



Contractors Mechanical Plant Engineers

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

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National Chairman’s Message.



As you are probably aware, I have taken over as National Chairman a little earlier than I anticipated.

I have been National Chairman before and would have been installed in June at Leyland, but with the ongoing problems with Covid-19 everything is now on hold for the foreseeable future.

With this in mind I don’t want the members to lose track of the CMPE, so I decided we needed a Newsletter to keep everybody up to date with what is happening in the construction industry.

David Nicholson has agreed to put the Newsletter together and we welcome your comments as to the content and if you have any items of news for inclusion please pass it on to David.

Any items in CMPE you think I should know about please let me have them.

I look forward to the branches reviving after this shutdown, hopefully stronger and looking forward to the future.

Best Regards,

Malcolm Saddington,

National Chairman CMPE.



Editors Message

It's an unsettling time, with COVID-19 (Coronavirus) bringing disruption to our day-to-day lives and with the situation changing on a daily basis we find our branches no longer holding regular meetings, our branch committee’s no longer meeting, and many of us either working from home or in house arrest, so to speak.

It is with this in mind that I have been asked by our National Chairman if I would compile a National Newsletter as a way of keeping in touch with all of our members. This being my first issue, I would welcome your feedback and suggestions as to content etc.

David Nicholson.



Coronavirus - What you can claim if you are affected.



The Chancellor has set aside billions of pounds for people affected by coronavirus.

How you can claim what you are entitled to:-

Mortgages

If you are struggling to pay your **mortgage** as a result of your finances being impacted by coronavirus, you can apply for a three-month payment holiday.

Interest accrued during the period will be added to the outstanding balance of your loan and can be repaid over the rest of the mortgage term.

To apply for the payment holiday, you need to contact your lender, either by telephone or online. You do not need to prove that you are in financial difficulties.

If you bought your property through the **Help-to-Buy Scheme**, you can also apply for a three-month payment holiday on interest on the equity loan.

Renters

If you are renting and you're worried you cannot pay your rent, there is help for you too.

Emergency Legislation has been put in place to stop you from being evicted for at least three months.

To take advantage of the scheme, contact your landlord as soon as possible and explain what your situation is.

As with mortgages, you will have to make up the payments you have missed, and landlords have been instructed to work with their tenants to create a repayment plan.

Buy-to-Let Landlords are also able to apply for the three-month mortgage payment holiday, as long as they pass on the benefit to their tenants.

In addition, the Government has increased the local housing allowance for people who are unemployed, on low incomes or claiming certain benefits to cover at least the bottom 30% of market rents in your local area.

Wages

If you are not able to work due to the impact coronavirus has had on the business that employs you, the Government has agreed to step in and pay **80% of your salary**, up to a maximum of £2,500 a month, as long as you are kept on the payroll.

You do not have to make a claim for the money. Instead, companies will apply directly to the Government for grants, and then pass on the cash to their employees.

While the scheme is not expected to start paying out until the end of April, payments can be backdated to 1 March.

It will initially run for three months, but the Government has said it will extend it if necessary.

Self-employed and freelancers

The Chancellor Rishi Sunak has announced new measures to help you if you're **self-employed**.

The self-employed and freelancers can now apply for a grant worth 80% of their average monthly profits.

The money - up to a maximum of £2,500 a month - will not be paid until the start of June at the earliest, but will be backdated to March.

For now, you can claim **universal credit**, a benefit for people who are unable to work or who earn low incomes. People who are self-employed can claim it at a rate that is equivalent to statutory sick pay, which is currently £94.25 a week.

The minimum income floor that is used to work out entitlement to the benefit has been suspended.

The Government has also said it will delay the next set of self-assessment tax payments until January 2021 to give you more time to pay your bill.

You also have longer in which to pay VAT bills, with money due from now until the end of June deferred until April 2021.

Those who are recently self-employed, having set up since April 2019, will not receive any help under this scheme. This is because they will not have filed a tax return and therefore HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will not know of their self-employed status.

The government's new help comes on top of a six-month delay for tax payments through the self-assessment system.

Those with the lowest incomes are in line to receive more generous benefits payments, announced previously. The chancellor said those applying for universal credit should be paid within a few days.

Utility bills

If you are struggling to pay your gas, electricity or other utility bills, contact your supplier, as they have been instructed to support customers who are in financial difficulties through reducing, pausing or reassessing payments.

