

[Scottish Conservatives call for plastic bag tax to be temporarily lifted](#)

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- Scottish Conservatives call for plastic bag tax to be temporarily lifted

20 Mar 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have suggested that for the next six months Scottish retailers should no longer be obliged to charge 5p for each single use carrier bag supplied with online deliveries.

The call has been made after a similar measure was announced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Scottish and UK governments have already announced a range of measures to help businesses across Scotland. This temporary relief would help protect the health and safety of customers and delivery drivers.

Rachael Hamilton, Scottish Conservative shadow rural affairs secretary said that the use of plastic bags will reduce the need for drivers and householders to come into close contact with each other and will enable deliveries to be rolled out more speedily.

This would only be a temporary measure and the charge would continue for bags in-store.

The suggestion comes as the politicians and retailers continue to urge people to shop considerately and look out for their friends, family and neighbours.

Rachael Hamilton, Scottish Conservative shadow rural affairs secretary said:

“We are all beginning to understand the extent of this crisis and the multitude of measures we must put in place to get us through it.

“The temporary removal of the plastic bag tax would reduce contact between drivers and householders and speed up deliveries.

“This small measure is just a tiny piece of our response to this crisis, but is another way to help reduce infection and keep food supplies getting to people.

“Retailers are doing everything they can to keep up with demand – both UK and

Scottish governments must continue to help them as much as possible.

“To that end, I recognise that we are all extremely worried at the moment but I would urge people to please shop considerately and only buy what you need.”

[NHS staff must have parking charges waived amid crisis](#)

19 Mar 2020



NHS staff at the three Scottish hospitals which still demand payment for parking should have their charges waived, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Workers at the Edinburgh and Glasgow Royal Infirmeries, as well as Ninewells in Dundee, are still charged by private firms for parking there.

At First Minister's Questions today, shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said those fees should not apply during the coronavirus crisis.

Nicola Sturgeon said she agreed with the sentiments, adding that health secretary Jeane Freeman was looking into alternatives.

The Scottish Conservatives have long campaigned for the parking charges to be refunded to staff and vulnerable patients.

Mr Briggs said, given the sacrifices being made by key health workers, the move had to apply now.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“NHS staff shouldn't have to pay to park at work at the best of times.

“But given this crisis, their brave and fundamental role in fighting it, and the advice given in relation to public transport, the message has to be clear.

“All those working at the three hospitals where charges still apply should be able to park there for free.

“Given the sacrifice they are making on behalf of all of us, that's the very least they deserve.

“It's vital we see urgent action now and I'm pleased the First Minister has agreed to take this forward.”

[Pledge to work together to minimise school closure disruption](#)

18 Mar 2020



Shadow education secretary Jamie Greene has said the Scottish Conservatives will work constructively with both the UK and Scottish governments following the announcement of school closures.

Children will need to stay at home from next week, possibly until the summer, as coronavirus cases in Scotland continue to rise, it was confirmed today.

And Mr Greene stated the Scottish Government would continue to have his party's full support as the crisis accelerates.

He added that questions still remain about how key emergency service workers would be supported with childcare, but vowed to "work together on practical solutions" over coming months.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Jamie Greene said:

"This is an unprecedented move which was unfortunately inevitable as each of the UK's devolved governments take advice relevant to their own circumstances.

"This will undoubtedly be of huge concern to parents who rely on their children attending school to allow them to go to work as well as those facing imminent exams.

"Given those challenges, it is vital that we put normal politics aside to support these decisions and work together on practical solutions to minimise the disruptive consequences of them.

"There remain questions over how key workers in emergence services will be supported with childcare but we will support both the UK and Scottish government as they take these very difficult decisions."

[Scottish Conservatives welcome budget](#)

measures

11 Mar 2020



A series of budget announcements boosting growth and supporting public services in Scotland has been welcomed.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak revealed hundreds of millions of pounds worth of measures to help people and businesses north of the border today.

Scotland will receive an additional £640 million in Barnett Consequentials, on top of the £1.3 billion announced last year, he confirmed.

Among those to benefit was the whisky industry who, as well as receiving a duty freeze, will get £40 million to invest in greener technologies.

There will also be a £25 million investment in a growth deal for Argyll and Bute.

Shadow finance secretary Donald Cameron welcomed the numerous measures unveiled to combat the health and economic threats posed by the coronavirus, including assistance for business, low-paid workers and as many resources for the NHS as it requires.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Donald Cameron said:

“This was an excellent budget for both Scotland and the whole UK, and at a time when we need it most.

“The chancellor made clear we are well prepared for the challenges coronavirus will bring, and that workers and businesses will be protected as much as possible.

“It’s essential the Scottish Government now steps up to take similar action to ensure people in Scotland are afforded the same reassurances.

“The budget also delivered an extra £640 million in Barnett Consequentials for Scotland, which is in addition to the £1.3 billion announced last year.

“It all confirms that this is a Conservative UK Government which invests in Scotland, and is committed to economic growth and boosting public services.

“If the SNP government was anything like as committed, people and businesses would be in a far better shape.”

40% of chronic pain patients missing waiting time guarantee

10 Mar 2020



40 percent of chronic pain patients are waiting longer than the SNP's waiting time guarantee of 18 weeks according to the latest statistics, a significant increase since 2015.

Figures released by ISD Scotland revealed that at the end of 2019, only 60.5 percent of patients were seen for their first appointment at a pain clinic within 18 months, only slightly higher than the most recent low of 60.4 percent in September 2016.

The statistics represent a drop of 10 percent from last year alone, and 22.5 percent from the end of 2015 when over 80 percent of patients were seen within the 18 week waiting time target.

In addition, the publication highlights that 1246 patients waited over 18 weeks by the time they were seen, a significant increase from 821 waiting over 18 weeks at the end of 2018, and 580 in 2015.

In addition, of the 4,769 patients who were still waiting for their first appointment at 31 December 2019, 1,053 (22.1 percent) had been waiting for more than 18 weeks, an increase of 7 percent from the previous year alone, and an increase of 14 percent from the end of 2015.

Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary said:

"These latest increasing waiting times for those already in significant pain are simply unacceptable.

"As bad as these figures already are, the true picture could be much worse as they don't include patients already in the system.

"Despite the SNP's waiting time guarantee and their failing Waiting Time Improvements Plan, waiting times continue to worsen.

"The Health Secretary simply lurches from catastrophe to catastrophe – with hospitals still not open, health boards in crisis and senior staff launching attacks in the media.

"Over the last thirteen years SNP Ministers haven't taken chronic pain patients' seriously – ignoring their concerns and needs and failing to improve access to pain management clinics and treatments.

"Scottish Conservatives are determined we see a step change in Scotland to help deliver for chronic pain patients and their families."