

Message from Tim Lowe CBE on COVID-19

On behalf of the UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO), I would like to reassure users of our products and services that maintaining safety of life at sea during this time remains one of our highest priorities. We are working hard to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the production and delivery of our products and services during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Through our dedicated UKHO COVID-19 working group, we are continuing to monitor the situation and are implementing the latest advice from the UK Government to help safeguard UKHO staff. We have enacted our comprehensive business continuity plans, including remote working across our organisation, enabling us to continue to meet key safety and defence obligations and to support our customers and distributors.

We have already seen our staff go above and beyond to safeguard continuity across all our products and services. On Wednesday 25 March we issued 39 Notices to Mariners – a significant increase compared to our average daily output of 25. This achievement is testament to the dedication and skill of our teams and our business continuity plans, making it possible for us to continue to serve the maritime sector during this challenging period. We will continue to keep users informed should this change.

I advise all users to continue to monitor the ADMIRALTY website, distributor updates, weekly bulletins and e-Newsletter, the AVCS Readme file, and messages from your ADMIRALTY Chart Agent for further news and updates from the UKHO.

It is important, now more than ever, that we work together to meet the needs of our teams and to keep the mariner safe at sea. I thank you for your ongoing support and commitment.

Tim Lowe, Chief Executive

Coronavirus: Changes to UKSV Services

UKSV is currently operating, with a significantly reduced workforce, in support of the COVID-19 containment effort.

As such the need to reduce to a minimum business as usual workflow is crucial. We therefore ask that you initiate only those cases which relate directly to COVID-19 or are within the Priority category. All other vetting activity will be processed only when UKSV capacity allows. Our telephone lines are now closed however you can still contact us via email for urgent enquiries at UKSV-ContactUs@mod.gov.uk.

Please only contact us if your enquiry is business critical.

Priority courts to make sure justice is served

The work of courts and tribunals will be consolidated into fewer buildings, maintaining the safety of all in the courts and in line with public health advice.

Work is being developed across the entire estate, following enormous changes to everyday life, and capacity for phone and video hearings has been significantly increased.

There will be 157 priority court and tribunal buildings open for essential face-to-face hearings. This represents 42% of the 370 crown, magistrates, county and family courts and tribunals across England and Wales.

MS Excel Spreadsheet, 54.3KB

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email web.comments@justice.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

- Open courts – these buildings are open to the public for essential face-to-face hearings
- Staffed courts – staff and judges will work from these buildings, but they will not be open to the public
- Suspended courts – these courts will be temporarily closed

The temporary changes, designed in partnership between HM Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary will help maintain a core justice system focused on the most essential cases.

They will also ensure effective social distancing for all court users and for cleaning and security work to be focused on fewer buildings.

Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland said:

We are facing an unprecedented challenge and the government's absolute priority is to save lives and protect the NHS.

With each part of our justice system – from police to probation –

dependent on one another, it is vital that we keep our courts running.

This will only be done while ensuring the safety of the public, judges, legal professionals, staff and all those attending hearings and I'd like to thank everyone for their extraordinary efforts so far.

The Lord Chief Justice said:

An extraordinary amount of hard work has gone into keeping our justice system functioning. Technology is being used creatively to ensure that many cases can continue. Not everything can be dealt with remotely and so we need to maintain functioning courts.

These temporary adjustments to how we use the court estate will help ensure that we can continue to deal with work appropriately in all jurisdictions whilst safeguarding the well-being of all those who work in and visit the courts.

Media and members of the public will be able to attend priority court hearings in person, if safe to do so in line with Public Health England guidance, thereby ensuring the principle of open justice.

Where this is not possible, judicial consideration will be given to them joining a hearing remotely or a transcript provided afterwards.

In addition, a further 124 court and tribunal buildings will remain closed to the public but open to HM Courts and Tribunal (HMCTS) staff, the judiciary and those from other agencies.

These 'staffed courts' will support video and telephone hearings, progress cases without hearings and ensure continued access to justice.

All remaining courts and tribunals will close temporarily.

