

# [Planning Inspectorate Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Update](#)

We are continuing to work through the implications to our casework and our workforce in response to the developing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Like many in the planning system, we have been making difficult decisions to balance the processing of casework whilst ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our Inspectors and casework staff. All casework events in the near future including site visits, hearings and inquiries have been postponed and our staff are working from home as the Bristol office building is closed. Although keeping casework moving is extremely important, our top priority is to ensure the wellbeing of our staff and the public. These arrangements will continue while the UK government advice on social distancing remains in place.

## **Trialling new technology**

We will continue to find innovative ways to allow us to progress case work fairly and robustly.

We are looking into the use of technology that enables us to continue running planning inquiries and hearings online.

We are exploring methods like video conferencing for events. We are working to arrive at a solution that enables casework to continue in an open, fair and impartial way. We want to ensure everyone involved including local communities can participate fairly and that this different way of conducting our work does not undermine confidence in the planning system.

We have, together with the [Planning and Environment Bar Association \(PEBA\)](#) [recorded a joint message on the work underway.](#)

## **Planning Inspectorate guidance during Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

We recently released [updated guidance](#) on how we are dealing with planning and other case work in this highly unusual situation affecting the whole country. We are still accepting appeals via our Appeals Casework Portal (ACP) but cannot receive correspondence via post at present.

For planning appeals, rights of way and Commons Act 2006 cases, whilst no site visits, hearings or inquiries are taking place at the moment, we are actively considering whether there are types of cases that can proceed without a site visit. Customers are advised to speak to their case officer.

Hearings and preliminary meetings for nationally significant infrastructure projects are postponed, but as the examination process is primarily a written

one, in most cases, we are expecting to continue to make good progress. We are continuing to consider information submitted to examinations, and we encourage interested parties to continue to have relevant discussions and prepare information and written submissions where it is possible and safe to do so. Some organisations are choosing to delay their submissions. Updates of all our [national infrastructure projects are on our website](#).

For local plans, inspectors will continue where possible to progress the pre and post-hearing stages of the examination, depending on the stage reached, but there will be delays as local plan hearings are not currently able to take place.

Clearly the situation caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) is having a significant impact to the planning sector. We will continue to monitor the situation and adapt as necessary. We are also providing support to our sponsor department, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government with experts from our organisation to assist with central government efforts.