

Senior Traffic Commissioner issues a Statutory Document in response to the COVID-19 outbreak

The Senior Traffic Commissioner has today (17 March 2020) issued a [Statutory Document](#) setting out the approach that traffic commissioners will adopt in response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Great Britain.

The document includes:

- temporary steps to assist operators who cannot meet the required financial standing levels;
- advice on what an operator must consider if a transport manager is unable to attend work;
- clear guidance on the period of grace process if the requirements to hold an operator's licence cannot be met;
- information around how the traffic commissioners may approach applications for temporary exemptions to the requirement to hold an operator's licence;
- guidance on the approach to be adopted for short notice requests around changes to local bus services and reducing the administrative burden on operators;
- guidance on hearings attendance and the postponement of hearings

You are also advised to sign up to [our news alert service](#) where further advice will be issued to operators and regular updates will be available as the position changes.

Advice for moving around France

Original Q&A [here](#) (in French)

Q. Can I move around in France?

A. From 12pm on 17 March, and for a minimum of 15 days, even if you have no symptoms, you cannot go out without a valid reason, which may be checked by the police. If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection or a temperature above 37.5 degrees, stay at home, contact your doctor and limit contact with other people as much as possible. Don't call 15 unless you have a very high temperature or difficulty breathing.

Q. What are the valid reasons for leaving your home?

A. You can leave your house:

- To go to work and come back, and for unavoidable professional trips.
- For health reasons
- To do essential shopping
- For urgent family reasons, to support vulnerable people.
- For short trips, close to your home, linked to individual physical activity (not including any collective sports), and for the needs of domestic animals.

You must fill out an individual declaration for each trip.

Q. If you are away from your home or residence, can you return?

A. Yes

Q. If I live in one area and work in another, can I go to and from work?

A. Yes, if you cannot work remotely, this is a trip justified by a professional need.

Q. Can I use public transport?

A. Yes. All private and public transport are functioning regularly.

Q. Can I leave to buy food items?

A. Yes. There is no need and there is no reason to stock up because shops will remain regularly supplied. There are no restrictions on the movement of goods, whether these goods cover basic needs or not.

Q. Can I leave to buy items other than food?

A. Yes, but only if necessary. So you can only go to authorised shops to buy basic necessities.

Q. Can I go to my parents' or friends' house for a meal?

A. No, because this is not an unavoidable trip and so is not included in the exemptions.

Q. Can I visit dependant parents or loved ones?

A. Only to support vulnerable people. You are reminded that older people are the most vulnerable and we must protect them as much as possible from all contact.

Q. Are physical activity outside allowed?

A. Unavoidable outings in open spaces to the wellbeing of children and individual sport and physical activity are permitted close to home. You should respect distance and avoid all gatherings.

Q. Can I leave with my dog?

A. Yes, so he can satisfy his needs or for a vet appointment.

Q. What will happen if these restrictions are not respected?

A. These restrictions will be controlled by the police and you will receive a fine of 135 euros.

PM call with Chancellor Merkel, President Macron and President Erdogan

The Prime Minister joined Chancellor Merkel, President Macron and President Erdogan on a call this afternoon to discuss coronavirus and the situation in Syria.

The leaders agreed that concerted multilateral action was essential to support the global health response and mitigate the economic impact of coronavirus. This follows the Prime Minister's call yesterday with G7 leaders to coordinate the international response to the pandemic.

The leaders welcomed the recent ceasefire in Idlib. They also condemned the regime and its backers for causing the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the mass displacement of people from and within Syria. The UK remains a leading donor to the humanitarian response in Syria and the region – providing £3.1 billion in lifesaving aid.

Emergency bill to strengthen coronavirus (COVID-19) response plans

Emergency measures to give ministers powers to take the right action at the right time to respond effectively to the progress of the coronavirus outbreak will be introduced to Parliament this week, the Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock has today set out.

The [measures in the coronavirus bill](#) are temporary, proportionate to the threat, will only be used when strictly necessary and will be in place for as long as required to respond to the situation.

They are intended to protect life and the nation's public health and ensure

NHS and social care staff are supported to deal with significant extra pressure on the health system.

They fall into 5 key categories:

- containing and slowing the virus
- easing legislative and regulatory requirements
- enhancing capacity and the flexible deployment of staff across essential services
- managing the deceased in a dignified way
- supporting and protecting the public to do the right thing and follow public health advice

To ensure the NHS and adult social care have the additional staff capacity they need to respond to increasing demands on services during the outbreak, the powers enabled by the bill will allow recently retired NHS staff and social workers to return to work without any negative repercussions to their pensions.

NHS staff will also be covered by a state-backed insurance scheme to ensure they can care for patients if, for example, they are moving outside their day-to-day duties while making use of their skills and training.

