

Commenting on the draft Scottish Budget for 2020 - 21, published 6th February by the Scottish Government, Dr Liz Cameron OBE, Chief Executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, said:

"Minister Kate Forbes MSP has delivered a budget in difficult circumstances. Without knowledge of the taxation and investment policies of the UK government the Scottish Government has rightly gone ahead with committing to a spending plan albeit with a blindfold on. I would also like to extend my congratulations to the Minister as the first woman to have delivered a budget in the UK.

"The Scottish Chambers of Commerce network welcomes the commitment to investing in the National Infrastructure Mission, city and region growth funds. We also congratulate the Scottish Government for its commitment to no further increases in income tax divergence between Scotland and the rest of the UK this year."

On Infrastructure Investment, Dr Cameron said:

"The budget hits a delicate balance between the need to invest in a low carbon future and the sustainability of our rural communities and crumbling road network. Commitment to current plans of investment in A9 and the A96, as well as the commitment to regenerate the Clyde, are key asks from the business community and we are pleased these will continue to go ahead along with other key projects. Our members also welcome support for decarbonisation of transport in the Future Transport Fund and the Low Carbon transport loan fund."

On Skills, Dr Cameron said:

"The Scottish Chamber network has high ambitions for the development of its current and future workforce so the increases to the further and higher education sector as well as the skills and training budget to support apprentices are a step in the right direction. We look forward to supporting the further development of the Scottish Government's career's strategy."

On Non-Domestic Rates, Dr Cameron said:

"We were relieved that parliamentarians recently voted to maintain the universal business rate. Today's budget shows that the Scottish Government has heard our plea to ease the impact of rates on businesses. But in this key year when Scottish companies face further uncertainty, we urge the Scottish Government to pull out all the stops to help them deliver the sustainable and inclusive economy we all crave."