

George Eustice MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

26<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear George,

We are writing on behalf of the members of the Arboricultural Association and the arboricultural industry in order to raise some serious concerns regarding the UK Government's advice in relation to COVID-9 (Coronavirus).

On March 23<sup>rd</sup> the Prime Minister stated that people should leave their homes for limited purposes, including *"travelling to and from work, but only where this is absolutely necessary and cannot be done from home."* Later that same day Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced in relation to the construction industry that *"if you are working on site, you can continue to do so. But follow Public Health England guidance on social distancing."* On March 24<sup>th</sup> Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care stated that people whose jobs have not already been shut down by government measures to date should continue to work but should only be travelling to work where that work cannot be done at home.

In trying to make sense of this advice the Arboricultural Association issued a position statement to its members on March 25<sup>th</sup> in which we stated that *"the Association recommends that members consider temporarily ceasing activity, wherever practically possible, until further clarification is obtained."* We also stated that *"we believe the only exceptions to this would be to undertake work deemed essential, primarily that of a nature to ensure public safety or for the maintenance of critical infrastructure."* A full copy of the statement can be found on our website at [www.trees.org.uk](http://www.trees.org.uk).

We have been following with interest the ongoing discussions in the construction industry, with whom we share some similarities in that many of our members are self-employed or work for contracting businesses. The nature of tree work for arboricultural contractors is that it is an outdoor activity which cannot be done at home.

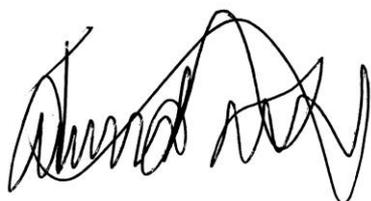
Some of our members have chosen to cease activity but are obviously extremely worried about what the implications of that decision will be for them, their businesses and their families. Others have taken the decision to continue working. Whilst we have recommended that they consider shutting down, we fully understand that this is a decision many in our industry do not

feel able to make at this time and we have therefore advised those people to follow Public Health England guidance if they are going to continue to operate.

We await further detailed information from Government about the exact nature of, and processes relating to, the financial packages which have been promised in support of those working in our industry and who have been, and will continue to be, adversely affected by the current situation.

Our members and our industry desperately need further guidance and a clear steer from Government as to how they can balance the often-competing requirements of personal need and social responsibility. Until a clear instruction is given to cease work, or assurances of financial support and more detail about the Job Retention Scheme are provided, many people will understandably continue to work. We would very much appreciate it if you could use your position as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to provide us with the necessary clarification at the earliest possible opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



**Jaime Bray**  
*Chair of Trustees*



**Navin Sehmi**  
*Trustee Chair of Arborist  
Working Group*



**Stewart Wardrop**  
*CEO*

*Please note that this letter has been made available to our members and published on our website and on social media.*