

SMTA Member Update 12

To our SMTA members,

This week we have experienced a degree of movement within the Scottish and UK Governments. In Scotland we are now seeing a relaxation of more of the restrictions on our daily lives created by the current Coronavirus crisis, this is welcome and hopefully we will remain safe and see continued drops in new cases of the virus and cessation of deaths as a result of this situation. Our sector has been hard hit by this crisis, and whilst long overdue it is encouraging to note that the car showrooms across the country will all be able to open officially from this coming Monday and without the previous restriction on space utilised.



I would like to announce that, with regret, the decision has been taken to cancel the 2020 Northridge Finance supported SMTA Annual Dinner. This was not an easy decision to make but it was felt that given the extreme situation around the country just now and the very genuine issues that face us all for the months ahead, it was felt that this event would not be appropriate in 2020. I can assure you we will bring back the event in 2021, bigger, brighter and more exciting than ever! Thank you to the venue, Glasgow Hilton and the guest speaker Eddie the Eagle, as they have both agreed to carry over to next year and of course to our long term sponsor, Northridge Finance for their impeccable understanding of this outcome.

Yesterday, we released a positioning paper on the on-going Covid-19 Retail Grant to our members who had registered with us, this paper contains a call to action as we feel it would be prudent to explore the professional / legal options available to us. If you want to review the contents the paper can be found [here](#) (Business Support Grant Newsletter). If you wish to be added to the growing number of members seeking support with this grant then please email your details to karen.thompson@smta.co.uk

The Scottish Government's recent release on additional steps and timeframes towards full implementation of phase two can be found here. [Phase 2 Route map from Scottish Government.](#)

In addition to the above announcement the Scottish Government have also released the outcome document to the recent review of how they will undertake to lead the task of rebuilding the economy of Scotland for the future. This is a very substantial document and the link can be found here: [Towards a Robust Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland](#). At this point I would comment that it is encouraging to note that they are reviewing this matter in such depth, however it has to be said that it is also disappointing to note the severe lack of experienced business people on the panel of experts involved in writing and researching this document.

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The SMTA has assurances from the Cabinet Secretary for the Economy that she will be seeking more detailed input from ourselves and other trade associations and employers across all the major sectors going forward. I will undertake to ensure that the challenges and issues our members face on a daily basis are transmitted and more importantly understood as and when I get this opportunity.

Yesterday I was asked to take part on behalf of the SMTA and its members in an urgent review by the Department of Transport into the possible cessation of the current MOT Exclusion programme, the paper asked multiple questions with various options, to ensure you are fully aware of our position I have copied the response email below. I sincerely hope that this will bring a rapid end to this unfortunate legislative change!

Sandy Burgess,
SMTA Chief Executive

Response from Department of Transport:

Thank you for your e-mail and giving the SMTA the opportunity to comment on the Governments plans to amend the end date of the regulations extending MOT expiry dates and reintroducing mandatory MOT testing on behalf of our membership.

1. Do you have any views on the proposals to restart testing, positive or negative?

We would be fully supportive for a quick cessation of the current extensions of the expiry dates of MOT tests as they become due.

2. Of the three periods mentioned above, which would be your preferred time for restart?

Option 1, would be our preference (two to four weeks from the date of announcement) however there is a very real urgency to halt this programme of extensions as quickly as possible and I would suggest that the 30th of June could be an achievable date, there are an increasing number of vehicles on the roads with safety defects going undetected due to them not being tested with a potential increase in serious injuries and road deaths. In addition to this as the majority of VTS are open and testing it is essential for both their viability and the economy at large that they can return to a normal volume of MOT Testing.

3. Do you have any suggested amendments to the proposals?/.....

As stated above we would like to see a resumption of testing as of July the 1st 2020.

Whilst we realise that legislation will need to be enacted, this time frame was possible when the original extension was put in place. Your document notes that you need to ensure that there is enough VTS capacity to conduct these tests. We feel that there is more than adequate capacity and coverage for the tests that will be needed, even if only the 80% of test stations you mention are operating. However as noted above there is every reason that as soon as the end of the extension is announced nearly all test stations will be open and begin accepting tests, there will no longer then be a logical reason for them not to open and realise the investment they have made in being able to provide MOT testing.

As we understand it there are currently approximately 23,000 test stations in GB even with 80% operating this would mean 18,400 stations available but in reality, there will be many more. We also note your concerns regarding giving time for stations to calibrate their equipment, we are now seeing that all the normal calibration companies are offering on site calibration and as such this is no longer the problem it was two months ago.

4. Do you have any concerns which you think have not been addressed?

In considering the time period in removing the extension we think it should also be considered that of the approximately 20% of test stations that are currently not testing the majority will have staff furloughed with the consequential costs to the Government. Urgent removal of the extension will allow these sites to remove their staff from the furlough scheme and be able to contribute to the economy in large rather than being a burden to it.

5. Do you have any other general comments?

The effect to road safety of any further delays to ending the MOT extension will be serious. As normally the failure for MOT tests runs between 32 – 34% meaning one in three cars do not meet even a basic minimum standard for use on the road and showing that a considerable proportion of GB motorists and vehicle users do not maintain their vehicle in a roadworthy condition. The longer the extension remains the number of additional unroadworthy vehicles will increase daily.

As of now there is not a requirement for any vehicle since 30 March 2020 to have been tested it is pleasing that there are many owners who are having the MOT test conducted regardless. What is evident however is that the fail rate has improved, 25% in April and 28% in May, meaning that the voluntarily MOTs that have been presented for test are tending to be the better maintained vehicles. However conversely this will also mean that the large numbers of the vehicle owners who are taking advantage of the extension may possibly be the ones with the vehicles who may be using the vehicle on the road with defects and as such the suggested 1.6 million unroadworthy vehicles being used on our roads may be an underestimate.

There is no doubt that our roads are now getting back to normal with more and more people travelling on a daily basis, the road usage is only going to increase as we are repeatedly told to avoid public transport meaning that the private car usage will escalate exponentially for the foreseeable future.

The SMTA will continue to push for this to be stopped as quickly as possible, however given that the Department for Transport asked for the response before 4.00 today from all of their Tier 1 partners suggests that we will have an outcome within the next ten days. We will keep you informed as and when we are further advised.