

## **Government financial support available now to the fishing industry**

These are the measures that are currently available (6 April). We understand that this is a challenging time for the seafood industry and are urgently considering what further measures can be put in place to help mitigate the impact on the industry and will keep you updated.

Please contact [MarineFisheries.PreparednessCentre@defra.gov.uk](mailto:MarineFisheries.PreparednessCentre@defra.gov.uk) if you have any trouble accessing these measures, or if you have any other feedback on how Covid-19 is affecting you.

### **Coronavirus Self-employment Income Support Scheme**

This scheme will help if you're self-employed or a member of a partnership and have lost income due to coronavirus. As per the current arrangements, for the purposes of this scheme, share fishermen will be considered 'self-employed'.

The government will pay self-employed people, who have been adversely affected by the Coronavirus, a taxable grant worth 80% of their average monthly profits over the last three years, up to £2,500 a month. The scheme will be open for at least three months, backdated to 1 March.

The scheme is not yet open but, if you're eligible HMRC will contact you directly and invite you to apply online. Full eligibility criteria can be found online:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme>

### **Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme**

Under the coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, all UK employers with a PAYE scheme will be able to access support to continue paying part of their employees' salary for those that would otherwise have been laid off during this crisis.

This is available to all qualifying businesses in the catching, recreational fishing, aquaculture and processing sectors.

This applies to employees who have been asked to stop working (for instance, due to falling demand), but who are being kept on the pay roll, otherwise described as 'furloughed workers'. HMRC will reimburse 80% of their wages, up to £2,500 per month. This is to safeguard workers from being made redundant. The scheme will cover the cost of wages backdated to March 1st and is initially open for 3 months, but will be extended if necessary.

<https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme/>

### **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

This scheme will help UK businesses affected by coronavirus access bank lending and overdrafts if they need to.

The temporary Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme will support small and medium-sized businesses with access to loans, overdrafts, invoice finance and asset finance. The scheme will be delivered through commercial lenders, backed by the Government-owned British Business Bank.

Fisheries and aquaculture businesses are eligible to apply for Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, subject to meeting the terms of their individual lenders. If you secure a loan you will not be charged an administration fee, nor any interest for the first 12 months, which amounts to “State aid”.

The link to access loans and where individual queries can be raised is below:

<https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme-cbils/>

### **The Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme.**

This new scheme provides support for large businesses. It will provide a government guarantee of 80% on bank loans of up to £25 million to firms with an annual turnover of between £45 million and £500 million. Further details will be announced soon.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-businesses-through-the-coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme>

### **Small Business Grant Funding in England**

The Government is providing additional funding for Local Authorities to support small businesses that already pay little or no business rates because of small business rate relief (SBRR), rural rate relief (RRR) and tapered relief.

This will provide a one-off grant of £10,000 to eligible businesses to help meet their ongoing business costs. This is only for businesses that occupy a property and local authorities will write to eligible businesses.

<https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/small-business-grant-funding/>

### **Statutory Sick Pay Rebate**

This will benefit all businesses whose employees need to take sick leave due to coronavirus. Small and medium-sized businesses will be able to reclaim Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) paid for staff sickness absence due to coronavirus. This refund will cover up to 2 weeks' SSP per eligible employee who has been off work because of coronavirus.

<https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay-rebate/>

### **Food production workers included in ‘key workers’**

Food production workers are included in the list of ‘key workers’ whose children will be prioritised for education provision.

Schools, and all childcare providers, have been asked by the Government to continue to provide care for children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response. This includes people involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines) and so applies to all those in the catching, processing and aquaculture sectors.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

### Other support for businesses:

- **VAT payments deferred from end March 2020 to end June 2020**
  - This will support businesses by automatically deferring VAT payments for 3 months.
  - <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/vat-deferral/>
- **Support for Businesses in financial distress with 'Time to Pay'**
  - Businesses with outstanding tax liabilities and in financial distress can receive extra support through HMRC's 'Time to Pay' service.  
<https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/time-to-pay/>
- **Support with international supply chains**
  - Details for government support for international supply chains can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-uk-businesses/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-uk-businesses-trading-internationally>
  - **Relevant text:** *"1.1 Supply chains affected by coronavirus (COVID-19): If your supply chain has been affected by coronavirus (COVID-19), DIT can help you to find alternative suppliers. The department has relationships with a global network of businesses across the world and will be able to advise you on the options available. If you have an advisory or professional services firm that can help UK companies to find alternative suppliers, email [COVID19@trade.gov.uk](mailto:COVID19@trade.gov.uk) with the subject line "Supply chain support".*

### Other support for self-employed:

- **Universal credit**
  - Universal Credit has temporarily relaxed the earnings rules (known as the Minimum Income Floor) for self-employed claimants who are sick or self-isolating according to Government guidance. This has already come into effect. On 20 February the Government extended this to all self-employed claimants not just those directly impacted by the virus, ensuring those affected by the economic impact of the outbreak are supported.  
<https://www.gov.uk/self-employment-and-universal-credit>
- **Income Tax Deferral for the Self-Employed**
  - If you are self-employed, Income Tax payments due in July 2020 under the Self-Assessment system will be deferred to January 2021.  
<https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/income-tax-deferral-for-the-self-employed/>
- **Mortgage deferral**
  - Mortgage lenders will offer mortgage holidays of three months for anyone in difficulty due to coronavirus, including owners of buy to let properties and help to buy homeowners.
  - [Payment holidays for Help to Buy homeowners](#)
- [Protection for renters](#)
- [Protection for commercial tenants](#)
- Energy Bill deferral

More information: [Support for businesses](#).

For individual businesses, there is also a Business support helpline: 0300 456 3565 where you can speak directly to an adviser.

