

Royal Visits

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The Role of the Lieutenancy

A Royal Visit is a special and exciting occasion and the emphasis nowadays is on informality but don't be misled into thinking that a lot of careful planning doesn't have to go into a successful and happy day! There are formalities and customs to be followed and the particular style of the Royal Visitor to be taken into account, so to save yourself time and energy the best thing you can do is to consult the Lieutenancy Office (which acts for the [Lord Lieutenant](#) who as Her Majesty's representative in the County is responsible for the conduct of all Royal Visits) right from the start.

For instance, a Royal Visit is CONFIDENTIAL (on a need to know basis) until the Palace has issued an official press release and in some cases it won't be confirmed until after the initial planning visit (known as a "recce") has taken place. Other points to bear in mind are:

- the time which the Royal Visitor can make available for the visit may be limited;
- the wording on any commemorative wall plaque or invitations has to be approved by the Royal Household;
- some Royals prefer finger food or may not have time for refreshment at all;
- certain VIPs have to be invited - including probably the High Sheriff and the Mayor;
- the Royal Visitor will want to see or learn something interesting - besides meeting lots of people!

The Lieutenancy Office (headed by the Clerk to the Lieutenancy) can help in the first place with an invitation and the thinking behind it which is most likely to lead to a successful outcome; and when you hear that an invitation has been accepted then the Lieutenancy Office should be your first port of call to ensure that the arrangements are made in the approved manner.

Let us start with ...

The invitation to a Member of the Royal Family

A Royal Visit is often to mark an event with which a whole town, school or voluntary organisation has been or is still involved. It is an opportunity to celebrate the different ways in which people have been involved in a special piece of work or occasion.

A future event will merit consideration for a Royal Visit if it is a unique or a commemorative event or a major development in the County. Or it might be of special interest to a particular Member of the Royal Family. As can be imagined, the Royal Family receive many more invitations than they can accept.

Generally speaking members of the Royal Family finalise their official diary plans twice a year in December and June for the subsequent Spring and Autumn seasons and an invitation should be made well in advance especially if it is the Queen who is to be invited. Late invitations have little chance of success.

Remember, if you want a Royal to visit for a special occasion on a particular day you will need to extend your invitation about a year beforehand.

You may like to telephone the Lieutenancy Office for advice or write to the Lord-Lieutenant and ask him to consider putting your invitation in the programme for a Royal Visit in the future, but you can of course write direct to the Private Secretary to the Member of the Royal Family you would like to invite. The letter briefly should outline your organisation, what the particular visit would achieve, and when you would like it to take place. The letter should be addressed to Buckingham Palace and the internal courier service between all Royal residences will ensure that it reaches its destination. When an invitation is made direct to the Palace, a copy to the Lord-Lieutenant is very helpful (and could mean that even if your invitation is refused, arrangements might be made to fit it into another programme).

It is very important to have a clear idea of why you are making an invitation and what will happen during the visit and you should make these points clearly in your letter to the Private Secretary or to the Lord-Lieutenant. Such points often act as an incentive for the Royal to choose your invitation from the many others.

An invitation refused

If your invitation is refused - as many sadly must be - it will not be sent on automatically to another Member of the Royal Family. You may extend it yourself to another Member, even if the second invitee is more senior than the first, although discretion should be exercised in extending subsequent invitations and you may find it helpful to consult the Lieutenancy Office.

An invitation accepted

Now your invitation has been accepted, the date of the visit is confirmed, and planning can commence! (But don't forget it must be CONFIDENTIAL on a need to know only basis).

Your first move should be to contact the Lieutenancy Office to begin planning the programme for the visit. The closer the degree of liaison which can be achieved between all the interested parties - and the greater attention that can be given to detailed aspects of the plan - the smoother will be the result on the day.

Planning for any Royal Visit will necessarily involve you in a lot of detailed planning and discussions to ensure the visit will be a success.

