

[Transport update: construction of new carriageway for A303](#)

I have been asked by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State, to make this Written Ministerial Statement. This statement concerns the application made under the [Planning Act 2008](#) for the proposed construction by Highways England of a new two-lane dual carriageway for the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down in Wiltshire (also known as the [‘A303 Stonehenge’ application](#)).

Under sub-section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority’s report unless exercising the power under sub-section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a Statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline. The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority’s report on the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down Development Consent Order application on 2 January 2020 and the deadline for a decision was previously extended from 2 April 2020 to 17 July 2020 to allow for further work to be carried out.

Following notification of a recent archaeological find within the World Heritage Site, the deadline for the decision is to be further extended to 13 November 2020 (an extension of 4 months) to enable further consultation on and consideration of this matter before determination of the application by the Secretary of State.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to give development consent.

[Civil news: fee rules change for mental health remote hearings](#)

News story

Contract changes made to allow payment of adjourned hearing fee where a mental health tribunal is listed for a remote hearing.



We are amending the 2018 standard civil contract to allow the adjourned hearing fee to be paid for tribunals listed for a remote hearing.

This follows confirmation earlier this year that the mental health tribunal level 3 fee is payable for representation at remote hearings.

This was done in response to tribunal process changes initiated by HM Courts and Tribunals Service as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

What are the new rules?

It will now be possible to claim the 'adjourned hearing fee' in some circumstances without travelling to the site of the mental health tribunal. The exact requirements are set out in the mental health category specific rules to the 2018 standard civil contract.

These include providers having to incur one or more of the following costs for a remote hearing that was adjourned to another day or cancelled:

- travel costs to be with the client during the hearing
- advocacy costs by putting the case for the client and/or
- attendance costs, where you attended the hearing remotely but it was adjourned after 15 minutes had elapsed since the scheduled start time

When do the new rules apply?

The new rules apply to any remote hearing that was adjourned, postponed or cancelled after 19 March 2020. We will apply the new rules to all cases we process, including any reviews and appeals.

Further information

[Standard civil contract 2018](#) – to download 'category specific rules mental health' (see 9.85A) (July 2020)

Government confirms allocations of £500 million additional funding for councils

- Individual councils in England have funding boosts confirmed
- Direct funding to councils to help with pandemic spending reaches £4.3 billion
- New scheme will help to cover councils' lost income during the pandemic and boost cash flow

Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick has today (16 July 2020) confirmed allocations for individual councils from the £500 million of additional support for coronavirus-related spending pressures.

The funding will help councils in England continue to deliver crucial frontline services, support those most in need and meet new spending pressures so they can deliver for residents.

The extra £500 million – which brings support for pressures they are facing to £4.3 billion – will be distributed to councils based on population and levels of deprivation, and how the costs of delivery of services varies across the country.

The funding is part of a comprehensive package of government support to help councils respond to the pandemic, including an unprecedented new scheme to help councils recover lost income, including from car parks and museums, which have been shut during the lockdown.

Over the last few months, the government has worked closely with councils to understand their needs and provided more than £27 billion to help them, businesses in their area and their communities through the pandemic.

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Councils are playing a vital role in our national fight against coronavirus, providing a lifeline for so many and supporting communities at a time when they need it most.

That's why we are giving them an extra £500 million – taking our total additional funding provided to £4.3 billion – and today I am setting out how this will be allocated to councils fairly based on the pressures they have told us they are facing.

This comes on top of the co-payment scheme announced last week that will compensate councils for irrecoverable income losses from sales, fees and charges.

Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government Simon Clarke MP said:

We've set out a comprehensive package of support for councils, including an unprecedented scheme to reimburse them for loss of income during the pandemic.

This additional £500 million funding will be allocated to councils to support them to meet the spending pressures they are facing in their local area.

The funding has been distributed between district and county councils to reflect the pressures they have reported.

Of the £4.3 billion we are providing to councils, £3.7 billion is not ringfenced so councils also have the flexibility to choose how to use it in their areas and £600 million was to support social care providers.

In addition, the government has announced a co-payment scheme that will compensate councils for irrecoverable income losses from sales, fees and charges. They will be expected to absorb the initial 5% of losses compared to planned income from these sources. Thereafter, there will be a cost splitting arrangement where 75p in every pound of relevant losses will be compensated for by the government.

And to enable them to get on the front foot and build much-needed breathing space into their budgets, the government is also allowing them to spread their tax deficits over 3 years rather than the usual 1 year. This will allow authorities to pay deficits off in a reasonable timescale and will limit their cashflow pressures.

