

Filming in Heritage Buildings



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

Many historic houses and similar premises are now well versed in working with production companies providing not only welcome financial income and increased profile, but there are a range of risks to consider. It is hoped that the following insight may assist those when sharing their buildings with the media.

Where to start

Early considerations

- Robust contracts and agreements, bespoke to your premise and it's operation and addresses 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 a property.
- The benefits of appointing a Filming Conservator should be considered in the early stages of any discussions or enquiries and should not be considered relevant for only the largest of productions. A 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 Line

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 Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

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

and one of our in-house risk professionals will be able to assist.

Alternatively, you can email us at

risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

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

- 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, together with a hierarchy in terms of reporting and accountability, ensuring that in the event of a breach of the contract or agreements, a clear means of contact should be established.
- It is advisable to collate a detailed record of building condition in the areas that may be used for filming, by way of appropriate description and a photographic record, timed/dated and shared. In some cases the use of floor plans may assist to highlight any issues. This should also extend to areas beyond those used for actual filming purposes, but include areas such as temporary green rooms, car parking areas, access routes both externally and internally etc. Similarly, photographic records are advised immediately after filming, to swiftly identify and record any damage that has occurred.
- Ensuring the production organisation has adequate insurance cover in place and that there is clarity in terms of what is covered, including any specific area and activities is something to consider in the early stages and of course, to confirm is in place prior to any activity taking place and for the entire duration of any filming.
- 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.
- Security arrangements relative to the security of the building, or part, again 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.
- The impact and interface of any filming activity should be considered relative to routine operation of your property and/or business activity, such as public access or guided tours.
- Sensitivity of the subject or theme and nature of the filming is something that should feature in the very earliest of considerations, and ideally from the outset during the initial approach. Historic, political and societal impact issues to name but a few may be the target topic of any filming, though there could also be an unexpected association with your property, that can raise the profile of your property and its history by association.
- Reputational impact related to the filming activities, whilst already highlighted, can be largely an extremely positive outcome by way of raising profile and public interest. By contrast however there are aspects that can be detrimental in terms of reputation with issues such as increased visitor numbers that may be as a direct result of the final film product, or increased traffic and onlookers during the filming process that could lead to localised traffic congestion and trespassing on neighbouring property presenting reputational threats, even if only in the short term.
- Changing technologies used in the film and media industry should be understood. The use of LED lighting presents far reduced risks in terms of heat and ignition source, though there remains the use of Daylight and Tungsten lamps across the industry in parts, so the heat output must always be considered in relation to possible ignition sources and heat damage. A shift towards greater use of Lithium-ion battery systems may present the potential risks associated with charging and battery storage arrangements. 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, with respect to the cleaning needs, methods and chemicals allowed. Potential for damage to surfaces, materials and contents should be factored into the detail to ensure that all parties understand the correct approach to be adopted.
- In respect of Health & Safety considerations, it is essential that you are aware of your legal duties relative to the filming related activity, and that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken, together with the introduction of suitable safe systems of work, staff training and appropriate protections put in place.



Physicals:

External

- Consider suitable pedestrian and vehicular access routes leading to the film location from the boundaries of the property, including potential for damage and suitable protections.
- The siting of film equipment, mobile accommodation and vehicles should be agreed.
 - Generators – Clearly cabling routes will inform the location of generators relative to any building, but they should be a suitable distance from the building given the potential as an ignition source, and located on a suitable hardstanding given their weight.
 - Catering facilities should be considered relative to the location of staff and crew members – again possible ignition sources if LPG is used for heating and cooking purposes, and the need to ensure appropriate fuel storage arrangement are in place.
 - Any security accommodation to be sited in a suitable location to ensure people and vehicular movements can be robustly controlled. The risk of unauthorised access and potential for intruders to gain access should be considered and adequate controls established.
- The location of designated smoking areas and controls require agreement prior to activity starting on site, and should be provided with suitable receptacles and be located away from any combustible materials
- Location of fire hydrants and other fire-fighting water supplies should be identified where they are located on private property so as to ensure access is not obstructed or covered by equipment and vehicles, and also ensure that access is not in any way restricted for fire-fighting purposes.
- Scaffolding, lighting gantries, towers and rig locations should be agreed in advance, and wherever possible not be fixed to the fabric of the building. Where this is not possible, agreed methods of fixing should be adhered to in order to minimise any possible damage to the building. The provision of scaffolding and external lighting towers could also potentially present security weaknesses by giving access to upper level openings, particularly in periods between filming when the building may be empty or only partially occupied.

