

Immediate action in response to COVID-19

New measures to limit the impact of COVID-19 on the business community in Scotland have been announced by Finance Secretary Kate Forbes.

The following steps will be put in place to support businesses during the 2020-21 financial year:

- a 75% rates relief for retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with a rateable value of less than £69,000 from 1 April 2020
- an £80 million fund to provide grants of at least £3,000 to small businesses in sectors facing the worst economic impact of COVID-19
- 1.6% rates relief for all properties across Scotland, effectively reversing the planned below inflation uplift in the poundage from 1 April 2020
- a fixed rates relief of up to £5,000 for all pubs with a rateable value of less than £100,000 from 1 April 2020

The Finance Secretary will also write to all local authorities urging them to respond positively to requests from rate payers for payment deferrals for a fixed period.

Ms Forbes said:

“COVID-19 will have challenging implications for businesses and the economy over the coming weeks and months.

“As well as following the latest health and travel advice, it’s also crucial we consider the latest economic analysis and listen carefully to what the business community is telling us. We know that the tourism and hospitality sectors are facing immediate pressure, which is why we have directed support to them in particular.

“All rate-payers will benefit from a relief that effectively reverses the planned inflationary uplift in the poundage that was due to come into effect in April.

“The measures I’m announcing today will provide £320 million of assistance to Scottish business and ensures that all Non Domestic Rate consequentials we expect to receive from the UK Government associated with the COVID-19 outbreak will be used to provide Scottish business with support through what is likely to be a difficult time. We will also be making the case to the UK Government that, because of the larger number of small businesses in Scotland, we need additional resources to be able to provide further support.

“Businesses receiving support are being encouraged to operate with fair work principles including supporting staff to self-isolate when they need to and if they have caring responsibilities and to consider keeping staff in employment where at all possible.

“We continue to work closely with our partners to identify what further support is needed and I’d encourage any businesses with questions relating to the impact of COVID-19 to contact the helpline we launched this week.”