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Cirencester Ashcroft Church & Centre COVID-19 Statement

Since the Government relaxed restrictions on multi-purpose community buildings reopening in July 2020, we have been working hard to make the building COVID-19 secure so that we could look to welcome existing and new groups to Ashcroft.

This has been extremely challenging, especially as a result of the fast-moving nature of the pandemic and associated changes to Government guidance.

Recent guidance further limits the type of groups which can meet and the number of people which can attend them, as a result of the increasing numbers of cases, and spread, of COVID-19.

In looking to reopen the safety and wellbeing of all our hirers, those attending their groups and any staff, visitors or contractors onsite has been paramount in our decision making. This has resulted in a very considered approach to reopening to absolutely ensure we feel there is the most minimal risk.

The tightening of restrictions, which it has been warned by the Prime Minister will be in place for the next six months, combined with strengthening of fines and compliance monitoring, warnings from the Chief Scientific and Medical Officers and the current increase in cases of the COVID-19 virus show that we are entering another phase of high risk. There is also the possibility that, if the number of cases does not reduce, additional measures may be introduced.

In addition to adapting plans to this, we must continue to consider challenges we were already facing such as; the varied and imprecise guidance for our building (which is understandable as it has so many uses), the supervision of those using the centre, adjustments to the buildings fabric to minimise risk and cleaning costs.

Finally, to ensure our building is available to those in our community as a resource, our hire costs have only seen minor increases over the past 6 years and these were currently under review due to increased costs even before COVID-19. It is felt that the additional costs for cleaning as a result of COVID, combined with the restriction on numbers which can attend groups, any revised cost to hire groups would be uneconomical.

After considerable thought and consideration, it has been, regrettably, decided that Ashcroft Centre will remain closed for the foreseeable future.

This decision has not been taken casually but has been a challenging and lengthy process of weighing up our desire to have groups return, especially those who support individuals in need, against the critical importance of ensuring everyone's health and safety from the risk of COVID-19.

We will continue to monitor this changing and challenging situation on a regular basis and, when it is felt that it is safe to reopen the centre's rooms for hirers we will be in touch.

Kindest Regards,

Ashcroft Church & Centre Trustees.