

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a plaid shirt, is looking down at a basket of lemons in a market stall. The background is blurred, showing other people and market structures.

**NABMA**  
the voice of markets

**FIGHTING FOR THE  
FUTURE OF  
MARKETS**

**SOCIAL DISTANCING  
GUIDANCE  
FOR MARKETS**

Version 2  
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# LINKS TO EXTERNAL INFORMATION

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MAIN GOVERNMENT ADVICE  
[gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

NHS INFORMATION  
[nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)



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# **FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE OF MARKETS**

**INTRODUCTION**

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The future of many markets, and that of thousands of small businesses, are being placed at risk as the government and scientists fight against the destructive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the date of this publication, only 15% of the 1,120 traditional markets in the UK were understood to be still operating with the vast majority being closed since 23 March. The markets still trading, primarily for food, were experiencing an approximate 80% drop in daily footfall. Over 90% of markets were operating without charging trader rents, or had suspended all rental payments.

The markets that continue to trade with food and essential goods have demonstrated strong partnerships between operator, traders and customers with some wonderful examples of innovation and success on our [website](#).

Good practice can be found with markets turning to click and collect, delivery services and online sales. Underpinning the continuation of trading has been the need to do all we can to comply with social distancing requirements.



## LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

As thoughts look towards when markets can fully reopen again, then fundamental changes will need to be made to market layouts and their infrastructure, market facilities, customer access and pedestrian flow etc. to satisfy social distancing. In some markets this may be easily achieved, but in others it will be more difficult.

Based on the experiences of market managers that have kept their markets trading during the lockdown and the NABMA consultancy team, NABMA has produced this Social Distancing Guide for Markets (v2).

This guide has now been extended to include Open Markets – which will have, in many cases, even more operational problems for market managers to address.

This offers a practical tick box of measures that markets may need to address when government guidance allows trading to recommence. As well as the practical implications, there are significant staffing and resource matters to consider.

It is hoped that this guide will promote the in-house discussion needed to help market managers put a strategy in place, so that when the lockdown is lifted, trading can resume successfully. With expert views that social distancing maybe in place for the rest of this year then urgent preparation by market teams is essential.



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# FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE OF MARKETS

## THE NABMA SUPPORT PLAN FOR MARKETS 2020

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The Cities and Local Growth Unit is a joint unit between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

As a result of the impact of COVID-19, NABMA has been discussing with its Town Centre and High Streets Policy Team, Cities and Local Growth Unit, support measures to markets, and market traders, and as a result compiled a list of the essential support that we believe is needed to support, sustain and relaunch the markets industry.

NABMA has urged that a business rescue package is provided by government for its membership, that of the National Market Traders Federation and the wider markets industry.

Five key points would need to be incorporated:

- Support for Traders and Small Businesses
- A Business Interruption Compensation Scheme – reflecting “lost rents”
- Market Start Back Grant Scheme – to get markets back up and running again
- Business Rates – 100% relief for all markets
- A national support programme to restore markets and market trading

Following an extensive membership survey, NABMA has presented the financial and operational impact of COVID-19 to Government, demonstrating the risks and threats to the markets industry.

NABMA has secured from government agreement that Market Halls can now sell – in addition to food - all goods and services listed in the legislation as “essential”, including plants. Announcements by the Government are expected on phased openings of all retail premises and NABMA will aim to ensure parity for markets (indoor & outdoor) in its continuing discussions with Government representatives.

Markets are part of the fabric of towns and cities across the UK. They are the breeding grounds for low risk business start-up and will have a major role to play in the aftermath of COVID-19 in their historic settings. Sadly, they are now at the crossroads and for the majority to even survive, and then have a future, they need support, investment and encouragement. NABMA looks to government to now give that investment and confidence to an industry that has been part of community and commerce for many centuries.

“  
We agree that retail markets will have an important role to play in helping the revival of high streets and town centres in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Simon Clarke MP  
Minister of State  
Housing, Communities & Local Government

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# SOCIAL DISTANCING

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## What Is Social Distancing?

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Detailed information from Public Health England is available [here](#).

As a reminder the measures are to:

- Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough
- Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible
- Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to employer guidance for more information.
- Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces, noting that pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently shut as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather.
- Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
- Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.

## The NABMA Guide to Social Distancing

NABMA has been making representations to government that markets must be treated in the same way as other retail outlets.

This measure, of course, is subject to the support of operators and traders alike, and their shared responsibility to meet all government guidelines, and social distancing.

Ultimately, of course, the responsibility for all compliance will be with the operator.

Operators will appreciate that some markets are large, some small, that design and use systems differ across the UK and that local circumstances – including the availability of human resources - will impact upon how management creates a safe and workable system for their own market. The following issues are, therefore, for consideration by local market management.

