



## PROSPECTS FOR RESTARTING OUTDOOR EVENTS

**The following is a summary of the briefing from Tom Rodden, Chief Scientific Adviser to the Department of Digital, Media, Culture & Sport (DCMS), to Events Industry Forum Members on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2021**

### Background

To open the meeting, Tom Rodden explained how the science of dealing with the pandemic operates within the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), with different groups looking at epidemiological modelling, behavioural signs, environmental issues etc. SAGE's role is to consolidate the views of these groups to provide scientific advice to Government, who then also consider economic and health issues to reach their decisions.

### Where we are now (10/2/21)

There are three key factors that dictate the levels of risk and levels of control needed. The number of incidents of COVID infection; the number of hospitalisations; and the number of deaths. Currently the number of incidents is falling but this has yet to filter through to hospitalisations and deaths. The R number is currently thought to be between 0.8 and 1.

### Vaccinations

There is confidence that the Government will achieve its target of offering vaccines to all over 50's by May, and data is being continually analysed regarding what effect the vaccine rollout has on infections and hospitalisations. There is a concern that only around 20% of those entitled to a free flu vaccination currently get this. It is hoped this will not be reflected in COVID vaccinations.

Currently, it is unknown how long the vaccines give protection for and the extent to which the vaccines prevent people carrying and transmitting the virus to others. These questions are being studied and our understanding will develop as the vaccine rolls out. However, there is confidence that they can be adjusted to new strains of COVID going forward.

### Restart Date for Events

All the above factors mean that vaccinations are not going to provide an overnight solution to the pandemic.

The scientific view is that it is better – and most likely – that the Government will ease restrictions gradually and try to avoid the Stop/Start situations we have had before, which are not helpful either to the economy or managing the pandemic. This means we are likely to see a phased return of events but it is not possible at this time to give any guidance either

on when events will be able to start again or even a 'not before' date as so much depends on the pace of science and success in managing the virus.

### Vaccination Passports

Although the government will keep options for supporting the reopening of the sector under review, domestic vaccine 'passports' are not being considered at this time.

### Social Distancing

The government will keep health measures in place until it is safe to ease them - this may mean some measures such as social distancing remaining in place for some time. The scientific view is that this may be the case until the level of incidence is sufficiently low and we may move towards thinking of Covid as endemic in the population rather than an epidemic.

### Outdoor Events

There are three main ways that the virus gets transmitted:

Droplets - these do not travel far before dropping to the ground

Surface spread - essentially people touching surfaces with the virus on which can be dealt with by cleaning and hand washing etc.

Aerosol - where very small particles are carried in air currents. Outdoors these disperse very rapidly

Because they are held in the open air, outdoor events are generally felt to pose less of an aerosol transmission risk than indoor ones because the air disperses the virus more quickly.

There have been examples of outdoor events in other countries causing super-spread situations, although there have to date been none in the UK.

### Local Authorities and Directors of Public Health

SAGE has produced a paper for local authorities on how to look at transmissions and Public Health England is developing specific guidance with the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) on outdoor events.

### Risk Assessments

The importance of risk assessments to reopening events is recognised, as is the significant experience of the events industry in risk management. As the scientific data progresses and the government makes decisions about the safe reopening of events, risk assessments will need to address key issues such as ventilation, queue management, stopping crowds gathering, ingress/egress points and the implications on public transport for getting attendees to and from events.

**Next meeting**

It was agreed that meetings would be held in future to brief the outdoor sector on current scientific thinking. The next meeting is scheduled for 24th February at 12.30pm.

**Present at the meeting were:**

Tom Rodden, DCMS Chief Scientific Adviser

Alexandra Gillespie, DCMS Tourism Team

Pak Ling Wan, DCMS Tourism Team

Steve Heap, Association of Festival Organisers – EIF Chair

Jim Winship, The Event Services Association – EIF Secretary

Paul Hooper, Association of Show and Agricultural Organisations

Tom Clements, National Association of Outdoor Events

Mark Laurie, National Caterers' Association

Carl Hagemann, Chartered Institute for the Management of Sports & Physical Activity

Andy Lenthall, Production Services Association

Des Fitzgerald, The Showmen's Guild

Martin Burton, Association of Circus Proprietors of GB