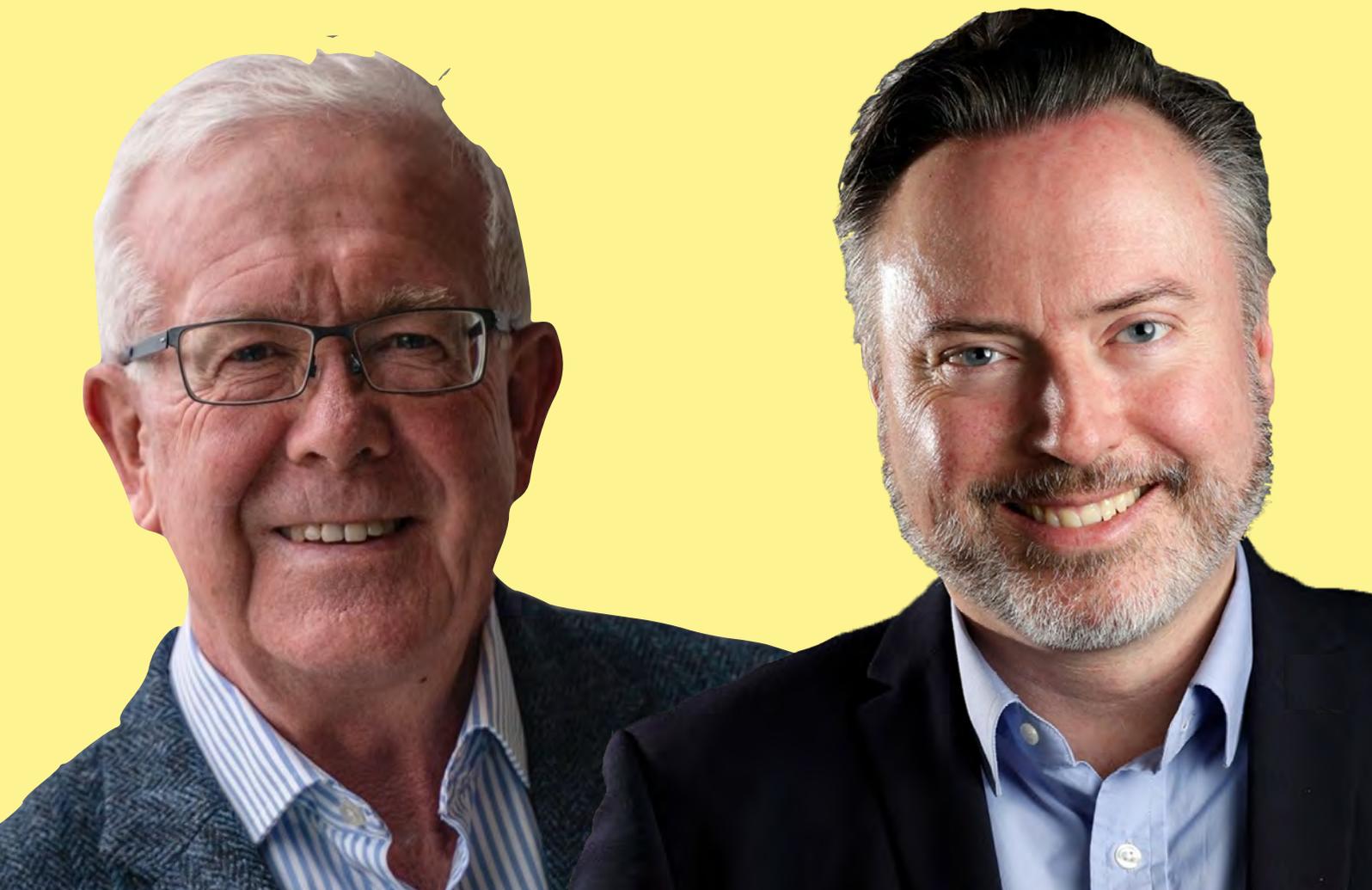


SUPPORTING STIRLING'S BUSINESSES DURING CORONAVIRUS



BRUCE CRAWFORD MSP & ALYN SMITH MP

The Coronavirus pandemic has led to serious economic challenges, particularly as lockdown has meant that many businesses were simply unable to operate for an extended period of time.

