

Coronavirus – Owen Thompson asks supermarkets to take on more delivery drivers

Midlothian MP Owen Thompson has appealed to supermarkets to cut their delivery costs and also take on more drivers in an effort to get groceries out to customers more quickly.

He is especially concerned about vulnerable customers during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Midlothian MP has written to the Chief Executives of the 'big four' supermarkets (Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury and Morrisons) raising concerns about the difficulties people were facing in getting online orders.

He called for more drivers to be employed to meet demand, for delivery charges to be removed and for minimum order levels to be lowered so that vulnerable people can more easily access essential supplies.

Mr Thompson said: "We are in the middle of a crisis and I know supermarket staff are working their socks off to keep shelves stocked and get the goods out to those who need it.

"But it's alarming that some people who need to use deliveries are being told to wait three weeks to get their groceries.

"I know they are under immense pressure – and we all have responsibility to do our bit by showing much more restraint in what we buy. It is essential that supermarkets are able to increase capacity for their online delivery services soon,

especially as more and more people will need to self-isolate over the coming weeks. It's vital that people know they can stay safely at home without worrying about how to feed themselves.

"If more drivers are needed to tackle the demand, perhaps the big supermarkets could employ the services of the Midlothian taxi drivers who are struggling to make a living at the moment. Taxis could help get deliveries out more quickly to those in need, while keeping their own small businesses afloat.

"Reducing the minimum order level and ending charges for delivery would be a welcome move too, so that older people and those in poverty are able to get what they need. It may hit the supermarket's bottom line for a bit, but I'm sure they could cope.

"Everyone is struggling to get to grips with this new reality and we all have to look out for each other to make sure nobody is left without food.

"It's fantastic to see small local shops and public-spirited volunteers across Midlothian offering to deliver goods for free. But this can't completely fill the gap.

"The big supermarkets still have around 70 per cent of the UK's grocery market, so it is essential that they do all they can to get their systems in shape as soon as possible."



Owen Thompson MP