

**Coronavirus information exchange for GWSF members**

Update 6, 26/3/20

Please feel free to get in touch on any of the issues raised below, and where appropriate we’ll share views and information with members, non-attributably.

**Maintenance contracts – who’s paying what?**

This will be an issue for many associations, but is covered today because members contracting with Mears have been advised that Mears is still expecting normal contract payments to be made despite the severe curtailment of the service. It seems Mears is saying ‘pay us as normal and we’ll bank the hours you’re not getting and these will be a ‘credit’ when the crisis is over’

Some members will doubtless be seeking legal advice on this, but it would be good to hear your views and experiences. We might have hoped that the UK Government’s announcement on covering 80% of salaries would have made the position a bit easier but obviously still a lot of uncertainty on the part of contractors.

**Gas safety**

There have been rumours that the UK Govt. may extend the certificate period from 12 to 18 months but nothing to report on this at the moment.

**Right to Repair**

We are pretty much assuming that in practical terms, Right to Repair is being quietly disregarded in the current circumstances but we’re asking the SG to say something on it.

**Utility companies**

We’ve asked the Scottish Government what it knows about UK-wide discussions with the utility companies. We know of no suspension of cut-offs at this stage, and other issues such as capacity to top-up remotely are, we assume, being explored.

**Evictions**

The Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill is expected to go through all of its Parliamentary stages on 1 April. It will include a provision to extend the Notice period to six months for social housing arrears-related eviction cases where no written notice has yet been served. It will be three months for ASB/criminal cases, and no change for abandonments.

This means there is no ‘ban’ on evictions which have already gone beyond the Notice stage, though these may be impossible to progress anyway in the current circumstances.

Cases where decree has already been obtained could, in theory, be progressed, but there is obvious moral pressure on associations not to. We’ve advised the SG that unless they amend the Bill, the current provision for decrees to fall if not enacted within six months will mean all these cases (which are unrelated to CV) having to be annulled and started again from scratch. The SG has said it’s looking into this.

**More feedback on office closures**

‘Here we are doing all we can remotely as we made the decision on Monday to close the office in order to follow social distancing advice. One significant thing we are doing is phoning every one of our tenants rather than awaiting incoming calls and contacts, or depending on our website. We have the capacity to make contact with almost every one of our tenants over the telephone and even if it’s just a quick check that people are Ok it can make all of the difference. This may lead to a multitude of responses and we are aware that we may not always be able to do what we normally would but may be able to make a difference to those in most need using our established local networks.’

**New build sites**

Helpful feedback from a member in Glasgow:

‘On the subject of new build sites, I can confirm that inspections are not being carried out by DRS so no habitation certificates will be issued. Our contractor has ceased work so it is not currently an issue for us.  Without habitation certificates tenants cannot be moved in so there would be an increased risk in terms of security of completed properties if they are handed over.  Hopefully most contractors will take the same sensible approach that ours has and close down the sites until advised further by the Government.’