



TRIBUNALS
JUDICIARY

LANDS CHAMBER (UPPER TRIBUNAL)

HELP FOR USERS

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, have ensured that incoming emails have been 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 have taken place instead using remote video technology or by telephone conferencing. A small number have been switched to written procedures or rescheduled for a later date, but no hearings have been postponed indefinitely. Decisions in matters heard before the national restrictions took effect have continued to be issued, and case management decisions in on-going matters have continued to be made.

Not all business has continued as usual. The Chamber's administrative staff have not had access to their offices at the Rolls Building. Only a very small number have remote access to the Chamber's secure database and servers. As a result, the Chamber's public telephone lines have not been staffed and the usual routine guidance on the progress of cases or procedural matters has not been available. Letter and parcels have not been opened. No new cases have been issued and only those received electronically have been reviewed and assessed for urgency.

On 8 April one more member of the Chamber's administrative staff was provided with remote access and is now beginning to work from home. It is intended that as soon after Easter as possible the Chamber's administrative offices will re-open with a much-reduced staff, working modified hours to protect their own and their families' safety. A further update will be provided when this happens.

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

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.

There has been no general waiver of fees for issuing proceedings or making applications, but parties may undertake to pay fees at a future time rather than paying on issue.

15 April 2020