

[eAlert: 18 June 2020 – Countryside Stewardship capital grants](#)

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[Government provides further halt to business evictions and more support for high street firms](#)

- The UK government will extend measures to prevent high street businesses facing eviction over summer
- New code provides support to shops and local firms planning their future recovery with their landlord
- Industry leaders back code and welcome measures to support affected businesses

The UK government has extended measures to prevent struggling companies from eviction over the summer.

The extension, until the end of September, comes alongside further support to help local businesses plan for economic recovery following the coronavirus pandemic.

A new [code of practice](#) has been developed with leaders from the retail, hospitality and property sectors to provide clarity for businesses when discussing rental payments and to encourage best practice so that all parties are supported.

These interventions are in addition to the comprehensive financial package provided by the UK government to businesses during this difficult time and is in recognition of the strain that the sector is currently under.

The code is voluntary for businesses and is relevant to all commercial leases held by businesses in any sector which have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

It encourages tenants to continue to pay their rent in full if they are in a position to do so and advises that others should pay what they can, whilst acknowledging that landlords should provide support to businesses if they too are able to do so.

The suspension of the forfeiture of evictions will come as a relief in particular to pubs, cafes and restaurants, after the hospitality sector called upon the government for action in this area.

Communities Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

As our high streets come to life and our town centres open for business, it is crucial that both landlords and tenants have clarity and reassurance as they seek to keep their finances stable and bounce back.

That is why we are extending measures to protect those who are unable to pay rent from eviction so that businesses have the security they need to plan for their futures.

And in recognition of the strain that the virus has had on our high streets, our new code, backed by leaders across the industry, will help unlock conversations on rent and future payments whilst ensuring best practice is displayed across the board as we confront the challenges of this pandemic.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma MP said:

From clothes stores to our local book shop, we want as many high street businesses as possible to emerge from the pandemic, in the best position to bounce back.

During this particularly challenging time for businesses, our retail stores are safely welcoming shoppers back and taking the necessary steps to drive economic recovery.

By putting a stop to unreasonable evictions, these measures will protect jobs and provide further flexibility to our high street businesses that were trading successfully before the COVID-19 emergency, so they can focus on continuing to deliver for their customers and communities.

Across the UK, the code will encourage tenants and landlords to be transparent in their discussions and to act reasonably and responsibly whilst recognising the impact that coronavirus has had on businesses' finances.

The UK government has confirmed the following changes to the existing package of measures for the commercial sector:

- We will lay a statutory instrument to amend the Coronavirus Act to extend the time period for suspension of the forfeiture of evictions from June 30 to September 30, meaning no business will be forced out of their premises if they miss a payment in the next three months.
- We will also lay secondary legislation to prevent landlords using Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery unless they are owed 189 days of unpaid rent. The time period for which this measure is in force will be extended from June 30 to September 30.
- An amendment to the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Bill has been tabled which will extend the temporary ban on the use of statutory demands and winding-up petitions where a company cannot pay its bills due to coronavirus until 30 September.

UK Finance has also [confirmed](#) its members' continued support for commercial landlord customers including amendments to facilities and capital payment holidays.

The UK government's financial package of measures to support businesses during the economic emergency includes:

- A Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where small and large employers can apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month. The scheme will be backdated to 1 March 2020 and available for at least 3 months, with first grants to be paid within weeks.
- Deferral of the next quarter of VAT payments for firms, until the end of June – representing a £30 billion injection into the economy.
- £330 billion worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses.
- A Bounce Back Loans scheme, providing loans of up to £50,000 to benefit small businesses with a 100% government-backed guarantee for lenders. These loans will be interest free for the first 12 months and businesses can apply online through a short and simple form.
- A Self-Employed Income Support Scheme to help eligible freelance workers receive up to £2,500 per month in grants for at least 3 months.

View the [code of practice](#).

It was developed and coordinated by the UK government alongside a working group of the following, who have all endorsed the code; British Chambers of Commerce, British Property Federation, British Retail Consortium, the Commercial Real Estate Finance Council, Revo, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and UKHospitality.

The working group was also supported by Trowers & Hamlins LLP who provided expert legal advice during the code's development.

To date, a number of other organisations have also endorsed the code including; Agricultural Law Association; Association of Convenience Stores; British Beer and Pubs Association, British Independent Retailers Association,

Central Association of Agricultural Valuers, Country Land Association, Federation of Small Businesses, Property Owners Forum, Scottish Property Federation, Tenant Farmers Association and Tenant Farmers Association Cymru, UKActive and UK Major Ports Group.

