



Department
for Transport

Baroness Vere of Norbiton
Transport Minister for Roads, Buses and Places

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: baroness.vere@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

24 April 2020

To everyone working in the UK's highway
construction and maintenance sector,

Covid-19 - Highway Maintenance and Construction

Britain will never forget the extraordinary efforts of health staff caring for patients through the Coronavirus outbreak. But it's not just the NHS that is helping us get through this crisis. We are relying on an army of workers in many different industries to keep public services running and meet the needs of the country. In particular, I want to thank the thousands of highways maintenance and construction workers, and the streetworks operatives, who are all vital to the resilience of our road network.

You are doing an outstanding job under extremely challenging circumstances. Thanks to your dedication and commitment, the strategic and local road networks remain open. And as a result, crucial supplies of food, life-saving medicines, fuel and other goods can move around the country, while health and other emergency workers can travel to where they are needed most.

Despite the importance of your role, I very much regret that some of you have received abuse from a small minority of members of the public while carrying out your work. This kind of behaviour is unwarranted and completely unacceptable, and those highways colleagues who have been affected have my full support and gratitude for maintaining your professionalism.

I am aware many local authorities have made detailed plans to continue with routine business while also being able to react rapidly to these changing and very demanding circumstances. I would urge all authorities to follow their lead, trying to maintain as close to a 'business as usual' approach as possible, working to existing maintenance and construction plans where it is safe and appropriate to do so, but also to look at what opportunities there could be to accelerate works whilst roads are quieter than normal.

The current Government advice for the housing, construction, building, highways maintenance and street works sector, including supply chains, is if staff who are in the office side of the authority or your contractors can work from home then they should do so.

For operatives who are required to work outside, either undertaking condition surveys, pothole and other repairs, including planned maintenance and construction works then they should continue to do so. It is vital they continue to heed Public Health England guidance on social distancing with plans in place to follow the advice. I understand the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport, in partnership with the Highway Sector Council, will be publishing guidance to help the sector operate safely and effectively while continuing with daily business. This guidance can be read alongside the Construction Industry Council safety operating procedures or separately.

Despite the many obstacles authorities and contractors are experiencing because of Covid-19, it is important that local highway authorities, those associated with highway infrastructure maintenance and construction works, road network surveyors, and the wider supply chain, including builders' merchants and asphalt plants, all work together to help improve and upgrade our highway networks for all road users.

I would like to thank you again for your work during this exceptionally difficult period. There are still many difficult weeks and months ahead. But the whole country owes a debt of gratitude to employees across our highways maintenance, construction, and streetworks industry who have worked tirelessly to keep Britain on the move.

Yours,
Charlotte

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON