

# Alister Jack responds to October 2020 Scottish GDP figures

News story

Scottish Secretary responds to Scottish GDP figures for October 2020



Commenting on today's Scottish GDP figures for October 2020, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

Today's figures show again the significant challenge we face to recover from the economic shock of the covid pandemic.

The UK Government continues to take unprecedented action to support jobs and business in Scotland. Yesterday, the Chancellor announced a further extension of furlough and business loan schemes, and we continue to support self-employed people and hardest-hit sectors with VAT cuts. The direct support is on top of £9.5 billion in additional funding from the UK Government to the Scottish Government.

As we look ahead to the new year, we will continue investing billions in our Plan for Jobs, supporting City and Region growth deals in Scotland, and driving green recovery and jobs.

The strength of the Union and the support offered by the UK Treasury have never been more important. Together, we will continue to get through these challenging times.

Background:

- The UK Government furlough scheme, paying 80 per cent of wages, will run UK-wide until the end of April. The scheme also offers employers flexibility to bring employers back to work part time with the UK Government continuing to pay 80% of salaries for the hours they do not

work.

- The self-employed support scheme will run till the end of March, paying 80% of average profits up to £7,500.
- At their peak in the summer the UK Government furlough and self-employed support schemes were supporting more than 930,000 jobs in Scotland. They will continue to provide a vital safety net for businesses and their employees over coming months.
- More than 76,000 businesses in Scotland have benefitted from UK Government loan schemes, worth more than £2.9 billion.
- The Scottish Government has been allocated an additional £9.5 billion from the UK Government for its COVID-19 response. This is on top of the block grant and in addition to direct UK Government support to people and businesses in Scotland.
- The UK Government is investing billions to help people back into work, including through our £2 billion Kickstart scheme to get young people into jobs, expansion of our sector-based work academy programme, and recruitment of thousands of Work Coaches in Jobcentres helping unemployed people of all ages back into work.
- At the Budget in March the Chancellor will outline the next phase of our plan to provide certainty and growth in the months ahead.
- The UK Government is providing the bulk of covid testing in Scotland including drive through and walk through test centres and providing the Scottish Government with one million lateral flow tests for mass community and student testing.
- The UK was the first country in the world to approve Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine with 40 million doses secured by the UK Government for distribution across all parts of the UK.

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## Former Chair of charity disqualified after failures resulted in loss of property

The Commission has concluded its inquiry into Christ Apostolic Church World Soul Winning and Evangelistic Ministry (registered charity number 1014992), which also saw the disqualification of the charity's former Chair, Pastor Paul Obadare, for a period of 10 years.

The inquiry revealed serious regulatory concerns, including failings in the charity's financial management, and wider misconduct and/or mismanagement.

An inquiry was launched in 2015 when concerns were raised in connection with the repossession of the charity's land and property and subsequent litigation costs incurred by the trustees.

The trustees of Christ Apostolic obtained a bridging loan for £250,000 purportedly to fund maintenance work for their church building. The former Chair (Mr Obadare) told the inquiry they discovered that solicitors, who were acting on their behalf, received £188,858 of the loan funds and the majority of this was paid to five companies they had not previously heard of. £35,000 of this is believed to have been used to repair the church roof, however, the inquiry found that it was not possible to establish the end use of the remainder of the loan funds that were drawn down.

The inquiry was told that the former trustees failed to carry out background checks on a broker they relied on for financial advice. Two former trustees said they signed the bridging loan agreement, which included the church as collateral, without seeing the terms and conditions. The former trustees defaulted on repayments of the loan and the property was repossessed by the loan company.

A fire destroyed the building and the land was then sold by the loan company. Legal proceedings undertaken by the charity to dispute the repossession had increased their liability with the loan company to more than £1.5 million. The charity then received none of the £1.2 million proceeds from the sale of the land.

The official report is also critical of the trustees' failure to submit timely serious incident reports to the Charity Commission, notably when the charity's property was repossessed.

The inquiry concluded that there had been mismanagement and/or misconduct in the administration of the charity by its former trustees and it found that a lack of sound judgement by the former trustees led to them taking inappropriate risks. As a result of his particular role in the failings, the former Chair of trustees has been disqualified from being a charity trustee or from holding senior management positions in charities in England and Wales

for a period of 10 years.

Amy Spiller, Head of Investigations at the Charity Commission, said:

The public expects each charity to show that it is doing its bit to uphold trust in charity more generally, and this expectation starts with the Chair and trustees. The former trustees failed in this expectation, allowing a catalogue of serious mistakes and misjudgements to occur. Their mismanagement had a direct and profound impact on the charity resulting in the loss of its largest asset – its property.

Our inquiry found the trustees had not acted in their charity's best interests or that of its beneficiaries. Their actions and oversights ultimately exposed the charity to undue and avoidable risk. This case should send a clear message to other charities about the need for financial controls, due diligence and correct conduct and the potential impact should these not be in place.

A new board of trustees has been appointed and the Commission has issued them with an action plan to help protect the charity going forward. It is satisfied that the new trustees are now acting in the charity's best interests and have made significant progress.

**Ends**

### **Notes to editors**

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
  2. Read [the full report](#) of the Commission's inquiry into Christ Apostolic Church World Soul Winning and Evangelistic Ministry.
  3. View the [charity's entry on the register of charities](#).
  4. The inquiry noted that the reports of the amount of money paid to the solicitors differed; the loan company told the inquiry that £191,950 of the funds were paid to an account in the name of the solicitors acting for the former trustees.
  5. Police investigated the matter regarding the payment to the five organisations linked to the charity but decided there was insufficient evidence to proceed.
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# [The RPC re-appointed as the independent verification body](#)

News story

The RPC have been re-appointed by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy as the independent verification body (IVB).



The RPC is pleased to have been [re-appointed by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy as the independent verification body \(IVB\)](#) for the current parliament (from December 2019). We are pleased to continue our role supporting effective regulatory decision making through independent scrutiny of government impact assessments.

The Government have also set a business impact target (BIT) of zero for the current parliament and have carried forward the BIT exclusions and metric (equivalent annual net direct cost to business – EANDCB) from the previous parliament. The opinions that we have issued since this parliament started made clear that, at the time of issue, neither our appointment as the IVB nor the BIT exclusions or metric had been confirmed. We nevertheless verified the BIT status and estimates of the impacts on business on the assumption that these might be confirmed. Now that this is the case, we are content that the BIT status and EANDCB figures set out in opinions issued between 13 December 2019 and 15 December 2020 should be considered as confirmed and formally verified by the RPC as the IVB for the current parliament.

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## [The impact of COVID-19 on UK – Cyprus](#)

# relations in education

UK universities remain committed towards quality education and ensuring the provision of pastoral care to students who choose Britain as their destination, Universities UK International (UUKI) Vivienne Stern underlines in the latest of our #DynamicUK webinars.

The webinar, hosted by the British High Commission and conducted by University of Nicosia's Associate Professor Dr. Christina Hajisoteriou, reveals how the UK will keep supporting Cypriot students following UK's exit from the EU as well as the benefits of studying in the UK as a freshman or as a researcher. Stern, who has over 20 years' experience of working in higher education policy and politics at national and international level, discussed four highly significant topics.

The topics cover everything from an overview of the UK – Cyprus relationship in education and research, coupled with the benefits of studying at a UK university to the Brexit transition and the COVID-19 effects to the academic community.

UK academics and Cypriot academics are working together, they're designing courses together, and they are making sure that Cypriot students have access to the best of both worlds. I think it's really important to try and foster and grow that. I think it tells a very strong story that UK universities are very serious about not only providing high quality education but also making sure that they provide excellent pastoral care to students that come to study with us.

Stern explains how the process of attending UK universities may have changed, but the opportunities and quality markets including rank position, have not. She notes that UK universities are committed in helping researchers and new students create strong bonds with their academic community and grow to their full potential.

Prior to her role in UUKI, Vivienne was Head of Political Affairs at Universities UK, and led the sector's response to several major pieces of legislation relating to universities. Before that she worked for the Chair of the House of Commons Education Select Committee, and as policy specialist. Moreover, she's a member of several Boards and advisory committees.

Discover more and gain insights on the UK – Cyprus relationship in education and research, by watching the entire webinar in the video below.

[#DynamicUK – Vivienne Stern discusses education ties between the UK and Cyprus](#)

The British High Commission has opened up an invitation to six highly innovative British professionals from various industries to share their

knowledge and expertise on how the current pandemic has affected their fields.

Check out our social media channels for more exciting upcoming discussions!

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## [Education Secretary selects preferred candidate for new Office for Students Chair](#)

The Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has named Lord Wharton of Yarm as his preferred candidate to be the next Chair of the Office for Students, following approval by the Prime Minister.

Lord Wharton will now go on to attend a pre-appointment hearing before the Education Select Committee on a date to be confirmed by the Committee.

As the independent regulator of higher education in England, the Office for Students (OfS) aims to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling university experience that enriches their lives and careers.

Lord Wharton has been selected following a rigorous assessment process conducted in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

He will take over from Sir Michael Barber whose appointment ends on 31 March 2021.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I look forward to finalising the appointment of Lord Wharton as the next Chair of the OfS who will bring strategic direction to the role.

He will play a vital part in ensuring students from all backgrounds are at the heart of the higher education system, receiving a high quality education and value for money from our universities.

I am very thankful to Sir Michael for his work setting up and transforming the Office for Students and particularly for his work tackling unconditional offers, senior executive pay and grade inflation.

The Chair leads the OfS at board level, working with Ministers and the Chief Executive to provide clear leadership and priorities for the next phase of the OfS' critical work.

Lord Wharton was the Chairman of Hume Brophy UK Communications up until November 2020. He served as the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for International Development from July 2016 to June 2017 and served as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government, with responsibility for Local Growth and the Northern Powerhouse from May 2015 until July 2016. Prior to that he worked as a solicitor. He was awarded a life peerage to the House of Lords in September 2020.

Following his pre-appointment hearing, the Education Select Committee will publish their recommendations, which the Education Secretary will consider before deciding whether to finalise the appointment.