Jane Gratton, Head of People Policy, British Chambers of Commerce said:

The pandemic has created severe cashflow problems for many SMEs, who will need time to rebuild and recover. This code will help landlords and tenants to work together constructively to find solutions that keep businesses open and people in work.

Melanie Leech, Chief Executive, British Property Federation said:

The majority of property owners and occupiers are already working well together, creating shared solutions to mitigate the impact of coronavirus on their businesses. The code of practice published today builds on the many examples of good practice and reinforces the importance of constructive collaboration – not only over the next few months and once the government’s temporary legislative interventions come to an end later this year, but for the long term.

The success of landlords and tenants working together as economic partners is vital to the UK’s recovery and to help ensure that viable businesses in distress as a result of coronavirus are supported, to protect both people’s jobs and the local authorities, savers and pensioners who own the majority of our town centres.

Helen Dickinson, Chief Executive, British Retail Consortium said:

The ongoing pandemic presents an enormous threat to the survival of thousands of retailers, and the millions of jobs they support. The necessary closure of most shops during lockdown has created a gaping hole in many retailers’ finances. This has been exacerbated by continued rent demands on stores around the country, even where most have been closed for business. A solution is needed.

This code is a first step toward improving the dialogue between retailers and their landlords. An extension to tenant protections against aggressive behaviour from some landlords is essential to underpin it, and we warmly welcome the government’s commitment to this.

However, all parties should recognise that the code does not provide a solution for those retailers who are simply unable to pay what is being demanded, and we now look forward to continuing our constructive dialogue with government and other parts of the

property sector to address these unpayable rents. Without further action, both retailers and landlords remain in a precarious situation that could lead to substantial numbers of redundancies as soon as tenant protections expire.

Peter Cosmetatos, Chief Executive, Commercial Real Estate Finance Council said:

Commercial real estate investment and finance markets are a complex, interconnected ecosystem; the pandemic-related stress affecting so many rent-paying businesses also threatens their landlords, and their investors and their lenders, with potential implications for economic recovery.

This code cannot magically plug revenue holes, but it sends a strong signal that good faith engagement and financial transparency are essential if commercial tenants and landlords are to find their way through this crisis.

Vivienne King, Chief Executive, Revo said:

Revo is pleased to support the government code of practice, which offers guidance to property owners and occupiers in navigating temporary rent arrangements through the pandemic, whilst underwriting the sanctity of existing contractual terms.

There are many cases of owners and occupiers collaboration in managing loss of income, which the code of practice reflects and we will continue to support government in identifying the potential measures to address this loss of income, which not only impacts owners and occupiers, but the wider economy including the savers and pensioners who depend upon it.

Paul Bagust, Global Property Standards Director, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors said:

We are pleased to have helped government in shaping this code which will increase constructive engagement and transparency between landlords and tenants at this challenging time. We believe it will provide a basis for negotiated measures which recognise the mutual importance and interdependence of landlords and tenants in contributing to the economy.

Kate Nicholls, CEO, UKHospitality said:

The near-total wipeout of income from the hospitality sector has

left it unable to meet its rent obligations. This code goes some way to bringing together landlord and tenant in the pursuit of a negotiated solution to allow hospitality businesses to move on and revert to the new normal, but this must be recognised as a first step that needs to be built on by all parties.

We remain of the view that further time and support is needed to facilitate a recovery for the hospitality sector, that is at the heart of our social lives and communities. The extension of the moratorium on aggressive enforcement and forfeiture is a welcome measure to allow this process to take place.

Major upgrade that will reshape Hull gets started

Work started today to improve the A63 Castle Street, which will create a much better connection between the city centre and the retail and docks area.

This major Highways England project will support Hull's economic growth, improve journeys to and from the city centre, and help the Port of Hull to flourish.

Highways England chief executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

We are really pleased that we are now starting this long-awaited project. This major upgrade will greatly improve journeys into Hull and the Port of Hull.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

We're working right across the country to level up infrastructure and the upgrades to the A63 Castle Street will provide the right tools to support Hull's economic growth.

As Northern Powerhouse Minister I welcome this vital improvement, which has the potential to cut journey times, improve reliability and boost businesses in the North.

Castle Street is a key scheme in Transport for the North's strategic transport plan, and will see the creation of a new junction by lowering the level of the A63 at the Mytongate junction.

