

# Tables and chairs are the answer say the LibDems

Scottish Liberal Democrats have proposed an amendment to the latest coronavirus emergency legislation to help allow more cafés, restaurants and bars when they reopen to use closed roads to enable social distancing between customers.

The amendment confirms that it will not be an offence to place tables and chairs in the road outside premises, provided it is done with the local authority's consent and does not cause an obstruction to disabled people.

This would to a degree conflict with the ban by The City of Edinburgh Council on A boards, advertising flags or bikes with advertisements on them. The council also has expressed a desire that street clutter is minimised. So whether or not this will be permitted in Edinburgh if the amendment is passed, is not yet known.

The Liberal Democrats will also ask The Scottish Government to publish advice to tell businesses about these possibilities and help Scottish local authorities prepare their own plans for the reopening of these businesses.

Edinburgh Western MSP Alex Cole-Hamilton commented: "Once it is safe and they are permitted to reopen, it seems inevitable that cafes, restaurants and bars will need to operate at a much reduced capacity to enable social distancing.

"Embracing a new street cafe culture with more covers outside

could for many make the difference between their business being viable or not.

“Temporarily allowing these businesses to use nearby streets and other open-air spaces would help them lift the shutters when the time is right, protecting jobs and keeping people safe.

“This proposal builds on the progress that Lib Dems have already helped secure towards widening pavements and closing selected roads to traffic except for local residents and emergency vehicles – something councils across the country are already drawing up plans for.

“There needs to be local discretion so the plans are suitable for each area and local residents too. But I want this Bill to give businesses and councils the confidence to work together and plan for the creation of a new street cafe culture.”

