Visit by a Member of the Royal Family
Guidance Notes

Wiltshire Lieutenancy
Things you need to know for a ‘VIP’ visit

For any information or assistance you need that is not covered, or is not clear enough in these notes, please do not hesitate to call the Wiltshire Lieutenancy Office at any time. We are here to help you to ensure that everything goes smoothly and you enjoy the day itself.

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For security purposes, the term ‘VIP’ should be used for any proposed visit by a member of the Royal Family until such time as the visit is officially in the public domain and listed in the itinerary on the Royal website. This is usually two weeks before the event. The identification of the Royal person (the ‘Principal’) concerned should be kept strictly confidential and on a ‘need to know’ basis as a leak may threaten the visit’s security and its viability to proceed.
How is a visit planned and co-ordinated?

Once a visit has been agreed between the Lord-Lieutenant and the relevant Royal Household, the Lieutenancy Office will liaise with you, as the host, regarding the date of the visit itself and the purpose of the visit from your point of view, together with dates for a planning meeting. The Assistant Clerk will then arrange to visit you to prepare a provisional outline programme.

A planning meeting is required approximately eight weeks prior to the event. A further meeting will be arranged if felt necessary.

The planning meeting, or ‘recce’, will involve officials from the relevant Royal Household and the Lord-Lieutenant, plus a member of the Lieutenancy Office, together with one or two members of the Wiltshire Police, who have various roles to fulfil with regard to security. At the recce your plans for the visit will be discussed, followed by a ‘walk of the route’ to highlight any considerations or alternatives. You may wish to invite to this meeting any of your colleagues, for example a press officer or secretary, who will play a key part in the organisation of the event. The provisional outline programme will form the basis of discussion at this meeting.

If light refreshments or main meals are to feature in the visit they must be included in the initial planning discussions to gain approval from the Royal Household early on. Menus, seating plans and other details can be advised on later, together with whether grace is to be said.

Following the recce meeting the Lieutenancy Office will amend the draft programme for the visit as necessary and liaise with you over fine-tuning the detail. You will also be asked to provide some background information, such as a short briefing note on your organisation, and pen portraits (six lines maximum) of key people involved in the visit.

Usually, the Principal will visit a number of places during their day in Wiltshire, so the Lieutenancy Office will pull together the whole programme for the day, and forward it as a draft to the Royal Household for general approval before the arrangements proceed further.

No changes can be made once the final programme has been completed and submitted with the background details, normally seven days before the visit.
Who should be invited to attend?

The Lord-Lieutenant or a Deputy Lieutenant will meet the Principal on arrival and be the official host at the start of the visit. There will normally be a certain number of Civic guests (‘Civics’) who will be introduced by the Lord-Lieutenant in an official line-up on the arrival of the Principal at your venue. Numbers will vary depending on whether or not other venues are being visited in your area that day, but may include some or all of the following:

- High Sheriff of Wiltshire
- Chairman of Wiltshire Council or The Mayor of Swindon
- Town Mayor
- Member of Parliament
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- Chief Constable of Wiltshire
- Host

Spouses or partners are occasionally invited to join the line-up, but this is at the Lord Lieutenant’s discretion, as some locations are more appropriate than others.

The ‘Civics’ will be invited separately by the Lieutenancy Office, but we ask that you designate a person to look after them during the visit itself. It is customary for them to be offered an opportunity to tour the facility, separate to the Royal tour, once the official greeting has taken place. This may or may not be appropriate depending on the venue, but you will be advised accordingly.

All the ‘Civics’ would be presented to the Principal by the Lord-Lieutenant in the order set out, which will be managed by the Assistant Clerk. Your chairman, or the person hosting the VIP on behalf of your organisation, is added to the end of the line. Once that person has been presented by the Lord-Lieutenant, he/she will then become the host to the Principal for the duration of the visit. This is a very important function: the Principal will not know where they are going or who they will meet. The host takes the lead at all times, but the Lord-Lieutenant will be close at hand for assistance, as necessary.

You can invite whoever you like to attend the visit as onlookers, including staff, family, local school children, and others, but you need to be specific about those you would like to be personally introduced and think about where the best place to introduce them would be during the visit.
Key individuals will be named in the final programme and may include staff, trustees, sponsors, clients, customers, fundraisers, volunteers, and others, depending on the nature of your organisation. If you have large groups of people to be introduced, it is better to break them down into smaller groups of six or eight, each with a leader, to make conversation easier and more inclusive.

All guests should be given clear instructions to arrive no later than half an hour prior to the expected arrival of the Principal.

It is worth noting that when the visit involves a public area or a business dealing with customers, there is no desire to interrupt normal working practices or to inhibit normal business. At the recce meeting, the Police are likely to advise on the management of any possible conflicts.

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**Flowers and gifts**

Any intention to present the Principal with a gift of flowers should be included in the planning meeting discussions. The Assistant Clerk will advise the best place to include this in the programme. Posies should not be wet or have any pins attached.

