

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): impact on our services

We will continue to operate as close to normal as possible in light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We would like to apologise to anyone who might be affected by a slower-than-usual service.

## **Impact on our services**

Our Business e-services, which receive the majority of all applications, are running as normal. In these unprecedented circumstances all other services are facing varying degrees of disruption and there may be some delays. However, we are working hard to minimise disruption and are prioritising the services that allow property transactions to continue as normal.

We anticipate minimal disruption to:

- bankruptcy searches
- Find a property
- land charges searches
- local land charges searches
- MapSearch
- official copies of documents
- official searches of the index map
- official searches of part
- official searches of whole
- Property Alert

We anticipate that some of our services will be affected by the current situation with some applications taking slightly longer than our usual service standards.

We anticipate moderate disruption to discharge updates.

We are working hard to ensure our most important services continue. As a result services which have less impact upon the normal operation of the property market are likely to experience more significant disruption. We anticipate that we will be unable to meet normal service standards for these services.

We anticipate more significant disruption to:

- register create applications
- register update applications

## **Cancellations**

We have extended all current cancellation dates until further notice. We will update you once we resume normal service and at that point we will send

warnings of cancellation again, giving you four weeks to reply to our requests for information (requisitions).

## Extensions

We will aim to grant any request to either extend a notice period, or allow a further period for making an objection, for any reason related to the coronavirus. However, there are some circumstances where we will not be able to do so including where:

- in some cases, the Land Registration Rules 2003 prescribe a period or a maximum period – while we cannot extend the maximum period, we may be able to delay determining the application concerned to allow for late responses
  - an example of where we might do this would be to allow for a late objection to an application for the entry of a restriction (s.45(2) and r.92(9))
- the registrar serves notice of an application to cancel a caution against first registration (s.18(4) and r.53) or to cancel a unilateral notice (s.36(3) and r.86) on the expiry of the prescribed period, which cannot be extended beyond a maximum number of days, the registrar is obliged to cancel the caution or unilateral notice in the absence of an objection
- the period for serving counter notice to an application for registration as proprietor by a squatter under [Schedule 6](#) to the Land Registration Act 2002 cannot be extended (para.3 of Sch.6 and r.189) – counter-notice is ineffective once the notice period has expired: paragraphs 3(2) and 4 of Schedule 6
  - rule 189 deals with the notice period for giving counter-notice: no provision is made for the period to be extended

## Evidence of identity

We will no longer reject applications where identity evidence is not provided. Instead we will now raise a request for information (requisition) so the application does not lose its priority.

## More time to access PDF downloads

We know many of our business customers have only limited access to their systems at the moment. We have therefore temporarily extended the time you have to [access your organisation's PDFs on the portal](#).

Documents for applications completed on or after 16 March are now available free of charge for 90 days from the day they were completed, instead of the usual 30 days. This includes completed registrations and documents for guaranteed queries such as official copies and official searches.

Register, title plan and document views that are in your download area will also benefit from the extended time.

## Land Charges applications

We have changed our practice to allow most Land Charges applications to be made by email, through attaching PDF copies of application forms and any supporting evidence. Only customers with a variable Direct Debit account will be able to do this. A new paragraph 6.1.3 has been added to [practice guide 63](#). The change does not extend to those applications that can already be made through the portal or Business Gateway. Practice guide 63 contains full details.

## Expedite an application

We apologise if your application is affected by this necessary prioritisation of work. If you feel that your application is urgent, you can ask us to expedite it using Application Enquiry in the HM Land Registry portal. If we approve your request, we will process your application sooner. [Find out how you can expedite your application](#).

## Telephone service

Our Customer Support Centre is not answering telephone calls until further notice. You can [send us a message](#) using our online form.

## Visiting our offices

We have temporarily suspended our service that allows you to make appointments to visit us in person. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience.

## View land and property information by post

You can apply by post to view information we hold about property and land.

Apply by post for:

You will be temporarily unable to visit our offices to have your identity verified using forms ID1 or ID2, or submit an application for registration in person.

You can have your identity verified by a solicitor, barrister, or notary public if they are still available at this time. Get more information, including a video, on our [identity verification requirements](#).

You can continue to [get in touch with us or use a guide that may answer your question](#). We will respond as quickly as we can.

## Keeping you up to date

In response to questions raised by our customers as a result of coronavirus, HM Land Registry continues to review its practice, policy and procedures regularly including, for example, the use of electronic signatures and also

the lodgement of incomplete applications.

We will update customers if we revise our guidance.

You can follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).