

Coronavirus Update – Wednesday 18 March 2020

With the Prime Minister confirming that the Government is acting as if on a wartime footing, our priority is to keep construction sites operational for as long as possible throughout the current crisis. This was the clear message presented to Government in a [letter from the industry](#) and in a call with Alok Sharma, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Recognising that some sectors cannot work from home, the Government has confirmed that it is not necessary to close a business or workplace if someone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature. The individual should be sent home and advised to follow the Government's [stay at home guidance](#). The workplace should then be cleaned in accordance with the Government's [decontamination guidance](#).

The Chancellor has announced a [series of measures](#) to support jobs, income and businesses on a scale greater than any previous Government, with the promise of more to come if required.

- Government-backed guaranteed loans of £330 billion will be made available to businesses from next week to help them pay rent, salaries and suppliers etc.
- To access this funding, larger firms can use a new lending facility from the Bank of England with SMEs able to use the existing [business interruption loan scheme](#) which will now offer funding up to £5 million with no interest in the first six months.
- The Government recommendation on avoiding non-essential contact, particularly in pubs, clubs and restaurants does trigger insurance cover which includes pandemics.
- With specific measures offered to the transport, retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, other industries have been invited to present their need for support and we will continue to do that on behalf of construction.
- To support individuals and families, mortgage lenders have agreed to offer a three-month mortgage 'holiday' and £1 billion will be made available for vulnerable people.

Alongside this, the Government has announced that changes to IR35 legislation, the off-payroll working rules, have been [postponed by twelve months](#) to 6 April 2021.

All training at CITB's National Construction Colleges has been cancelled with immediate effect and the colleges closed. Current and advance-booked courses during the closure can be rescheduled or refunded. All CITB Employer Roadshows have also been cancelled.

CITB has confirmed a range of measures to reassure employers, including:

- A comprehensive plan to support apprentices in the industry is being developed, with companies encouraged to continue employing any apprentices in the meantime. Information will be available shortly on the specific support that will be offered by CITB.

- Existing bookings of the Health, Safety and Environment Test can be rescheduled or cancelled at no cost.
- The introduction of a grace period for the renewal of SMSTS and SSSTS certificates for those unable to complete the refresher course before the expiry of their certificate.
- A relaxation of the rules and sanctions that apply to Approved Training Organisations in relation to the uploading of information, course completions and certificates on the Training Directory.

We are working on providing more detailed information on the specific issues raised by members and will be adding information to our [new coronavirus webpage](#) daily.

Businesses should continue to follow the most up-to-date [Government guidance](#) and members can contact [Build UK](#) via email with any construction-specific queries. We cannot guarantee to respond to every message; however, if we are aware of sector-specific issues we may have the opportunity to address them collectively.