The aim of the programme should be to combine formality with informality and to produce a varied, relevant and interesting programme for the visit which also achieves your objectives.

Remember, the Royal Visitor may not have very long to be with you and you will need to maximise the use you make of the time available to you.

On arrival there is usually a formal line-up of civic dignitaries and other VIPs. Naturally everyone will want to meet the Royal Visitor but you must avoid long lines of formal handshaking. However you should try to involve as many different kinds of people as possible - perhaps by introducing them in small groups somewhere on the tour or at the reception. It is not always necessary to introduce everyone individually by name but as a member of a group or team with some kindred function so that the Royal Visitor spends time talking about what they have done and not just listening to a long list of names.

The emphasis of the visit should be on meeting those people who have actually been involved in the project - whatever it is - who know about it and can talk about it. Again formal introductions may not be necessary but the Royal will have had an opportunity to mark the contribution of those most involved.

The official programme for any Royal visit, based on the wishes of the organisers and the Royal Visitor, will usually be prepared by the Lieutenancy Office in liaison with the organisers and Surrey Police who will be responsible for security. The Clerk to the Lieutenancy oversees the programme for the whole day and is also the liaison point for the Royal Household and Surrey Police. The Clerk will submit the draft programme to the Palace for approval.

Depending on the scale of the visit, it is often a good idea to convene a first meeting with the Clerk so that you can establish the outline of the programme. Consideration would be given at this meeting to the following matters:

People - variety - timing

- Who should be invited
- Who should be presented
- Who should do the presenting
 - Group presentations
- Operational and security aspects of the visit
- Publicity control
- The route to be taken during the visit, with timings
 - Route and timing of tours by VIP party after the Royal Party
 - Tours - if appropriate - of further groups of guests
- The means of involving the public in the visit, eg. by walk-about
- Any special duties of the Royal Visitor, eg. speeches, plaque unveiling
- vehicle security
- Refreshment arrangements, including retirement facilities
- Vehicle arrangements for arrival and departure, which will be by car usually and helicopter occasionally.

An important decision to make early in the planning is whether spouses should be included or not. This depends very often on numbers of guests and the space you have to move around. There is too, a limit to the number of people a Royal Visitor can be expected to meet in a formal line-up on arrival. The maximum is usually 8. However, the Royal Visitor is usually keen to meet quite large numbers of people in a less formal setting, and if space allows spouses to be included, a solution may be achieved in this way.

The Lieutenancy Office and the Surrey Police have a wealth of experience of planning and working on Royal visits so please do make as much use of us as you need to.

A Royal visit to your organisation may be only one of two or three which the Royal Visitor is making that day to locations in the County, so careful planning is essential for all the visits to

ensure that they run to time. This is particularly important for hosts placed later in the programme, so that they and their guests are not kept waiting. When the unforeseen happens, we are there to rejig the day to ensure, if possible, that nobody is let down or disappointed.

Police

The support of the Police is essential to the success of every Royal visit, both from its operational and security aspects. The Clerk will inform the Police as soon as an invitation has been accepted and thereafter they will be involved in every stage of the visit. Surrey Police in conjunction with the Personal Protection Officer is responsible for the security of the Royal Visitor for the duration of the visit and will be able to answer any questions you may have on security.

For security reasons, only vehicles driven by the Police ever form part of a Royal motorcade.

Reconnaissance

By the time the first recce meeting is held on site you will need to have prepared a written draft plan and timetable, in consultation with the Lieutenancy Office, which details who is to be presented, where (and why), what the Royal Visitor will see/do (and why) who else will be present (and why) etc. Copies of the draft plans should be sent to the Lieutenancy Office before the recce. Until the recce has occurred everything is provisional. The Private Secretary, the Personal Protection Officer, the Press Officer from Buckingham Palace (when appropriate), the Surrey Police, and the Clerk to the Lieutenancy will attend the recce and expect to discuss virtually every aspect of the visit from the content of the programme, provisional timings, people to be present, and security down to refreshment arrangements, 'retiring' facilities and publicity.

