Guidance Note

Filming in Heritage Buildings



Our heritage remains a fascinating and evocative topic today. The public's interest and appetite continues to drive the desire for film and media to access many historic homes and buildings in order to deliver film productions to the masses.

Many historic houses and similar premises are now well versed in working with production companies, providing welcome financial income and increased profile. But there are a range of risks to consider. The following insight may assist you when considering sharing your buildings with the entertainment industry

Where to start

Early considerations

- Robust contracts and agreements, bespoke to your premises and it's operations, which address the risks and exposures adequately are essential in order to protect all parties. Your input is critical to this to avoid generic forms of contract that may not reflect the unique features, access, contents and finishes within your property.
- The benefits of appointing a Location Filming Conservator should be considered in the early stages of any discussions or enquiries and should not be restricted to only the largest productions. A location filming conservator can provide vast expertise in matters specific to your property, the contents, finishes, access, condition, and many more elements. They are also familiar with the needs, processes and requirements of production teams, directors and associated crew and therefore are able to relate these to the unique elements of your property, home and business.

Risk Advice

Should you have any additional questions on this topic or other risk-related matters, as a valued Ecclesiastical customer you can contact us through our Risk Management Team on

01 619 0300

(Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

For queries about your policy cover or claims, please contact your insurance broker.

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- Any staffing needs should be considered from the outset and how any existing staff may be involved in the management of the property during filming periods. Numbers of staff likely to be involved, their roles and the impact of their routine 'day job' that may be affected should also be factored into early discussions.
- A robust list of key contacts for both parties should be drawn up, together with a hierarchy in terms of reporting and accountability, ensuring that a clear means of contact can be quickly established.
- A comprehensive record should be created which documents the condition of any areas of the building that may be used for filming. This should include detailed descriptions, with time and date stamped photographic evidence. These records should be appropriately shared. In some instances, the use of floor plans may assist with highlighting any issues. You should also include areas beyond those used for actual filming, such as temporary green rooms, car parks, access routes both internal and external, etc. Photographic records should also be made immediately after filming, to swiftly identify any damage that may have occurred.
- Prior to any activity taking place, ensure the production company has adequate insurance cover in place for the duration of any filming. You will need to obtain details of what is covered, including activities and be satisfied that the limits of indemnity are sufficient to re-instate your property
- Location specific boundaries should be established and made clear to all parties, including the production company, crew, contractors and cast members. Appropriate demarcation may be required in some cases.
- The security arrangements for the building, or any parts of it being used, need early consideration. This is likely to take the form of both physical and staffed security measures, to ensure that the overall property is not adversely affected, but also that areas deemed 'out of bounds' are adequately protected.
- Consider the impact and interface of any filming activity on the routine operation of your property and/or business activity, such as public access or guided tours.
- At the initial approach stage, thought should be given to the sensitivity of the subject or theme and nature of the filming. Historical, political and societal issues, to name but a few, may be the target topic of any filming. This could lead to an unexpected association with your property, which could raise the profile of your property and it's history, by association.
- The reputational impact of the filming activities can deliver an extremely positive outcome to your property, raising it's profile and generating public interest. Occasionally, certain aspects can be detrimental to reputation, for example, issues such as increased visitor numbers following release of a film or increased traffic and onlookers during filming process that lead to local traffic congestion or trespassing on neighbouring property. Generally, these occur only in the short term.
- Changing technologies used in the film and media industry should be understood. The use of LED lighting presents reduced risks in terms of heat and ignition source. However, there remains the use of Daylight and Tungsten lamps across the industry in parts, so heat output must always be considered as possible sources of ignition and heat damage. A shift towards greater use of Lithium-ion battery systems may present the potential fire risks associated with charging and battery storage. The charging of such film equipment should not typically be allowed within the property itself.
- Cleaning arrangements must be factored in at an appropriate stage, having regard to the cleaning needs, methods and chemicals allowed. As there is the potential for damage to surfaces, materials and contents, all parties should understand the correct approach to be adopted and take appropriate measures to avoid damage.
- Health and Safety is a key consideration and it is therefore essential that you are aware of your legal duties in respect of any hazards the filming related activities may create. Appropriate risk assessments will need to be undertaken, suitable safe systems of work and staff training will have to be introduced and appropriate protections must be put in place.



