

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 9 July 2020

[Coronavirus press conference \(9 July 2020\)](#)

For months now, our lives have been on hold.

When the call came in March, we pressed pause on many of the things that brighten our lives.

Meals with friends.

Trips to the cinema or theatre.

We had to close our gyms and swimming pools.

Cancel our holidays.

And postpone some of our favourite events.

But as we've made huge progress against this disease, we've gradually seen the things we love return.

Today, I'm very pleased to announce we can go a little bit further. As of this weekend, our artists, musicians and dancers can start performing live outside to audiences. We'll also have the resumption of recreational sport, followed later by the reopening of our gyms, swimming pools and leisure centres.

Normal life is slowly returning.

This is an important milestone for our performing artists, who have been waiting patiently in the wings since March. Of course we won't see crowds flooding into their venues. But from 11 July, our theatres, operas, dance and music shows can start putting on outdoor performances to socially distanced audiences.

That means theatregoers can experience a live play for the first time in months at places like the stunning Minack Theatre in Cornwall. And music lovers can attend Glyndebourne this summer.

We are taking various measures to make these places safe as they reopen. Venue capacity will be reduced, and organisations encouraged to move to electronic ticketing, to help test and trace.

But our performing artists deserve an audience. And now they will be getting one.

And while those outdoor performances get underway, we will be working with the public health experts to carefully pilot a number of indoor performances – from the London Symphony Orchestra at St Luke’s, to Butlins – to work out how we can confidently usher socially-distanced audiences indoors as soon as possible.

At the same time, we’re funding scientific studies to help us understand and mitigate some specific public health risks, like the impact of singing, wind and brass instruments on transmission.

The more we know about coronavirus in every setting, the safer we will be.

We’re also taking steps through the planning system to protect theatres and venues from demolition or change of use, and of course all of this comms on top of the unprecedented £1.57 billion package of emergency support to help arts, heritage and cultural institutions weather the COVID storm.

But, of course, we want to see all of our venues open as soon as it’s safe to do so.

Today’s announcement brings us a further step closer towards that reality.

Having allowed hairdressers to reopen, beauticians, tattooists, spas, tanning salons and other close-contact services can now do the same I’m pleased to say from Monday. Of course that will be subject to some restrictions on particularly high risk services.

As I’ve seen myself at the Royal Academy this morning, the National Gallery, and as we’ll see shortly from National Museums Liverpool, our cultural institutions are beginning also to welcome back visitors.

As these places begin to reopen their doors, I’m really urging people to get out there and to play their part. Buy the tickets for outdoor plays and music recitals, get to your local gallery and support your local businesses.

We have seen in recent weeks how our landlords, waiters and shop assistants have welcomed customers back with open arms, while doing so much to keep their communities safe. It’s time to give other businesses those same opportunities.

The Chancellor this week set out a bumper package of tourism and hospitality tax breaks, to get these industries firing on all cylinders once more and protect the millions of people who work for them.

That means a VAT cut on everything from tickets to shows, theatres, amusement parks, museums and zoos.

Lower costs for hotels, inns, caravan and campsites.

Vouchers for food and non-alcoholic drinks.

I’m urging the British people to make the most of this summer safely. We need them to support the places that we all love.

And today there is good news for our nation's fitness.

As we all know, exercise is incredibly important for both physical and mental health. Even at the height of lockdown it was considered an essential activity – with countless people hitting their parks for their daily run or transforming their living rooms into temporary gyms.

From this weekend onwards, millions of people will be able to rejoin their local sports teams as soon as their organisations publish approved guidance. Recreational cricket is back on this weekend. Five-a-side football, basketball, hockey and countless other sports will follow shortly after.

From this Saturday, they'll also be able to enjoy outdoor pools and waterparks.

And from Saturday 25th, people will no longer have to work out in the park or on their living room floor. They'll be able to get back into their gyms, their indoor swimming pools, their leisure centres, and jump on the spin bike or treadmill for the first time in months.

Now we've made a number of positive visits to gyms in recent weeks, and of course had hoped to do this sooner. But we really do have to phase this properly. We will be giving gyms the certainty, clarity and time they need to reopen safely, so that the maximum number can open their doors in just two weeks' time.

Again, we've worked intensively with both professional bodies and the experts to get us to this point, and facilities will have to take a number of measures to protect their communities. That includes for example using timed booking systems to limit the number of people using the facility at any one time, and reduced class sizes. Equipment will be spaced out, and there will be enhanced cleaning throughout.

As always, the public will need to do their bit and follow the guidance sensibly and safely. All of the measures we are taking are conditional and reversible. And we will not hesitate to impose lockdowns where there are local spikes – as we saw in Leicester, where things remain closed and of course in any other place when that is necessary.

But the return of gyms and recreational sport is a vital part of our battle against coronavirus.

We need to get the nation to get match-fit to defeat this disease.

And our fight began with a collective effort, and I really hope it will end with one. At the beginning, we all stayed home to protect the NHS and save lives.

Now the British public has a new part to play.

It's time to eat out to help out.

To enjoy the arts to help out.

And to work out to help out.

It's over to all of you to help the country recover safely.

Thank you.