

Local newspapers must be protected amid crisis

9 Apr 2020



Scotland's regional media must be supported by both Scotland's governments to ensure their survival now and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Scottish Conservatives said the vital role played by the country's trusted traditional press was clearer than ever as the coronavirus crisis continues.

Shadow finance secretary Donald Cameron has now urged his SNP counterpart Kate Forbes to work with the UK Government to ensure action is taken as quickly as possible.

He said a 100 per cent rates holiday was essential, and that the Scottish Government should direct more advertising in the direction of newspapers.

Ministers are spending considerable sums on public health messages, but most of that is online to companies who are ultimately based overseas.

He also suggested investing in a similar scheme to the Danish government, which has introduced a fund for media organisations during the crisis.

A similar initiative by the Scottish Government could be replicated for around £25 million.

A trusted media loan scheme has also been floated, which established titles could sign up to.

As well as providing a vital public service, news publishing supports around 4000 jobs in Scotland.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Donald Cameron said:

"We are seeing throughout the coronavirus crisis just how vital newspapers and broadcast media are.

"They play a crucial role in holding both the Scottish and UK governments to account, and in carrying vitally important public health messages.

"But these are also publications who, in some cases, are a month away from collapse.

"We simply cannot allow this industry to disappear, and the Scottish Government needs to step in and ensure these publications are supported.

"It should be providing support in the form of a rates holiday, and

channelling more of its considerable advertising budget in the direction of the local press.

“It would be extremely regrettable if newspapers, having played such a critical role during this health and economic emergency, were allowed to collapse immediately afterwards.

“We know papers have been struggling for years, but this could be a chance to finally boost their resources and ensure they can continue operating for generations to come.”

[‘Shielded’ family hit out at lack of delivery slots](#)

9 Apr 2020



The daughter of a vulnerable pensioner in the coronavirus “shielded” category has described her difficulty in securing supermarket delivery slots.

Leanne Tervit, whose 72-year-old mother Margaret has received three transplants and recently survived sepsis and pneumonia, is struggling to get hold of vital daily items.

The Fife woman is on the Scottish Government’s “shielded” list, but those details haven’t been shared with supermarkets.

That means Ms Tervit has to spend hours online in the hope of a slot opening up for her mother.

She’s a member of a UK-wide transplant network, and has spoken to counterparts south of the border who have been able to secure delivery slots.

That’s because the UK Government has informed supermarket chains of England’s most vulnerable patients, but the SNP has failed to do the same.

At today’s virtual First Minister’s Questions, Nicola Sturgeon said she hoped 130,000 vulnerable people would receive a text about sharing their details today, and that a system may be up and running by next week.

But for many, that process is taking far too long.

Ms Tervit, an SNP member, said she felt “let down” by the Scottish Government’s approach.

As she lives with her mother, who is extremely vulnerable, she cannot herself

leave the house for fear of picking up the virus and passing it on, and therefore relies on supermarket delivery.

She said:

“The only way I can get a delivery slot is by checking all the big supermarkets several times a day in the hope one opens up.

“I’m a member of a couple of UK transplant support groups and when the letters telling us to shield came out, the people in England could register and are now able to get priority delivery slots online.

“There are people in Scotland with no support, so their only alternative is to risk going out to the shops when that’s specifically against official advice.

“I’m feeling let down right now by the Scottish Government. There should have been something in place before we were told to shield.”

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Maurice Golden said:

“This family are in an impossible position purely because the SNP hasn’t shared the list of vulnerable people with supermarkets.

“The UK Government has managed it for shielded people in England, so there’s no reason why the Scottish Government can’t follow suit.

“Failure to do so is having a very real and damaging impact on families across Scotland.”

Big supermarket chains confirm they are still waiting for ‘shielded’ list

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- Big supermarket chains confirm they are still waiting for ‘shielded’ list

8 Apr 2020



Supermarket giant Sainsbury’s has confirmed stores are still waiting for the SNP government to share its list of Scotland’s most vulnerable patients.

