

Fergus Harradence
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Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
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Dear Mr Harradence,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Executive Committee and members of the Guild of Architectural Ironmongers (GAI) to extend our thanks to you and your colleagues at BEIS, to the Minister and the Construction Leadership Council for all the support and guidance that has been provided during the current coronavirus crisis, and to offer any help that we can.

The GAI is the only trade body in the UK that represents the interests of the whole architectural ironmongery industry – architectural ironmongers, wholesalers and manufacturers. In this way, our membership straddles both services for contractors and specifiers, and industrial manufacturing, including export.

Architectural ironmongery – the hardware on a door or window such as locks, handles, hinges and closers – is critical to the success of any building's security, fire safety and accessibility. Consequently, it is a complex part of the construction supply chain, subject to more than 60 British and European standards.

The GAI has 167 member companies in 27 countries. Our qualifications, education and CPD programmes are widely respected in the UK and overseas, including the GCC and Hong Kong, with GAI examinations taken in more than 20 different countries. Our technical information service is also the only specialist service of its kind, providing comprehensive advice on issues relating to the legislation, regulations and standards governing the use of architectural ironmongery and related hardware.

We are working closely with the Construction Products Association, BSI and others to ensure full implementation of the proposed industry improvements post-Grenfell. However, we have not had much contact with the Department over recent years and have not had any direct contact with the CLC in the past.

But I wanted to write from our essential part of the construction industry to share with you the experience of our member companies over recent weeks, and to share with you some examples of how GAI members are trying to do their bit to help with the battle against coronavirus. I hope you will find the attached information of use in some way, if only to add more nuance and detail to the overall picture about how the current situation is affecting the industry.

If the GAI can be of assistance in any way, please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,



Julian Newman
President, GAI

RESULTS OF GAI MEMBER SURVEYS

SURVEY – 15 APRIL 2020	SURVEY – 15 MAY 2020
<p>The industry is still open for business...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three quarters of businesses are fully or partially open throughout this difficult time. 23% are closed. • Looking at the replies from manufacturer respondents (46 replies), a third say that their manufacturing facilities are closed, a third say they are partially working and the other third say that manufacturing is still operational. This changes slightly with their distribution function, which is currently 77% partially or fully operational. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even more businesses are now reopening – just 15% are still closed. • Out of 25 respondents, 76% said their manufacturing facility was partially or fully operational. This rises to 82% for distribution function.
<p>... but the disruption is severe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsurprisingly, the areas of business most likely to be reported by respondents as 'severely disrupted' are sales revenue (66%), getting on site (54%), new contracts (53%) and profitability (50%). Least disrupted are staff health and wellbeing and employee morale. • Cashflow is slightly or moderately disrupted for 57% of respondents and severely disrupted for another 39%. Closely linked to this, payment from customers is slightly or moderately disrupted for 74% of respondents and severely disrupted for another 22%. • Regarding the availability of components or products, 31% report this to be severely disrupted, 36% say it's moderately disrupted, 29% say it's slightly disrupted and about 4% say there's no problem at all. Supply chain relationships are being disrupted to some degree for 74% of respondents. • In terms of marketing, new product development and plans for business growth, all of these are also most likely to be moderately or severely disrupted. Just 9% of respondents say their marketing plans are not affected, but this rises to 15% for new product/service development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The degree of business disruption being reported by GAI members has increased over the last month, and it's mostly financial. Most often described as 'severely disrupted' are sales revenue (67%) and profitability (64%). Cashflow issues and payment from customers are not really that much different from last month. But new contracts are more likely this time to be experiencing disruption (100% are reporting some level of disruption). • Regarding the availability of components or products, this appears to be easing very slightly. But disruption to supply chain relationships is now more widespread, currently affecting 92% of respondents. • Concern around staff health, wellbeing and morale appears to be increasing. 47% of respondents say that staff health and wellbeing is moderately or severely disrupted, compared to 33% last month. There's a similar shift (from 37% to 46%) in concern about employee morale.

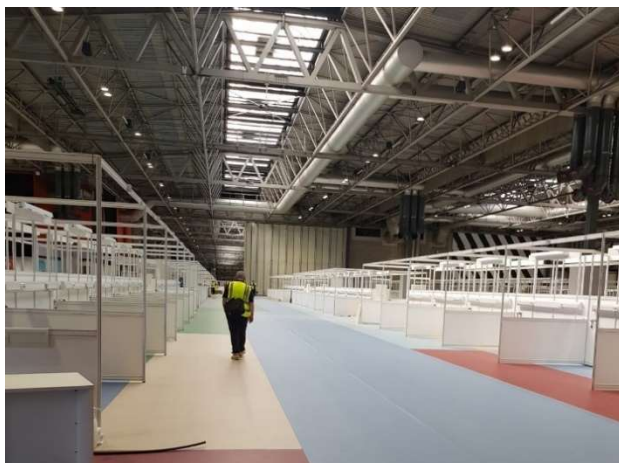
<p>A mixed picture about who is getting Government help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost half of respondents (49%) have furloughed all or the majority of their staff. 19% have not furloughed anyone, and 2% did furlough but are now bringing staff back to work. • While employees are in furlough, 48% of respondents have encouraged all or some of those employees to do some training. 29% have left it up to employees to decide. • 45% of respondents have successfully applied for some sort of Government support, such as a business interruption loan, deferred tax payments, deferred or reduced business rates, but 38% have not managed to access any support as yet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furloughing staff is still widespread – just 18% have not furloughed anyone. Training of staff while on furlough leave is also still a popular option. 80% of respondents would welcome the Chancellor’s extension of the furlough scheme, with 49% preferring a more flexible option to allow part-time working. Asked about the likelihood of job losses, only 18% confirmed that they were currently planning redundancies. • Compared to 45% last time, the proportion of respondents who have accessed some sort of Government support has risen slightly to 49%.
	<p>Getting get back to work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just 2% of respondents feel that they are not able to implement the safety advice and site operating procedures recommended by the CLC. 36% feel they could implement it fully and another 54% think they can implement it partially. • The three most important factors that will influence the decision on whether to reopen for business are ‘growth in customer demand’ (41%), ‘ability to implement safety measures in the workplace’ (15%) and ‘specific advice and instructions from Government’ (15%). • Asked how quickly they anticipate being able to return to normal operations, most respondents (36%) said within six months. 21% thought it could be done in one month, 15% said it would take 12 months. 23% said they didn’t know, and 5% said they had already achieved it.

