

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has responded to the government's document released today, 11 May, titled 'Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy'.

Statement

The timing and the manner of the opening of churches touches profound sensitivities and spiritual needs. The Government's document and statements fail to recognise this.

The Government's position, established today, includes these steps aimed at opening churches as soon as possible: the establishment of a task force for places of worship, to work closely with 'stakeholders' in ensuring that premises are COVID-19 secure; and heeding the experience of other countries in which churches are already open for worship.

In dialogue with the Government, the Catholic Church will continue its engagement in this process and has already submitted a detailed plan, in full accordance with public health guidelines, for churches to be opened for private prayer.

The Church is ready to play its full part in the task force, understanding that this includes the possible earlier use of churches for private prayer, as a first safe step towards their use for public worship.