

## SMTA Member Update 6 —14 May 2020

### To our SMTA members,

This week we have seen “mixed messaging” coming out from the UK (now clearly England) and devolved governments with regards to what you can and can’t do relevant to the Coronavirus crisis and the national interpretation.

Whilst confusing for private individuals it is an absolute nightmare for businesses especially in Scotland! Our sector is suffering terribly and whilst we have secured some successes there are still many challenges to be made with both the Scottish Government and the UK Westminster based authorities such as the Department for Transport.

We will expand on some of these in the following bulletin however it is important that you are aware of the current portfolio of on-going issues. Please see below

*Sandy Burgess, Chief Executive*



### Chief Executive Update

#### Department for Transport – six month MOT holiday on light vehicles

I have written to Gavin Shapps as Minister for Transport raising my concerns about the foolishness of this action and the huge ramifications it will have on our sector if not addressed, I have also highlighted the regrettable but likelihood of his departments “overzealous” actions causing accidents that will result in serious injury or worse to a number of the general public as the use or come into contact with vehicles that should quite simply not be on the road. As you will imagine I am also having weekly high level conversations with the DVSA on this and other subjects around recent Covid-19 actions taken by them. They have also convened a Tier one partnership working party to review how they get testing back to normal as quickly as possible and David Inness is taking part in that process. The situation is clearly being directed by the politicians within number 10 Downing Street, I have also written to the Secretary for State for Scotland raising this issue as I am a constituent within his patch, he has acknowledged my letter and assured me he will take it up with the Department for Transport ASAP, I await his and Gavin Shapps response!

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### **Chancellor of The Exchequer – flexible furlough payments.**

I wrote to the Chancellor some weeks ago quoting the French model for furlough payments which provided for an hourly balance to be charged against as and when required, this model is very complex but allows for a better degree of flexibility especially as and when we have the option to come out of lockdown and need to manage the staff situation around social distancing. He acknowledged my letter and I am delighted to read that we have some plans in place now to introduce more flexibility into the system. This will as stated provide us all with some opportunity to plan ahead over the coming weeks. At the time of writing we are awaiting some additional detail but the intent has been made obvious.

### **Chief Executives of all Local Authorities – non-payment of support grants both £10,000 & £25,000**

This is a huge issue and one that will have the potential to cause irreparable damage to many of the SME repairers within our sector. I wrote to every Council leader across Scotland and all the Islands and to date we have received responses or intention to respond from many of them, by the middle of next week May 20th or thereabouts we will collate all the responses and decide on how we take this further, I firmly believe our sector is being unfairly treated and to my mind this is caused by a total misunderstanding of what constitutes a retail transaction by the Scottish Government, we have a postcode lottery in existence here and I am very focused on ensuring we get a fair hearing from those responsible.

To date we have letters from the Cabinet Secretary that suggests the Local Authorities are to blame and we have letters from the Local Authorities chiefs stating it is the Government to blame! I hope that by reporting on this situation using actual written responses received from both sides of the fence we will manage to get an adult conversation going about how and when it can be resolved.

We would encourage all SMTA members to write to their local MSP regarding this major issue, we have a link to a draft letter for you below and a link to Scottish Government's website to find your local MSP:

[Letter for Members to write to MSP re non payment of support grants](https://www.parliament.scot/msps/current-msps.aspx)  
<https://www.parliament.scot/msps/current-msps.aspx>

### **Car Dealer Magazine – non-payment of support grants both £10,000 & £25,000**

Car Dealer Magazine ran an article about this situation ([click here to read article](#)) please use this link and copy it to as many people as you can, we need to make sure everyone is aware of the unfair treatment at this time.

### **Scottish Conservative Party – non-payment of support grants both £10,000 & £25,000**

I have written to Jackson Carlaw as Leader of the Opposition in the Scottish Parliament raising the issue along with the “click an collect” issue mentioned later, I await his response at this time.

### **Scottish Government – Click and collect in England**

I have written to the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and highlighted the potential impact on our sales that our members may well now suffer as a direct result of not being able to compete on level terms with the motor dealerships based in England who can now operate a “click and collect” service for their customers.

[Letter received from Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair work and Culture, Fiona Hyslop](#) re distance selling in Scotland.

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**CORONAVIRUS  
UPDATES**

## DVSA UPDATES

We are aware of DVSA Vehicle Examiners, not being in a position where they can carry out routine site assessments, maintaining a degree of enforcement activity by interrogating information that is available to them on the MOT Testing Service. They may also check VTS records against Companies House records to help establish whether or not the declared Authorised Entity status is correct.