Refinements to the draft programme will then be made by the organisers who will forward it to the Lieutenancy Office for clearance by the Royal Household. The Lieutenancy Office will inform the organisers when approval has been given or of any amendments which have been requested and will advise the number of copies of the final version of the programme which are required by the Royal Household. After this the plans may not be changed. If a substantial part of the visit is to be held out of doors you will need to have organised a "wet weather" plan and have had this approved by the Private Secretary.

The following, if they are included in your visit, must be cleared through the Lieutenancy Office before the draft programme is drawn up and before you notify anyone involved from your side as they are all things that have to be approved by the Royal Office concerned:

- inscriptions on plaques;
- any presentations to be made;
- signing of Visitors' Books (if this is agreed, a table and chair need to be provided. Also a clean page in the book and a reliable pen);
- Arrangements for lunch, especially menus;
- Any speeches to be made by the Royal Visitor;
- Any gifts to be made to the Royal Visitor. (Gifts should not be wrapped. Details of the person presenting the gift are needed so that the Royal Visitor knows what to expect.)

The final programme will show a detailed description of the visit, broken down into segments no shorter than 5 minutes and will include:

- names of all the main people to be presented;
- names of those escorting the Member of the Royal Family;
- details of those making any presentations to the Member of the Royal Family;
- "retirement" opportunities.

Attached to the final programme will be:

- brief biographical details on all the main people to be presented;
- brief notes on the organisation receiving the visit;
- if there is a lunch - table plan and menu;
- if there is a pre-lunch or similar reception - list of guests showing their occupation or connection with the organisation being visited.

The organisers are responsible for ensuring that all those involved in the programme are thoroughly briefed on their part in the visit and for sending them copies of the programme or the relevant part of it.

Depending on the nature, length and complexity of the visit, the Lieutenancy office will advise on the need for a rehearsal prior to the visit.

You should not feel that it is necessary to make any very expensive or time consuming changes or alterations to the surroundings just for the Royal Visitor. The last thing any Member of the Royal Family would wish is for organisers to go to any great expense because they are coming to visit. If, however, organisers are planning to make changes or improvements anyway and their Royal Visit manages to speed things along, all the better!

Publicity

Press

The organisers should not tell the press about the visit until they are given the go ahead to do so by the Lieutenancy Office.

Press announcements about Royal engagements are made by the Palace usually about four to six weeks before an event and the press should not be notified before the announcement has been made. If you have any enquiries from the press before the announcement by the Palace you should merely say that nothing has been confirmed and that you will contact the enquirer when you have more definite news.

All contact with the press is through the Buckingham Palace Press Office and any enquiries you receive should be directed to them. Invitations to the press to be in attendance on the day of the visit are often issued by the Press Office, usually on a rota basis to keep the numbers of the press to a minimum.

Generally, if the visit is by a less prominent member of the Royal Family, the organisers' dealings with the press should be on the advice of the Lord-Lieutenant's Office. Once they have been given the go ahead by the Clerk to the Lieutenancy to announce the Visit, organisers may notify and invite the press but should try to keep the numbers to about six.

You can also issue your own press release giving details of your organisation and the purpose of the visit. This draft press release also has to be approved by the Palace or the Clerk but, for security reasons, you should only give the date and say either morning or afternoon as far as

timings go. You can give more precise details of timings nearer the day to those members of the press due to attend.

The organisers should identify one person to be responsible for press arrangements before and on the day of the visit. This needs to be someone who is not involved in any presentations on the day and who can be free to look after the press throughout the duration of the visit. Photo opportunities and where the press are allowed on the day will be decided in liaison with Surrey Police and the Clerk when the draft programme is drawn up.

Whether press arrangements are being handled by the Palace Press Office or direct by the organisers, you are usually allowed to have an in-house photographer who is often permitted to take photographs in areas where the press are not allowed. However, any photographs taken by an in-house photographer are not for release to the press and must not be used for any commercial purposes.

