



The Rt. Hon. Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local
Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
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Helen Dickinson OBE
Chief Executive
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25 March 2021

Dear Robert,

Relaxation of delivery enforcement restrictions

I am writing to you in advance of the ending of the period of relaxation of enforcement on delivery times on 31 March to ask that you consider extending this until at least 30 June.

We welcomed the announcement of 13 March last year that delivery times should not be enforced by local authorities in order to enable maximum flexibility of the supply of food and other essential goods during the pandemic. We further welcomed the 30 November announcement of the extension of this to 31 March. This measure, although relatively small in comparison to some of the other major pillars of business support given by Government during the past year, has proved incredibly useful to retailers working hard to ensure that customers get the food they need at the time they want. Measures like this have enabled the grocery sector to successfully step up to the plate and ensure that the nation has had the food it needs throughout the pandemic.

Your statement of 30 November was clear that relaxation of enforcement of delivery times was needed “to ensure access to food and essential goods in light of ongoing impacts of coronavirus”. While the vaccine programme is undoubtedly going very well, the pandemic is clearly still impacting the country, with all nations of the UK still advised by their governments to work from at home if possible and with non-essential retail not re-opening in England until 12 April at the earliest. Further warnings from the Prime Minister that variants may yet reverse the progress made in getting case numbers down, and the banning of holidays abroad this spring/summer, suggest that coronavirus will still be having profound effects on the country after 31 March.

Essential retailers are still fulfilling very high numbers of online deliveries, particularly to vulnerable customers who are still shielding in line with Government advice, and they require more time than in the past to do this given both the continuing high level of demand and the need for staff to maintain social distancing.

Similarly, ongoing delays at the UK border following the end of the transition period are making it ever more important that essential retailers are able to receive supplies in a timely manner or risk not being able to receive some deliveries at all.

I understand the need to balance the objective of resident amenity with the smooth flow of food and other vital goods. Clearly we are in a less pressurised situation than we were last March when the relaxation was first announced. Where there have been issues of resident amenity, retailers have worked with local communities and councils to address and mitigate these. While it is possible that this approach could continue, it would be more helpful to retailers to know that this was in the context of guidance to councils not to enforce delivery time planning conditions, giving greater certainty to their ability to continue to meet customers' needs.

I hope that you are able to give consideration to a further, final and short extension of the guidance to councils to not enforce delivery times to ensure the continuing free flow of essential goods to customers across England.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Helen Dickinson', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Helen Dickinson OBE
Chief Executive