

FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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19 March 2020

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
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Dear Secretary of State,

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.

Our respective companies perform waste and recycling collections for almost half of councils in England and treat the vast majority of the nation's waste, employing around 40,000 workers. At this time of national crisis we will do what is necessary to continue to provide our 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 Government clarified that all contractual penalties related to performance should be suspended until normal operations can be resumed.

We are working closely with Defra and Environment Agency officials 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. 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, Environmental Services Association

Michael Topham, CEO, Biffa plc

Roger Hewitt, Executive Chairman, Castle Environmental

Dougie Sutherland, CEO, Cory Riverside Energy

Ute Fleck, Director, CNIM UK

Paul Taylor, CEO, FCC Environment UK

Neil Grundon, Deputy Chairman, Grundon

Mike Hill, CEO, Hills Group

James Priestley, Managing Director Municipal, Renewi plc

Michael Tracey, Chairman, SESA

John Scanlon, CEO, Suez recycling and recovery UK

Gavin Graveson, Executive Vice-President UK and Ireland, Veolia

Phil Piddington, Managing Director, Viridor