

Coronavirus Update – Friday 20 March 2020

It has been quite a week and amongst all the business issues we are dealing with don't forget to look after yourself, your family and friends, and your workforce. The Prime Minister said last night 'stand by your workers and we will stand by you'. We have yet to see what that means but we know there are a range of measures to support employers being considered.

As well as the impact on us all as individuals, the coronavirus is causing a momentous shock to the global economy far beyond anything we have seen before. The £330 billion of funding announced by the Government is 15% of the UK's annual GDP and double the value of the construction sector, demonstrating the levels to which it is prepared to support business.

Schools and nurseries will close later today and the [definition of 'key workers'](#) has now been confirmed. It includes those required to keep transport, infrastructure and utility networks operational. The Government will ask workers to only use the limited school places that are available if they actually need them.

The Government is introducing legislation to implement its Coronavirus Action Plan.

- The [Coronavirus Bill](#) which was introduced to the House of Commons yesterday, will enable the Government to manage the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. It contains temporary measures designed to either amend existing legislative provisions or introduce new statutory powers and is expected to be enacted on Monday.
- The CLC is calling for the Government to declare the pandemic an event covered by force majeure. Whilst this is not yet the case, the Cabinet Office has published a [Procurement Policy Notice](#) which:
 - recognises that the Covid-19 outbreak is likely to give rise to supply chain disruption and that contracting authorities **may** need to take action in response to supplier claims of 'force majeure' or contract 'frustration'.
 - enables the public sector to procure goods, services and works due to extreme emergency although this must be demonstrated.
 - allows contracts to be modified without a new procurement procedure but only under certain conditions and these must be justified.

The **Bank of England** has introduced a [Covid Corporate Financing Facility \(CCFF\)](#) which will provide funding to businesses by purchasing commercial paper of up to one-year maturity which will help businesses across a range of sectors to pay wages and suppliers.

The different nations are offering a range of business support packages:

- The **Scottish Government** is to call an emergency meeting of the Financial Services Advisory Board and offered:
 - £10,000 grants for small businesses in receipt of the Small Business Bonus Scheme or Rural Relief.

- 1.6% relief for all properties, effectively freezing the poundage rate next year.
- The **Welsh Government** announced a £1.4 billion business support package including a £10,000 grant to all businesses eligible for Small Business Rates Relief with a rateable value of £12,000 or less.

CPCS has provided [advice and information](#) confirming that it will extend the expiry date for plant sector cards, aligning with CITB and CSCS. Cards should still be relevant for the plant being operated.

Finally, **working from home** means entering a whole new world of [cyber security](#) measures that employers and employees should be aware of.

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

The situation continues to develop rapidly and please follow Build UK on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) for the latest updates.

We will be taking a break over the weekend to recuperate and will be back on Monday with our next update.