



Tulleys Drive Thru

Notes by Stuart Beare

We took the decision the weekend before last to provide a fresh produce, meat and the basics of bread and milk service from the farm in the form of a drive thru. As supplies locally tightened and supermarkets struggled, we were getting inundated with people driving out to the farm looking for the farm shop, even though we had closed it back in 2014.

We took the decision to create it on Sunday 22nd March, and we opened as a test / pilot on Wednesday 25th March, the response was immediately phenomenal.

Convenience, safe shopping and an excuse to get out of the house all wrapped into one experience.

We're lucky in that we have the space for lots of cars, and for several lines of traffic. We're currently running four order / checkout lanes increasing to six from Thursday.

The orders go onto iPads, payment is contactless and orders feed into six product picking lanes via our EPOS system.

It was chaotic the first day but systems have now settled down, it's now pretty efficient. Selling lines that we've sold out of before the system syncs has been one of the issues.

The main challenge has been sourcing stock, fresh produce is coming out of Covent Garden market daily, fresh meat is coming in daily from a wholesale butcher who was supplying high end restaurants and pubs.

To give an idea of scale, when we had the farm shop running at its full potential, we were averaging around £30k a week. The drive thru has taken £65k in the first 5 days. I'm expecting it to turnover £100k to £120k this week. Margins are also very good.

The media attention has been extraordinary and the local people are seeing it as a community project.

We plan to run it all the time demand is there; supermarkets are now struggling with the social distancing rules and I can see this also being an increasing problem for traditional walk in farm shops. Delivery solutions are expensive to run, so we didn't want to go that way.

The systems have already changed slightly from the first videos we put up, order / checkout points are now under marquees which give some protection from poor weather. We're also installing digital screens at this point to help communicate what's available. We're introducing an FM radio station on the farm, that people can tune into while they wait, again to find out more about the product range and about the project. We're using number plate recognition from one of our CCTV cameras to help make the preparation and collection of orders more efficient and order them.

We've put our full creative, marketing and tech team at it who with the entertainment business now closed would otherwise have been twiddling their thumbs.

Buying food is one of the only things that people can get out of the house to do, hopefully we've made that safer than visiting a store, different enough that people see it as a form of entertainment and efficient enough that visitors won't get fed up with wait times. If they are waiting, they are doing so from the comfort of their own cars, rather than stood 2m apart around a supermarket car park.