

Rachel Reeves MP  
Chair, Business Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1 0AA

18 March 2020

**BY EMAIL**

Dear Rachel

Following the BEIS Select Committee oral evidence session on 17 March, I wanted to let you know what steps Hermes is taking during the current Covid-19 crisis to protect couriers and consumers and to keep operating and delivering parcels.

**Courier and consumer safety:**

The safety of both our customers and couriers is paramount, particularly in challenging times such as these. We are taking steps to allow parcel delivery to continue as far as possible, while introducing social distancing measures advised by the UK government.

Our current delivery processes already ensure that customers can divert their parcel to a safe place if they do not wish for the delivery to be made in person or if they will not be home.

For those deliveries where the customer has not selected a diversion to a safe place, we have made some temporary changes to the signature process to ensure that contact between couriers and customers is minimised. These changes will also be shown on our website and reiterated within our call centre.

- If customer has already diverted to a safe place, couriers should ensure that that diversion is followed even if the customer is in the property. There is no need to knock on the customer's door or provide a calling card in this instance;
- If customer has not selected diversion to a safe place but there is a safe place available, then couriers should deliver to that safe place following the standard safe place process. To inform the customer that the parcel has been delivered, we will provide a calling card;
- If there is no safe place available then the courier will place the parcel on the doorstep, knock on the customer's door and steps away from the door;
- Where a customer has paid for a signature on delivery, couriers will ask the customer their name and sign Covid-19 in the signature box on behalf of the customer.

In addition, we are also advising couriers of the following precautionary steps:

- Equip yourself with sanitiser gel and wipes to ensure they are to hand should you need to use them. Wipes and sanitiser will be available in sub depots;

- Consider your interactions with others during your daily routines, e.g. limiting handshakes / personal displays of affection / avoiding close contact with people who are unwell;
- Wash your hands with soap and water often – use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available;
- Use wipes to clean regularly touched items such as; hand held terminal devices / mobile phones / handles / steering wheel.

#### **Covid-19 Courier Fund:**

On 5 March, we announced a £1 million fund to support couriers who may need to self-isolate. Hermes will also support them in finding someone to deliver on their behalf if they do not have a substitute and guarantee that their rounds will be kept open for them for when they return. This is because we recognise that, by agreeing to self-isolate themselves in accordance with government requirements, those couriers are benefitting their wider community whilst potentially suffering a negative financial impact themselves.

The fund applies to couriers earning less than £90 a day and who provide services for more than three days a week. This is so we can target the fund at those most in need. Those in receipt of the help will receive £20 a day for each day they would otherwise have been delivering parcels. The daily amount is comparable to what is offered by the government under its Statutory Sick Pay scheme and, for most couriers, they will receive more than they would have done via the statutory scheme which is around £94 a week. Most couriers work part time, providing services to Hermes for around five hours a day. This initiative is supported by the GMB Union.

This is an extraordinary situation and we have taken the decision to help support our couriers financially if they need help and ensure we are doing everything we can to prevent the spread of the virus. It is the right thing to do and Hermes is delighted to see that other companies have followed our lead in announcing support for drivers.

#### **Business continuity planning:**

Home delivery is likely to become even more important during this period, with people self-isolating and social distancing and we are working hard to maintain normal levels of service as far as possible.

We have already seen an increase in our volumes and a change in what people are buying, moving away from fashion and purchasing cleaning and self-care products, as well as non-perishable foods and pet food. Parcel sizes are also increasing as people buy these bulkier items. Larger parcels mean we can fit fewer parcels onto a truck, so we are making more deliveries and collections from our clients, requiring more trips and more drivers.

At present, only drivers delivering to supermarkets are exempt from the Working Time Directive. We are managing increased collections and delivery at present, but if this changes we may need to ask the government to temporarily extend the exemption to other drivers.

We are preparing in case we need to increase our workforce. We are working closely with agencies to prepare for an additional 30% increase in staffing in our parcel hubs and depots - in line with what we would use during the peak Christmas period. We are also preparing to open an additional parcel sorting hub in Nuneaton if necessary.

We also have daily Board level meetings to discuss any changes in advice or guidance and a business continuity planning project jointly led by me and our HR director.

**Employment opportunities:**

We are aware that Covid-19 is already resulting in job losses and some sectors are affected more than others. We have approached the CBI about the most effective way to link up with people looking for temporary or permanent employment in different parts of the UK, perhaps working directly with HR departments to put people in direct contact with us.

We would welcome any support from government to facilitate this and enable us to contact those facing unemployment. We are also using usual approaches to advertise roles. We have already had 3,000 applications for courier roles.

We will of course continue to be guided by medical and UK government advice and keep our measures under the review as the guidance changes. I'd be happy to answer any questions you are your Committee may have about what we are doing during this time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hugo Martin', written in a cursive style.

**Hugo Martin**  
**Director, Legal and Public Affairs**