

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

28th January 2021

Following the announcement of the Scottish Budget by Cabinet Secretary for Finance Kate Forbes, Dr Liz Cameron, Chief Executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, said:

“The position of Scottish businesses has never been so precarious. The Scottish Government’s announcements today are welcome but do not go nearly as far enough to avoid risk of widespread business collapse and job losses.

“Yes, there is light at the end of the tunnel with the vaccination programme but restrictions to prevent the spread of the virus have been devastating. We understand that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance faces difficult choices in setting the budget particularly ahead of that of the UK, in a time when the country faces extraordinary challenges.

“Business will be disappointed that further details on an economic route map on how we will exit this crisis aligned with the roll out of the vaccine were not provided today. This is a critical component if businesses are to unleash the investment our country so desperately needs.”

On Non-Domestic Rates:

“The Cabinet Secretary has listened to us and has delivered a reduction in the Non-Domestic Rate (NDR) poundage rate. However, longer-term, we believe the system is unfair and needs significant reform.

“Plans for a three months extension of rates relief is a too short a reprieve. We need commitment to a 12-month reliefs package to provide the certainty business needs. Clearly there is more to do, and we await further announcements from the Chancellor to see what further support can be made available and expect Scottish Government to pass on the equivalent consequential funding to businesses.”

On Business Support:

“The doubling of the discretionary fund is good news particularly for those businesses who have fallen through the gaps of other support packages. However, it is imperative that the process for businesses is clear, transparent and quick across all local authorities to ensure funding is available for businesses quickly and immediately.

“Now is the time to pull out the stops and redouble efforts to ensure business support comes through. We need to see a significant ramping up to get those funds that have been promised out the door and to businesses.”

On Infrastructure:

“The Scottish Government’s commitment to infrastructure investment is absolutely necessary for Scotland and the UK to be in a position to build back better and meet net zero ambitions. Now is the time for a vision driven by ambition and a willingness to collaborate like never before. This must be put first and foremost ahead of any political point scoring this year.”

On skills and training:

“SCC welcomes these important steps to support jobs, employment and training. We called for training academies and we are pleased to see the Cabinet Secretary has acted on our recommendations, particularly the focus on green jobs. It is now critical that the government and academia works in partnership with the private sector to ensure benefits are fully realised.”

On Protecting Jobs:

“We maintain our call to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to extend the furlough scheme beyond April 2021 and outline further initiatives to protect business and jobs at the UK Budget in March.”

On mental health support:

“Business will welcome this as we understand the toll the pandemic has taken on our customers, employees and communities.

“Recovery of our wellbeing is just as important as economic recovery, with many employers investing in their own employee support programmes. This commitment from the Scottish Government will enhance these efforts.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- From the Scottish Government – [Scottish Budget 2021 - 2022](#)

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- The Scottish Chambers of Commerce is Scotland's largest business network with over 12,000 business members, across a network of 30 regional Chambers of Commerce, providing business support, business intelligence and business connections: <https://www.scottishchambers.org.uk/>
- In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, SCC has created a [Covid-19 Support Hub](#) with access to resources, support and advice, designed to support business communities with the effects of the crisis.