Physicals:

External

- Consider suitable pedestrian and vehicular access routes from the boundaries of the property to the filming location. Include the potential for damage and any suitable protections.
- The siting of film equipment, mobile accommodation and vehicles should be agreed.
  - Generators – Clearly, cabling routes will determine the location of generators, but they should be a suitable distance from any buildings given their potential as an ignition source. Given their weight, they will need to be sited on a suitable hardstanding.
  - Catering facilities should be considered relative to the location of staff and crew members. Once again, these are a possible ignition source, particularly if LPG is used for heating and cooking purposes. There is also a need to ensure appropriate fuel storage arrangement are in place.
  - Any security accommodation must be sited appropriately to ensure people and vehicular movements can be robustly controlled. As there is a risk of unauthorised entry and a potential for intruders to gain access, adequate controls will need to be established.
- The location of designated smoking areas and controls must be agreed prior to activity starting on site. Appropriate smoking waste receptacles must be provided and these must be located a suitable distance from any combustible materials. Smoking waste must never be disposed of with other combustible waste.
- The position of all fire hydrants and other fire-fighting water supplies must be identified and clearly marked. Access to these must never be obstructed or covered by equipment and/or vehicles. Access routes for the emergency services must be kept clear at all times
- The use and siting of scaffolding, lighting gantries, towers and rig locations must be agreed in advance. As far as is possible, they must not be fixed to the fabric of the building(s). Where this cannot be avoided, agreed methods of fixing should be strictly adhered to, in order to minimise any possible damage to the building(s). Bear in mind that the provision of scaffolding and external lighting towers could also potentially weaken the security of the building by giving access to upper level openings. This is particularly so during periods between filming when the building may be empty or only partially occupied.

- Ensure routes for cabling are agreed and controlled to minimise trip hazards. Consider high traffic areas particularly and ensure suitable protection, such as cable covers with reflective surfaces, are provided and maintained.
- Site specific security requirements will require detailed consideration, particularly where access to the site is not provided exclusively for filming purposes.
- Where access to roof levels is required, appropriate assessments will need to be completed in respect of any guarding, temporary means of access, the provision of emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers, first aid, the means of contacting the emergency services, the suitability of the area for use etc.
- Special effects, such as pyrotechnics or fireworks may be suggested as part of a film production. Such aspects are considered to be the subject of specialist assessments and any proposals should also be agreed with your property insurers.



Internal

Alongside your external security measures, you will need to consider your internal security arrangements and ensure these are not compromised either during filming or outside production periods.

