

BALI Position Statement - COVID-19 (coronavirus)

Issued 24th March 2020

The British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI) continues to provide frontline support to its members around the United Kingdom by delivering on its four-point battleplan strategy, which was launched last Friday. Following the latest guidelines issued on Monday, like many landscape professionals working in our sector, BALI has been seeking clarification and additional guidance from the Government for those working in the landscaping sector.

BALI wants answers to the crucial question many landscape professionals have been asking; can I still go to work?

In light of the lack of a response from the Government, **BALI is taking the necessary measures to protect its members' staff and their clients by recommending all BALI member businesses temporarily cease trading for a period of 48 hours**, essentially, imploring members not to go out to work. This does not apply to those deemed as essential landscaping services, including waste collection, highways, byways and rail line maintenance, along with custodians of the cemetery (i.e. grave digging and burial services).

For those businesses that fall into one of the above categories, BALI expects these services to continue operating, but, reinforces both the Government's and Public Health England's advice, that all individuals sent out to carry out landscaping works should ensure an appropriate level of social distancing, a minimum of 2m apart at all times, and, stagger break times to avoid unnecessary interaction, cleaning down multi-use machinery prior to use and must wash their hands regularly with soap and hot water. Members are advised not to share vehicles, and, when working on site, to ensure the activity in question does not break these strictest of guidelines. BALI has anticipated that these businesses will have already been informed by various agencies to continue carrying out essential works. If any employee falls ill and develops a

high temperature or new continuous cough, they are to return home immediately and self-isolate for 7 days with no social contact other than with those in the same household. The household will then have to self-isolate for 14 days.

This was not an easy decision for BALI to make, but following several internal management meetings throughout the day, it has been decided that this course of action is absolutely necessary to protect our NHS, our most vulnerable and our key workers. It is also a move that will help further reduce the number of people going to work and go some way to help prevent the spread of the virus.

The reason BALI has decided to advise a 48-hour shutdown is to allow the association more time to press the Government for answers on several critically important questions we have posed to them today after speaking to members and listening to their experiences. It is BALI's hope that within that timeframe, the Government will respond to these questions and BALI will be able to provide a further update to all members affected as to what to do next.

Two critical questions BALI is seeking clarity on surrounds force majeure; if a BALI member decides to close and temporarily cease trading, will they still be eligible to apply for a Government grant, and also, a support package for the self-employed. The Government is expected to make an announcement on the latter towards the end of this week.

Commenting on the guidance issued, BALI Chief Executive Wayne Grills said:

“We are in the most exceptional of circumstances and doing our utmost to keep the landscaping sector operational where essential landscaping works are required. Today, we have outlined measures that hopefully provides some guidance for members who are facing uncertainty day-by-day. For those businesses who employ staff to carry out essential landscaping works, I say this; you have a duty of care for those in your employment and minimising the spread of infection by implementing a range of practical safety methods and procedures. It is also vital that the health and safety requirements of any landscaping activity must not be compromised at this time. If an activity cannot be undertaken safely due to a lack of suitably qualified personnel being available, or social distancing being implemented, it should not take place. We are aware that emergency services are also under great pressure and may not be in a position to respond as quickly as

usual. Likewise, we too have a responsibility to you, our member, to help save lives and protect our most vulnerable. We hope today's announcement goes some way towards supporting that cause."

BALI will continue to do everything in its power to get the answers our members rightly deserve. Many businesses and individuals are facing an uncertain future, which BALI hopes will be short term.

For our members, the message is clear: stay at home and avoid all social interaction. For those already remote working, BALI is preparing to launch several new online webinar courses that it has subsidised, exclusively for members, to allow you to attend free of charge. This has been designed to help get your business through the COVID-19 outbreak. These will be listed on our online events calendar over the next few days, weeks and months. This is on top of BALI's commitment to delivering a series of online-based support clinics for members to discuss health and safety, human resource, insurance, legal and technical issues.

Finally, BALI has also added a frequently asked questions document to its COVID-19 support page on the website.

Stay safe.

bali.org.uk/help-and-advice/covid-19-coronavirus