

SCC Comment on Programme for Government 2019-2020

03/09/2019

Commenting on the First Minister's Programme for Government announcement, Dr Liz Cameron OBE, Director & Chief Executive, Scottish Chambers of Commerce, said:

On Scotland's Future:

"The First Minister has outlined the Scottish Government's plan to seek a section 30 order from the UK Government, during the passage of the newly announced Referendums (Scotland) Bill in 2020.

"Businesses are in need of certainty and stability, two things which are sorely lacking in the current economic and political environment. We will continue our process of engagement with our members across the country to understand how the prospect of another referendum on Scotland's constitutional future could potentially affect their ability to grow, create new jobs and invest."

On Climate Change:

"A joined-up approach from private and public sector is absolutely essential to tackle the global challenge of climate change. Business is already playing its part and we share the Government's ambition of leaving the earth in the best condition possible for future generations. We welcome the Government's 'Scottish Green Deal' approach, including the pledge to improving Scotland's bus network and the Green Growth Accelerator.

"The Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan will act as an important enabler to upskill and reskill Scotland's workforce and we look forward to playing our part.

"Chambers of Commerce in Scotland, including Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow are leading the Circular Economy agenda and with a wealth of private sector expertise in this area, we will ensure the business voice is engaged in the newly-announced Circular Economy Bill."

On International Trade & Exporting:

"Businesses will welcome the First Minister's focus on international trade and exporting; a critical enabler of Scotland's economic growth. The four-year Foreign Direct Investment Growth Plan and the £37 million further investment in R&D technologies will act as upbeat measures to continue raising the bar of Scotland's place in the world.

"We are ramping up our international trade footprint and leveraging our global business-to-business connections, and the continued collaboration between private and public sector will be key to unlocking the potential of international growth markets."

Business Competitiveness / Taxation:

"Whilst we have welcomed the progress that has been made on the issue of Non-Domestic Rates, the bill in its current form does not go far enough to reduce the rates burden being faced by Scottish businesses. For example, the current poundage rate is at a 20 year high with £65 million worth of costs being put onto businesses due to the Large Business Supplement being out of parity with the level currently in England.

"The introduction of the Transient Visitor Levy Bill is one that will be met with caution by businesses across Scotland. Many of Scotland's communities depend on our world-leading tourism and hospitality sector. Therefore, what is absolutely clear, is the need for business communities across Scotland to be fully engaged before the introduction or implementation of any additional tax burden is placed on businesses."

On Digital & Infrastructure Investment:

“Digital innovation is one of the main drivers of the global economy. In order to keep up with international competitors in this quickly expanding field, we must be on the ball when it comes to investing and expanding our digital capability.

“With 100% fibre broadband coverage still to be achieved across Scotland, it is critical we pick up the pace of fibre broadband delivery and guarantee every part of Scotland is connected. We urge the Scottish and UK Government to work together, collaborate and join-up, enabling our businesses and communities to reap the economic benefits that connectivity can bring.”

On Workplace Diversity:

“We welcome the First Minister’s continuing commitment to diversity in the workplace and taking steps to further reduce the gaps in the current system of work.

“The pledging of £5 million over the next three years to help up to 2,000 women return to work after a career break is an important step in helping women back into work as well as addressing Scotland’s skills shortages and recruitment challenges.”