

Postponement of the University of Bath's graduation ceremonies planned for the end of July 2021

A number of Universities have announced that they will not be holding Graduation events this summer. Locally, Bath Spa University have decided not to hold one, as has Bristol. The [University of Bath has also announced their postponement](#), following advice from us that their event would have meant thousands of additional visitors from around the country at a time when COVID cases are rising both locally and nationally, and a large proportion of our population is not yet fully protected through vaccination.

We recognise that this is disappointing for all those who were planning to attend these ceremonies to celebrate their hard-won achievements. We have prepared the following FAQs to help explain the council's role in this decision and our reasoning behind the advice we gave.

What was the council's role in the postponement of these events?

The University of Bath, before it made its decision about whether or not to go ahead with its planned face-to-face graduation events on campus in late July, sought the advice of Bath & North East Somerset Council's Director of Public Health (DPH). The council has worked closely with our two Universities during the pandemic and we have built close working relationships to help reduce the spread of the virus and to support student health and welfare in this challenging period. However, the decision on postponement was for the University of Bath to take.

What advice was given by the DPH?

The DPH's advice to the University was to postpone the specific events planned for these dates, to allow more time for people locally and across the country to receive two doses of the vaccine.

What was the reasoning behind this decision?

These events would have meant thousands of additional visitors from around the country at a time when Covid cases are rising both locally and nationally, and a large proportion of our population is not yet fully protected through vaccination.

What was the evidence used?

We have seen a rapid increase in our Covid-19 case rates particularly amongst the 15-24 age group. Although an increase is to be expected as restrictions are eased and given the greater transmissibility of the Delta variant, this is happening at a time when the national vaccination programme is still being rolled out. A large proportion of our population in B&NES is not fully protected through vaccination, hence the need to continue to exercise caution.

We are making huge progress in rolling out the vaccine programme in Bath and North East Somerset. However, we still have a significant way to go. For example, at the beginning of July less than 50% of 40-49 year-olds had received both vaccinations, and the vaccine was only recently made available to 18-30 year-olds.

More information about Covid-19 case rates and vaccination uptake can be found [here](#).

Why was this advice given when the roadmap indicated that national restrictions may end on 19 July?

The easing of national restrictions removes many of the *legal* frameworks and central government guidance that were put in place due to Covid. However, this means that decisions on how we act in our own communities, businesses and organisations at local level will now need to be taken locally. The council and specifically the DPH will continue to offer advice, where appropriate to protect the health of the population and for the safe reopening of local jobs, businesses and cultural life.

With the easing of national restrictions, organisations will in the main be free to consider this advice on its own merits and take what at times may be difficult decisions.

What are other universities doing about their Summer 2021 graduation events?

Most other universities have made the decision to postpone holding in-person graduation summer 2021 graduation events. Many announced this earlier in the year, preferring to wait and see how the national and local picture developed. We understand that York, Southampton, LSE, UCL, Bristol, and Exeter are amongst those who have postponed in-person summer ceremonies for this year or are holding virtual ceremonies instead.

Why are large-scale sporting events going ahead when these events have been postponed?

It should be noted that the large-scale sporting events such as Wimbledon and the Euros are pilot events as part of the government's Events Research Programme.

More information on the process for outdoor events in Bath and North East Somerset can be found here [Safety Advisory Group for Events..](#)

12th July 2021