

Pilots announced for return of spectators to elite sports events

The Government has announced that a small number of sporting events will be used to pilot the safe return of spectators through late July and early August – with a view to reopen competition venues for sports fans, with social distancing measures in place, from October 2020.

The events have been carefully selected to represent a range of sports and indoor and outdoor spectator environments. They are expected to include two men's county cricket friendly matches – such as Surrey v Middlesex at The Oval on 26-27 July – the World Snooker Championship at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre from 31 July, and the Glorious Goodwood horse racing festival on 1 August. There are also likely to be further pilot events for other sports, in order to build up to and prepare for the full, socially distanced return of sporting events from 1 October 2020.

The pilot events will provide the opportunity to stress-test the Government's '[stage five](#)' guidance, on the return of fans to elite sports events.

The guidance has been developed with UK Sport and in close consultation with the Deputy Chief Medical Officers of England, Public Health England, the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, Police and medical representatives across Olympic, Paralympic and professional sports governing bodies.

It is designed for competition delivery partners and venue operators and marks the final piece of Government guidance for the resumption of elite sport. The guidance will outline the conditions, facilities and processes that will need to be implemented for the safe return of spectators to competitive sporting events, including tight restrictions on numbers in the short-term.

Further guidance outlining the licensing obligations for sports stadia and how venue operators must calculate safe capacities in line with social distancing restrictions will be published by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority..

It marks the latest phase of the Government's measured approach around the return of elite sport, under carefully controlled conditions.

Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

For months millions of us have felt the void of being unable to go to the match to support our team or attend a top-class sporting event. So I am pleased that we are now able to move forward with a plan to help venues safely reopen their doors to fans.

I recognise that not every sport, team or club has the benefit of huge commercial revenue, and it is often their dedicated fans that

are the lifeblood which helps keep them going. By working closely with sports and medical experts, these pilots will help ensure the safe return of fans to stadia.

Although it will remain some time before venues are full to capacity, this is a major step in the right direction for the resumption of live spectator sport across the country.

The stage five guidance makes clear that the following operating standards must be in place for spectators until further notice:

- Prior to any ticket purchase, competition delivery partners should provide spectators with information on the steps being implemented to minimise the risk of COVID-19, including any modifications being made to the venue.
- Spectators must agree to a new code of behaviour obliging them to take full responsibility for themselves and others by not attending if they have any symptoms or have potentially been exposed to someone with COVID-19. * Anyone attending an event will also be advised to consider if they are putting themselves at higher risk because of their general state of health or any other risk factors.
- Carefully controlled bookings should be in place, so that social distancing is observed in seating arrangements, alongside a minimising of the numbers of tickets sold to a predefined safe capacity, in accordance with regulator guidance.
- Spectators must be supported to avoid public transport, including through parking facilities, bike and walking routes. However a transport management plan with local and national providers should be in place to increase service frequency, where needed.
- A crowd management plan should be in place, incorporating the controlled entry and exit of spectators (including staggering entry times), and one-way systems inside the venue to maintain social distancing and minimise the risk of crowding.
- Additional hygiene facilities, such as hand washing and sanitiser stations, should be provided, particularly at entry and exit points to the competition venue and in seating/standing areas.
- Screens or barriers should be used to separate people from each other when social distancing cannot be maintained for catering and retail, such as buying programmes and merchandise, or betting.
- Signage and floor markings should be developed both inside and outside competition venues to enforce social distancing, seating plans, one-way systems and queuing requirements.
- Spectator medical requirements should be considered, such as additional isolation rooms, and screening when entering the competition venue.

Sports venues have been closed to spectators since lockdown measures were implemented on 23 March 2020. However in recent weeks certain elite sports have resumed behind closed doors, such as Premier League and Championship football, international cricket and horse racing.

This latest announcement is part of the Government's carefully-designed

package to ease the burdens of lockdown in a way that is expected to keep the R rate, the average number of secondary infections produced by 1 infected person, down. The phased approach is outlined in the Prime Minister's roadmap for easing lockdown.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has published a range of guidance in relation to elite sport over recent weeks.

On 13 May '[stage one](#)' guidance was published, outlining conditions for a return to individual performance training at official elite training venues while maintaining social distancing from teammates and other people outside their households. This included safeguards such as the deep cleaning of facilities and the screening of athletes and staff for coronavirus symptoms before they can enter the training venue by an appropriately trained healthcare professional.

On 25 May, DCMS published '[stage two](#)' guidance, outlining the conditions for elite athletes to resume competitive, close contact training at official elite training venues, so that players could get match fit under carefully controlled medical conditions.

On 30 May, DCMS published '[stage three](#)' guidance – the conditions for elite athletes and professional sportsmen and women to resume competitive sport behind closed doors safely in England from 1 June. This opened the door for the first domestic live action in almost three months.

On 5 July the Culture Secretary announced he had brokered agreements with sports authorities and event organisers to allow a limited number of international sporting events to be exempt from border health measures and get underway this summer, with strong public health protections in place. This was followed by [stage four](#) guidance, which outlines the conditions, facilities and processes that will need to be implemented for all cross-border sporting competition to take place behind closed doors, being published on 7 July.

Further updates to the stage five guidance may be published to reflect the result of the test events before competition with spectators is permitted. Competition Delivery Partners (the Competition Organiser and the Competition Venue Operator) should periodically check gov.uk for further updates.

Sport is a devolved matter and this guidance is applicable to elite sports in England. Those in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should refer to guidance from the devolved administrations.