NABMA is grateful to members of its consultancy team for preparing the below good practice, and questions to address, based on their experiences and discussions in the first month of restrictions.

This has created unprecedented change and challenge for market operators, traders and customers.



## SOCIAL DISTANCING SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### Social Distancing - The Expert Viewpoint

Social distancing will be needed until at least the end of the year to prevent fresh outbreaks of coronavirus even though the UK has reached the peak of the current epidemic, the government's chief medical officer said on 23 April 2020.

Prof Chris Whitty, the UK's most senior medic, said it was important to be realistic that "highly disruptive" social distancing would need to be in place for "really quite a long period of time". He said there was only an "incredibly small" chance of a vaccine or treatments being ready for use this year, and social distancing would have to stay in place to suppress outbreaks until then.

"We have to be very realistic," he said. "If people are hoping it's suddenly going to move from where we are in lockdown to where suddenly into everything is gone, that is a wholly unrealistic expectation."

"We are going to have to do a lot of things for really quite a long period of time, the question is what is the best package and this is what we're trying to work out."

"If you release more on one area, you have to keep on board more of another area so there's a proper trade-off and this is what ministers are having to consider."

### The Health and Safety Executive - Guidance

In these extraordinary times, HSE is constantly reviewing the fast-moving situation with their partners across government to support the national effort to tackle COVID-19.

While social distancing is fundamentally a public health measure introduced to reduce the spread of infection, they recognise the concerns raised on social distancing within the workplace and are in contact with trade unions.

Where HSE identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant PHE guidance to control public health risks, e.g. employers not taking appropriate action to socially distance or ensure workers in the shielded category can follow the NHS advice to self-isolate for the period specified, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. These actions include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements with the PHE guidance.

Further information can be found [here](#).

### The NABMA Support Plan for Markets

The five-point plan, prepared by NABMA, and endorsed by the NMTF can be read [here](#).

# NABMA

## SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES

	✓	Guidelines / Considerations	May Apply to:	
			Indoor	Outdoor
MEASURE SPACE		Measuring your spaces will give you an indication of the number of people to be allowed into the market at any one time so that customers can reasonably follow 2m social distancing.	✓	✓
LIMIT CUSTOMER NUMBERS		<p>Limit the number of customers in the market area at any time.</p> <p>This is likely to mean the provision of additional staffing to manage the queuing and count numbers. Set an appropriate number of customers to be allowed in – depending on your local circumstances as above.</p> <p>Use a colleague to meet customers, explain the social distancing requirements and control the number of customers entering the market area at any one time. In some circumstances, that colleague may need to be SIA licensed.</p> <p>While queuing is likely to be required, some people might be reluctant to accept this essential measure, so it is important that adequate resources are available through the market to assist as required.</p> <p>Place markings outside the entrances to assist correct queue spacings.</p> <p>Many fixed open markets, &amp; marketplaces with demountable stalls and streets with market stalls may have lots of access points for the public which are extremely difficult to manage in terms of numbers of people able to access the markets areas. Routing the public into particular directions may be very difficult in such locations and this will be one of several factors in deciding whether a market can be reopened due to social distancing requirements.</p> <p>Consider reducing the number of entry and exit points and how you can effectively manage total customer numbers.</p>	✓	✓
AISLE WIDTH		<p>Traditional open marketplaces with fixed stalls often provide public rows between the counters of facing stalls of some two metres wide or so. Measuring this distance and considering whether this fits with the Government's guidance on two metre separation "where possible" is one consideration for local management.</p> <p>Consider whether only a single row of trading stalls is more feasible and where fixed stalls are facing each other whether just one row only is tradeable with a one-way access route in such situations. This would need to be supported by significant barriers and public signage to indicate routes.</p>	✓	✓

