



Zooming with our younger members

Last week, it was a great pleasure to be invited to chat with our newly formed Mid Scotland and Fife Young Conservatives Group, a dozen of whom took part in their first Zoom call. This was led by Gavin McWhinnie, who has done a terrific job bringing many new faces into the association's activities and I want to thank him for all the work he is doing behind the scenes to prepare for our young members' input to the Holyrood election campaign whenever that might be.

Murdo and I were asked a whole range of questions about jobs and the economy, about education and manifesto commitments and we took the opportunity to ask the group for their own views on a wide range of issues, including about the use of social media. There is no doubt they are a very committed and well-informed group and we are very lucky to have them.

We will be undertaking these discussions on a regular basis and obviously we will be welcoming them into the campaign team when we can get back onto the doorstep. Their additional resources will be very good news for all our long serving stalwarts who have often felt our canvass teams have been too small and maybe a bit over-stretched when it comes to delivering up all the longer driveways!

If any readers know of younger people who might like to join this new group, please let me know and I will put them in touch with Gavin.

Health Issues



I cannot speak as a health expert or as a health professional but I would like to share some thoughts with you about the health service in Scotland, seen largely through the eyes of the many constituents who have come to me with their concerns.

Firstly, there is near unanimous support for our doctors and nurses and all the medical professionals who are on the front line. Very seldom do I receive any complaints on this basis and, of course, the Covid19 crisis has just heightened our gratitude for and appreciation of all that they do.

There are, however, many concerns about the way the health service is managed and Covid19 has thrown these into sharp focus.

I spoke with a very senior health official from Fife who told me that Covid19 had proved that new management structures, especially those related to hospital ward management, could work very effectively if the decisions were made by those with clinical expertise rather than by “managers” who do not have the necessary expertise. She hoped that a major rethink take place about what organisation can successfully be implemented given the experience of Covid19.

For far too long, the SNP Government has failed to tackle the inherent failings with the NHS management structures. For example, it has persistently refused to acknowledge and address the concerns about the integrated joint board (IJB) approach and about the problems

which have arisen within the application of an integrated approach to health and social care. The principles may be widely agreed but the practice is not.

A second issue which gives cause for concern is the lack of support for NHS staff and those who may wish to make a complaint or report an incident. NHS Trusts say they are addressing this issue but, as yet, there is little sign of progress. As readers know, the breast care scandal in Tayside and the appalling situation which continues to affect the patients of the disgraced, former NHS Tayside surgeon, Professor Eljamel provide little encouragement.

Thirdly, medical professionals tell me that the Covid19 pandemic has also put into sharp focus the need to quicken the pace of reform to primary care services. We know just how hard some communities were hit by closures of GP surgeries before Covid19 and there is now even more of a problem when it comes to managing the access to primary care.

If I look at the correspondence I receive from constituents about health matters, a very large proportion refers to the weaknesses in the administration of patients' care – long waits for diagnosis and treatment, a lack of information and a lack of a coherent approach. That is a completely different matter from the medical care provided.

The most urgent need now in this regard is, of course, to have a detailed timetable of when other health services can fully resume. The effects of the pandemic stretch far beyond Covid19 so it is vitally important that the Scottish Government provides this timetable as soon as possible.

The Economy



As the pandemic progresses, the scale of the crisis affecting the economy becomes ever more apparent, not least the downturn in GDP, the spectre of mass unemployment and business failure. In recent days, we heard about the job losses at Rolls Royce and, across Mid Scotland and Fife, we now know just how many small to medium sized businesses are looking at very uncertain futures. A number of these have been in touch with me, especially in the hotel and hospitality sector and I have been doing my best to point them in the right direction as to where they can get help.

Of course, a very large proportion of that help has come from the UK Government as can be seen in the following table. The £10 billion UK Government support compares with the £255 million from the Scottish Government.

Total UK Government spending in Scotland on coronavirus measures	
Scheme	Spend (£ million)
Job Retention Scheme	4,851
Self-Employed Income Support Scheme	693
Statutory Sick Pay refund	77
Universal Credit uplift	119.5
Working Tax Credit uplift	28.6
Bounce Back Loans	825.9
Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme	464.6
Barnett <u>consequentials</u>	3,500
TOTAL	10,560

In a related context, readers may wish to see Murdo Fraser's Scotsman column from last week about what might have happened had Scotland been independent- a very frightening thought!

Murdo Fraser MSP Scotsman Column

The rural economy and tourism



Last week, I spent some time discussing with farmers the problems they are facing as a result of Covid19 and last Friday I was part of a Zoom session with NFUS in Fife and Kinross. It was very worrying to hear the extent of the problems, especially in some key food sectors and the significant loss of income forecast because of the cancellation of all agricultural shows this summer. On environmental issues there were concerns too about the damage that has been done by an increase in the population of beavers, and of the damage to land that has been caused by a small, but nonetheless, highly active number of people whose irresponsible behaviour has led to such abuse of the countryside, most specifically fly-tipping. I have highlighted this issue in my last two newsletters and it is good to hear that, at last, recycling centres are fully open. Since most of the enquiries to my office about this have been related to Perthshire and Kinross-shire, I am taking the liberty of re-printing the most recent information from the Perth and Kinross Council's website.