- Any temporary sets or props, linings and the like, must not obscure intruder alarm devices such as PIR or beam detectors. Other measures should be used, such as locking areas to which access is not permitted, particularly where highly valuable or desirable contents are present.
- There may be a need to consider temporary storage of certain contents, including high value or delicate items, such as fine art. Where this is the case, suitable means of removing, transporting, storing and securing such items should be identified. In addition, you will need to establish if there are any security arrangements required by your insurers for these items.
- Access routes in and around the building could require careful consideration and agreement, particularly where the property is also occupied for other purposes. Routes for transporting equipment within the building should be planned carefully, where there are valuable or delicate wall and floor finishes, or features such as wall hangings, displays or other fine art etc.
- The impact of the types of lighting being used on any decorative features such as art work, wall coverings or glazing should be discussed with the production teams. The move towards greater use of LED lighting, which emits significantly lower levels of heat, significantly reduces elements of fire risk. More traditional lighting methods such as tungsten or halogen based luminaires are however, still in use. The location of equipment, including lighting rigs, stands etc, around such features as artwork or stained glass, should also be discussed in advance, to avoid the risk of impact or heat/light damage
- Hot Work Permit procedures are a valuable aid to ensuring any activities that involve hot work are adequately managed. Hot Work Permits are traditionally used where construction and maintenance related works are carried out. However, it is recommended that this is extended to any aspect of the film production that introduces a similar risk, such as the provision of candelabras as part of the set. Link to HWP
- Where it is necessary to wedge open internal fire doors, arrangements should be made to disconnect cables to enable the closing of doors outside filming periods.
- Before production commences, make arrangements to protect finishes, such as decorative features of the building(s), original or highly decorative paintwork, linings and wall coverings, sensitive and valuable floor finishes, ornate plasterwork and embellishments
- Owing to the 'period nature' of some film sets within historic properties, it may be necessary to disguise such items as Intruder Alarm Detectors, which are often located in the corners of rooms and Smoke or Heat Detectors, which are fitted to ceilings. Where this is necessary, their continued operation should be maintained wherever possible and temporary isolation only considered as a last resort. Any necessary alterations to security or fire alarm systems for the duration of filming activities, including the controls, levels of coverage, continuity etc must be agreed with your insurer and addressed within your Fire Risk Assessment.
- If you grant the film crew permission to light an open fire in a hearth that is not normally used, you will need to ensure the fireplace and chimney are in a suitable and safe condition. Appropriate procedures will need to be put in place during and following the use of the fireplace

The issues outlined here are not an exhaustive or complete list of considerations. Similarly, they may identify far greater issues, depending on the nature, scale and type of film production, but also in relation to the type of property.

Ensuring that everyone remains safe during any filming will be an important consideration for you. In many cases, you will already have tried and tested arrangements in place to keep all those who work at, visit or use your property, safe. As such, all you may need to do is review your existing precautions to check that they will be adequate for the nature of the filming taking place. In particular, you will want to make sure that access to your premises and all plant and equipment within them are safe.

It is important to remember, that any additional health and safety precautions you identify should be proportionate. This will depend on your own circumstances. For example, reflecting the size of your premises; the numbers of employees, production company staff, contractors, volunteers or visitors you have or expect.

With all of this in mind, here are some points for you to consider. There may be others depending on the nature of the filming contemplated:

- If you have appointed a consultant to help you with your health and safety obligations, work with them to review your arrangements and precautions to make sure they are adequate. This should reflect any responsibilities you may have under health and safety law, along with any commitments you have made in your Safety Statement, if you have prepared one.
- You should work closely with the person in overall control of the production to enable them to use the building safely. Both parties must ensure suitable information is exchanged, including, where appropriate, plans, drawings, operating manuals for equipment, arrangements for isolating electrical and gas supplies, asbestos registers, emergency procedures, security measures, information about the state of repair of the building and equipment, areas to which access is not permitted by the film crew, arrangements for the safe movement of vehicles, arrangements for sharing welfare facilities or first-aid if necessary, etc.
- If you need to complete risk assessments to meet any legal responsibilities you have, review these to make sure they are valid and that the precautions will remain effective. If not, your risk assessments should identify any additional precautions that need to be taken
- Provide your staff with any additional training or information considered necessary to ensure they know how to work safely and protect others while filming is taking place.
- Carry out periodic checks to ensure that the precautions you have taken remain effective and adequate. This may include simple inspections to check that the premises and any equipment is safe. If you have completed risk assessments, these will help you identify where these checks will be necessary.

Need to contact us?

Further useful information is available from the UK Health and Safety Executive, on Buildings used for locations - https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/etis18.pdf

For further advice, Ecclesiastical customers can call our Risk Management Team on **01 619 0300** (Monday to Friday 9am -5pm, excluding bank holidays).

This guidance is provided for information purposes and is general and educational in nature. It should not be used as a substitute for taking professional advice on specific issues and should not be taken as providing legal advice on any of the topics addressed.

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