



The Rt Hon Dr Therese Coffey MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

Dear The Rt Hon Dr Coffey

24 March 2023

We are writing to you today, to express our joint concern over the cost of food in Midlothian, and right across the UK. This has caused impacts to both residents and businesses and shows no signs of improvement. Constituents are regularly reporting to us that supermarkets have shortages, and the costs of purchasing nutritional food such as fruit and vegetables is a great burden to them. Similarly restaurants in Midlothian have seen great success in the past and seek to do so again in the future, but our flourishing hospitality businesses are also voicing concerns about the impacts being placed upon them.

By way of an example, one local business has come to us to express their concern that they face soaring energy and food prices, they are worried that the restaurant industry will shrink by 30% by the end of this year alone. Their own energy costs have increased to £80,000 per annum. On top of that colossal price increase, this local business has seen a 25% increase in the cost of rice and other basic ingredients have doubled, for basic items such as onions, garlic and cream.

Our restaurants are being squeezed by the constant increase in cost, and this will inevitably result in a loss of jobs and opportunities for people here in Midlothian.

Midlothian Council has been very proactive to support residents and businesses in Midlothian. By setting up a Cost of Living Taskforce we have given a laser like focus to the issues people are experiencing, and we have invested almost £1.6m locally to help people. But the UK Government must do more to help.

Therefore, we would be pleased if you can confirm if the Government has any plans to restore the lower VAT rate for tourism and hospitality businesses which your government ended last March. Additionally we would also ask that the UK Government invest additional funding to help support our constituents and businesses through these very difficult times.

We look forward to hearing back from you.

Yours Sincerely

Owen Thompson MP
Member for Midlothian

Cllr Kelly Parry
Midlothian Council Leader