

Why are timber merchants still open?

ARTICLE · By Timber Trade Federation · 27 March 2020

Timber merchants are regarded as essential services by the Government, having been placed on a list of business exempt from closing among other “hardware” stores.

This has put many of our members in an incredibly stressful position. Many have closed for the time being in order to ensure any risk of spreading the virus is minimized.

However, some of our members have chosen to stay open to support those construction workers carrying out essential work on building sites such as hospitals.

We know this has been an incredibly difficult decision for many. And unfortunately, we are aware that some members of the public have seen this as opportunism.

First, we wish to assure all that our members, where they remain open, are maintaining social distancing measures, inline with advice from Build UK and Public Health England.

Those who are open are focused on maintaining the safety of their employees, the public, along with allowing our public services and other essential services to continue.

This is because if the timber supply chain were to close completely it would cause issues for those construction workers who have no choice but to stay onsite.

Construction Industry Council Chief Executive Graham Watts wrote on this matter some days ago, on ‘why aren’t construction sites closing?’.

Some examples of these constructions sites which must remain open to preserve public safety during quarantine are those dealing with:

- Emergency leaking or flooding
- Food supply chain – essential new builds or maintenance on existing buildings
- Essential maintenance and remediation across the health sector
- Factories that are making anything required to combat the virus (e.g. a new hand sanitiser factory is under construction)

We appreciate the concern that some members of the public have expressed to our members. But please know that staying open is not a decision anybody takes lightly.

Solidarity and support for those people who do not have the option to lay down their tools is essential at this time. Please be kind and thoughtful to others.