	✓	Guidelines / Considerations	May Apply to:	
			Indoor	Outdoor
STALL NUMBERS & LAYOUT		<p>Limitations on stall numbers and / or careful placement of stalls may be required to create significant space between trading stalls.</p> <p>Planning of stall layouts will be crucial to market operations to prevent close contact and to guide against large numbers of customers queuing together.</p> <p>On permanently erected markets consider only allowing traders to occupy every other stall, leaving an empty stall in between, in order to create space to separate customers.</p> <p>On markets with back to back rows of stalls, do not allow traders to stand back to back unless “back sheets” can be so placed as to act as virus barriers, in order to create sufficient useable space between traders.</p>	✓	✓
LIFTS		If you have lifts in your market hall, set appropriate numbers of people able to use them at the same time and provide signage accordingly.	✓	
ONE-WAY		Consider whether a one-way system would work to support distancing requirements. If not, consider the width of public aisles and whether physical measures can be put in place to route and direct customers with appropriate distancing measures, including floor markings, to keep queuing and passing customers 2 metres apart “where possible”.	✓	✓
BARRIERS		<p>Consider whether temporary barriers should be available in case it is necessary for managing queues or to stop people joining a queue.</p> <p>Consider the use of metal barriers / fencing / retractable barriers / hazard warning barrier tape and other options, to assist customer queues and flows.</p>	✓	✓
SIGNAGE		<p>Place clear signage inside &amp; outside the market explaining the social distancing measures in place that customers should follow.</p> <p>Layout plans exhibited throughout the market showing pedestrian routes and regular reminders about social distancing.</p> <p>Floor stickers, taped floor areas and pop-up signage in queue areas to denote two metre customer distancing.</p>	✓	✓
REMINDERS		Use in house announcement systems (where available) to frequently remind customers of the need for distancing.	✓	✓
TOILETS		Market toilets for the public can be kept open subject to more frequent cleansing regimes being put in place. Particular arrangements should be considered for pregnant and disabled persons and for those with medical needs. Signage giving clear instructions to the number of people allowed at any one time and some form of number counting of users could be considered. Supervised staffing is an ideal, but it is acknowledged to be a significant problem due to resources.	✓	✓

	✓	Guidelines / Considerations	May Apply to:	
			Indoor	Outdoor
CONSULT		Speak to nearby premises to work together to manage possible shared queuing areas and to assess their own plans, so they do not clash with your own, particularly in relation to outdoor queuing areas. Consult with partners such as local authorities, landowners, shopping centre managers and BIDs (where they exist) to determine the best way to avoid congestion for queues outside stores.	✓	✓
SINGLE SHOPPING		Consider encouraging customers to shop alone wherever possible.  Suggest as part of your announcement about the opening of the market that you encourage as few members of a family as possible to shop, but recognise the difficulty you are likely to face of limiting access to only one family member at the entrance to the market.	✓	✓
INNOVATION		In addition to traditional customer stall / counter service, consider options to accelerate 'click and collect' / online ordering and the introduction of a shopper permit system to enable customers to book time slots.	✓	✓
INNOVATION		Encourage and support traders to develop online businesses in addition to their regular stall trading.	✓	✓
FACE COVERINGS , GLOVES & SCREENS		Face coverings are now recommended as appropriate in certain circumstances, though not compulsory. You may wish to supply these to traders and customers or to strongly recommend the purchase of them by your traders. Traders need to take personal responsibility for protective measures such as plastic screens to act as barriers between servers and customers.  It is important that masks & gloves are used correctly to minimise the risk of infection. The use of such PPE does not replace or reduce the need to follow the government guidance in relation to hygiene practices.	✓	✓
HYGIENE		Provide at the main entrance, and elsewhere in the market, sanitisers for the public use. Provide signs to encourage people to use them.  Disinfectant wipes or spray and tissue for trolley/basket handles.	✓	✓
HYGIENE		Ensure enhanced cleaning regimes can be provided. Identify and regularly clean key touch points e.g.. door handles, lift buttons, keypads, stair/escalator hand rails. Leave doors open if possible and where health and safety allows.  Additional cleansing regimes will need to be considered by management, for example where demountable stall handling is a necessity.	✓	✓
CAFES, BARS & COFFEE SHOPS		The Government have indicated that an extension to allow cafés, bars & coffee shops to fully open is not to be included in the first phase of opening, with the exception of a take-away service (as is currently allowed).  Seating areas should be removed or made inaccessible. Shared condiments should be removed.	✓	✓

