

Please see below information from BVEP in response to questions raised by HBAA and other members of the partnership, relating to the government guidance on holding meetings at event venues.

Updates to the Visitor Economy guidance have now been published to reflect the current permissions related to meetings being held of up to 30 persons.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/the-visitor-economy>

In summary:

1. Exhibition and Conference centres that have small, separate and directly accessible meeting facilities as part of the site, may be used to host business meetings and events of up to 30 people, if social distancing can be maintained, groups can be kept separate, and the venue can demonstrate it has followed the COVID-19 guidance.
2. If a venue has several separate and directly accessible meeting facilities as part of the site these may be used to host business meetings and events of up to 30 people if social distancing can be maintained, groups can be kept separate, and the venue can demonstrate it has followed the COVID-19 guidance.
3. Exhibition Hall or Conference Venue must remain closed by law until at least the 15th August for the purpose of marketing or pre-planning.
4. Any permitted venue can host a business meeting of up to 30 people, following COVID-Secure guidelines.
5. Basic catering can be provided at meetings and events, following the COVID-19 guidance for bars, pubs and takeaway services. However it is advised not to hold extended sit down meals for large groups. The UKHospitality guidance may also be useful; it recommends grab and go and pre-packed food rather than buffet.
6. Banqueting and private dining events should not currently take place in any venue. If a banqueting venue is able to operate as a restaurant (following the relevant BEIS guidance, adhering to rules on social distancing, keeping household groups/bubbles separate, etc) this would be allowed. The dining provision for groups of up to 30 would have applied to weddings only, more widely we advise against extended sit down meals for large groups. Allowing wedding receptions of up to 30 will be kept under review (although will not be before 15 August). BEIS has developed guidance which is currently going through the government approvals process and will be published as soon as possible.
7. Receptions, award ceremonies, examinations, filming, fashion shows, product launches, team building exercises will all need to wait until restrictions on business events are lifted (1 October, if public health assessments allow). They will need to carry out risk assessments in line with Visitor Economy and AEO guidance, and the pilots (when they take place) will assess whether that guidance is sufficient or needs updating in any way. Venues may also need to consider mitigations depending on specific aspects of their events (e.g. performing arts guidance on singing/dancing if relevant).

8. The guidance states that events should operate at a capacity allowing for compliance with social distancing of 2m, or 1m with mitigations. This should be the fundamental principle. It notes that for conferences and events, venues should consider social distancing approximately equivalent to a density of 10m² per person, given the additional risks of large groups interacting in this specific environment. The pilots (when they take place) will assess the guidance and whether the mitigations suggested are appropriate /sufficient.
9. Academic venues (Universities and Colleges) can use their lecture theatres and classrooms for external meetings of up to 30 people and as above, separate and directly accessible meeting facilities can be used as long as groups are kept separate and all other guidance is followed.
 - Details on whether face masks need to be worn in meeting venue settings are still being sought.

Update published 20.08.20:

Following the recent advice about the need to wear face coverings in conference and exhibition centres, BVEP has issued a statement:

'It is strongly advised that face coverings are worn within meeting venues and during meetings. It is anticipated that the only exemption at a business meeting will be if one of the group needs to lip-read/see facial expressions.'

The guidance is set out here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

This states "You should also wear a face covering in indoor places not listed here where social distancing may be difficult and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet". Therefore it may be practical for speakers or presenters at a meeting not to wear a mask if they follow the social distancing requirement of the guidelines in terms of their distance from the other meeting participants.

- With as regards to the 10m2 referenced within government guidelines, **Section 2.2.3** of <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/the-visitor-economy>

DCMS officials initially indicated it was an approximation only and applied more generally to circulation areas and aisle widths in exhibition settings. This would be tested in any event during the pilots, which are currently on hold. **The key social distancing measurements for meetings and conferences remain 2 metres or 1 metre with mitigations identified in the guidance.**

