

SMTA Member Update 7 —22 May 2020



A MESSAGE FROM THE SMTA CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Dear member,

I do hope this statement finds you and yours all safe and well.

The SMTA was formed in 1903 to encourage, promote & protect its members who joined us from across the growing automotive sector in Scotland. In that time the association has experienced numerous crisis situations including World Wars, global pandemics and financial recessions to name a few. There can be no doubt however that this current CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC will be the one that will leave the heaviest stain on many of your business and households.

The offices of the SMTA have never stood so empty for so long, but as families, friends and businesses, right across the world – continue to adjust so admirably to an unfolding catastrophe there is much to be thankful for and more to be hopeful for.

LOOKING AFTER OUR CUSTOMERS

A country without personal and business transport is a country that will eventually grind itself to a halt! The services that you provide on a daily basis throughout the communities of Scotland are critical to the success of our country as we start the long road to recovery from this lockdown.

To date we, as your association have worked hard to answer hundreds of member, non-member and political enquiries as quickly as possible, and we are still receiving more and more each and every day. It's essential that we are there for our members, present and future. Not least while we continue to provide vital support such as our Consumer Conciliation Service, Trading Partners, MOT QMS advice and support along with Scotsure and

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In what felt like a heartbeat, we have gone from operating our South Queensferry HQ based within traditional buildings with people and processes to a virtual call centre dispersed over multiple living rooms, kitchens and even garden sheds across Scotland, with some staff receiving office equipment to their doorsteps and connecting remotely to our HQ centre systems. Whilst we all may have been less able than normal to reply personally to members calls and emails, we do strive to ensure we are dealing with every enquiry across the business as effectively as possible. Currently we have furloughed approximately 50% of our team across all departments, while it may take slightly longer to get through to us, and we may need two or three days to reply to non-urgent emails, our promise remains. We are here to encourage, promote & protect our members interest as we always have been.

LOOKING AFTER OUR STAFF

I am incredibly proud of the way our staff have adapted to such unusually demanding circumstances. Working from home can be difficult. Working from home during a lockdown poses even greater tests of focus and flexibility. We are doing our best to make sure everyone is supported and remains connected – whether that's through regular one-to-one catch up calls or our general staff emails and of course our own website daily CORONAVIRUS updates. Personal connection with our staff and our members has always been important to us as a business. Right now it matters more than ever before.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Living in lockdown has given new meaning to numerous words and statements like isolation, insecurity, loneliness and distance. However we have also experienced the true value of community and social unity in our personal and business lives. This has also produced a new wave of different thinking as the issues we face have become challenges in themselves, and of course the use of technology will have transformed and changed some attitudes and process in our sector forever, and of course created new challenges and opportunities as a result.

The efforts that so many have gone to, and the sacrifices people are making, can give inspiration to all of us and help to bring tomorrow closer. A tomorrow where our businesses are once again fully operational and everyone can travel freely to work and visit their families and friends, in the first instance within the UK but ultimately around the world.

From me and the whole team at The Scottish Motor Trade Association please stay safe,
stay focused and stay positive

Sandy Burgess, Chief Executive



**! CORONAVIRUS
UPDATES**

MEMBERS UPDATE FROM SMTA CHIEF EXECUTIVE

As many of you are all too well aware we have a number of really pressing issues on the table right now and we as your representative organisation have been very active with the politicians and civil servants at a local, Scottish and UK level.

Rural Rate Relief support fund £10,000

Retail, hospitality and tourism support fund £25,000

We have been challenging the Scottish Government on these payments which in our opinion are due to all our members regardless of where they operate, how they operate or with whom they transact! The Scottish Government at Ministerial level have reacted to our challenges and in two distinct cases suggested that we needed to contact the Local Authorities (Councils) in each of Scotland's 32 areas and ask them why they have not paid the amounts over to our industry. Last week I wrote a personal request to every Chief Executive of every Council in Scotland, to date we have many responses and more continue to arrive on a daily basis, however the responses regrettably contain no surprises to me at least, they all say in one way or another, that they would like to pay funds across, are well aware of the hardships that our sector are suffering but are tied with the constraints of the guidelines that the Scottish Government have issues!

So we have reached the point where by and large we are at stalemate with each party blaming the other and where do we go next? I have a view that we need to focus on the Scottish Government as in the end it is them that control, guide, direct call it what you want the Local Authorities and regardless of what the thoughts are supportive or otherwise of the Chief Executives, the SG will have the final say, so if they will not respond to our emails (email to First Minister of 15th May still not responded to) then we will have to get a response from across the chamber and with that in mind I have now been working this week with the Scottish Conservative Party, many of you will know that Jackson Carlaw the Leader of The Opposition is an ex Ford Dealer. The Conservative Party have agreed to take the challenge up directly with the Scottish Government and have written two letters on the above subject and the issue of "click and collect" as available in England, to the Scottish Government requesting an urgent response, I have been advised that this response should be provided within five business days.

Further to the above I was contacted yesterday by the Secretary for State for Scotland Alister Jack (he is my local MP) as I had asked him to review this and another matter with the Department for Transport around the six-month MOT suspension and he wants to be kept informed as to any progress or otherwise on these issues.

Click & collect

As you are aware dealers in England can now operate a "click & collect" service for vehicle sales and that is giving them a distinct advantage over your opportunity as the very best a Scottish based dealer can do is offer click and deliver bringing with it all manner of issues especially around the logistics of the delivery as well as associated costs and the Distance Selling legislation. We have been actively seeking the same opportunity for you with the Scottish Government and have also requested and been provided with support and help by the Scottish Conservative MSP Maurice Golden who has written a letter to the Scottish Government on this subject.

DVSA Six month suspension of testing requirements....continued on next page

DVSA Six month suspension of testing requirements

Those of you who operate DVSA Testing Stations will be aware of the introduction of the a six month suspension of testing in April, we have continually argued against this as being an “ill thought-out” concept and called for it to be abolished as quickly as practical. I have also just received a response from the Secretary of State for Scotland attaching a response in turn for Gavin Shapps who is the Minister for Transport, our message is getting to the highest level in Government, hopefully it will help them to realise the need for change.

In my regular DVSA update call earlier today, I was given the latest set of like for like testing figures which show an encouraging return to normality for the consumers seeking out testing appointments and also the number of sites open for business. [The letter from Gavin Shapps can be viewed here](#)

Scotland’s route map through and out of the crisis

On Thursday afternoon the First Minister made an announcement providing a route map as highlighted above. I have read the detail provided and have found it to be severely lacking and rather ambiguous especially relevant to our sector, I have written to the Scottish Government requesting an urgent detailed interpretation of the plans for our sector and in particular the opening of dealers showrooms. as soon as the response is available I will publish it on our website as usual. [The full document can be viewed here](#)



**! CORONAVIRUS
UPDATES**

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.

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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.

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.

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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