Paperwork and administrative requirements will be reduced to help doctors discharge patients more quickly when clinically appropriate, to free up hospital space for those who are very ill and enable clinicians to focus on delivering care.

Volunteers will have extra employment safeguards, allowing them to pause their main jobs for up to 4 weeks while they help care for patients in the health and care system, and will receive a flat rate of compensation to mitigate lost earnings and expenses. This could benefit more than 3 million people who already volunteer in health and care settings and bolster the NHS's capacity to respond to the virus.

Changes to councils' duties under the Care Act will enable them to prioritise people with the greatest care needs and make the best use of the adult social care workforce.

Other measures in the legislation include:

- allowing police and immigration officers to support and enforce public health measures, including powers to detain people and put them in

appropriate isolation facilities if necessary to protect public health

- making arrangements for statutory sick pay for those self-isolating without symptoms from day one
- allowing small businesses to reclaim statutory sick pay payments from HMRC
- allowing more phone or video hearings for court cases to stop the spread of the virus in courts
- enabling Border Force to temporarily suspend operations at airports or transport hubs if there are insufficient resources to maintain border security

The bill allows the 4 UK governments to switch on these new powers when they are needed and, crucially, to switch them off again once they are no longer necessary, based on the advice of the 4 Chief Medical Officers.

The bill builds on the Treasury's recent investment of £12 billion to support public services, people and businesses through the disruption caused by COVID-19 in the 2020 Budget. It follows considerable action from the government to control the epidemic, including a nationwide public health campaign and a cross-government 'war room' of communications experts and scientists.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We are doing everything we can to protect lives and support the NHS, guided by the best scientists and clinicians in the world.

The new measures we will be introducing in the Emergency Coronavirus Bill this week will only be used when it is absolutely necessary and must be timed to maximise their effectiveness, but crucially they give the government the powers it needs to protect lives.

By planning for the worst and working for the best we will get through this, but this is a national effort and we must all work together – from businesses prioritising the welfare of their employees, to people thoroughly washing their hands.

I also want to pay tribute to our brilliantly selfless NHS and social care staff who are working tirelessly to care for our friends and loved ones in this unprecedented period.

Chief Medical Officer for England Professor Chris Whitty said:

Our approach to responding to this outbreak has and will remain driven by the scientific and clinical evidence so we do the right thing at the right time.

The measures included in this bill will help support our frontline workers, protect the public and delay the peak of the virus to the summer months when the NHS is typically under less pressure.

It is important everyone continues to play their part by avoiding non-essential contact and travel as well as washing their hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap and water.

Chancellor announces additional support to protect businesses

This includes unlimited loans and guarantees to support firms and help them manage cashflows through this period. The Chancellor will make available an initial £330 billion of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of UK GDP.

At last week's Budget, the Chancellor provided £30 billion of support to the economy to deal with the crisis by investing in public services, increasing support for vulnerable people and providing business with tax reliefs and loans.

He said he would take further action as the situation evolved and today outlines further measures including:

To ensure that businesses have access to the funds they need, we are providing:

- support for liquidity amongst large firms, with a major new scheme being launched by the Bank of England to help them bridge Coronavirus disruption to their cash flows through loans
- increasing the amount businesses can borrow through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme from £1.2 million to £5 million, and ensuring businesses can access the first 6 months of that finance interest free, as Government will cover the first 6 months of interest payments
- including new legal powers in the Covid Bill enabling us to offer whatever further financial support we think necessary to businesses

Providing £20 billion of business rates support and grant funding to help the most-affected firms manage their cashflow through this period by:

- giving all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England a 100% business rates holiday for the next 12 months
- increasing grants to small businesses eligible for Small Business Rate Relief from £3,000 to £10,000
- providing further £25,000 grants to retail, hospitality and leisure businesses operating from smaller premises, with a rateable value over £15,000 and below £51,000

Mortgage lenders have agreed they will support customers that are experiencing issues with their finances as a result of Covid-19, including through payment holidays of up to 3 months. This will give people the necessary time to recover and ensure they do not have to pay a penny towards their mortgage in the interim.

Confirmation that government advice to avoid pubs, clubs and theatres etc. is sufficient for businesses to claim on their insurance where they have appropriate business interruption cover for pandemics in place.

To support the food industry and help provide meals for people who need to self-isolate, we will relax planning regulations to allow pubs and restaurants to start providing takeaways without a planning application.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

We will do whatever it takes to protect our people and businesses from the effects of this global economic emergency brought on by the Coronavirus pandemic.

The interventions I am setting out today will help support businesses of all sizes – so they can continue operating during these unprecedented times.

The action announced today means that over £3.5 billion in additional funding will be provided to the devolved administrations for support to businesses in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.