



scottish  
environmental  
services  
association

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TEL 020 7591 3200

e-mail: [info@esauk.org](mailto:info@esauk.org)

23 March 2020

By e-mail only  
Mr John Swinney MSP

Dear Deputy First Minister

### **Waste as a provider of key workers in covid-19 crisis**

We are writing to you as providers of essential services to homes and businesses across the country, the absence of which would lead to rubbish piling up in the streets, endangering public health even further at this testing time for all.

As you may know, the Scottish Environmental Services Association (SESA) is the trade association for Scotland's waste and recycling industry. Our Members are responsible for sorting, processing and treating the vast majority of the nation's waste, including household waste, and at this time of national crisis we will do what is necessary to continue to provide this essential service to our communities.

To enable us to do so, it is vital that our sector is recognised as a critical industry to the economy. We need our employees - of both collection services and those in less visible but equally essential roles - to have key worker status so that they may continue to clear our homes and streets of waste, and we need priority status for our operational activities so that way may continue to receive fuel and other supplies critical to our operations.

In the event that we have to vary our operations and respond to the crisis it is unlikely that we will be able to maintain the full suite of recycling services for all. Under these conditions, it would be helpful if the Scottish Government clarified that all contractual penalties related to performance should be suspended until normal operations can be resumed.

We are working closely with your officials and SEPA to allow regulatory flexibility for some permit and planning conditions so that as many of our operations as possible are able to continue throughout this crisis and we would like to reassure you that we are doing everything that we can to maintain vital services for councils and businesses.

Public health is of course paramount at this time. The waste industry provides an essential service for all. We will not be able to operate throughout this period without key worker status for our operational employees.

It is therefore of considerable concern that the Scottish Government has so far decided not grant key worker status on our sector, with this decision instead devolved to local authorities in compiling their own, local lists of key workers. This will likely lead to inconsistency in approach across the country for what is an essential service relied upon by all, and with authorities focused on their statutory duty in maintaining provision for household waste collections only, instead of the full spectrum of waste services, including for care homes, GP surgeries and other activities essential for society throughout the crisis.

Please ensure that our sector is not overlooked as you and your officials identify those sectors which are critical to society and which employ key workers.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Jacob Hayler, Executive Director