

COVID-19: Advice for site working – 24 March 2020

Summary

This briefing summarises current Government advice on working on site. *The situation is changing rapidly. Please check our website and social media for up to date advice.*

Current Government advice

As of 23 March 2020, Government advice issued by the Prime Minister has been for people to stay at home, and only go outside for food, health reasons, or essential work. Senior Government figures have, however, confirmed that construction sites in England *can* remain open provided that they follow advice from Public Health England.

[Government's current guidance on social distancing can be found here.](#) The guidance states:

“Travelling to and from work” is permitted where this work absolutely cannot be done from home. Even when working you should remain 2m away from other people at all times.

We are aware that an increasing number of construction and archaeological employers are ceasing all site work because safety cannot be guaranteed. The Scottish First Minister has already stated that construction sites in Scotland should close.

You should ask: Is the work or journey necessary? Can it be avoided or delayed until later in the year?

We have written to Government asking for urgent clarity on the situation and for assurances that archaeological companies working on construction sites will not be held liable if they decide that they cannot continue to work safely.

Support for those choosing to stop work on site:

We support the decision of Registered Organisations and members who have made, or wish to make, the decision to shut down site work due to safety concerns.

ClfA considers that work which can be undertaken safely should be permitted to continue until such time as Government advice changes. However, we recognise that for some sites it will be almost impossible to follow Government advice on social distancing. In these cases site work must cease.

We will follow up any reports of Registered Organisations and accredited members who may be failing to follow Government's social distancing advice. Principle 5 of ClfA's Code of Conduct sets out accredited professionals' responsibilities to health, safety & welfare of

employees, colleagues or helpers. We will investigate any complaints in line with our professional conduct process.

We recognise that the situation is regularly changing and that we are all facing challenges in interpreting advice and adapting to it, but our responsibilities to health and safety are paramount.

We are encouraging all employers to take full advantage of support mechanisms to compensate for income lost as a result of coronavirus. We support the furloughing of workers unable to be supplied with work to do from home under the terms of the Government's Jobs Protection Scheme.

[Information of Government support packages for businesses and employees can be found here.](#)

Advice for those continuing to work on site:

Given that Government advice is to avoid nonessential travel, it is recommended that the need for all proposed fieldwork and journeys are reviewed and the options carefully considered. For those who feel that it is possible to continue work on site without risk to staff or the public, we recommend this useful [advice published by CIEEM](#).

Social distancing advice must be followed at all times when on site, with people keeping at least 2m apart. If reasonable measures to ensure this cannot be followed (e.g. for travel to site as well as work on site) then work should not take place.

All journeys and fieldwork should be assessed on a journey by journey and site by site basis using a Dynamic Risk Assessment approach. If the journey and site work cannot be conducted with minimal and manageable risk, it should not be undertaken.

Public transport should be avoided where practically possible. Keep journeys as short as possible, put hand hygiene measures in place and avoid touching surfaces unnecessarily. Site staff should travel separately, not sharing vehicles. Provision for food and drink should be adapted to minimise hygiene risks.

Consider the site-specific circumstances. If different techniques are required because of COVID-19 precautions/restrictions, this is fine, but make sure you are justify the approach that you have taken in your report and highlight it as a limitation and explain the implications of the limitations on the conclusions and recommendations. You may need to discuss this with your local authority advisor if appropriate.

[CifA has published advice on meeting CifA Standards and Guidance, including advice on adapting practices.](#)

For further information about CifA's advocacy and campaigns and for details on other priority areas, visit www.archaeologists.net/advocacy or email admin@archaeologists.net.