



Dear Readers

There is finally some good news on the horizon, with the prospect of vaccines for Covid-19 being rolled out to the general population in the new year. We are still waiting on full details of this, but it is encouraging that progress does finally seem to be happening. I know everyone is frustrated by the restrictions that we are currently living under, but sadly many of these are necessary to prevent any further spread of the virus until such time as the vaccines are widely available.

In the meantime, much of the business at Holyrood remains focussed on the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences. A great deal of my time is spent trying to support individuals and businesses who need financial support from the Scottish Government. It is fundamentally depressing, against this backdrop, that we continue to see the SNP pushing for a second independence referendum, when there are so many other and vital issues that they should be focussing on.

**MURDO FRASER CALLS FOR MORE SUPPORT
FOR PERTH AND KINROSS BUSINESSES
AFFECTED BY COVID RESTRICTIONS**



Murdo Fraser MSP has called on the Scottish Government to do more to support businesses across Perth and Kinross which have been affected by a loss of trade as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

The area is currently in Tier 3, which means that many businesses can still operate. However, because of wider restrictions, many have seen a collapse in business. One example of this is in self-catering holiday lets, where operators are legally entitled to continue to trade, but the travel restrictions that have been applied mean that business has all but disappeared, with substantial cancellations for the coming months.

These businesses are not entitled to the levels of support available in Tier 4 areas. The Scottish Government announced this week a new discretionary fund for local authorities worth £30 million, but details of this are still awaited.

Mr Fraser, who represents the Mid Scotland and Fife region, raised his concerns in a meeting this morning (Thursday) with the Scottish Government Economy Secretary Fiona Hyslop.

He commented: "I have been contacted by many businesses across Perth and Kinross suffering serious losses at the present time due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Whilst they are legally able to remain trading, in reality their

business has all but disappeared.

“Problems are particularly acute in the tourism and hospitality sector, where self-catering accommodation providers have seen a collapse in bookings due to the travel restrictions that have been introduced. In addition, suppliers in the food and events sector, and associated businesses such as taxis, have been seriously impacted.

“Yet these businesses have not seen the same level of support going to those which have been forced to close.”

Mr Fraser continued: “I raised with Fiona Hyslop today the need for financial support for suffering businesses across Perth and Kinross, otherwise we are going to see real hardship and business failures, with consequential job losses. The Scottish Government has announced that they will be giving local authorities £30 million to set up discretionary funding schemes, and while this is welcome I am concerned that this will come nowhere close to what is required to meet the need. It is also likely to be another week before details of this scheme will be announced.

SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVE MSP ENCOURAGES RESIDENTS TO SUPPORT COUNTRY’S HIGH STREETS



Scottish Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser is encouraging residents to back the party's 'Support our high streets' campaign.

The politician, who represents the Mid Scotland and Fife region, feels that yesterday's (Monday) re-opening of Scotland's high street shops is a major step in trying to get the country's economy moving again following the lockdown.

Commenting, Mr Fraser said: "As Scotland moves from the public health emergency we are undoubtedly facing a significant economic crisis. In April alone, total Scottish sales slumped by 40% - an unprecedented nosedive.

"The Scottish Conservatives will continue to stand up for jobs and livelihoods to ensure our economy suffers as little as possible over the course of this crisis."

Mr Fraser continued: "Our message is that the Scottish Government must start to revitalise our economy, but so can we – we can get out there and spend money.

"Scottish Conservatives were out on the high streets on Monday, publicly highlighting the great shops we have, and the great people who work in them."

The campaign also calls for:

- Greater support from local authorities, BIDs or the enterprise agencies to facilitate high street shops switching to socially distant trading. Freeing up planning restrictions and licensing along with greater support for BIDs can help achieve this.
- The Scottish Government to bring forward its review of the 2-metre rule. International evidence already exists, and every day counts for businesses: even a few more days' notice on any changes would help.
- Scrapping car parking charges as well as offering pop-up park and ride facilities to help people that will not be able to use a public transport network that is significantly under capacity.

- Sustained cuts to business rates including reducing the large business supplement. Rate relief should be extended for as long as possible.

MURDO FRASER MSP BACKS CALL FOR FULL FIBRE BROADBAND ROLL-OUT



Scottish Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser has backed plans to ensure every home and business premise has access to full fibre broadband by 2027.

Mr Fraser says the proposals, unveiled by Scottish Conservative party leader Douglas Ross at their virtual conference, will help to rebuild communities in the Mid Scotland and Fife region after the Covid pandemic, with a huge boost to digital infrastructure.