Working together for Stirling

Days prior to the announcement of lockdown, Alyn issued a video statement on Facebook.

In the statement, Stirling's MP committed to working with Stirling's MSP, Bruce Crawford, stating that both representatives and their teams would be available to support those who needed it throughout this crisis - including businesses.



Calling for support for business

Bruce was clear throughout the pandemic in his support of the cross-party approach.

Bruce also stressed that if certain nations and regions of the UK began to exit lockdown at different times, it was vitally important that the existing support for businesses would continue to be available.



Alyn and Bruce have worked closely with local and national government to ensure that the support available to businesses and communities in Stirling benefitted as many people as possible.



Support companies to support customers

Alyn called on the UK government to provide support for travel insurance companies. Not only was this to support businesses and their employees, but also to ensure that as many UK nationals as possible could return home and get clarity from their insurers, as the crisis continued.

Preventing panic buying

Both Alyn and Bruce urged against panic buying at the start of the lockdown. Thanks to the hard work of those in the local food retail sector, local shops overcame the initial challenges brought about by panic buying, with regular stock levels replenished quickly.



Supporting the Haulage industry

Alyn joined calls to support the Scottish Haulage industry. During the crisis, both Stirling and Scotland needed a robust transport and logistics network to sustain and support the recovery of all other businesses and the wider economy.

Duty waiver for alcohol hand sanitiser

Alyn joined calls for a waiver on alcohol duty for alcohol based hand sanitiser. When the Government announced its intentions to implement this, Alyn welcomed the move. This enabled local businesses, like McQueen Gin in Callander, to assist in combatting the spread of Coronavirus, by providing hand sanitiser.



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Government support for Stirling

The Scottish Government welcomed the various forms of support announced by the UK Government at the start of lockdown, and encouraged everyone to seek that help where possible - including businesses. In addition to this, the Scottish Government announced a £350 million support package for those facing financial and social risks as a result of the crisis.

Stirling Council supporting businesses

The 'Scottish Government Coronavirus Business Support Fund' was announced, and is administered by local authorities. In Stirling, this made grants of up to £25,000 available to eligible businesses. More information can be found at the attached link.



Directing business to the right support

By the end of April, 73.4% of Stirling Business Support Applications had been processed. Alyn and Bruce were keen to draw attention to the work that Stirling Council and the Scottish Government had done together on this. In a number of cases, Alyn and Bruce worked closely with Stirling Council and Scottish Government departments to see that the support reached as many local businesses as possible.

73.4% STIRLING BUSINESS SUPPORT APPLICATIONS PROCESSED
CORONAVIRUS SUPPORT
 £15 MILLION TO OVER 1,200 LOCAL BUSINESSES.

Rates relief for businesses

The Scottish Government implemented significant rates relief for businesses. Alyn and Bruce both support these measures as another way to lift the financial burden off businesses during this crisis.



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Supporting Forgotten Ltd's Campaign

The UK Govt support for self employed people is welcome, but has not gone far enough. Forgotten Ltd campaigned to include those who have been left out from this much-needed support. Alyn and Bruce both support the Forgotten Ltd campaign.

Supporting those excluded from Government support

Alyn also supports 'Excluded UK', which plays a similar role, in highlighting the injustice done to the three million individuals who are exempt from UK government support. This includes newly self-employed people and many new businesses. Alyn has written an article, published in a national newspaper, outlining his support for these groups.

