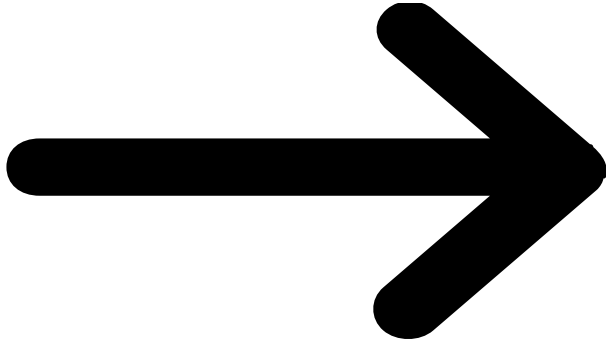


SNP must change business support to match UK level

5 Apr 2020



The SNP government has been urged to change its approach to grants given to businesses shut down as a result of the coronavirus.

Nicola Sturgeon said she would mirror a UK Government scheme which would ensure each business property receives a £25,000 grant to mitigate the impact of the lockdown.

However, it now appears the Scottish Government will only provide those payments per business, even if that business has several properties.

It has caused some small firms to speak out, saying they are considerably worse-off than they would be if they were based south of the border.

And in a letter to Scottish Conservative shadow rural affairs secretary Rachael Hamilton, her SNP counterpart Fergus Ewing appeared to confirm the payments would be made to businesses, rather than by property.

He said his government would pay “£25,000 one-off grants to the ratepayers businesses with a rateable value of between £18,000 and £51,000 in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.”

And he added: “One grant is available per property where the ratepayer has one property, and for those with multiple properties it is one grant per business.”

The UK Government guidance states: “The Retail and Hospitality Grant Scheme provides businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with a cash grant of up to £25,000 per property.”

Earlier in the week, CBI Scotland raised concerns about the Scottish Government taking a divergent approach to support for industry, saying it caused confusion and mixed messages.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“Nicola Sturgeon was quite clear when she said she would replicate the UK

Government scheme.

“But now there seems to be a very apparent difference, and it will lead to small businesses with more than one premises losing out.

“These are exactly the kind of businesses which need the Scottish Government’s support, but if Fergus Ewing’s admission is anything to go by, they’re being sold well short.

“This needs to be fixed as a matter of urgency.

“We all understand this is first and foremost a public health emergency, but the importance of these small and medium businesses to our economy cannot be underestimated.

“They employ people, serve people and keep things going in villages, towns and cities across the country. They will play a pivotal part in any recovery from this crisis.

“They need action now.”

[SNP already due to miss affordable homes target](#)

3 Apr 2020



The Scottish government has confirmed that it will miss its targets on affordable homes, fuel poverty and energy efficiency measures.

The Scottish Conservatives have stated that, even without the impact of Covid19, the SNP government was on course to miss its affordable homes target of 50,000 houses by May 2021.

In a Scottish parliamentary written answer Kevin Stewart, Minister for housing stated that due to the ‘effective lock down’ it is necessary to have a ‘pause in the delivery of affordable homes.’

However, the latest figures show that between April 2016 and December 2019 31,000 homes had been completed. In addition, at present 9,000 new homes are being completed in Scotland per year.

These figures suggest that even with a final surge the SNP were on course to miss their own target by at least 4,000 homes.

Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative shadow housing and communities

secretary said:

“This is understandably frustrating, particularly for those waiting for a home.

“The fight against Covid19 is affecting every part of Scottish life and it is right that we put people first and do everything possible to stop the spread of this virus.

“However, the SNP was already on course to miss the affordable homes target by some margin.

“Missing these important targets is extremely disappointing and will obviously hit the most vulnerable hardest.”

[Elderly patients shouldn't be pushed into DNR amid Covid-19 pressures](#)

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3 Apr 2020



Concerns have been raised about ‘do not resuscitate’ orders after an elderly lady was “pushed” into signing one as a result of coronavirus pressures.

It was reported this morning that an 86-year-old in Tayside agreed to the procedure – should the circumstances occur – following a phonecall from her local GP.

Her family say the practice cited “Covid-19 protocol” in making the arrangement, despite the pensioner suffering from memory problems.

It was only when relatives found the subsequent copy of the form in the woman’s house that they realised the order had been signed.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs has now called for clarification on the matter from the SNP government.

He said, although the NHS will come under immense pressure because of coronavirus, that wasn’t a reason to hurry elderly people into making major decisions like DNR.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“Everyone accepts the NHS has to make changes as we battle this crisis.

“But pushing elderly and very vulnerable patients into agreeing life-ending procedures over the phone is utterly unacceptable.

“This kind of thing should never happen within the NHS, irrespective of the challenges it is facing.

“This lady and her family deserve a very thorough apology.

“The SNP government must also intervene and reveal to patients if this is indeed new guidance being given to GPs.

“If it is, patients right across the country will be furious.”

[Confirmation that horticulture businesses can continue to operate](#)

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3 Apr 2020



The Scottish government has confirmed that horticulture companies may continue to operate, provided they adhere to strict guidelines to prevent the spread of Covid19.

This was confirmed in a letter to Rachael Hamilton, Scottish Conservative shadow rural economy secretary.

Mrs Hamilton raised the matter after the police visited a horticulture business and ordered it to shut down in compliance with the latest government rules.

In the letter, Fergus Ewing, Scottish rural economy secretary states that operations can “continue” provided businesses protect the safety and welfare of their staff, keep up to date with the latest guidance and demonstrate their adherence to social distancing guidelines in their businesses and to the public.

This comes just hours after business leaders in Scotland called for

“cooperation, consistency of policy and clarity of message across all parts of the UK.”

Rachael Hamilton, Scottish Conservative shadow rural economy secretary said:

“I am extremely grateful and pleased that the Scottish government has acted so quickly and confirmed that horticultural businesses can stay open at this time.

“All open businesses must put their staff first, ensure their safety and the safety of the public.

“Horticultural businesses are often associated with farming businesses and, without them, we will undermine our ability to provide food for Scottish people in the coming months.

“Earlier today the business community called for clarity and consistency from the Scottish government.

“Hopefully this letter will give businesses and the police clear guidance so that horticulture businesses can stay open while operating safely.”

[Accuracy of coronavirus fatality stats vital](#)

2 Apr 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have said the daily fatality statistics in relation to the coronavirus must be “robust and reliable”.

It comes after 50 new deaths were reported from the virus today north of the border.

However, 40 of those had occurred at a much earlier date, but their recording had been delayed, the First Minister confirmed today.

It brings the total number of Covid-19 deaths in Scotland to 126.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“The daily reporting of coronavirus deaths in Scotland is hugely important for a variety of reasons.

“These statistics have to be robust and reliable.

"We can't have a repeat of a situation where scores of deaths have suddenly been revealed which actually should have been included at an earlier stage.

"That causes alarm and confusion among the public when anxieties are already sky high.

"The SNP government needs to assure the public that it will do everything possible so this kind of delay won't occur again."