



Ein cyf/Our ref KS/04233/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

21 July 2020

Dear Janet

Thank you for your letter of 6 July regarding retail businesses being fully accessible.

Welsh Government is also aware that any changes in the physical environment can prove difficult for blind and visually impaired people as routes become unfamiliar and unpredictable. Welsh Government have reminded Local Authorities of their duty to ensure that any changes to physical environments are implemented in a way that does not cause any inadvertent issues for disabled people.

Local Authorities are required to undertake Equality Impact Assessments and engage proactively with disabled people where there is any potential for an adverse impact. When requested, Local Authorities need to be able to provide evidence that this has taken place before we release funding.

Welsh Government is working closely with retailers and the Welsh Retail Consortium to ensure adequate steps are taken to accommodate the needs of disabled consumers within the constraints of social distancing protocols. This work is continual and gaps in support continue to be addressed, particularly regarding wider vulnerable groups, including those seldom heard, vulnerable and socially-excluded.

Meetings between members of the Welsh Retail Consortium and disability organisations have proven useful for sharing information and feedback on the communications and adaptations required in meeting the needs of disabled consumers and workers. As a result, many retailers have offered dedicated hours for elderly and vulnerable consumers, as well as allowing personal assistants to shop alongside consumers when needed. Supermarkets have also introduced electronic vouchers or gift cards, allowing family, friends and volunteers to shop for others, and are providing staff with training on how to better meet the needs of their disabled customers.

As restrictions are cautiously lifted on areas of the economy including hospitality and retail, the safety of the public and workforce is of primary importance. As the economy reopens, Welsh Government expects the accessibility needs of the public to be fully met wherever

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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.

possible, and where the 2m distancing laws makes that difficult, adequate alternative arrangements to allow access are put in place.

We understand, however, that there is more to be done, and officials continue to work with retailers to ensure those who are blind or visually impaired are able to maintain their independence as lockdown measures are eased - taking into consideration the issues raised in your letter, as well as in the petition submitted.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', with a stylized flourish above the name.

Ken Skates AS/MS

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

