

Roadmap to Ringing Resumption

By Simon Linford on Feb 26, 2021 01:35 pm

On Monday 22 February, the UK Government published a roadmap for exiting lockdown over the coming months, detailing how and when restrictions will be eased if everything goes to plan. It is a welcome and cautious framework for a return to normality. The roadmap provides us with an opportunity for ringing to return over the coming months.

While there is still detail to be studied, and every chance of change, all indications are that ringing in England at least will come out of lockdown as follows:

Stage 1 – 29 March

Rule of six outdoors will benefit handbell ringing (up to 15 for young people)

Stage 2 – no earlier than 12 April

Young ringers groups possible following the ‘out of school settings’ guidance (expect social distancing restrictions)

Stage 3 – no earlier than 17 May

Rule of six indoors enables ringing subject to social distancing rules to be confirmed (could still be 2m)

Stage 4 – no earlier than 21 June

All legal restrictions removed

(it remains to be seen whether facemasks will still be suggested or mandated – that is not absolutely clear yet)

During any of these stages, ringers may still be cautious as not all ringers will be vaccinated, particularly young people. There is still risk of transmission and infection for us to be aware of; vaccination is not a passport. An article will be published in next week’s Ringing World with updated analysis of transmission in ringing chambers and the benefits of ventilation. This will just be for guidance though to be interpreted in accordance with local circumstances – the law will be the primary driver for what ringing is possible.

This week’s announcement applies to England only, and so we continue to keep in touch with our contacts in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales to stay abreast of the situation there over the coming weeks. Scotland for instance has rule of six outdoors from 5 April and churches reopening for limited numbers from that date also. Then from 26 April at the earliest Scotland intends to go back to a “tiers” system of local restrictions.

This is the clearest we can be at the moment based on the information available, and after discussion with the Church of England Recovery Group this afternoon. It is a roadmap, with more detail to be considered as we move forward. We appreciate ringers are all now starting to plan ringing events from late June onwards, and being asked whether bells will be available for weddings, etc. The main word of caution is that the Government is at pains to stress that these dates are the earliest possible, so commitments made for shortly after those deadlines should be made with that in mind.

It does now feel like the end of an incredibly difficult year for ringing is in sight. Thank you for your ongoing trust and support.

Simon Linford
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