We re-opened the Recycling Centres, welcoming householders and most commercial customers, with all materials from Thursday 4th June.

Restrictions will still apply to large commercial vehicles (i.e. vehicles larger than a transit-type van) and trailers to ensure efficient traffic flow on sites but other commercial permit holders will be able to tip chargeable waste and recycling at the Recycling Centres. Commercial permit holders are also able to use Friarton Weighbridge which reopened on 1 June. People with a Recycling Centre Permit (e.g. Commercial Permit or Domestic Exemption Permit) are asked to display it on their windscreen as a A4 print-out or electronically using a tablet so that Recycling Centre Attendants or the Weighbridge Attendant can view it easily from a distance of 2 metres. Commercial customers looking to dispose of chargeable waste or recycling must also purchase pre-paid vouchers by telephoning 01738 476476, or use the Friarton Weighbridge where they can pay by card only.

We anticipate that the Recycling Centres will be very busy and that people may need to queue and allow for more time on site to adhere to the social distancing guidance. We are continuing to ask our residents to be patient, and possibly delay going to the recycling

centres to ensure that queues are as small as possible, as this has worked successfully over the last few days. Our advice to people using the Recycling Centres is to separate their materials in advance of coming to the site. The re-opening last week is being supported on each of the sites by the Traffic Wardens, Police Scotland and Waste Services Officers as well as temporary road closures, road cones and additional explanatory signage.

*Further information is regularly updated on www.pkc.gov.uk/recycle but please do not hesitate to contact **Christina Flynn** if you have any comments or queries.*

Clearly, Scotland's tourism sector is absolutely vital to kick-start the economy again. Many bed and breakfasts and holiday let companies have had a particularly tough time, especially as they feel very much at a competitive disadvantage with similar companies south of the border who are just beginning to open their doors again.

In a letter to Fergus Ewing last week, tourism bosses spelt out the biggest challenge is maintaining the 2 metre social distancing rule. They have requested the Scottish Government implements the WHO rule of 1 metre.

They have also requested clear guidance on dates for which they can take new bookings. The current uncertainty just adds to the concerns for the future of the sector.

SNP hypocrisy over local government funding

SNP delays £155m lifeline as councils face cash crisis

Authorities in the dark over failure to hand over promised vital funding

By David Bell
Political Correspondent

COUNCILS across Scotland have still not been handed the £155m of promised extra funding from the Scottish Secretary, Jim Swire, which would help them deal with the rising costs of the coronavirus crisis. The Scottish Government has said it will be in touch with the councils in the next few days to discuss the funding. The Scottish Government has said it will be in touch with the councils in the next few days to discuss the funding. The Scottish Government has said it will be in touch with the councils in the next few days to discuss the funding.

Walk on the wild side



The first group to walk on the wild side appeared in a town in June, 2019, as a protest against the government's decision to allow the sale of wild game.

Surgeon in firing line as testing fails to meet targets

By Yvonne Gordon
Political Editor

NICOLA STURGEON has been heavily criticised for a series of failures in the way the Scottish Government has handled the coronavirus crisis. The Scottish Government has said it will be in touch with the councils in the next few days to discuss the funding. The Scottish Government has said it will be in touch with the councils in the next few days to discuss the funding.

German child sex offender identified as the prime suspect in McCann case

NEIL MACKAY The Scots and Irish roots of US racism Page 14

ALISON BOWAT Could Scots do with a stern talking to? Page 13

MARK SMITH English get-out clause protects Sturgeon Page 14

NEIL MACKAY The Scots and Irish roots of US racism Page 14

ALISON BOWAT Could Scots do with a stern talking to? Page 13

MARK SMITH English get-out clause protects Sturgeon Page 14

At the local government committee last week, COSLA confirmed that councils still haven't received the £155m promised by the SNP to help them deal with Covid19. This is after April when the UK Government announced Scotland would receive extra funding for local government yet it still hasn't been passed on!

Calling former teachers



Readers will have seen in the media that the General Teaching Council for Scotland is relaxing its regulations to allow former teachers to return to help youngsters in the virtual classroom during Covid19. This means that people like me, who are former qualified teachers and who hold GTCS registration, can offer their services to assist with home-schooling or tutoring. May I encourage those who meet these criteria and who might want to help out to look at the GTCS website for details www.gtcs.org.uk. With up to 40% of pupils not engaging with schools in some areas there is a desperate need for additional help.

And finally, volunteering week



Given our extensive political duties recently, I have not been able to undertake as much volunteering during Covid19 as I would have liked but I have managed to help with some dog walking and a twice a week shopping expedition to help some elderly constituents who have found it impossible to get out and difficult to acquire delivery slots. Scarf, gloves and bags in hand, I have made my way to various supermarkets and what a pleasure it has been to see so many young volunteers assisting too. Good for them and I hope they will continue to volunteer in the future. Strong communities depend on their volunteers.

[**Find Out More About Me Here**](#)

