, and security measures be kept in place to ensure that no unauthorised person enters the building.
2. Allowing construction work to resume does not necessarily require the return of clergy, volunteers or lay staff except as may be necessary to give access to the building. Contractor/client meetings should be conducted remotely. If you are not comfortable leaving the house, meeting others at a distance, opening and closing the building and directing people to facilities, and especially if you are in a group classed as vulnerable, you should say so and don't do these things. See if there is someone else in your community who is willing to undertake these duties. Your Archdeacon or DAC Secretary can help if difficulties arise.
3. If construction is to resume in one part of a building whilst prayer or worship resumes in another then consider how you can avoid unnecessary interaction. For example, can construction workers use a dedicated entrance and bathroom facilities? Can entrance times be staggered? There is more detail on managing multiple building users in our guidance for clergy entering buildings for prayer and worship, which can be found via the Church of England Coronavirus pages.

Roles and responsibilities:

4. It is the responsibility of the main contractor to ensure that workers on site have proper safety protocols in place. Construction workers should follow [government guidance on safe working during the pandemic](#), which includes recommendations on social distancing.

5. Contractors should have clear protocols in place to ensure safe working and you should seek written confirmation of the measures they will take before allowing work to resume.
6. The Construction Leadership Council has published [detailed advice on how to implement the government guidance](#), which you may wish to ask your contractor to refer to. An important point to note in this guidance is that the wearing of facemasks is not a substitute for social distancing: for activities where it is impossible to maintain a two-metre distance between workers, each activity should be risk assessed using the hierarchy of controls and against any sector-specific guidance, with facemasks the last resort in the hierarchy.
7. Some construction will involve lay staff, especially in cathedrals and major churches. In this case the liability for ensuring safe working lies with their employer – usually the PCC or cathedral. The same safety protocols as for contractors must also cover staff such as stonemasons, and professionals supporting construction work, such as conservators and archaeologists. [Guidance on safe working for archaeologists](#) has been issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and the Royal Institute of British Architects has [extensive materials available for architects](#).
8. In most cases volunteers will not be accessing construction sites, but if they are doing so the PCC or Chapter has a duty of care to ensure they have access to the same safety equipment and have the same information as everyone else.

It should be noted that construction workers (including archaeologists working on construction sites) are eligible to apply for Coronavirus testing if they exhibit symptoms. Details of how to book a test are [available here](#).

Because our buildings have been closed for a number of weeks we would suggest you find ways to communicate to the church/cathedral community and wider public the circumstances in which construction work is being allowed to resume. It is important both to give reassurance that necessary safety procedures are being followed, and to make clear that this does not yet mean a reopening of church and cathedral buildings to the public for prayer and worship, but that we are all working hopefully towards that day.

END