

Lands Chamber (Upper Tribunal)

HELP FOR USERS

Revised 29 April 2020

Since national restrictions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic were announced on 24 March, the Upper Tribunal, Lands Chamber has continued to operate. All of the Chamber's judges and members have been working from home. Key administrative staff, also working remotely, ensured that incoming emails were monitored and prioritised and urgent matters dealt with.

Most hearings due to take place at the Royal Courts of Justice or at the Rolls Building took place instead using remote video technology or by telephone conferencing. A small number were switched to written procedures or rescheduled for a later date, but no hearings were postponed indefinitely. Decisions in matters heard before the national restrictions took effect continued to be issued, and case management decisions in on-going matters continued to be made.

The conduct of business will continue in this way for some time, but the quality of the service offered to users will gradually be enhanced. The Chamber's administrative staff now have access to our offices at the Rolls Building, although in smaller numbers than before and working modified hours to protect their own and their families' safety. Remote access to the Chamber's secure database and servers is also now available to a greater proportion of our staff. Letters and parcels delivered while access to the Chamber's offices was not available have now been opened and assessed for urgency. Urgent matters have been assigned to judiciary and the remainder are being worked through. New cases are being issued and served, and new hearings are being listed.

The preferred method of communication with the Chamber remains email (lands@justice.gov.uk), but parties should expect a slower response, especially where the matter is not urgent. As a result of continuing staffing restrictions, the Chamber's public telephone lines are not yet open and the usual bespoke guidance on the progress of cases or procedural matters is not available. General guidance on proceedings is available on the Chamber's website at <https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/upper-tribunal-lands-chamber>

Specific guidance on the conduct of proceedings in the Lands Chamber during the pandemic was issued by the Chamber President on 24 March and updated on 1 May 2020. It remains applicable and will continue to be updated from time to time as circumstances change.

Where it is possible for hearings already listed to be conducted using remote technology they will take place as scheduled. Before the Tribunal decides on the form of a hearing the parties will be contacted and their views will be taken into consideration. Where a hearing is to take place using remote technology, the Tribunal will expect the parties to prepare an electronic bundle for use by the Tribunal and all participants.

With effect from 29 April 2020, parties will be able to pay the fees necessary to issue proceedings or make an application online. Payment may be made using a unique reference number which will be provided by the Chamber's staff when the proceedings are being registered. Cheques will continue to be accepted where proceedings are filed by post. It will no longer be possible to give an undertaking to pay at a future time.