Please feel free to direct any queries before the day to the Clerk, no matter how trivial they might seem.

Presentations

This can be a bit of a headache because inevitably lots of people want to be presented and the Royal Visitor doesn't want to spend the whole visit shaking hands!

For all Royal visits, the Royal Visitor is greeted first on arrival by the Lord Lieutenant who is also the last to say goodbye. The Lord-Lieutenant likes to give opportunities to young people from the uniformed organisations to act as Lord-Lieutenant's Cadet. He may be accompanied by a Cadet on a visit and the Clerk will advise you on this.

When The Queen comes or The Prince of Wales comes on a visit then, the full formalities have to be observed so that people who because of their office would expect to be presented are indeed in the line-up.

On such an occasion the official order of presentation (as laid down by the Home Office) made by the Lord-Lieutenant would be:

- The High Sheriff of Surrey
- The Chairman of Surrey County Council and Chief Executive
- Mayor/Chairman of the Borough/District Council and Chief Executive
- The Member of Parliament for the area
- The Chief Constable of Surrey

Although the inclusion of these extra VIP guests may seem a bit of an imposition, it is worth bearing in mind the value of the extra publicity the goodwill that such inclusion will bring in the community which your organisation or project serves.

On an official visit to a Borough or District event then the local Mayor/Chairman takes precedence over the Chairman of the County Council and indeed the line-up may only include local dignitaries.

On a visit to an independent organisation the line-up would be tailored to suit the occasion but would most likely include the Chairman of the County Council and the Mayor or Chairman of the Borough or District in which the visit occurs.

The Lord-Lieutenant has complete discretion to omit from the line up elements of the standard list of presentees. The important thing is that line-ups suit the occasion and don't over-balance the whole event and that the possible logistical problems of arranging one or two parties to follow the programme behind the Royal party are borne in mind.

For these same reasons it is often not possible to include spouses or partners in the line ups.

When those in the formal line-up have been presented, the Lord-Lieutenant will present the principal organiser and other necessary presentations will be made by him/her. Care should be taken that the Royal Visitor is not "monopolised" by one person but that a number of "hosts" involved in the organisation do the honours during the visit.

The Lieutenancy Office will advise, if necessary, on further individual presentations and the composition of groups which might be presented during the visit. The arrangement of like with like groups is usually recommended. These groups can, be introduced at suitable points along the route.

The Visit Itself

It is the formal duty of the Lord-Lieutenant, as Her Majesty's representative in the County, to receive the Royal Visitor as he or she arrives. He then makes the first presentations as outlined in the previous section, ending with the Chairman or Director of the organisation. However he may delegate his responsibilities for the visit to the Vice Lord-Lieutenant or to one of his Deputy Lieutenants, but you would of course be made aware of this in advance.

It is then best practice for the Chairman or Director either to assume the role of main escort or to delegate the duty to another who will in turn introduce and handover to the person in charge of each particular area. Someone who has first hand knowledge of an area, the people in it, what they do and who they are, is much better suited to escort the Royal Visitor around that area, and then hand back the Visitor to the main escort who will repeat the introduction and handover process to someone in the next area. The main escort needs a very good knowledge of everything the Royal Visitor is to see, and needs to be politely assertive and lead the way on a tour of the building. Royal visits nowadays should involve as many people in an organisation as possible.

The Lieutenancy Office will advise on how crucial time keeping is for a particular visit. If the Royal Visitor has no following visit (or private engagement) to make then there probably need be no concern if the visit runs a little late - indeed delays are often caused by a Royal Visitor's interest in and enjoyment of the visit. A well-planned programme will have reserves of time (probably within the refreshment period) which can, if necessary, be shortened to allow the visit to end at the appointed time. Hosts are asked not to "pop surprises into the programme", either by way of gifts or by deviating from the agreed programme. This can cause consternation to those responsible for security, and embarrassment for host and visitor. However if the Royal Visitor chooses to deviate, hosts must generally "go with the flow" and get back on track as appropriately as possible. Do not be alarmed if this happens as all members of the Royal Family are professional and will not upset the programme.