Test logs, test & retest times, pass/fail rates, brake test results, computer I.P. addresses etc. can all be checked remotely and do not necessitate a visit to a VTS. Any irregularities found can and are still being followed up and could result in more detailed and extensive further investigations or monitoring being carried out.

Our advice – Don't assume it's safe to cut corners just because there is a reduced DVSA presence. Maintain normal testing practices expected of you by DVSA and make sure your employees are doing likewise. It sounds fairly straight forward, but that's all it takes.

***SMTA is still available for all MOT related advice and assistance.***

**MOT Expiry Date Extension**—The current six month extension to MOT expiry dates is still in place. It is being applied by DVSA on a daily basis – one week ahead of the intended expiry date. We understand that DVSA and the Department for Transport are keen to end this arrangement at the earliest opportunity and that recommendations will be made to government as soon as arrangements for easing Lockdown and Furlough provisions is made clearer. Consideration is also being given to how normal testing can be resumed in such a way that minimises disruption. No decision has been made yet. At present, approximately 50% to 60% of all Vehicle Testing Stations are open for business and approximately 20% to 25% of motorists who could take advantage of the MOT expiry extension are still getting their vehicles tested when due.

**Test Equipment Calibrations**—Vehicle Testing Stations are permitted to continue testing with equipment that has expired calibration – as long as that equipment is believed to be functioning correctly. However, most emission test equipment ceases to function when calibration has expired and in such situations Testing must cease. DVSA and the Garage Equipment Association are aware of this problem. DVSA will be considering whether or not regulations can be temporarily relaxed and the Garage Equipment Association will be working with its members to try to restore normal calibration services as soon as possible.

**Social Distancing**-DVSA are aware of the difficulties in adhering to Social Distancing guidelines whilst testing – particularly with assisted test bays. Testers and assistants are encouraged to make full use of PPE when sufficient distancing can not be maintained. Guidance is available on the gov.uk website by using the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-mot-centre-and-tester-guidance>

**New VTS Applications awaiting DVSA Assessment**-DVSA have now issued safe working instructions for Vehicle Examiners to carry out new site assessments in a manner that enables compliance with social distancing requirements. If you are experiencing difficulty getting a site assessment for a new VTS please let us know.

**MOT Tester Annual Training & Assessment**-DVSA's extension to the MOT Tester Annual Training & Assessment deadline for 2019/20 has now ended. Access codes for 2020/21 Training & Assessment are now available from the SMTA. [click here for our brand new flyer and details how to book](#)

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**Automotive aftermarket sector ready to keep millions of British vehicles road worthy as SMMT launches COVID-19 guidance**

[COVID-19 : INDUSTRY GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICE FOR AUTOMOTIVE AFTERMARKET](#)

- New automotive sector-specific guidance for aftermarket providers published by GEA, IAAF, IMI, SMTA and SMMT today.
- MOT testers and service and repair sector ready to welcome back more customers with comprehensive COVID-19 safety measures across all points of interaction
- Sector can cope with significant ramp-up in demand but calls for end of six-month MOT extension as soon as possible.

The UK automotive aftermarket sector has signalled its readiness to cope with increased demand for MOT tests, service, maintenance and repair with the publication of new sector-specific guidance<sup>1</sup> by the Garage Equipment Association (GEA), Independent Automotive Aftermarket Federation (IAAF), Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI), Scottish Motor Trade Association (SMTA) and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

Although workshops have been allowed to stay open throughout the lockdown, helping to keep vehicles roadworthy for essential journeys, the new guidance will help companies of all types and sizes in the aftermarket operate safely while minimising the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

The best-practice guidance covers the entire aftermarket sector, including workshops, warehouses, mobile operations and parts distributors. It covers every aspect of their operations, from clear communications with customers and colleagues to social distancing, sanitisation and hygiene, and collection/delivery of vehicles from vulnerable owners. It is designed to complement government advice and help the aftermarket sector demonstrate safe practices for employees and customers across all points of interaction. It comes as vehicle mileages start to climb and the sector calls for an end to the six-month MOT extension.

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**Out of furlough and back to work - FREE TEMPLATE**

Some dealers have aptly adjusted to selling cars in the lockdown, taking on board the imposed restriction on trade and doing business distantly. Essential workers and all those who cannot work from home still need transport to commute, goods need to be delivered. There is, reassuringly, a demand to meet and there are jobs to be done. Dealers and garages may have to start to recalling their staff from furlough.

If you are in this fortunate position and need your staff to come out of furlough to do work, this certainly can be done. Just remember, the minimum furlough duration is 3 weeks. It is the employer's decision which employees remained furloughed and who is coming back to work. This decision must not be in any manner discriminatory. It is worth reminding your staff that on furlough ending, the normal terms of employment resume.

[Click here for a template created by Lawgistics](#)

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