

JOHN LEWIS PARTNERSHIP

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Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee
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Dear Rachel

The John Lewis Partnership's response to Coronavirus

I hope you and the rest of the Committee are keeping healthy and well during these challenging times.

Thank you for your Committee's interest in 'The impact of coronavirus on businesses and workers'. As the UK's leading responsible retailer, I thought it would be helpful to set out how the John Lewis Partnership is addressing the challenge.

This is truly a national challenge, requiring Parliament, industry and wider society to work together. We welcome the regulatory easements that have been put in place to allow us to more effectively and efficiently get food and other essential products to customers.

While the measures announced are a help, the unprecedented nature of the crisis means that we simply do not know the full extent to which it will impact public health or the economy. We are therefore calling on the Government to continue to keep the situation under review and to take any further action needed to support the economy and protect workers.

The welfare of our Partners, our customers and the communities we operate in is the absolute priority for the John Lewis Partnership. We welcome the precautionary and social distancing measures announced to control the spread of the virus and I am pleased to say that we have put in place strong controls to apply this right across our operations, including limiting customer numbers in our shops, introducing 'safe distance' floor signage, 'two-metre marshalls' to help manage queues, encouraging contactless shopping and staggering breaks for Partners. It is also why we took the difficult decision to close our 50 John Lewis department stores before the Government announced the tighter restrictions, because we were convinced it was absolutely the right thing to do for our customers and Partners

I believe the most crucial role we can play is in ensuring we continue to provide the UK public with the essential goods they need to successfully and healthily sustain themselves through this period of isolation and staying indoors. While our Waitrose shops and waitrose.com are supplying essential groceries, it is important not to overlook the crucial role of our John Lewis online operation in providing important goods to customers who are staying at home and who are no longer able to shop on the high street and in shopping centres. We

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were pleased to see this reflected in the Government's Guidance on closing certain businesses and venues which confirmed that "online retail is open and encouraged".

We know that our johnlewis.com channel is providing crucial products to customers in their homes as demonstrated by a sharp increase in online sales of essential products since the restrictions have come into place, such as nursery and baby items, kitchen appliances and utensils, and technology for home working. This reflects the fact that these products, which are now only available through online channels, are much valued by the public as they adjust to a new way of life.

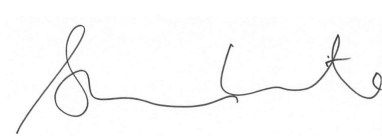
The strong social distancing measures in place in our shops have been replicated in our warehouses and distribution centres. At our Magna Park depot, which services our johnlewis.com home deliveries, we have introduced, amongst other things: mandatory use of hand sanitisers; time provided to Partners to clean workstations, equipment and other kit; the rearrangement of workstations and closing alternate packing benches, plus signage and floor markings to ensure two metre social distancing is maintained. We have also moved Partners in our main call centres which support our John Lewis online operations, to working from home.

As the situation develops, should further restrictions need to be introduced on what are considered non-essential businesses, we would urge the Committee to support online retail remaining an essential channel that should be maintained and encouraged, because it supports social distancing by providing necessary goods direct to the public in their homes.

For the wider community, we have introduced a raft of measures. These include supporting NHS workers by setting aside essential Waitrose products in our supermarkets; dedicating the first opening hour to elderly and vulnerable customers and those caring for them; reserving a proportion of our grocery online slots for vulnerable customers; participating in the voucher scheme for free school meals and establishing a Community Support Fund to help local communities across the country.

I hope this letter assures you of our commitment to working together to support the nation's efforts to tackle coronavirus while maintaining the health of our Partners, customers and the economy.

Yours sincerely



Sharon White
Partner & Chairman