



First Tier Tribunal: Guidance for users during the COVID-19 pandemic

On 19th March 2020 the Senior President of Tribunals published two Emergency Practice Directions. The First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) has also published specific guidance for users on how the tribunal will operate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of the key points for First Tier Tribunal user is as follows:

HEARINGS:

- No oral hearings or mediation will be conducted until further notice but at least to 29th May 2020;
- Hearings and/or mediations that do convene will be carried out remotely;
- Where possible, determinations will be made on the strength of the documents / papers themselves.

INSPECTIONS:

- There will be no property inspections for at least 6 months.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE TRIBUNAL:

- Users have been asked to communicate with the Tribunal only when it is necessary, and to use the Regional Tribunal's generic email addresses only.
 - Eastern Region: rpeastern@justice.gov.uk
 - London Region: London.rap@justice.gov.uk
 - Midland Region: rpmidland@justice.gov.uk
 - Northern Region: rpnorthern@justice.gov.uk
 - Southern Region: rpsouthern@justice.gov.uk

New Applications

Any new applications should be lodged by email to the Tribunal's Regional offices generic email address above.

The slightly catch - the application fee must still be paid by cheque or postal order (!) although apparently the application fees will be accepted if it reaches the Tribunal within 28 days of the application being made.

LIVE CASES BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL ALREADY:

- **Matters already listed for oral hearing**
All cases listed for oral hearing have been postponed until 29th May 2020.

With consent of the parties, the Tribunal may decide matters on the papers alone.

- **Matters before the Tribunal but not yet listed for hearing**

Parties should seek to comply with those directions as far as possible but the Tribunal acknowledge that there will be delays in dealing with them fully.

The postponement directions that have been issued by the Tribunals thus far suggests that the Tribunal will review the directions already given and consider how to move the case onto final determination. We do not yet know when that process of review will begin.

If directions have not yet been given the Tribunal will aim to do so but perhaps not for another 6 weeks.

- **Cases where a hearing/paper consideration has already taken place**

If cases have been heard and the hearing has concluded, or if matters were determined on consideration of the papers alone, then the Tribunal's decision will be issued by post or email.

However, it is acknowledged that there may be delays in the decision being completed, or delays in the decisions being issued.

If you require any advice or assistance in dealing with the issues we have outlined please contact Yashmin Mistry by email on ymistry@jpclaw.co.uk or telephone on 020 7644 7294 or connect with her on <https://www.linkedin.com/in/yashmin-mistry-b0985a15/>