



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

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Dear Amanda,

Thank you for your emails of 6 and 10 November, addressed to the Secretary of State, regarding the classification of greeting card shops. I am replying on behalf of the Department.

I understand that these remain extremely challenging times for greeting card retailers, particularly as restrictions have come at an important trading period for the sector. The Government recognises that greeting cards play an important part in helping stave off feelings of loneliness and improving mental health, especially for those who are self-isolating.

I sincerely appreciate the effort and expense retailers have made to make their premises COVID-Secure – these efforts mean we have not seen high rates of transmission in retail premises. However, the decision to close non-essential retail is part of a wider package of measures to make clear that people should stay at home except for a limited set of exemptions – allowing non-essential retail to remain open would run contrary to that aim.

We believe the measures strike the right balance to help contain the virus while also allowing some parts of the retail sector to stay open. These restrictions will expire on 2 December, and our intention is to return to a system of local and regional restrictions. We will set out what this means for retailers and other businesses as soon as possible.

All shops can continue to offer home delivery and click and collect services to customers. Click and collect services allow for doorstep pick-up, which is safer than shopping indoors, in potentially poorly ventilated spaces.

To support businesses and employees, we have announced further financial support. We will be extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until the end of March 2021, providing grants of up to £3,000 per month for businesses required to close in England due to local or national restrictions, extending the existing loan schemes and future fund to the end of January 2021, with an ability to top-up bounce back loans, and increasing the support available to the self-employed through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme Grant Extension.

Additionally, £1.1bn is being given to Local Authorities, distributed on the basis of £20 per head, for one-off payments to enable them to support businesses more broadly.

We will continue to do everything we can to protect businesses, their employees, and livelihoods, exploring all potential options so that we can address these challenging issues.

Thank you again for writing and highlighting these very important issues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Solloway". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end that loops back under the name.

AMANDA SOLLOWAY MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State – Minister for Science, Research and Innovation