

Coronavirus Update – Thursday 9 April 2020

It is anticipated that an updated version of the [Site Operating Procedures](#) will be issued shortly, which will reflect the latest Public Health England (PHE) guidance on [Social distancing in the workplace during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

Build UK members are keen to see manufacturers, suppliers and builders merchants increase the **supply of goods and materials** to construction sites as they look to re-open sites after the Easter break. Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, Alok Sharma, has written an [open letter](#) to the manufacturing sector thanking all those that are at work and saying: “*Manufacturing is a critical part of our economy and I would like to be clear that there is no restriction on manufacturing continuing under the current rules*”.

With a collaborative approach already being taken by some, the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) has [issued a statement](#) calling for construction businesses to pay in accordance with agreed contractual terms. It is vital that all parties understand the implications of the current situation on their contracts and work together to find solutions. Build UK and Wedlake Bell LLP have updated the [Guidance on Contractual Issues Caused by Coronavirus](#), adding an appendix to show the corresponding sub-contract clause numbers for both JCT and NEC standard forms of contract.

HMRC confirmed yesterday that the online claims portal for the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) should be open by 20 April, with the first grant payments made to businesses by the end of the month. Whilst furloughed employees may not carry out any work for their employer, they may undertake training (as long as it does not generate income or provide services to the company) and there is a range of support being offered across the industry. If the employer requires the employee to undertake any training whilst furloughed, the employee must be paid at least the minimum wage, even if this is more than 80% of their wage that will be subsidised.

The **Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)**, a Build UK member, is making its lectures freely available and will be offering [remote professional reviews](#):

- [How the ICE and infrastructure professionals can reassure the public that infrastructure is safe](#) – 21 April 2020 (09:00-10:30)
- [How can infrastructure help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals?](#) – 29 April 2020 (18:00-20:30).

The **Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)**, also a Build UK member, is offering a range of [online courses](#) as well as online routes to its [Site Management Certificate](#) and [Chartered Membership](#).

CITB is helping the industry in a number of ways including:

- Deferring the collection of 2020 Levy payments for an initial period of three months. CITB Levy bills, which are usually sent out in April and due for payment in May, will not be issued or require payment until August or possibly later this year

- Freezing the 20-week processing rule for grant claims and processing them as a priority when received
- Introducing a remote learning and examination option for the following Site Safety Plus courses which can be booked using the [SSP course locator](#):
 - Health and Safety Awareness (HSA)
 - Site Supervision Safety Training Scheme Refresher (SSSTS-R)
 - Site Management Safety Training Scheme Refresher (SMSTS-R)
- Supporting apprentices:
 - Employers can [apply for advanced payment](#) of apprenticeship attendance grants for 2nd and 3rd year apprentices and higher level apprentices in their final year
 - The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) [has introduced temporary changes](#), including enabling furloughed apprentices to continue their training, training and end-point assessments to be carried out remotely, and breaks in training due to coronavirus.
 - Online [functional skills videos](#) are available
 - A dedicated [e-mail helpline](#) is available for all apprentices and their employers
- Expanding the Skills and Training Fund:
 - [Micro and small businesses](#) can apply for a maximum of £10,000
 - [Medium sized businesses](#) with up to 250 employees are eligible for up to £25,000
- Providing a Leadership and Management Development Fund for large companies which will be launched on 14 April.

CSCS and its partner schemes have introduced a [range of measures](#) to support card holders during the current pandemic, as individuals are unable to attend relevant courses or sit the Health, Safety & Environment test. These include extending the period for card renewals and any expired cards that are accepted on site should still be relevant for the occupation being undertaken. CPCS has introduced an 'emergency card'; however, Build UK, CECA and NFDC do not see the need for this as the grace period for expired cards has been extended.

Businesses should continue to follow the most up-to-date [Government guidance](#) and for the latest updates please follow Build UK on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#). If you have any construction-specific queries or feedback on what is happening within the industry, please contact [Build UK](#).

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