The party's proposals would see laws changed to ensure that every new home in Scotland must be built with full fibre broadband.

Mr Fraser says the SNP have completely broken their promise to deliver 100% super-fast broadband to all in Mid Scotland and Fife by 2021, and the proposals from the Scottish Conservatives, will help to rectify their failures.

With many workers and businesses set to continue working from home, Mr Fraser says the plans to deliver gold standard broadband in Mid Scotland and Fife will be of huge benefit to people and businesses in the region.

Commenting, Mr Fraser said: “Having access to gold standard broadband is becoming more and more of a requirement for people and businesses in Mid Scotland and Fife.

“The proposals from the Scottish Conservatives would see a major digital infrastructure upgrade in Mid Scotland and Fife which is hugely welcome.

“The SNP have broken their broadband promises because they are too focused on another divisive referendum to ensure premises throughout Mid Scotland and Fife have the broadband they need.

“Poor broadband speed and lack of broadband is still one of the main issues I receive complaints on from constituents. With more and more people working at home, we must have the digital infrastructure to cope with demand and the Scottish Conservatives bold proposals for the coming years will achieve that.”

**SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVES’ DELIGHT AT
BENEFIT OF CHANCELLOR’S SPENDING REVIEW
TO PERTH AND KINROSS**



MSPs Liz Smith and Murdo Fraser have expressed their delight at targeted support from the UK Government which will accelerate the Tay Cities Deal from 15 years to 10 and provide £150 million for the deal in the process.

The Scottish Conservative politicians, who both represent the Mid Scotland and Fife region, were reacting to the Chancellors' Spending Review 2020, and its implications for Scotland, which will see an additional £2.4 billion be provided to the country through the Barnett formula in the 2021-22 financial year, including £1.3 billion in relation to Covid-19.

In addition, the Spending Review confirmed that Scotland will benefit from £15 billion in UK-wide funding for Test and Trace; an additional £733 million to buy successful vaccines and £128 million to support vaccine research and development. And Scotland will also benefit from £3.5 billion in additional funding to help the Plan for Jobs initiative, including the £2 billion Kickstart scheme for young people.

Commenting, Liz Smith MSP said: "The announcement from the Chancellor's Spending Review that the Tay Cities Deal will be accelerated from 15 years to 10 is great news and will be warmly welcomed in Perth. This means a pledge to distribute cash for the deal over 10 years and it will drive forward economic priorities in Perth, including helping fund the Cross Tay Link Road, and create

thousands of jobs in the area.

“Tay Cities Deal is a vital cog in the wheel for economic growth in Perth and it will bring a long-term boost to the area’s economy.”

And Mr Fraser added: “The news that funding from the Tay Cities Deal will be rolled out over 10 years is very welcome indeed – this followed extensive lobbying by local Scottish Conservatives.

And the Chancellor’s Spending Review also confirmed that the UK Government will provide £150 million towards the deal.

“The Tay Cities Deal will fund a number of projects including the valuable Cross Tay Link Road and also go towards research work at the James Hutton Institute in Invergowrie. The Cross Tay Link Road is vital as it will generate millions of pounds to the local economy, while also addressing concerns about air quality by diverting traffic out of Perth city centre.

“This Spending Review once again highlights the tremendous financial contribution of the UK Government towards Scotland and demonstrates the strength of the Union. The review confirms an additional £2.4 billion for the SNP Government, including £1.3 billion in relation to the pandemic.

“This money should be wisely spent by the SNP Government in order to grow the economy, improve public services and support businesses and people across the country.”

**MURDO FRASER MSP BACKS NEW BANK
CARD TO HELP VULNERABLE RESIDENTS**



Scottish Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser is encouraging elderly residents to make use of a newly launched bank card.

The politician, who represents the Mid Scotland and Fife region, is backing the Trusted Person card, rolled out by the Bank of Scotland, as it has various beneficial advantages.

This followed Mr Fraser contacting various banks to ask what help they could provide to vulnerable residents in his constituency during the pandemic.

The Trusted Person card allows a Bank of Scotland customer to link to an account to enable a loved one or carer to either shop or go to a bank ATM on their behalf.

The card has a weekly spending limit of £100 and a weekly cash withdrawal limit of £100.

Commenting, Mr Fraser said: “The Trusted Person bank card is a really useful initiative that will help elderly residents who may be self-isolating or are anxious about shopping and going to use an ATM due to the pandemic.

