Dear Sharon,

Thank you for your follow up email of 24 April, concerning the impact of coronavirus on Nissan and the wider automotive industry.

I share your concerns and I appreciate that this is a difficult time for Nissan, its workers, and their families. Please be reassured that we are working round the clock to protect both people and businesses.

Manufacturing is a critical part of our economy. Under the current rules there is no restriction on manufacturing continuing where carried out in accordance with the social distancing guidelines. On 7 April, to help ensure the safety of manufacturing workers my Department issued updated guidance on social distancing in the workplace with a specific section on manufacturing and processing businesses. The guidance is available on the following link: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#manufacturing-and-processing-businesses

Nissan is a critical part of the UK’s automotive industry and the North East's manufacturing landscape, as it has been for the past 30 years. The Chancellor has announced an unprecedented package to support businesses, including Government-backed and guaranteed loans, making available an initial £330 billion of guarantees during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the Coronavirus Job Retention and VAT deferral schemes.

The Chancellor also announced strengthened support for people and individuals during this time. For example, mortgage lenders will offer at least a three-month mortgage holiday so that people will not have to pay towards their mortgage during this period, until they are back on their feet. The Chancellor will work with trade unions and business groups to urgently develop new forms of employment support to help protect people’s jobs and incomes through this period.

The measures that have already been announced provide a comprehensive and coordinated response to what is a serious and evolving economic situation and build on the first stage of the Government’s economic response (£30 billion package of support) set out in the Budget on the 12 March. We are also taking legal power in the Coronavirus Bill, enabling us to offer further financial support that we think necessary.

For the first time in our history, the British Government is going to step in and help pay people’s wages through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme - paying grants to support as many jobs as necessary. We will place no limit on these grants. Any employer in the country -
large, small, charitable or for profit - who promises to retain their staff, can apply for a grant to cover most of the cost of paying people’s wages. Government grants will cover 80% of the salary of retained workers up to a total of £2,500 a month. The cost of wages will be backdated to 1 March and will be open for at least three months. We will extend the scheme for longer if necessary.

Please be reassured that we have been holding regular telephone conferences with the automotive sector and key industry bodies, focusing on plans to support the continued resilience and competitiveness of UK manufacturing during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will remain in close contact with companies across all business sectors to understand their concerns during this time.

Thank you again for taking the time to write. I hope you find this information helpful.

NADHIM ZAHAWI MP
Minister for Business and Industry