



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1144
Ein cyf/Our ref KS/00803/21

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

26 February 2021

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 2 February regarding Petition P-05-1144 about the closure of garden centres in Wales under Alert level 4 restrictions.

The Welsh Government recognises the incredibly difficult and uncertain circumstances currently being experienced by businesses, including garden centres. We are absolutely committed to providing the support and assurance needed.

The Welsh Government introduced Alert Level 4 restrictions for Wales to reduce the spread of the virus. Coronavirus cases have been falling thanks to the efforts of everyone in Wales, and every vaccine delivered is a small victory against the virus. However, rates are still too high and our NHS remains under significant pressure. We need to keep going to bring the virus under control. We are clear that the ability to relax the current restrictions remains limited by the presence of the new variant, which is more transmissible than before.

We recognise the enormous efforts businesses have made to become safe places. This requirement to close in Alert Level 4 is not a reflection on those efforts and we appreciate that some business environments make only a low or moderate contribution to the risk of transmitting the virus. Unlike in earlier lockdowns, at Alert Level 4 all shops and other types of businesses required to close can offer click and collect, online and delivery services to people's homes.

Last Friday, the First Minister confirmed the next three-week review of the regulations will consider the restrictions around non-essential retail.

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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.

We know this remains an incredibly difficult time for businesses and we continue to do all we can to support them. In total the Welsh Government has ensured more than £1.75bn has reached the bank accounts of businesses since the beginning of the pandemic to help the deal with the pressures we are all facing. The Welsh Government's financial assistance for businesses is in addition to UK Government schemes, making the support package in Wales the most generous anywhere in the UK.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Ken Skates AS/MS

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