These measures, which will come into effect from Monday, 30 March 2020, will be kept in place for as long as necessary to comply with government and public health advice and will be reviewed regularly.

Notes to editors:

- Hearings that cannot be heard by video or telephone and which cannot be delayed will be held in a priority court and tribunal buildings, except in exceptional circumstances, from Monday, 30 March 2020.
- Currently, fewer than half of all court and tribunal buildings will remain open for physical hearings, although this is due to change over time in response to circumstances as measures are reviewed.
- These changes affect all jurisdictions and any urgent or essential hearing that must be held in person, as decided by a judge, can be heard

in these priority buildings.

- [Guidance has already been issued in civil and family cases to ensure remote hearings](#) can be carried out in as many cases as possible, subject to judicial discretion.
- Decisions on individual hearings are a matter for the judiciary, who will have regard to open justice, the matters at stake in the hearing, and the needs of court users when determining whether to use audio or video technology.

Coronavirus important update on IPO services

The majority of our services remain unaffected. Rights holders and IP professionals should continue to file using our online services where possible. Please allow additional time for the information you file with us to be dealt with.

We recognise the current challenges faced by many. So, in order to support businesses, rights holders and IP professionals, the following service changes are in place.

London Office

Following the introduction of new restrictions, as part of the national lockdown in England, the IPO's London office has been closed to all but critical workers with immediate effect.

This means that customers are unable to gain access to file in person. It also means that the London post room is not operating so no paperwork will be processed after Thursday 7 January 2021.

If customers need to submit papers by post then Concept House, our Newport office, remains open.

The London office will remain closed at least until 18 February 2021 when current restrictions will be reviewed.

Interrupted days

The period of interrupted days that we declared on 24 March, ended on 29 July. An 'interrupted day' is a day in which the normal course of business at the IPO is not possible.

This meant that most deadlines for

- patents,

- supplementary protection certificates,
- trade marks,
- designs,

and applications for these rights, which fell on an interrupted day were extended.

Temporary fee changes

We know many businesses are in a challenging situation and will look to the IPO for flexibility and support, to maintain their IP and progress their pending applications. Deadlines will once again need to be met and fees paid.

To support those businesses, [temporary fee changes](#) were in place from 30 July 2020 to 31 March 2021 in relation to patents, supplementary protection certificates (SPCs), trade marks and registered designs:

The deadlines for completing actions, requesting extensions of time and paying fees were not affected by these fee changes and must still be complied with.

Renewals

The period of interruption for patents extended all time periods mentioned in the Patents Act and Rules. This wasn't the case for all registered designs and trade marks. This [renewals deadlines table](#) (RTF, 69.7KB) should answer any queries you have regarding your renewal deadline.

We will continue delivering patent correspondence by email until we can provide an enhanced digital solution. We will only send paper documents where we are unable to deliver them by email or where we cannot identify a suitable email address

Filing with us

Customers should use online services and communicate with us digitally. We will continue sending and receiving documents and notifications by email wherever possible.

Forms or correspondence may still be filed with us by post or hand delivered to our Newport office. However, they will take longer than usual to process while access to our offices remains limited. The London office is closed from 7 January 2021 and unable to process forms or correspondence sent by post or hand delivered.

Our fax service has been turned off and we can no longer receive documents through this channel.

Please use our forms@ipo.gov.uk inbox to file any forms that can't be filed online. The only exception is that patent applications made subject to directions under section 22 ("national security") must still be filed by post.

To avoid processing delays

- in the subject line of your email, enter the form number, the IP rights number and (optionally) your own reference. Provide these in the format: FORM NUMBER-IP RIGHTS NUMBER-YOUR REFERENCE for example: TM16-UK00002345678-T1234GBAW
- if you are attaching a document other than a form, for instance a response to an examiner, enter 'OTHER' instead of the form number in the subject line
- attach all files as PDF and attach any supporting documents required to the same email as your form. Include the IP right number in all attachments
- if you have more than one form to file, use a separate email for each form
- do not send copies of your email to any other IPO mailboxes as this will cause duplicate processing, delays and could mean multiple payments being taken
- do not use the forms@ipo.gov.uk inbox for anything other than filing forms and documents. Email other enquiries to information@ipo.gov.uk

We are currently unable to accept payment by cheque.

