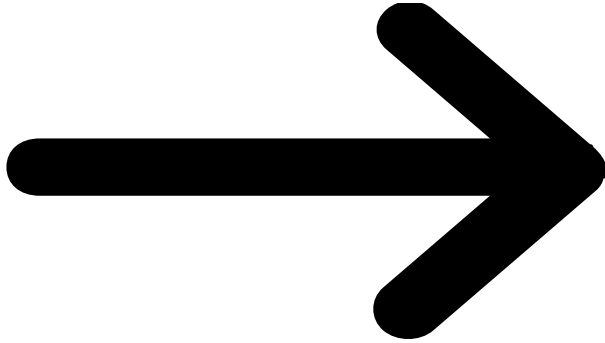


SNP must change business support to match UK level

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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.”