

# Guidance to commercial property owners

**I recently received this answer to a Parliamentary Question from the Government:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (106880):

**Question:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to issue guidance to commercial property owners who wish to (a) improve or (b) modify their air flow, heating and air extraction systems to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. (106880)

Tabled on: 21 October 2020

**Answer:**

**Paul Scully:**

Evidence shows that proper ventilation can be used to mitigate the transmission risk of COVID-19, alongside other measures. Ventilation into the building should be optimised to ensure the maximum fresh air supply is provided to all areas of the facility wherever possible.

Our workplace guidance includes a number of steps that will usually be needed to ensure that ventilation systems provide a good supply of fresh air. It is important that businesses check whether ventilation systems need to be services or adjusted. If businesses and employers are unsure we advise they seek advice from their heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers.

The workplace guidance broken down by business type/environment can be found here: [www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19)

The answer was submitted on 29 Oct 2020 at 12:43.

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## The EU believes in tariffs

There is a double irony in the Remain position on trade. They say a free trade agreement with the EU is crucial, whilst doing everything in their power to stop us having free trade agreements with all those other non EU countries who would like one . They pose as free traders, claiming tariffs are harmful, yet they fully support EU trade policy which makes use of very high tariffs on agricultural and food products to protect domestic farming and the food industry, and seeks to use a 10% tariff on non EU cars to help

single market producers.

So which is it? Is free trade essential to our future? Or do selective tariffs do good and protect domestic industries sensibly?

The theory of free trade tells us that a country is better off with free trade than with tariffs. If, however, you take this to the logical conclusion that you might as well surrender all your tariffs with no reciprocation from overseas you may well find domestic industries damaged by aggressive overseas competition, to be followed by price hikes once the domestic industry has been demolished. Arguably the West has been too generous to China, offering low or no tariffs under WTO rules whilst allowing China to maintain big protectionist barriers of various kinds. UK industry lost out badly when we went to zero tariffs against German and other continental steel, car and textile manufacturers in the 1970s.

I favour bilateral or multilateral reduction of tariffs and other barriers. As we leave the EU's single market and customs union we are free to choose tariffs or no tariffs, and to decide how high they should be. The only proviso is we need to impose the same tariff on all WTO members, unless they have a Free Trade Agreement with us. In the case of food it means we can lower tariffs on non EU countries whilst imposing some tariff on EU food, which will act as a stimulus to recapture market share for domestic producers lost over our years in the CAP and Customs Union.

So let us once and for all get rid of the silly lies put around about trade

1 We can trade well and grow our trade without a Free Trade Agreement, as we have done during our time in the EU with non EU countries

2 Tariff free does not guarantee good trade growth, as have seen in recent years within the tariff free single market in the EU

3, Most Free Trade Agreements are useful and can add a bit to trade.

4. Lop sided trade agreements can be damaging, as our EU has been to our farming and fishing industries.

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## [The new pedagocracy](#)

The global elite are trying to make one size fit all around the world. They seek to enforce the power of their ideas by recruiting people of like minds to leading global bodies and into the civil services which staff governments. They value highly the formal qualifications put out by universities and professional bodies. They create a hierarchy of income, respect and wealth based on approved knowledge of a certain kind and membership of the privileged educational clubs. They find entrepreneurs uncomfortable with

their radical ideas and ability to change the world without necessarily having passed through the right institutions. They seek to vilify or ignore anyone with a different view of the big issues of the day from how to promote growth to climate change and the way to respond to a virus.

They claim there are correct scientific or factual answers to complex problems. They think there is something called "settled" science. They seek to limit the scope for permitted dissent or political discussion of other options and approaches. They edge towards the idea of a post democratic age, when the views and wishes of the many distilled through the electoral process are replaced by the rules and laws of the so called international order, set down and interpreted by lawyers, senior officials and conforming politicians. They are intolerant of others whilst preaching tolerance on their own terms. The worst of them can be stupid in the way they deny the obvious, bury inconvenient evidence or scorn what commonsense suggests.

We need more debate about why the advocates of this approved and regulated international order are so often wrong, and why they think doing damage is an acceptable price to pay for their ideas.

If we take the issue of the "settled" views on economics, they hold that Central Banks are all wise and need to be independent. They seek to take as many issues as possible from competition policy to environmental policy out of the hands of elected politicians and ultimate public debate and control and put onto a rules based autopilot instead.

This system has delivered the Oil and banking crash of the 1970s, the Exchange Rate Mechanism recession of the early 1990s, the Great banking crash of 2008-9, the successive Euro crises of the last decade and now the CV 19 slump. Much of this was a failure of Central banking as well as poor conduct and judgement by commercial banks, but the Central Banks are always protected from criticism or management change.

The system has also delivered an over powerful China cornering the market in many manufactured products whilst enjoying privileged trading terms with the West. China busily sells the West the products of the Green revolution whilst pressing on with the construction of many new coal fired power stations.