Big grocery retailers are standing ready to prioritise delivery slots for

those who need them most as the coronavirus pandemic intensifies.

However, although the UK Government has made this list available for English stores, the SNP government has so far failed to do so.

The letter, sent this morning to customers from Sainsbury's chief executive Mike Coupe, states: *"At the end of last week we received the government database, which includes details of all the people in England who have registered with the government to say that they are vulnerable and need help getting a food shop. We are waiting for the databases for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and will contact vulnerable customers in those areas as soon as we are able."*

The Scottish Government has already written to around 120,000 "shielded individuals" setting out measures they should take to protect their own health.

The Scottish Conservatives have said that same list should be given to supermarkets to allow them to target the most vulnerable for delivery slots which are increasingly hard to come by.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Maurice Golden said:

"This is confirmation from one of the UK's biggest supermarket chains that the SNP government still hasn't acted.

"The list exists, and indeed these people have already been contacted by the Scottish Government about the coronavirus.

"We now need to get those details to supermarkets so they can start prioritising delivery slots.

"As it stands, it's far too difficult for vulnerable people to access this service.

"That's either forcing them to go without, or making them risk their own health by venturing out to the stores themselves.

"The UK Government has managed to do this for people in England – it's time the SNP government stepped up and did the same for Scotland."

Care homes can't be forgotten in PPE emergency

8 Apr 2020



Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw has urged Nicola Sturgeon not to forget about care homes as her government attempts to roll-out delivery of personal protective equipment.

Much of the SNP government's focus has been on providing PPE to hospitals and GP surgeries as the country battles the Covid-19 pandemic.

But care homes across the country are now raising concerns that they haven't been supplied with the adequate gear for their staff.

The Scottish Conservatives have spoken to a number of care homes across the country who back that argument up.

They say they either don't have the PPE they need, or are concerned about supplies running out.

Some care homes across Scotland have already recorded a number of deaths in their facilities, and the First Minister is expected to make an announcement later about the challenges facing care homes.

And today, it was reported in the *Times* that Scottish care home workers have been denied PPE because a key distribution centre was closed for the day.

It is understood that home providers in four parts of the country were unable to obtain supplies because local health and social care partnerships had closed the centres.

Donald Macaskill, the chief executive of Scottish Care, said that other hubs had indicated they would shut for the Easter weekend, potentially leaving those looking after the elderly and vulnerable short of supplies.

Yesterday, care homes in the north east described themselves as "cannon fodder" in the coronavirus fight.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"Much of the attention has understandably gone on hospitals and GPs when it comes to the provision of PPE.

"But the SNP government needs to remember that care homes are on the front line too.

"Many of them feel they've been treated like second-class citizens amid this pandemic, and things aren't changing quickly enough.

"We know from our own work that care homes across the country simply don't have the equipment they need to save lives and protect their hardworking staff.

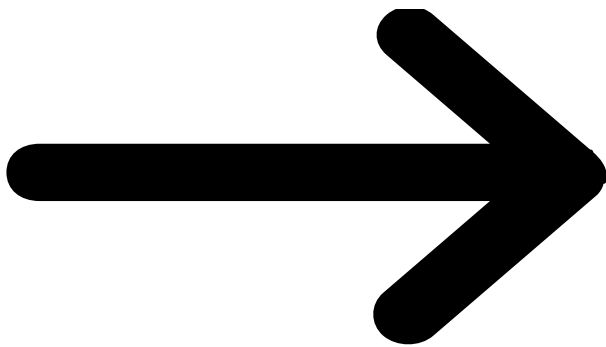
"And when they do have PPE equipment, they're fearful of it running out soon.

"At a time when we're seeing some care homes record alarmingly high numbers of deaths, it's something Nicola Sturgeon must focus her attention on as a

matter of urgency.”

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.”