



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1067
Ein cyf/Our ref KS/00070/21

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

26 January 2021

Dear Janet

Thank you for your letter dated 30 October on behalf of the Petitions committee regarding P-05-1067, the sale of non-essential items during lockdown restrictions. May I offer my sincere apologies for the delay in responding. Clearly the position has moved on considerably from the 'firebreak' lockdown referred to in your letter.

Coronavirus rates remain high across Wales, and the new strain of the virus has added a new dimension to the pandemic. This has increased the risk of people catching or spreading the virus whenever they are in close contact with each other. For this reason Wales will remain at Alert Level 4 until infection rates are under control which continues to limit the sale of non-essential items.

The Welsh Government expects that businesses and others understand the severity of the situation we are facing as a society and to respond accordingly. Under Alert Level 4, the default position is that people must stay at home unless they have a reasonable excuse to leave. Leaving home for any reason that is not essential is not allowed. Buying food is considered essential, however we would expect people to understand this and minimise the amount of times they leave home for this purpose and the amount of time they are away. They should also consider whether alternatives such as home delivery are available. In addition if people do not need to buy any particular product they should not leave home to do so. The Welsh Government continues to publish messages to remind the public of their obligations to others and to remind them of these points.

The guidance below sets out which businesses and premises will be required to close at alert level 4. It also describes the limited purposes for which some closed businesses and premises may be accessed.

<https://gov.wales/business-closures-alert-level-4>

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

More recently, the greater threat posed by the new strain of the virus has required us to review the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020. The amendments reflect the Government's determination to do as much as possible to ensure that product retailers are meeting their obligations to minimise the risk to staff and customers of exposure to coronavirus.

All retailers are now required:

- To have signs visible to help people keep their distance and make their way around the store.
- To have sanitiser available for hands and trolleys.
- And to have systems in place to limit the number of people who can be in store at any one time.

I trust you will be reassured by this response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', is positioned above the printed name and title.

Ken Skates AS/MS

Gweinidog yr Economi, Trafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru
Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales