

Coronavirus Update – Tuesday 25 August 2020

The Government has set up a new [Acceleration Unit](#) to speed up the delivery of major transport projects and tackle delays in infrastructure projects. Recommended by Balfour Beatty in its '[Seizing the Day](#)' report and suggested by Build UK to Minister for Business and Industry Nadhim Zahawi, the new unit will call on Clients and Contractors with knowledge and experience of successful projects, including Build UK members Highways England (Chris Taylor, Director of Complex Infrastructure Projects) and Mace (Mark Reynolds, Chief Executive).

The leading suppliers of materials to the construction sector have reported a busy start to the second half of the year, with tradespeople seeing strong demand for **domestic repair, maintenance and improvement work** and associated materials. [Travis Perkins](#) recently surveyed over 1,300 customers and 91% expect this high demand to continue. Respondents were not too concerned about the impact of Brexit, with 97% not taking any action at all to prepare for a 'no deal'.

When the Prime Minister announced his [New Deal for Britain](#) in June 2020, he promised to promote a clean, green recovery, and the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) has issued a [Statement on Net Zero Carbon and the Climate Emergency](#) setting out how it will play its part in delivering a net zero carbon future.

The £2 billion [Green Homes Grant](#), supporting energy-saving home improvements, will go live at the end of September 2020, and anyone installing measures under the scheme must be registered with [TrustMark](#) (through a scheme provider) or the [Microgeneration Certification Scheme \(MCS\)](#). A number of Build UK Trade Association members are [Trustmark Scheme Providers](#) and can register their members to ensure they are ready to install the range of energy efficiency measures covered by the grant. Companies that aren't a member of a Trustmark Scheme Provider can find a list of scheme providers that cover their trade by entering their details on the [Trustmark website](#).

The [Planning for the Future consultation](#) anticipates that from 2025 new homes will produce 75% - 80% lower CO2 emissions compared to current levels and will be 'zero carbon ready', with the ability to become fully zero carbon homes over time without the need for retrofitting work.

From 1 September 2020, the level of grant available under the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) will be reduced further. Employers will only be able to claim 70% of a furloughed employee's wages and will have to contribute the remaining 10% to ensure employees continue to receive at least 80% of their wages, up to a maximum of £2,500. Employers will also have to pay National Insurance and pension contributions. At the end of July, 76% of construction employers had accessed the scheme claiming almost £3 billion in grants, and the total cost of the scheme now stands at £35.4 billion having supported 9.6 million jobs.

Austria, Croatia, and Trinidad and Tobago have been removed from the Government's [list of travel corridors](#), meaning passengers arriving in England from these countries must now self-isolate for 14 days. Portugal has been added to the list and people can arrive without having to self-isolate.

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](#).

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