

# RSAW



Cymdeithas Frenhinol Penseiri yng Nghymru  
Royal Society of Architects in Wales

Mr Mark Drakeford  
The First Minister of Wales  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
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17 April 2020

Dear First Minister

In these uncertain and unprecedented times, we are all mindful of the terrible impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. Of course, the health of the people of Wales is the primary concern, but our shared economic prosperity is also under threat as demand and consumption has retracted to very low levels across nearly all sectors of our economy.

As the representative body of over 650 Chartered Architects in Wales, we would like to encourage positive action which will benefit our members and we would also like clarification on another matter. We are keen to stress that Welsh Government is welcome to liaise with us directly with any concerns over construction or design matters. Our members are highly skilled and knowledgeable and would welcome the opportunity to share their expertise and experience with Welsh Government.

Firstly, we would like to encourage Welsh Government to extend the non-domestic rates relief beyond retail, leisure and hospitality premises. While it is a very welcome intervention, it does not account for many small businesses outside these sectors. A large proportion of our members are sole practitioners or within practices of less than five people. These members would greatly benefit if their office premises were included in the scope of the non-domestic rates relief.

Secondly, we would like to encourage the continuation of the Innovative Housing Programme (IHP) during this period. Members involved in IHP schemes have contacted us to say that the continuation of these projects during this time would be enormously beneficial, especially as so many other projects are currently on hold.

Lastly, we would like to clarify whether construction sites in Wales should be operational or not during this period. Members have shared mixed messages with us regarding their experiences across different local authority areas. It is difficult to find any guidance from Welsh Government on this matter beyond the measures laid out in Regulation 7A of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 and at the moment it seems the approach across Wales is different depending on the local authority.

Yours sincerely

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