



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

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Dear colleague,

Over recent weeks, the continuing hard work of local authorities has allowed us to make progress along the government's roadmap to recovery. We have begun to bring life back to our high streets and town centres by opening retail businesses that were closed, with effective social distancing. I am now writing to set out how you can continue to support hospitality businesses in particular, ahead of regulatory checkpoints that may see further changes.

Helping hospitality businesses

In March, the government took action to ensure that pubs, restaurants and bars could provide a takeaway and delivery service. We want to make sure they are taking advantage of other opportunities already available to them. Many businesses will already have licences which enable them to set up stalls to sell takeaway food and drink outside their place of business. We would urge local authorities to support more local businesses to get these licences, cutting costs for them and accelerating decisions wherever possible.

We are aware that some local authorities have separate licensing arrangements for street trading and street furniture. Given the current situation, you should not seek to undertake enforcement action which would result in unnecessarily restricting outdoor stalls during this period, having regard to your legal obligations and access for pedestrians. There is wide variation in fees for these licences. In some areas these are as low as £115, and we would encourage all authorities to consider whether their fees are set at an appropriate level. Finally, you should minimise the time to process these applications, aiming to process applications within five days of the end of the statutory consultation period.

Making the most of outdoor markets

To boost outdoor trade, we would also encourage local authorities to explore options to set up more outdoor markets. We made it easier to use traffic orders to close roads through emergency legislation that came into effect on 23 May, and we encourage you to consider whether closing certain streets to traffic could better support temporary markets and outdoor eating in a way that reduces pressure on space and reflects the guidance on social distancing. For instance, local authorities could consider using this legislation to pedestrianise streets, in order to create more space for outdoor stalls, as well as making the best use of those already pedestrianised.

We encourage market operators to be as flexible as possible in granting licences, while taking into account that safe movement across public space is not unduly compromised, in particular for those with mobility or visual impairments and other disabilities.

As you work to accommodate further reopenings, we would suggest that you proactively contact hospitality businesses in your local area to ensure they understand the guidance and ask whether they wish to make use of the opportunities available to them. The government will continue to offer guidance¹, but local businesses will need local authorities to work with them as they plan for the weeks ahead.

We are committed to supporting local authorities in this important work. In May we announced the £50m Reopening High Streets Safely Fund to help you prepare for the safe re-opening of high streets and commercial areas. This Fund is on top of the £3.8 billion package of support already announced to help councils deal with immediate pressures, and complements existing longer-term interventions including the Future High Streets and Towns Funds. The Government will continue to support local authorities as we progress through the phased recovery.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emran Mian', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Emran Mian

Director-General for Decentralisation & Local Growth

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>