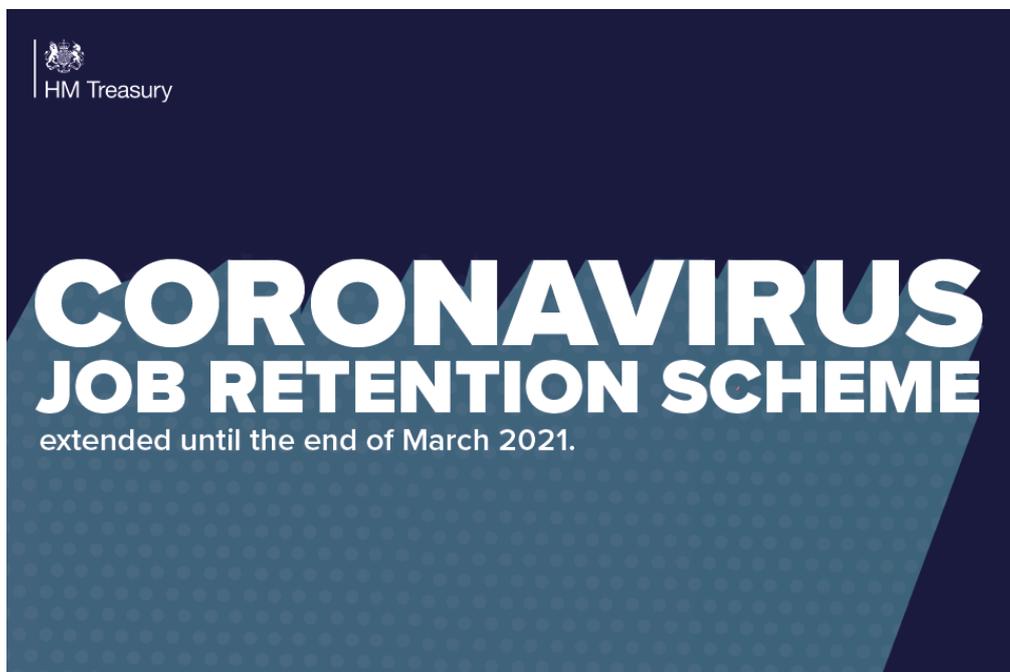
“One of the many benefits of this scheme is that the main account holder

retains full control of the bank account, can cancel the additional card at any time and can keep track of how it is being used. It means that a loved one or carer can either shop or go to an ATM on behalf of the resident.

“It will help many elderly residents who are in the position of not wanting to risk going to a bank ATM or are nervous about shopping. The card can’t be used to purchase goods online or over the phone and all transactions made using it will be shown on the customer’s account.”

Mr Fraser added: “It is a very useful, secure scheme and shows that the Bank of Scotland have been looking at ways to help elderly customers during these unprecedented times.”

Scottish Conservative MSP hails success of UK Government’s job retention scheme



Scottish Conservative and Unionist MSP Murdo Fraser has hailed the UK Government’s job retention scheme for helping to protect thousands of jobs across Fife.

The MSP says it highlights the strength of being part of the United Kingdom

during a time of unprecedented crisis and shows that Westminster has provided invaluable support to individuals and businesses throughout Scotland during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The latest figures from HMRC show that a total of 628,200 people across Scotland have been protected by the so-called furlough scheme, with a total of 37,900 protected in Fife alone.

The UK Government has provided further support to businesses and individuals in Scotland through the self-employed scheme, bounce back loans, VAT referrals and increases in welfare support such as Universal Credit, as well as an extra £3.8 billion in support through Barnett Consequential funding.

Commenting, Murdo Fraser MSP, who represents the Mid Scotland and Fife region, said: "These figures from the job retention scheme are absolutely astonishing and highlight the support provided by the UK Government in order to protect thousands of jobs across Fife.

"This crisis has truly shown the strength of being part of the union and the need for a UK-wide response to this unprecedented crisis.

"The job retention scheme from the UK Government scheme has been one of the biggest support schemes from any country in the world and these figures highlight just how many thousands of jobs have been protected over the last few months, including in those in Fife."

He continued: "The UK Government has also provided further support through the self-employed scheme, bounce back loans, VAT referrals and increases in Universal Credit as well as £3.8 billion worth of extra support through Barnett Consequential funding.

"The UK Government has stepped up and supported businesses and individuals in Fife throughout this crisis, safeguarding jobs, protecting our vulnerable and helping our economy recover in the future."

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