- Routes for cabling to ensure trip hazards are minimised and controlled should be agreed, and again adhered to. Consider high traffic areas particularly, and ensure suitable protection is provided and maintained.
- Security requirements relative to the specifics of the site are likely to require detailed consideration, particularly where access to the site is not provided exclusively for filming purposes.
- Where access is required to roof levels, there will need to be the appropriate assessment completed in respect of any guarding, temporary means of access and the suitability of the area for access etc.
- The use of special effects such as pyrotechnics or fireworks may be proposed as part of a film production. It is suggested that such aspects are the subject of specialist assessments, and any proposals should also be agreed with your property insurers.



Internal

In a manner to the external security related risks, there is the need to consider internal security arrangements comparable, and ensure any physical security arrangements are not compromised, be that during filming periods, or outside of production periods.

- Any temporary sets or props, linings and the like, must not obscure intruder alarm devices such as PIR or beam detectors. Furthermore, physical measures such as locking off areas where access is not allowed should not be overlooked, particularly where highly valuable or desirable contents are present.
- There may be a need to look at temporary storage of certain contents, which can of course include high value or delicate items such as fine art. Where this the case, suitable means of removing, transporting, storing and securing such items should be identified. In addition, in respect of high value items, checks on any security arrangements in terms of insurance cover should be established.
- 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 such features as wall hangings, displays or other fine art etc.
- The types of lighting being used should be discussed with the production teams, particularly with respect to impact on any decorative features such as art work, wall coverings or glazing. The significant shift towards greater use of LED lighting that emits far reduced levels of heat output significantly reduces elements of risk, though more traditional lighting methods remain such as tungsten or halogen based luminaires. The location of equipment, including lighting rigs, stands etc in relation to such features as stained glass should also be discussed in advance, to avoid the risk of either impact or heat/light damage.
- Hot Work Permits procedures are a valuable aid to ensuring any activities that involve hotwork are adequately managed. Hot Work Permits are used traditionally where construction and maintenance related works are carried out, but 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 doors that afford a degree of fire protection, arrangements should be made for the cabling to be disconnected to enable the closing of doors outside the periods of filming.
- Protection of finishes, including elements such as listed features, original or highly decorative paintwork, linings and wall coverings, together with sensitive and valued floor finishes and ornate plasterwork and embellishments should be given due attention.
- Owing to the 'period nature' of some film sets within historic properties, there can be the need to disguise such items as Intruder Alarm Detectors, and Smoke or Heat Detectors, often located in the corners of rooms, and at ceiling level respectively. Where this is necessary, their continued operation should be maintained wherever possible and temporary isolation be considered purely as a last resort. Any necessary alterations to security/fire systems for the duration of filming activities, including the controls, levels of coverage, continuity etc should be agreed with your insurer and also addressed within your Fire Risk Assessment.
- Dependent upon the nature of filming being undertaken, there may be a desire to introduce special effects such as the illusion of smoke. The impact of any chemicals, and potential residue should be discussed between all parties so as to not cause damage, either internal finishes or any contents such as fine art.
- Whilst it's not necessarily a rare request that an open fire is to be used during filming, it could be that it is a fire place that is not ordinarily in use, and therefore checks may be required as to the condition and it's suitability to be used, together with suitable procedures following any use.

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

Ensuring that everyone remains safe during any filming activity will be an important consideration for you. In many cases, you will already have tried and tested arrangements in place to keep safe all those who work at, visit or use your premises. As such, all you may need to do is review your existing precautions to check that they will be adequate given the nature of the filming to take 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, although there may be others depending on the nature of the filming contemplated:

- If you have **appointed someone** 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 **health and safety policy** 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 the appropriate information is exchanged, including, where appropriate, plans, drawings, operating manuals for equipment, arrangements for isolating electrical and gas supplies, asbestos registers, emergency procedures, information about the state of repair of the building and equipment, 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 as well to make sure that they are valid and that precautions will remain effective. If not, your risk assessments should identify any additional precautions that need to be taken.
- Provide any additional training or information for staff if this is necessary to make sure they know how to work safely and protect others whilst filming is taking place.
- Carry out any necessary 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 information from the Health and Safety Executive is available [here](#), including the **Entertainment Information Sheet [No. 18], Buildings used for locations or temporary studios in film and television**.

For further advice Ecclesiastical customers can call our risk advice line on **0345 600 7531** (Monday to Friday 9am -5pm, excluding bank holidays) or email us at risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

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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