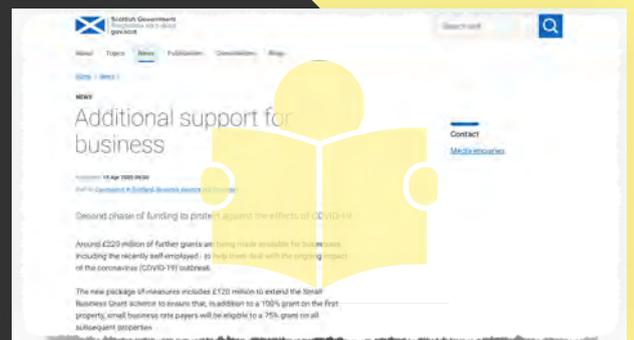


Welcoming new developments

Confirmation from developers that the new business complex at Craigforth will go ahead was very welcome. This is a vote of confidence in the Stirling economy, and highlights that Stirling is very much open for business.

More support for smaller businesses

In April, the Scottish Government announced a second phase of funding to support the economy, which included £120 million to extend the Small Business Grant scheme.



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Support for the self-employed

The Scottish Government announced a £100 million fund for newly self-employed people, and other groups which were ineligible for existing Scottish or UK Government schemes. This new funding, provided by the Scottish Government, was administered by Stirling Council.

Ensuring hospitality establishments are safe

During a virtual parliament session, Bruce asked the Rural Economy and Tourism Secretary about the support available for pubs, restaurants and hotels - which are of vital importance to tourism in Stirling – particularly for those which might find it challenging to implement social distancing measures as a result of their size.



Small businesses need support

Alyn continued to make it clear that the needs of Scottish businesses must be committed to during the pandemic.

Clarity for the construction industry

When some services resumed in summer, Bruce was keen to ensure that the construction industry could return to business as soon – and as safely – as possible, asking the Scottish Government what considerations were being taken on this vital issue.



Ensuring insurers treat businesses fairly



During the crisis, it became clear that some insurers were seriously letting down businesses who took cover from them in good faith. These businesses were covered for infectious diseases but weren't getting a pay out, as COVID-19 isn't specifically mentioned in the policy. Alyn urged the UK government to hold these insurers to account, and intervene.

Supporting students and Universities

Stirling University is central to Stirling's local economy. However, like many sectors, the University is facing hardship - with a multi-million pound deficit. Bruce asked the Scottish Finance Secretary what measures they were taking, along with the UK government, to ensure Universities were financially supported at this time.



Inquiring on behalf of those left out of support



Bruce welcomed the measures implemented by the Scottish Government to support businesses. However, both Bruce and the Scottish Government recognised that there were still some gaps in these schemes, and that some businesses were losing out. Bruce asked what the Scottish Government was doing to support businesses which fell through the cracks, such as B&B's operated from domestic properties.

Support for Stirling's tourism industry

Once the provisional date of 15th July for the re-opening of the tourism sector was set, Bruce called for further financial support for businesses in the tourism industry, which had lost out on large amounts of income as we entered the summer months.



Scotland needs more powers to support businesses

Following various meetings between Bruce, Alyn and local business leaders, it became clear that continued support for businesses was necessary. Bruce wrote a column, published in the Stirling Observer, on this subject, stressing that the Scottish Government would continue to press the UK either for more funding, or more financial powers. As always, Bruce made clear that both his and Alyn's team were available to help in any way they could.



Raising the issue of borrowing powers in Parliament

In light of the current situation, Bruce called on the Scottish Parliament to have borrowing powers, in order to mitigate the Coronavirus crisis in a far better way than the current constitutional arrangement allows. Bruce also suggested that these borrowing powers could perhaps be temporary, in order to build a cross-party consensus for meaningful financial support for business.



Bruce Crawford MSP
the Scottish Government and UK Government,

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Calling for rates and VAT reduction for businesses



Bruce took part in a debate in the Scottish Parliament, looking at what support was needed for an economic recovery from COVID-19 as the lockdown began to gradually lift. Bruce mentioned the importance of Stirling's Hospitality and Tourism industry, stating that a specific approach was needed. Bruce called for the Scottish Government to consider a reduction in business rates for these businesses, and for the UK to reduce VAT for the sector.

