

Coronavirus Update – Tuesday 12 May 2020

The Government has published its [COVID-19 Recovery Strategy](#) which sets out the plan to “*return life to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, as fast and fairly as possible... in a way that avoids a new epidemic, minimises lives lost and maximises health, economic and social outcomes*”.

Build UK Chief Executive Suzannah Nichol attended a meeting with the Prime Minister on Sunday evening, comprised of business leaders and representative organisations. The Prime Minister confirmed that, as we enter the next phase of the response to the virus, the challenge will be to keep the rate of infection or R number below 1.0 and restrictions will be eased in a safe and measured way. Whilst the first consideration is the nation’s health, there is also the need for a strong economy which protects people’s jobs and ensures that the Government can fund the country’s vital public services.

The plan is for restrictions to be lifted step by step and the following changes, which will be familiar to the construction industry because it has continued to work, will apply in England as part of step one from **Wednesday 13 May 2020**:

- Workers should continue to work from home wherever possible
- All workers that cannot work from home, including those in construction, should travel to work if their workplace is open
- Public transport should be avoided wherever possible. Where it is used, the following Government advice is applicable: ‘*If you can, wear a face covering in an enclosed space where social distancing isn’t possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet*’
- Workplaces should follow the new guidance on [Working Safely During Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) which has been published for a range of working environments, including [construction](#) and [working in people’s homes](#). The Construction Leadership Council (CLC) will review the Site Operating Procedures to ensure they are fully consistent with the new guidance.

There is no clear guidance from the Government or Public Health England on the use of face masks by construction workers; however, information on [PPE and face coverings](#) is included in section 6 of the construction guidance and Build UK will now look at what further information it can offer to help members.

With construction workers being ‘actively encouraged’ to go to work, the [Open Doors website](#) has more than **340 accommodation providers offering over 22,000 beds** across the UK and Ireland for anyone working away from home who needs local accommodation.

The CLC has published [guidance](#) for all companies in the construction supply chain on how to minimise potential disputes. It builds on Build UK’s [Guidance on Contractual Issues Caused by Coronavirus](#) and offers practical advice on resolving common issues, as well as a series of template letters including:

- *Supplier and employer dialogue letters* to propose collaborative discussions on the way forward on works impacted by coronavirus

- *Contractor notice and employer response* in the event of a delay in the progress of works under the JCT Design and Build Contract 2016
- *Contractor notice and project manager response* regarding a Compensation Event following a material change to the Completion Date/Key Events under NEC3/4 Engineering and Construction Contract.

This guidance is supported by non-statutory [guidance](#) from the Cabinet Office on responsible contractual behaviour where contracts have been impacted by coronavirus.

Recent data published by Build UK showing the impact of coronavirus on the construction industry has been featured in an [article in The Telegraph](#). Suzannah Nichol confirmed that “*construction, like almost every other sector, has been pushed to the brink by coronavirus*” but “*there is the opportunity to fundamentally change the way that projects are conceived, designed, procured and delivered, including the potential for more off-site work*”.

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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