On the Day

Please make sure that all those to be presented and any other guests are in place well before the Royal Visitor arrives. It is probably best to tell them to be there at least half an hour beforehand.

The Clerk to the Lieutenancy will usually be with you before the Royal Visitor is due to ensure that line-ups are correct, check on the press, sort out any last minute hitches and calm any nerves!

The following is a guide for those being presented in a formal line-up (usually only at the beginning of a visit):

the Royal Visitor will offer his/her hand for a handshake;
men when being presented should make a slight bow with the head, just a nod and not from the waist;
ladies should make a slight curtsy (ie not right down to the ground!).

There is no obligation on anyone to bow or curtsy. It is recommended in the case of Her Majesty The Queen and for other senior Members, eg Prince Philip. It is custom or convention and not a rule so people of all ages should feel free to go along with it or not. What is important is that the Royal Visitor and everyone involved in the engagement uses the time to the best advantage and that the visit itself fulfils its purpose and is enjoyed by all;

The correct form of address is to use Your Royal Highness (or of course Your Majesty in the case of The Queen), on the first occasion and to use Sir or Ma'am (to rhyme with Jam) after that.

For those being presented elsewhere on a visit usually in a much more informal way - it is not necessary to bow or curtsy and it is easiest to stick to Sir, or 'Ma'am' when talking to the Royal Visitor. The Royal Visitor may or may not offer a handshake,

The host who escorts the Royal Visitor should remember that it is the host who presents others to the Royal Visitor and not the other way round! The form of words might be:

for a formal line-up - "Ma'am may I present Mr John Smith, our Finance Director."
for informal presentations (ie when presenting staff in an office or factory) - "These are members of my production team, Sir, who have worked so hard on the project you have been seeing today."

The escort should try to keep an eye on the time and keep things flowing. He or she should precede the Royal Visitor at all times during the visit - even if this seems rather impolite. The onus is on the person escorting and not on the Royal Visitor to keep things moving and on time.

If the escort has to present groups of people at say, a reception, the escort should not be frightened to move the Royal Visitor on to the next group. If they stand talking to one group for too long there is less time available for meeting all the others. The Royal Visitor is quite used to being steered in this way!

Try not to be too formal and keep things as relaxed and interesting as possible. Remember that your Visitor will have been briefed on your organisation so you must be prepared for all sorts of questions,

You may well now be thinking "how did I ever get involved in all this and how on earth am I going to remember it all?". Don't worry. This information should cover most of the questions generally

asked and you can ask more as the visit is planned. By the end of the great day you will have acquired another skill: How to organise a Royal Visit!

Final Points

Following the visit, it is usual for the principal organiser to write to the Private Secretary expressing appreciation of the visit.

You should note that the organisation extending the invitation is expected to bear any costs of the arrangements.

Guests often ask what they should wear for the occasion which is a tricky one in this day and age when people wear all kinds of things for all kinds of occasions! Suffice to say that the people in the formal line-up will be wearing suits and ties and the ladies will be wearing perhaps the sort of thing they wear for a wedding! Hats may be worn but there is no need especially if the setting is fairly informal - an old people's home or a facility for young people for example - when it would seem appropriate not to wear a hat. On the whole people nowadays seem to do without. Gloves, likewise, are not essential for a lady. Some people may prefer to dress less formally. Again the Lieutenancy Office will guide you if asked.

It is not necessary to send personal invitations to the Lord-Lieutenant, the Clerk to the Lieutenancy and the Chief Constable as they will be there on duty.

Finally it should be said that on some occasions the Lord-Lieutenant hands over responsibility for a Royal Visit to the Vice Lord-Lieutenant or to a Deputy Lieutenant and he or she then acts on behalf of the Lord-Lieutenant on all matters relating to the visit.

List of Contacts

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