Bringing the case for more support to Parliament

Alyn continued to support the Excluded UK and Forgotten limited campaigns - and is a member of the MP Group. This group looks at how millions of self-employed and company directors have been ignored by UK support, and what can be done to press their case in Westminster



Stirling MSP welcomes measures to support outdoor hospitality

Scottish Government relaxes regulations

The Scottish Government action to support the hospitality industry, through a temporary relaxation of planning regulations to allow for adequate physical distancing measures, was welcomed by Bruce.

VAT cut for Stirling businesses

Bruce welcomed the 6-month VAT cut from 20% to 5% for hospitality and tourism businesses.

VAT relief welcomed by Stirling MSP

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Supporting the re-opening of hospitality

The volunteers who helped to take the Black Bull Pub into community ownership held a special event to celebrate, attended by Bruce Crawford.

Gartmore is the first community in Scotland to own both its local pub and local shop.

Stirling is open for business

Following the easing of lockdown restrictions, Alyn met with numerous businesses of all kinds, across the constituency. Stirling is open for business, and Alyn and Bruce are available to support business in any way they can.



Government support still not enough

In September, Alyn again called on the UK government to extend their support schemes to those who had been excluded from it. This is an issue which has effected many self-employed and freelance workers in the Stirling area.

Ending fire and rehire

During the crisis, it became clear that some businesses like British Airways were using the uncertain situation to 'fire' existing employees, and 'rehire' them on poorer contracts. Alyn and the SNP group in Westminster called for this to be made illegal.



Supporting Outdoor Education Centres

The 'Save our Outdoor Centres' campaign focussed on supporting residential centres during the Pandemic, such as Dounans Outdoor Education Centre in Aberfoyle. Bruce raised this issue in Parliament, making reference to his own families experience of these centres, and asking for more support to be made available.

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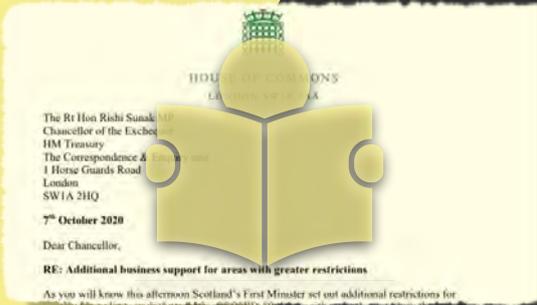
New protection levels introduced

When new regional restrictions were put in place in October, Alyn called for a debate in the House of Commons for greater and more regionalised support. This call was rejected by Jacob Rees-Mogg on behalf of the UK Government.



Demanding more regional support

Given the lack of borrowing powers available to the Scottish Government, and the rejection of the above calls for better support from the UK Government, Alyn wrote to the UK Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, urging him to make available greater support for areas like Stirling and the Forth Valley.



Support for Outdoor Education Centres

Following campaigning by Bruce Crawford and other MSP's, the Scottish Government announced that it was to provide £2 million in financial support for Outdoor Education Centres.



Clarity for businesses moving online

When Stirling entered Level 4 and non-essential shops were required to close, Bruce asked the First Minister to confirm if these businesses could still operate through online and telephone orders. The First Minister confirmed that this was possible.

Support for spectator sports announced

Bruce welcomed the SNP Scottish Government's announcement of £55 million to support spectator sports.





Calling for VAT reduction to be extended

In November, Alyn wrote to UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak, calling for the 5% VAT reduction for hospitality and tourism sectors to be made permanent.

Support available to those self-isolating

Bruce Crawford and local SNP Councillor Evelyn Tweed welcomed the news that the Scottish Government's self-isolation payment would not change following the lowering of the required self-isolation period from 14 days to 10 days.



Listening to local businesses

On Small Business Saturday, Alyn hosted a virtual meeting with local business leaders, and heard their concerns about the impact the ongoing crisis was having on the local economy, and what action these local businesses would like to see being taken.

More support over the festive period

When it became clear that further measures would be taken over the festive period, Alyn sent a further letter to UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak, stating that the support for businesses and individuals still left a lot to be desired, and asking that the solutions offered by Excluded UK and Forgotten Ltd. be implemented.