Peter Molyneux, Major Roads Director at Transport for the North, said:

It's great to see on-site works commence on this vital project just a few months after it was confirmed in the March 2020 Budget. This scheme will have a significant impact on local connectivity, reducing congestion and opening up the waterfront area for people and freight.

Alongside other road and rail schemes across the North the A63 scheme is part of Transport for the North's long-term vision for a sustainable, multimodal transport network that will support economic growth in our region for years to come.

The improvements will also see Ferensway and Commercial Road cross the A63, creating a split-level junction. The eastbound carriageway between Princes Dock Street and Market Place will be widened to three lanes, and a new bridge built over the A63 at Porter Street.

Work has begun at the Trinity Burial Ground, and a compound will be set up as offices on Wellington Street West.

Work at the burial ground, which lies partially within the area where the scheme improvements need to be carried out, is being done with permission from the Church of England. Contractors are relocating monuments and removed walls in a careful and respectful manner, and are installing hoarding.

Councillor Daren Hale, portfolio holder for economic regeneration and planning at Hull City Council, said:

To see this long-awaited scheme finally start on site is a momentous occasion for this city. Over the past 20 years, we have worked hard to bring this crucial transport upgrade to fruition. This long-term investment will deliver significant benefits for those thousands of motorists who use this arterial route on a daily basis.

Meanwhile Hull's new bridge, which will be named after the city's first female GP Dr Mary Murdoch, opens this summer, having been built in advance of the main scheme to ensure connectivity during the work. It will connect the city centre to the marina, waterfront and fruit market. The bridge is going to cross the dual carriageway of the A63, allowing pedestrians and cyclists to safely cross the road, as well as reducing congestion on the A63.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[UN Human Rights Council 43: UK statement under item 10](#)

Madam President,

The United Kingdom strongly supports the vital role of technical cooperation. The international community must challenge States with egregious human rights situations, but it is equally important to support States cooperating with the UN and striving to meet their human rights obligations.

We welcome Ukraine's continued co-operation with OHCHR. It is crucial that the Mission can access all of Ukraine, including illegally annexed Crimea, where Russian authorities commit human rights violations and limit fundamental freedoms.

The UK commends the continued co-operation between Georgia and OHCHR. We remain deeply concerned by the human rights situation in its regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In Uganda, we welcome the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between OHCHR and the Government, renewing the mandate of the UN Human Rights office in Kampala.

We urge Cambodia to take further steps to restore democracy and freedom of expression. We appreciate cooperation with special rapporteurs and technical work with OHCHR.

We welcome progress on Sudan's commitment to tackle human rights issues, notably establishing a Khartoum OHCHR Office, and commitment to open field offices to support further progress.

We also welcome Afghanistan's commitment to improving human rights and we urge further steps to implement commitments. As Afghanistan moves closer towards peace, human rights protections must be safeguarded and expanded.

Thank you.

National Underground Asset Register project update

News story

The Geospatial Commission have published a project update report on its recently completed National Underground Asset Register (NUAR) pilots.



Our national infrastructure keeps the lights on, water flowing, internet connected and transport moving. All this needs to be done in a way that is well designed, and affordable for the government and the public.

There is huge potential for location data to improve the way that national infrastructure is planned, built and managed. Our [initial analysis](#) suggests that more accessible and better quality location data in infrastructure and construction could be worth over £4 billion per year.

The Geospatial Commission launched its National Underground Asset Register in 2019 with the aim to realise some of this value through better mapping underground assets. Every construction and infrastructure project has to source information on buried utility assets such as cables, pipes, sewers and ducts when preparing ground investigation and excavation work. Multiple different organisations have to be contacted with their data delivered in varied formats, scales, quality, and on different timelines.

This [project update document](#) celebrates NUAR's successful twelve month pilot phase that ended in April 2020 and outlines our next steps, as well as celebrating NUAR's shortlisting for a Digital Leaders cross sector digital collaboration award.

Thalia Baldwin, Director of the Geospatial Commission, said:

Our National Underground Asset Register pilots demonstrate the benefits of good geospatial data within the construction and infrastructure industries to improve safety and drive efficiencies. Accidental strikes on underground assets are estimated to cost the sector £1.2bn a year. It is the first time that the UK government

has brought major utility companies and Local Authorities together to share data through a single data platform for safe digging and I am pleased our pilots have successfully proved the value of this approach.

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