

COVID-19 UPDATE

1st May 2020

As the Covid-19 restrictions are into their 5th week, and speculation about how we emerge from the pandemic has been growing in the media, it is now time to start looking forward.

‘Re-starting’ the property market has been one of the strands of the media speculation and indeed the indication is that Government (for a whole variety of reasons) is likely to include property buying and letting amongst those activities that are amongst the first to be released from the restrictions. It is therefore entirely possible that demand for EPCs could increase as early as Mid-May.

If Government is going to follow this course it is important that there is very clear guidance on how any party that may need to visit an occupied property should protect themselves (and their families), as well as the occupants (and their families) from the risk of infection. To this end PEPA has been working with the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA), The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), The Residential Property Surveyors Association (RPSA), The Law Society and The British Association of Removers (BAR) on a submission to Government to help inform their Guidance. The intention is that estate agents, surveyors, valuers and removers as well as (of course) energy assessors who visit occupied premises are all working to the same guidelines and standards. At the centre of this initiative is the wellbeing and safety of all.

As soon as PEPA is able to share further information on the reactivation of the property market it will do so.

In the meanwhile, the PEPA Schemes are interested in the issues that are foremost in the minds of the Assessor community and will be issuing an on-line survey which all Assessors will be invited to complete on an anonymous basis. The intention is that PEPA can then focus on trying to address the issues of greatest concern to the whole community.

In our last COVID-19 Update on 1st April we announced the release of a detailed ‘Resource Kit’ for Assessors detailing all the Government and other stakeholder support mechanisms that had been made available at that time, and we hope that the Assessor community found this to be useful. Since the 1st April there have been a number of changes and additions to the support mechanisms available and PEPA will be providing an update for Assessors as soon as the details of the latest announcement by the Chancellor on 100% Government Guaranteed ‘Bounce Back’ loans have been released.

One issue that PEPA continues to follow up with Government (the first bullet point in our 1st April update) is the lobby to the Chancellor that sole traders that take income by way of a combination of salary and dividend should be assessed on the combined earnings and

qualify for the self-employed support scheme/Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme accordingly. There is a multitude of people across a wide range of industries and professions adversely affected by the current rules and there has been widespread engagement with Government on the issue. Should you wish to get involved, a template letter is being circulated with this update that you can personalise (or use as the basis for developing your own letter) and send to the Chancellor.

Of our other lobbying points, we can confirm that furloughed Directors of companies are able still to discharge their responsibilities as a Director and that this does not constitute 'working' under the scheme. We continue to pressure MHCLG that lodgement fees for EPCs, DEC's and ACRs should be waived for three months, and for BEIS to fund a programme of bringing EPBD requirements current in respects of DEC's and ACRs in unoccupied public buildings.

We hope that you find this update useful and please watch out for the PEPA Resources Kit update on support mechanisms in the next few days.



Andy Parkin
PEPA Chairman