They have also been told to help customers who have pre-payment meters but cannot add credit to them.

Support available includes using a discretionary fund to increase customer's credit or sending you a pre-loaded top-up card so that your supply is not interrupted.

Debt repayments

Many lenders are offering payment holidays on unsecured debt, as well as waiving late payment charges for people whose finances have been hit by coronavirus.

As with the mortgage payment holiday, if you are struggling to keep up, contact your lender as soon as possible.

Unlike the mortgage payment holiday, however, this is not a formal scheme announced by the Government, so individual lenders can make their own decision on whether or not to grant you a pause in repayments.

You may also have to provide proof that your finances have suffered.

Increased benefits

In a bid to help those on low incomes, the Government has increased certain benefits.

The universal credit allowance is being increased by £20 a week for all new and existing claimants.

The rise, which is in response to the pandemic and comes on top of already planned annual increases, will start on April 6 and last for 12 months.

Those who are still eligible for the working tax credit will also see the allowance increased by £20 a week.



Financial Support for Businesses



The Chancellor has set out a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19.

This includes a package of measures to support businesses including:

- a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
- deferring VAT and Self-Assessment payments
- a Self-employment Income Support Scheme
- a Statutory Sick Pay relief package for small and medium sized businesses (SMEs)
- a 12-month business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality, leisure and nursery businesses in England
- small business grant funding of £10,000 for all business in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief
- grant funding of £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with property with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000
- the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme offering loans of up to £5 million for SMEs through the British Business Bank
- a new lending facility from the Bank of England to help support liquidity among larger firms, helping them bridge coronavirus disruption to their cash flows through loans
- the HMRC Time To Pay Scheme

Help and advice for all or any of the above can be found at:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>



Keep Working? Not so easy builders say.



Despite ministers repeatedly reasserting that construction work should continue where social distancing protocols can be observed, builders who want to keep working are finding it increasingly difficult to do so.

According to the National Federation of Builders (NFB), its members say that it is not just social distancing that is reducing

productivity – it is also hard to get materials and hostile public opinion has made it extremely difficult for industry to operate.

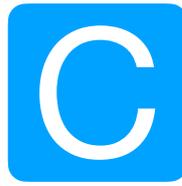
Richard Beresford, chief executive of the NFB, said: “Members are reporting that they are unable to get materials and deliveries from builder’s merchants, many of which have closed after struggling to get hold of stock. This a major concern, as it will cause breaches of contract, permanent supply chain loss and ongoing costs, without revenue to pay for them. Remobilising sites is expensive, as is mothballing them, which is why so many businesses want to continue operating but with lower productivity to ensure social distancing.”

He added: “Employers are putting staff first, not just on site but in ensuring they have a job to come back to. We desperately need the government to come out and talk about specific industries like construction, otherwise businesses will be forced to close, perhaps for good.”

Newmarket-based architect Keith Johns, of KJ Architects, said: “All of the construction sites that I am dealing with as an architect are shut due to all builders’ merchants being shut and the lack of any materials. Also, most subcontractors are refusing to go to site due to peer pressure, so trades such as plumbers, bricklayers and electricians are not attending site.”



Business Minister backs sites staying open.



Construction bosses under fire for keeping their sites open have today been given support by the government.

Nadhim Zahawi, under-secretary of state for business, has reaffirmed that house-building and other construction work must keep going to help the economy survive the devastation of the coronavirus pandemic.

While Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon and London mayor Sadiq Khan have acted to close down construction sites, the position of the UK government remains firmly that all work that cannot be done from home should continue, on the condition that all workers remain two metres apart and observe all other Public Health coronavirus guidelines.

Nadhim Zahawi writes in *The Daily Telegraph*: “The last few weeks have been tough, as infections and deaths due to Covid-19 rise, as well as adjust to the new social rules we must live by. Horrendously, we know the coming weeks will be harder still, before the measures brought in start to take effect and as we travel towards the peak of the virus. That framework of rules was enacted with a heavy heart; no British prime minister wants to restrict the daily lives of citizens, close businesses or ban gatherings. Every one of us is being forced the learn to live differently, but there is no other option.”

“However, we have seen some, intentionally or otherwise, wrongly interpreting the current rules and unfairly criticising businesses that are implementing the rules correctly.”