- The allocations of this £500 million have been published on the [emergency funding for local government page](#)
- In recognition of the acute cost pressures that a small number of local authorities are facing with regard to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, the Department for Education will use £6 million of the £500 million to provide targeted support to a small number of councils.
- We are providing councils with an unprecedented package of support, including £4.3 billion of support for pressures, including £3.7 billion of grants for expenditure which are not ringfenced and a £600 million Infection Control Fund.
- In total, our comprehensive support includes:
 - £3.7 billion of new funding to councils which is not ringfenced
 - £600 million to support adult social care providers through a new infection control fund

- Over £20 billion in support for businesses
 - £500 million in council tax hardship funds to offer economic support to the most vulnerable
 - £300 million to support test and trace
 - Each funding allocation has been informed by the latest assessment of pressures reported by councils and submitted to government
 - On 19 March we announced an initial £1.6 billion for local councils. These funding allocations were based on a mixture of Adult Social Care Relative Needs Formulas and Settlement Funding Assessment.
 - On 18 April we announced a further £1.6 billion funding for local councils. These funding allocations are based on a per capita basis, and there was a 65:35 split between county and districts. Where there are separate fire authorities a specific tier split for fire of 3% will be used.
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Customers could lose out in merger between window blind companies

Hunter Douglas is a leading global supplier of blinds and other window coverings, which generated global sales of \$3.6 billion in 2018. It already owns established online and in-home UK providers of window coverings, Blinds2Go and Hillarys. 247 Home Furnishings (247) operates online and sells a range of window coverings, including curtains, shutters and blinds, across the UK.

Hunter Douglas originally obtained a minority interest in 247 in 2013, although this was not publicly disclosed at the time. It then went on to purchase 100% of the shareholding last year.

The CMA's in-depth investigation has concluded that the companies are close competitors in online sales of made to measure market blinds, with few effective alternative providers remaining after the merger. Most other specialist retailers are much smaller and less well-established than the merging businesses, and competition from large retailers of window coverings, like Next, Dunelm and John Lewis, is limited. The CMA therefore provisionally found that the merger will leave customers for online made-to-measure blinds with few alternative suppliers, likely leading to less choice, higher prices, and lower quality.

While Hunter Douglas already had a minority interest in 247 before the merger, the CMA has provisionally found that the purchase last year will bring the Blinds2Go and 247 brands under the same ownership and significantly reduce the incentive to operate as independent competitors.

Kirstin Baker, Inquiry Group Chair, said:

“The CMA is concerned that this merger will negatively affect customers in the UK looking to buy custom blinds online. We have provisionally found that Hunter Douglas’ ownership of Blinds2Go combined with the full purchase of 247 would give it control of a very large share of the market for online made to measure blinds – this would be bad for consumers, reducing choice and quality, and increasing prices.”

All interested parties now have until 29 July 2020 to submit views on possible remedies to address the CMA’s concerns, which may include selling part or all of Hunter Douglas’ interest in 247, and until 5 August 2020 to submit views on the CMA’s provisional findings.

For more information, visit the [Hunter Douglas N.V. / 247 Home Furnishings Ltd merger inquiry](#) web page.

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.

[A19 Downhill Lane Junction Scheme granted development consent](#)

Press release

Today, Thursday 16 July 2020, the application for the A19 Downhill Junction Scheme has been given development consent by the Secretary of State for Transport.



Development consent has been given to significantly enhance the capacity of the junction between the A19 and A1290 in Sunderland/South Tyneside, supporting local plans for an International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) to the north of the existing Nissan plant.

It involves the construction of a new bridge to the south of the existing (A1290) bridge across the A19. Together with the existing bridge this will

form a more traditional roundabout layout above the A19. New slip roads will connect the A19 to the south. To the north, link roads will tie into the consented A19/A184 Testo's Junction Alteration.

The application was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration by Highways England on the 25 January 2019 and accepted for examination on 22 February 2019. Following an examination during which the public, statutory consultees and interested parties were given the opportunity to give evidence to the Examining Authority, a recommendation was made to the Secretary of State on 17 April 2020.

The Planning Inspectorate's Chief Executive, Sarah Richards said:

This is the 91st nationally significant infrastructure project to have been examined and decided within the timescales laid down in the Planning Act 2008. The Planning Inspectorate is committed to giving local communities the opportunity of being involved in the examination of projects that may affect them. Local people, the local authority and other interested parties were able to participate in a 6-month long examination. The Examining Authority listened and gave full consideration to local views before making their recommendation.

The decision, the recommendation made by the Examining Authority to the Secretary of State and the evidence considered by the Examining Authority in reaching its recommendation is publicly available on the [National Infrastructure Planning website](#).

Journalists wanting further information should contact the Planning Inspectorate Press Office, on: 0303 444 5004 or 0303 444 5005 or email: Press.office@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Notes to editors:

The Planning Inspectorate, [National Infrastructure Programme of Projects](#) details the proposals which are anticipated to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as applications in the coming months.

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