More information: [Support for those affected by Covid-19](#)

## FAQ

### **Q. What if I am self-employed?**

The Chancellor announced on 26 March the [Coronavirus Self-employment income support scheme](#). The government will pay self-employed people, who have been adversely affected by the Coronavirus, a taxable grant worth 80% of their average monthly profits over the last three years, up to £2,500 a month. The scheme will be open for at least three months, backdated to 1 March.

The scheme is not yet open but, if you're eligible HMRC will contact you directly and invite you to apply online

You can apply if you're a self-employed individual or a member of a partnership and you:

- have submitted your Income Tax Self Assessment tax return for the tax year 2018-19
- traded in the tax year 2019-20
- are trading when you apply, or would be except for COVID-19
- intend to continue to trade in the tax year 2020-21
- have lost trading/partnership trading profits due to COVID-19

Your self-employed trading profits must also be less than £50,000 and more than half of your income come from self-employment. This is determined by at least one of the following conditions being true:

If you have not submitted your Income Tax Self-Assessment tax return for the tax year 2018-19, you must do this by 23 April 2020.

Additionally, the Government is deferring income tax self-assessment payments from July to January 2021 which will help the self-employed.

**Universal Credit** has temporarily relaxed the earnings rules (known as the Minimum Income Floor) for self-employed claimants who are sick or self-isolating according to Government guidance. This has already come into effect. On 20 February the Government extended this to all self-employed claimants not just those directly impacted by the virus, ensuring those affected by the economic impact of the outbreak are supported.

If you are self-employed and you have coronavirus or are advised to self-isolate, you can now more easily make a claim for [Universal Credit \(UC\)](#) or new style [Employment and Support Allowance](#). If you are eligible for new style Employment and Support Allowance, it will now be payable from day one of sickness, rather than day eight, if you have coronavirus or are advised to self-isolate.

The self-employed may also benefit from:

- Mortgage support: following discussions with industry, for those in difficulty due to coronavirus, mortgage lenders will offer mortgage holidays of 3 months.
- Loans forbearance: forbearance from lenders, where individuals are having difficulty paying back personal loans or credit.
- In addition to these measures we have worked to reduce the fixed outgoings of self-employed people. So they can also benefit from:
  - Rent deferral
  - Energy Bill deferral

- Tax Bill deferral
- Business VAT deferral
- IR35 deferral

**Q. I am a share fishermen, what support can I access?**

Share fisherman are classed as self-employed earners. This means they are may be eligible for the [Coronavirus Self-employment income support scheme](#).

This scheme will pay self-employed people, who have been adversely affected by the Coronavirus, a taxable grant worth 80% of their average monthly profits over the last three years, up to £2,500 a month. The scheme will be open for at least three months, backdated to 1 March.

Additionally, they may be eligible for either new style Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) or Universal Credit or both. People can apply for either or both of these benefits online at GOV.UK.

New Style JSA is a personal benefit. It isn't means-tested and doesn't take a partner's circumstances, income or savings into account. To be eligible, the person will normally need to have paid a relevant amount of National Insurance contributions in the last two tax years.

Universal Credit is means-tested. Eligibility depends on a person's personal circumstances, including, where appropriate, those of any partner, spouse or civil partner who live in the same household. Universal Credit covers additional costs such as housing.

**Q. I employ people on zero hours contracts. Can they access sick pay?**

Yes, those on zero hours contracts are still eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). Individuals diagnosed with coronavirus or those who are unable to work because they are staying at home in line with Government advice are entitled to SSP. Individuals are encouraged to use NHS 111 online to get a fit note after 7 days instead of going to the GP, where employers request evidence.

As an employer, you will be available for Statutory Sick Pay Rebate. The Government has introduced a rebate scheme reimbursing SMEs (<250 employees) for up to two weeks per employee of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) due to coronavirus. Employers should maintain records of staff absences and payments of Statutory Sick Pay.

Anyone not eligible to receive sick pay, including those earning less than an average of £118 per week, some of those working in the gig economy, or self-employed people, is able to claim Universal Credit and or contributory Employment and Support Allowance.

**Q. The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme guidance states that 'fishery, aquaculture and agriculture businesses may not qualify for the full interest and fee payment'. What does this mean for my business?**

Fisheries, aquaculture and agriculture businesses are eligible to apply for Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, subject to meeting the terms of their individual lenders. If you secure a loan, you will not be charged an administration fee, nor any interest for the first 12 months.

This support (no administration fees, nor interest for the first 12 months) is classed as "State aid" which means that the Government's Covid-19 support to the sector must comply with

the EU State aid Temporary Framework. For the fisheries & aquaculture sector this means support per applicant is capped at €120,000. Only the loan interest and fees would count towards this aid ceiling, not the total loan value.

You will be asked what, if any, of the €120k Covid-19 Temporary Framework aid ceiling you have already been in receipt of (in relation to other Covid-19 support schemes). Whatever you have used will be deducted from the €120k ceiling and will therefore reduce what further support you can receive under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan scheme.

The link to access loans and where individual queries can be raised is below:

<https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme-cbils/>

### **Q. I have been furloughed, can I work for a different employer?**

If your contract allows, you may undertake other employment while your current employer has placed you on furlough, and this will not affect the grant that they can claim under the scheme. Any activities undertaken while on furlough must be in line with the latest Public Health guidance during the COVID-19 outbreak.

You will need to be able to return to work for the employer that has placed you on furlough if they decide to stop furloughing you, and you must be able to undertake any training they require while on furlough.

If you do take on new employment, you should make sure you complete the [starter checklist](#) form with your new employer correctly. If you are furloughed from another employment, you should complete Statement C.

A furloughed employee can take part in volunteer work, if it does not provide services to or generate revenue for, or on behalf of their employer.

Full guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>