GAI MEMBERS WORKING TO HELP TACKLE CORONAVIRUS



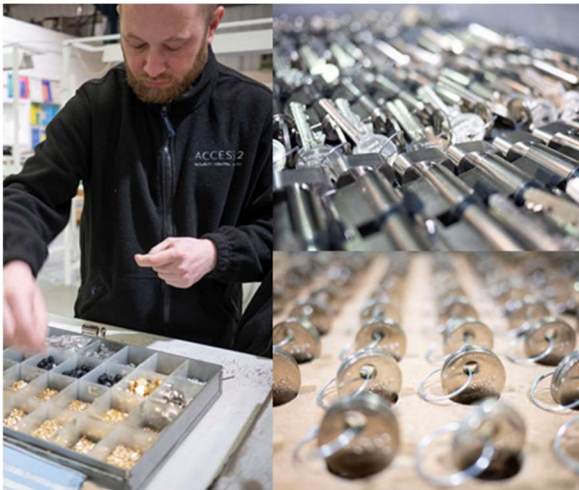
Dormakaba’s Tiverton manufacturing site has repurposed its equipment and made it available to the NHS. By using an open source design, approved by the National 3D Printing Society, they have produced 3D visors using a Flashforge printer. Staff then trimmed the acetate sheets to complete the shields, which were then supplied direct to NHS. Manufacturing engineer Barry Mitchell also liaised with the local NHS logistics team to provide PPE and cleaning products for distribution to surgeries, in coordination with the Tiverton maintenance department.

Northumberland based Norseal has teamed up with a local school to help them supply PPE to the local NHS. Norseal is putting its machinery to good use to manufacture bands and straps, which are then assembled into PPE masks. Michael Spoons, managing director, says: “It is good to know we are contributing. It has really boosted our staff and given them a buzz. We aren’t superheroes but we are helping to get it done.”



The team at Turentek, Nottingham has been helping support the NHS Nightingale hospital Birmingham, by providing a quick turnaround on orders. Paul Henstock, director, explains: “The joiners started work at the Nightingale on the Sunday afternoon. Once up and running they put in an order with us the next day. It was a big ironmongery order to provide all the necessary hardware for 19 shower rooms and two corridors. We spent Monday getting the order together and we delivered it to them on Tuesday morning.”

Raygar Architectural & Engineering Supplies has worked hard to source as much PPE as possible for its local hospitals in Derby. By approaching all their suppliers they managed to supply 20,000 facemasks, 300 sets of coveralls and thousands of gloves. What a great way to celebrate the business’ 25th year.



Access 2 has increased production to support the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. The new Specialist Critical Care Centre at the Grange University Hospital development was pulled forward to support the Coronavirus outbreak. Access 2 was asked to supply 1,000 cylinder locks to complete the work at the hospital. Neil Rule, managing director, says: “The order for the cylinder locks was placed on Thursday afternoon and Access 2 delivered on the following Monday. Usually it takes four weeks to turn around an order of that size. We had to clear all production and split the production team into two smaller shifts. This was to accommodate social distancing and to allow the work to continue. We also hand delivered the cylinders to our customer to make sure the order got there safely.”

Philip Goldberg, commercial director at Em-B Solutions, said: “We were already involved with a lot of hospitals around the UK, but we’ve noticed a particular increase in demand for updates to access control systems to accommodate the sudden influx in volunteer staff and also new systems for remote facilities. We have lots of the team working in high-risk COVID-19 infected areas, supporting the existing and new hospitals to make sure everyone can access the areas they need to do their jobs. Our staff have been fantastic throughout. We’ve been asking them to be there to support staff on the front line and everyone has stepped up to the mark. From a business point of view, we had already taken steps to ensure a smooth transition for when the inevitable lockdown came. We implemented social distancing very quickly, ordered and set up lots of IT equipment so that people could work from home or be set up in the locations they needed to be to work.”



Picture courtesy of Jersey Evening Post

ROB CURRIE. (28106322)

Romerils based in Jersey is supplying to the Nightingale hospital, which is being built there. Des Brady, department manager, says: “We have put together a 24-hour service to supply materials. Once the hospital was announced by the state of Jersey we were involved. Our team have all worked together to deliver this. We have split them across different days so we can keep running efficiently. We can open the business at any time and get the materials required and deliver them. There has been great camaraderie and the island community has really pulled together. We are happy to be supporting and being here to help.”