	✓	Guidelines / Considerations	May Apply to:	
			Indoor	Outdoor
OPENING TIMES		<p>Consider reduced market opening times particularly to ensure you have the resources to implement these guidelines effectively.</p> <p>Consider restricted shopping hours for NHS/essential workers/ older people/ vulnerable groups but only implement if you can effectively manage such an arrangement. You will not need to check everyone's ID but access will have to be carefully managed.</p>	✓	✓
TRADER ROTA		Consider whether it is necessary to rotate traders so that everyone has an equal opportunity of trading within the resources and space that you have available.	✓	✓
SEATING		Prevent / restrict the use of all seating and opportunities for shoppers to dwell.	✓	✓
VENTILATION		Increase ventilation indoors to help ensure that infectious aerosols are diluted and flushed out. Avoid recirculating air to reduce concentration of infectious aerosols within a system.	✓	
PHYSICAL CONTACT		Remove objects requiring physical contact, such as vending machines, children's rides, mobile charging points, leaflet dispensers, customer accessible fridges etc..	✓	✓
CONTACTLESS PAYMENTS		Encourage, whenever possible, card payments by traders and seek to minimise cash transactions. Encourage the use of contactless payments.	✓	✓
LITTER BINS		Increase number of litter bins to encourage customers to carry tissues and place in bin after coughing or sneezing.	✓	✓
TRAINING		Training for traders & staff on social distancing and their responsibilities with regard to your market's own guidelines.	✓	✓
PARKING		Consider if changes are required to parking areas to increase the space between customer vehicles.	✓	✓
DISPLAY SYSTEMS		Consider how traders setting out their stall areas with racks or different selling systems other than counters will be able to trade with social distancing factors in mind.	✓	✓
TRADER AGREEMENT		Written instructions to traders regarding social distancing, cleansing, screening, etc - and to how those with staff can work together - may be necessary. Consider whether you need written undertakings by traders that they will follow your guidance/instructions if granted the ability to trade in your market	✓	✓
SAFETY IS KEY		Safety for people is key - and overrides a trader's wish to trade. Be aware that unregulated crowd situations and public unwillingness to abide by social distancing will give rise to higher health risks for people plus negative media attention.	✓	✓
RISK ASSESSMENTS		Do you consider that traders allowed in principle to "start back" should provide written risk assessments for you or your HASAW specialist to review and decide whether the way they wish to work is acceptable?	✓	✓

	✓	Guidelines / Considerations	May Apply to:	
			Indoor	Outdoor
TRADER RETURN		<p>The level of trader demand and the types of traders wanting to return will be different for each market, but management will have to create letting systems that can cope with local circumstances.</p> <p>With limited stalls available, for instance, will you aim to have a “free for all/first come first served/unlimited same goods traders” approach to your lettings system or a clear, nuanced approach that may allow only one trader selling particular goods to attend? Will you be able to offer different market day trading to same goods traders? Who, amongst your traders, wishes to return and how will you decide who can return?</p> <p>Can you liaise and discuss with trader representatives and individual traders how to manage your operational and letting arrangements? Do you have a NMTF branch or a local trader organisation that you can consult with?</p>	✓	✓
KEEP UP TO DATE		<p>Keep yourself familiar with Government instructions through the main Government portal at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus">gov.uk/coronavirus</a>. Updates are often - and sometimes very detailed. They often refer to specific trades (exemplified by food handling).</p> <p>NABMA clearly aims to be totally supportive to members, but there is a need for all market operators to take responsibility for fully updating themselves on the details from Government.</p> <p>Please see below for details of how to keep up to date.</p>	✓	✓



Whilst market halls have been allowed to open for food and other essential items to date, Government announced on 11 May 2020 that there is intended to be a phased reopening of retail outlets as from 1st June at the earliest.

NABMA will update guidance for markets management as and when that becomes available.

Prior to any phased reopening of retail outlets, as of mid May 2020, Government documents state that only food can be sold on Open Markets. NABMA is liaising closely with Government regarding potential extension of “essential” goods that may be able to be sold on Open

Markets prior to full reopening and will update guidance for markets management should this situation change.

NABMA appreciates that there are many different types, sizes and locations of markets around the country, so the guidance may not apply to all situations. Market operators will need to consider the operational factors specific to their own situations and the resources available to them at their own markets.

If effective social distancing cannot be implemented the operators will need consider whether a market goes ahead or is held in a reduced format.

# USEFUL LINKS AND SUPPORT

In these fast changing times, you are advised to check the latest Government advice.

## Main Government Portal

[gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Business support including businesses that must be closed

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>

Sign up for daily Government Updates

<https://www.gov.uk/email-signup?link=/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

Government Portal for Scotland

<https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Government Portal for Wales

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

Government Portal for Northern Ireland

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>

# NABMA SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS

For general enquiries email: [info@nabma.com](mailto:info@nabma.com)

For IT support & media enquiries: [support@nabma.com](mailto:support@nabma.com)

Main NABMA Support Area

<https://nabma.com/covid-19-coronavirus/>

Join Basecamp for Market Networking

<https://nabma.com/basecamp/>

Sign-up for Website Access to Member-only content

<https://nabma.com/?/register/NABMARegistration>

NABMA's aim is to be supportive and helpful to its members in this new situation, to interpret government instructions and general guidance into practical market situations.

No one has operational experience in amending the human and physical assets of markets to cope with this situation – and it will be challenging.

Feedback from NABMA members on both positive and negative factors arising from operational implementation would be very welcome in order that this document can be kept up to date and so that colleagues can learn from each other.

**Learning and supporting each other is the way for the NABMA family.**

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# FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE OF MARKETS

## **NABMA THANKS**

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