He continues: “It has therefore been disappointing that those who feel the need to criticise any and all private sector work have started attacking companies for staying open when their work cannot be done remotely. It does not matter whether they appear on that key worker list, what matters is that they follow the rules our government has set out.”

“These businesses need to be defended because we need to minimise the damage to our economy where possible, and be ready to spring back into action as soon as this lockdown is over. There will always be some work that cannot be done from home, whether it is construction or packing boxes in an Amazon warehouse – but we still need houses built and for deliveries to be made. If the scientific view changes, and all of this work becomes too high risk, the government will update its advice. But until then businesses should not be criticised for following the rules.”

He concludes: “These are difficult times for business. We cannot allow those who hate the private sector to use this crisis as an excuse to pile unfair criticism on them. We should stand up for those that are correctly following the rules. They are the same companies we will need to help fund our recovery when we finally get through this.”



JCB poised to start making Ventilators



JCB are poised to restart production at a factory closed as a result of the coronavirus crisis in order to join the national effort to manufacture ventilators, the company announced today.

JCB received a direct appeal from Prime Minister Boris Johnson earlier this month to help plug the national ventilator shortage and to help save lives of coronavirus patients.

Following the approach, JCB chairman Lord Bamford promised the company would help in any way it could and immediately mobilised a research and engineering team to examine potential ways to assist.

Now JCB are ready to restart production at a factory which has been closed for nearly two weeks as a result of the coronavirus crisis, but instead of making cabs for JCB diggers, the plant is being mobilised to make special steel housings for a brand-new design of ventilator from Dyson.

A minimum of 10,000 of the JCB housings are earmarked for manufacture once Dyson receive regulatory approval for their design. Mass production of the housings could start in a matter of days.

The first prototypes of the housings have been delivered to Dyson after rolling off the production line at JCB's £50 million Cab Systems factory in Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, which Boris Johnson visited during last year's election campaign.

The factory fell silent on 18 March 2020 along with eight other JCB UK manufacturing plants after a fall in demand caused by the coronavirus crisis.

Today, JCB chairman Lord Bamford said: "When we were approached by the Prime Minister we were determined, as a British company, to help in any way we could."

"This project has gone from design to production in just a matter of days and I am delighted that we have been to deploy the skills of our talented engineering, design and fabrication teams so quickly at a time of national crisis."

"This is also a global crisis, of course, and we will naturally help with the production of more housings if these ventilators are eventually required by other countries."

JCB's response to the national call to action would see a return to work for around 50 employees affected by an extended company shutdown announced last week.

JCB suspended production at their nine UK production plants until at least the end of April as a result of the coronavirus crisis and furloughed the vast majority of their 6,500 workforce.

The company is paying staff 80% of their basic pay for the next month, regardless of what they earn. Employees returning to work to help manufacture the ventilator housings will be paid 100% of their normal pay.

Kubota launch next generation of Wheeled Loaders



KUBOTA have launched their next-generation R070 and R090 wheel loaders, both of which have been redesigned inside and out and now boast a fully enclosed glass cabin for improved visibility, as well as a more ergonomic control layout.

New features include: a high-visibility cabin with enlarged glass surface; fully opening right window; optional air-conditioning; adjustable right wrist rest; digital display; full suspension seat; and tilt-able steering wheel.

A new long-reach loader boom design and high lifting capacity (R070: 18,436N; R090: 21,182N) ensure smooth performance in a wide range of loader and material-handling tasks. All major loader functions are on a single, easy-to-operate right-hand lever, whilst the two-step speed control switch allows quick changes in speed for optimum efficiency.

Moreover, Kubota's fuel-efficient V2607 direct-injection engine is now fully Stage-V compliant, whilst the new and improved DPF reduces maintenance by increasing the service intervals.

Glen Hampson, business development manager for Construction at Kubota UK, said: "Both the R070 and R090 are built for enhanced performance, with productivity features and power to spare. They're also built for safe and simple operation, even by operators with no loader experience."

"We know our customers want versatile, reliable, low-maintenance machines, which is why the R070 and R090 are designed to meet Kubota's exacting standards of quality and performance. The wheel loaders are easy to maintain, with areas that require routine maintenance being easily accessible for fast and straightforward servicing."



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Footnote:- Any member wishing to receive a personal copy of the National Newsletter please forward your email address to John Robinson the National Secretary (Details above).