It is time this universocracy was made more accountable. Elected people around the world need to ask more questions about the obvious failures of the policies of some of these institutions and governments, and need to speak out more for changes of approach.

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## [The Presidential election](#)

Over the long campaign so far I have kept off the topic of the Presidential election. I strongly believe that politicians and commentators from another

country should keep out of other people's elections. Today I do not break my silence so far to recommend one of the candidates. US voters do not need another UK MP or commentator telling them how to vote. I was appalled by President Obama's clumsy and ill judged intervention in the UK EU referendum, though I soon realised he had if anything helped the Brexit cause he wished to damage.

I write today to make two main points. Many of us follow the debates and stories of the election because the USA is still the leader of the democratic world. The person, policies and team the voters choose matters to us all. We need a USA that is strong in the defence of freedom, a good ally and friend, who respects us and our different democratic views and decisions. This election is particularly important, because the USA has before it two champions of very different world views and policy prescriptions that mirror the debates this side of the Atlantic and have read across to us.

I will leave aside the candidates other than Mr Biden and Mr Trump, as practically all UK and European media do as if they do not exist. I accept the polls and past history suggests the two main party candidates will command well over 90% of the vote between them and only those two have any chance of winning.

I will also leave aside all the character and behaviour issues which are part of the US debate because both sides have chosen to make character a big issue. Character and often unfortunate or unpleasant remarks are in the USA as in the UK treated with undue fascination with extreme reactions to words, when what matters more for US voters and the wider world is what use would either man make of the large powers of the office of President if elected.

The essence of the debate between the two revolves around two major disagreements. The first is rooted in the immediate background. Mr Trump stands for livelihoods and Mr Biden for lives. The President argues fear of CV 19 is overdone and there are limits to what government can do to grant people immunity so he favours getting the USA fully back to work and a more normal life. Mr Biden believes the virus needs strong state powers to block social contact and shut down business that thrives on it to stop the spread and so bring the death rate down. Damage to jobs is a price worth paying to stop or delay infection. These two contrasting views are also very prevalent in our own country.

The second is their attitude to world government and the so called international rules based order. Mr Biden for example agrees with the fashionable consensus that climate change is the most crucial problem besetting our world, and wishes the USA to tread the EU and UN route to closing down the oil, gas and coal industries and forcing a rapid transition to electrical power at home and in transport. Mr Trump backs cheap energy and defends all the jobs dependent today on fossil fuels and fossil fuel using vehicles and machines. He sees that as part of the prosperity machine he sought to unleash.

I will look in a later post at some of the other big differences, especially in foreign policy, their attitude to military intervention and different

approaches to the Middle East, terrorism and borders. Be in no doubt this is a big moment in the history of the advanced world and in its impact of the democracies on world politics.

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## Time for Plan B

The decision of the Welsh devolved government to impose a wider ranging lockdown on an already scarred and weakened Welsh economy has made the contradictions and absurdities of too many controls more obvious. The supermarkets are told to tape up their shelves and fence off their aisles for so called non essentials. The devolved government stumbles over what is an essential. They defend their decision by saying that as they have closed non food specialist shops it would be unfair to let the supermarkets sell items the specialist shops cannot offer. There is no good answer when people point out that the policy will just lead to many more people buying the banned items on line, losing business not only to the specialist High Street shops but to the food shops of the high Street as well. How is that sensible?

The idea is that stopping more shopping will abate the spread of the disease, which then will allow relaxation of controls which on their analysis of course will lead to a further spread of the disease. How does that help? Why should the virus wait until after Christmas before it builds up again, if the plan is to relax a bit for Christmas. What proof is there that shopping spreads the disease anyway? People do not spend much time in the company of another person from outside their household in a supermarket. Air flows through stores of course need to help control the disease, and can do so.

As I argued in Parliament and put to the government, trying to change behaviour to contain the virus requires consent and co-operation from the public. There is no longer enough buy in to the detailed rules nor to Test and trace. The even more complex and wide ranging Welsh rules have met with a hostile response from many Welsh people, showing that the devolved government is losing support for these measures.

The U.K. government needs to learn from the Welsh experience. More needs to be done to encourage a business and jobs revival. There are many things that are being done and can be done to limit deaths. Improving treatments, safeguarding the vulnerable, improving ventilation and air flow in public buildings and improving infection control in health settings, can all help to get the death rate down. There are limits to how many detailed rules and controls government should seek to place on people generally, as government has reached the end of tolerance for the current degree of control let alone for tightening. People now want explanations of why and how a control will help or is necessary, and why it should continue.

It is time to put economic recovery higher up the priority list, and to go out to save many more livelihoods. There needs to be another drive to get

more non CV 19 medical problems treated. We have to live with the virus, and do all we can to lower the death rates from CV 19 and from other killer medical problems without shutting down the economy or seeking to control everyone's social life and shopping habits..