



Rt Hon Alok Sharma
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

18th March 2020

Dear Secretary of State

As a nation, we are living through extraordinarily challenging and difficult times. While this is first and foremost a public health crisis, as the Chancellor noted in his address yesterday, the impact of COVID-19 on the UK also represents a fast-developing economic crisis, the impact of which will clearly be profound.

We are writing to you as the leaders of the UK's three largest builder's merchants who, collectively, and along with our partners in the industry (as you will have seen from the letter sent to you yesterday by the Builders Merchants Federation), are critical to keeping Britain warm and dry, and our buildings operational, repaired, maintained, safe and secure.

We support the trade that maintains and repairs housing and commercial buildings, hospitals, prisons, energy plants, waterworks and other critical infrastructure.

We are urgently seeking a meeting with you to discuss the importance of allowing the UK builders merchants to continue to support the trade during this difficult time; providing essential materials and services to keep the country operational.

Together, our businesses;

- **Facilitate the repair and maintenance of homes, hospitals, prisons and public buildings**
During this time of uncertainty, it is critical that we continue to supply these products so we can support the country's economy and maintain essential services, such as repair and maintenance of housing and hospitals alongside other important public buildings and infrastructure that are so crucial to the safeguarding and wellbeing of our citizens and local communities.
- **Support well over one million tenanted social housing properties**
We provide materials to well over one million tenanted social housing properties in the UK. If this was to stop, it would mean that leaking roofs, broken plumbing and blocked toilets would not be repaired. The impact of this on our already vulnerable citizens would be significant.
- **Support the growing demand for the heating of water and homes**
With millions of our citizens now at home, and the ill, elderly and vulnerable in our society instructed to stay indoors, the demand for heating and hot water for cleaning and laundry will be immense. This is likely to result in more boiler breakdowns and maintenance call-outs, and so demand for replacement boilers and spare parts is expected to increase.

If the UK's builders merchants are not able to supply professional tradespeople with products and services, this risks exacerbating the existing crisis by undermining the country's ability to operate, repair and maintain critical infrastructure, homes and healthcare facilities.

As an industry with significant distribution capabilities, we are capable of mobilising a huge fleet of vehicles and drivers from key locations throughout the country, while our warehouse capacity and unique expertise in supply chain management means we can help the Government and other critical businesses store and move vital supplies around the UK. We can do this, while adhering strictly to the latest guidance from Public Health England and the Government to ensure we keep our colleagues and customers safe at all times.

We are ready and willing to play an active role in helping our country get through this crisis, and in time, rebuilding Great Britain.

Our ask is that we urgently sit down to discuss how we can work together to keep Britain warm, dry, repaired, maintained, safe and secure during this unprecedented period of crisis.

Yours sincerely,



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