Small gifts may be given by the organisation, but they are not expected. Gifts of local food or produce are also acceptable.
Plaques, speeches, visitors’ books

If you wish to have a plaque to commemorate the visit, the wording needs to be approved by the Royal Household, via the Lieutenancy Office. This should be discussed as early as possible in order to allow enough time for the plaque to be prepared. The unveiling of the plaque by the Principal will usually take place at the end of the visit, in front of an audience of all your guests.

Any speeches by you or your organisation will usually be made towards the end of the visit prior to the unveiling and must be kept to a minimum; approximately three minutes is recommended. Unless specifically discussed and agreed beforehand, the Principal will not make a speech.

If you have a visitors’ book and wish it to be signed, this will normally be done at the end of the visit, with a suitable chair and table provided. The book should be opened at a fresh page and a fountain pen provided.

Addressing a member of the Royal Family

When speaking to a member of the Royal Family one should say in the first instance:

“Your Majesty” (for The Queen)

“Your Royal Highness”
(for all other members of the Royal Family)

… and thereafter:

“Ma’am” … (rhymes with “jam”) or “Sir”.

When making introductions one should say:

“Your Majesty (or Your Royal Highness) may I present …”

Etiquette and protocol
Security

The Police are responsible for the security arrangements for each visit and will discuss these with you at the recce. For that reason it is sensible to have an appropriate person present at this meeting who has responsibility for the venue.

Normally all guests will need to have some form of photographic ID with them on the day together with a formal invitation card or letter confirming their attendance at the event. This enables guests to be verified on arrival.

Publicity

You are responsible for arranging publicity for the visit to your organisation. It is recommended that you engage your own photographer, because they will be given greater access to the visit in order to take photographs that you can use to the benefit of your organisation and for providing copies to staff and those attending the visit. It will be helpful if you could decide where you propose your photographer to stand at certain points in the programme and particular elements you would wish to capture. You will need to have a designated person in control of the Press on the day of the visit if the Personal Protection Officer has agreed they can be present.

The Palace press office is usually involved only for visits by Her Majesty The Queen or Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall. If you do not have a press or PR person, the Lieutenancy Office can advise on how to deal with the press and assist with the clearance of press releases prior to the visit.

Any photographs of the Principal to be displayed on websites or in publications will need to be cleared with the Royal Household before publishing. This can be organised through the Lieutenancy Office.
What we need from you

Before we visit you it is helpful if you have thought carefully about how you want the visit to be arranged. The main purpose will usually be to celebrate the work of your organisation or the achievements of a group of people. Therefore it is important that the Principal meets the main hosts at the beginning, learns about the work being done or the achievements made, and meets everyone involved through a tour or a reception.

A visit can be brought to a close by the host thanking the Principal for visiting and they may invite the Principal to unveil a plaque to commemorate the visit if desired.

It is important that the Principal has the opportunity before arrival to know something of the venue they are visiting and the main people they are meeting. Therefore we ask you to produce a short briefing note on your organisation, setting out a brief history of your organisation, key salient facts on the reason for the visit and, as appropriate, the support you have had. Normally this will be about one side of A4. In addition, we will need short biographies, a maximum of four lines, about each of the key people involved in the visit. Civic biographies will be provided by the Lieutenancy Office.

All information must be provided a minimum of seven days before the date of the visit.

Bowing and curtseying

This is a polite custom, or convention, and not a rule. People of all ages should feel free to decide whether they wish to bow or curtsey. If they do, ladies should ‘bob’ curtsey by placing one foot behind the other; men should do a neck bow.
Dress

Dress should be what is considered appropriate for the occasion or venue. Although there has been a custom or convention for ladies to wear hats and gloves, this is completely optional. However, depending on the occasion and the Principal attending, advice on this custom will be given by the Lieutenancy Office when relevant.

Name badges

It is helpful for all those who will meet the Principal to wear name badges. These should be a large print bearing the name and title, for example: Mr. Joe Brown, Trustee. Badges may bear the organisation’s logo, if desired.

Line-up presentations

When introducing someone, the host should always stand to the inside of the member of the Royal Family to ensure that any photographers have unblocked vision of the Principal and the person being presented.
Group presentations

It is usual for any visit to include an opportunity for the Principal to meet the majority of your guests. This can be in the form of a gathering in a large room, or could be a reception of some kind. Numbers vary but can involve 50 or more people.

In order to manage such numbers, it is recommended that the guests are divided into groups of six to eight in horseshoe shapes dotted about the room. It is often feasible to include people with common interests within a single group, for example, the architect and builders of a new building, the governors or teachers in a school, and so on. Name badges are useful here, as it is an easy process to apply, for example, coloured dots to them to signify membership of a particular group.

A ‘leader’ should be nominated for each group, and this person will gather the group into a horseshoe shape, enabling the Principal to join the group at the ‘open’ end and engage with everyone in the group.

The leader should introduce the group in generic terms, for example: “These are architects and builders responsible for the new construction … etc”, rather than each person individually. This means that the Principal can engage in a group conversation to which everyone can contribute.
If you would like further information please contact:

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