Do not send copies of your email to any other IPO mailboxes; this causes duplicate processing, may result in you paying fees twice and will result in delays.

Patent related correspondence both before and after publication of the patent application continues to be emailed. The only exception is to patent applications made subject to directions under section 22 ('national security') and to applications where we don't have an email address.

It also covers correspondence relating to supplementary protection certificates and certified office copies of documents. We will use the email address provided on the forms submitted with the particular application or otherwise communicated to the IPO. Any queries on this should be sent to information@ipo.gov.uk

We will accept electronic signatures on forms and other documents.

Certified Office Copies (COCs)

We are now issuing paper COCs by post. The e-mailing of COCs was temporary to ensure customers were able to receive these documents when access to workplaces was limited by the pandemic.

If you still cannot access documents delivered by post, we can provide your COCs digitally if you request it. Please be aware that some IP Offices are no longer accepting priority documents in this format. If you need your COCs to be issued digitally please tell us in the covering letter accompanying your request form.

We will not be issuing duplicated copies (in both paper and digital formats)

as a matter of course. For patent COCs we encourage customers to use WIPO's online Priority Document Access Service (PDAS) where possible. This can be selected when filing an application online or by emailing forms@ipo.gov.uk

Uncertified copies of documents are still available for delivery by email as they do not require an official seal and signature. We will still issue paper copies by post when appropriate. You can request an uncertified copy of a document from the Sales Team by emailing sales@ipo.gov.uk and giving your consent to receive it digitally. There is a flat fee of £5 per copy.

We will continue to update this page with any changes to services, as well as providing more details as they develop.

Further information on alterations to services for specific rights:

[IPO interrupted days](#)



This power is set out in rule 110 of the Patents Rules 2007, rule 75 of the Trade Marks Rules 2008, and rule 40 of the Designs Rules 2006. The notice of interruption will be published in our Journals and displayed at our sites.

The declaration of interrupted days means that most deadlines for:

- patents
- supplementary protection certificates
- trade marks,
- designs, and
- applications for these rights

which fall on an interrupted day will be extended to the next non-interrupted day. To help rights holders, businesses and IP professionals plan ahead, we will provide a minimum of 2 weeks' notice before ending the interrupted days period.

This applies to all time periods set out in the various relevant UK Acts and Rules, and to all non-statutory periods that have been specified by staff.

It does not apply to time periods set out under the various international IP treaties e.g. the Patent Cooperation Treaty, European Patent Convention, or the Madrid system, where the Office may be acting as a Receiving Office. Remedies are available under the various international systems.

This period of interruption does not affect filing dates of IP applications which are filed at the Office and do not claim priority from a previous application. These will be assigned a filing date under the usual rules.

We are taking this action in view of the disruption to applicants' businesses and ability to receive and send post by the current coronavirus pandemic. It is consistent with action taken by other intellectual property offices such as the European Patent Office and the European Union Intellectual Property Office.

Following a review, we have decided to bring the interrupted days period to an end on 29 July. This will mean that the first normal day of operation when all interrupted days deadlines expire will be Thursday 30 July.

This action relaxes the requirements on applicants or rights-holders to act by certain deadlines. To keep work moving and avoid a surge of work once the interruption period ends, please aim to meet original deadlines where possible.

We remain operational and able to conduct all forms of business but there are impacts on certain processes. We are extending the ways in which we can communicate with our customers electronically and advise our customers to use alternatives to post.

Published 27 March 2020

Last updated 22 June 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 22 June 2020

An update to inform customers of the end of interrupted days

2. 29 May 2020

Update to the period of interruption and the next date for review

3. 7 May 2020

We reviewed interrupted days on 7 May and have decided to continue with the period of interruption. We will review again on 28 May. We will give customers advance notice (at least 2 weeks) to plan prior to the end of interrupted days.

4. 22 April 2020

We have confirmed the continuation of our interrupted days period.

5. 27 March 2020

First published.