

Alister Jack responds to December 2019 labour market figures

Commenting on the latest Labour Market figures the Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

It is encouraging that Scotland's unemployment figures have fallen slightly, with the overall UK rate now at its lowest since 1974. However, I remain concerned that employment has also fallen in Scotland.

The UK Government will work flat out to ensure that Scotland and every part of the UK grows and prospers. Getting Brexit done by January 31st will bring new opportunities, including helping Scottish businesses, farmers and fishermen unleash their full potential.

The UK Government has invested more than £1.4 billion in city and growth deals – with more to come – these projects will bring transformation and regeneration to our communities, helping to create tens of thousands of jobs.

I urge the Scottish Government to use their extensive powers to improve the lives of people across Scotland rather than stoking grievance and conflict by trying to railroad through another independence referendum.

Overview

For the three months to October, Scotland's overall labour market is sending mixed signals: employment fell robustly (-21,000) and unemployment fell moderately (9,000), furthermore, activity decreased robustly too (-30,000).

In addition, monthly claimant count numbers are worsening over the month of November, as there are 115,800 people in Scotland claiming Jobseeker's Allowance and out-of-work Universal Credit (seasonally adjusted); this is up 2,400 on the month of October (revised) and 18,100 up on the year before.

As a result, Scotland's unemployment rate at 3.7% is now back to the rate we had around 12 months ago and somewhat up on the recent record low at the start of the year.

Also, Scotland's unemployment rate is now just below that of the UK as a whole at 3.8%, which remained unchanged over the last quarter.

Furthermore, the number of people employed at 2,648,000 in Scotland is somewhat down on the recent record high at 2,702,000. This means that Scotland's employment rate, at 74.5%, remains below the UK's rate at 76.2%.

Whirlpool issues washing machine recall following intervention by regulator



The recall campaign began in early January 2020 and is being undertaken by Whirlpool UK Appliances Ltd, which identified the fault in models from brands it owns. The recall was announced on 17 December 2019 when consumers were advised to contact Whirlpool to arrange a replacement.

The advice sets out that there is a risk that the door locks of affected machines could catch fire due to overheating during the washing process. Affected consumers are advised to unplug their machine and register with Whirlpool for a replacement.

Under the recall, consumers with an affected washing machine will be entitled to a free replacement. Old machines will be removed, and replacements installed, at no cost to the consumer.

This safety announcement and recall follows urgent action by the regulator the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS). OPSS is committed to acting immediately to ensure public safety.

Office for Product Safety and Standards Chief Executive Graham Russell said:

Whirlpool is recalling models of washing machines due to consumer safety concerns. They have advised consumers with affected models to unplug their machine until it is replaced. The Office for Product Safety and Standards will closely monitor Whirlpool to ensure the recall is carried out successfully.

Our priority is to keep consumers safe and we urge affected customers to unplug their washing machines and contact Whirlpool.

Additional information:

- Whirlpool will be required to provide regular updates to OPSS on progress made in the product recall.
- Consumers can contact the Whirlpool helpline on 0800 316 1442 for more information or visit the Whirlpool website for a full list of affected machines.

Published 17 December 2019

Last updated 15 January 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 15 January 2020 The product recall has now begun.
2. 17 December 2019 First published.

[UK-South Africa Tech Hub partners with Future Females Business School](#)

[Future Females Business School](#)

Overview

Challenge

10% TEA rate for South African women

Solution

- Future Females Business School in partnership with the UK-South Africa Tech Hub
- 3 month virtual incubator
- 12 month post-programme support

Impact

- Total of 320 women supported
- 120 part of FFBS
- 200 part of FF online membership programme

- 35 newly registered businesses (and counting)

Background

Local networks have found the biggest challenges that female entrepreneurs face when starting and growing a business are access to support structures and role models, and lack of funding, according to an informal 2018 survey conducted across Future Females and Startup Grind communities.

With the Total Early Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) rate for South African women at [just 9%](#), there is a critical need to improve gender inclusion and increase available skills in the market. Historically, despite high volumes of applications to the Future Females Business School, only 64% of applicants could afford to join the programme.

Programme

The UK-South Africa Tech Hub partnered with [Future Females](#) in March 2019 to launch a twelve week virtual programme, as part of its greater mission to support gender inclusion in digital spaces.

The programme equips local female entrepreneurs with the skills needed to start and grow successful and sustainable tech-led businesses. By deploying tech to tackle local issues these startups drive positive change in their communities, as well as generate wealth for their female founders.

Tumelo and Pheladi at the Future Females Business School

In the first cohort, 50 female entrepreneurs with tech-enabled businesses were selected through an online application followed by a one to one consultation to validate their business plan. Successful participants joined the three month virtual incubator programme which offers various skills-development seminars (ranging from writing an effective business plan to building an online presence).

The programme features guest experts, including serial entrepreneurs, executives and coaches, who cover important personal development topics (including how to overcome fear of failure and how to uncover your true passion).

One of the goals of our UK-South Africa Tech Hub is to strengthen and enrich existing value chains in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. It's been exciting seeing the growth of the Future Female programme in the market and how it has positively impacted so many female entrepreneurs, equipping them with the skills needed to run

successful, tech enabled businesses.

Shirley Gilbey, Director of the UK-South Africa Tech Hub

Tech Hub Leadership

The UK-South Africa Tech Hub provided full and partial bursaries for both the Future Females Business School and membership programmes (which offer access to offline content).

Through supporting local female entrepreneurs to scale and grow, the Hub promotes inclusive growth of the digital ecosystem in South Africa. In this way, together with other Prosperity Fund interventions with a marked focus on gender and social inclusion, the Hub is supporting underserved communities to gain meaningful employment and/or embark on their own entrepreneurial journey.

Looking to the future

Upon completion of the programme, 70% of participants had successfully registered their business. This percentage is likely to increase thanks to post-programme support, which consists of twelve months access to the programme content, inclusion in the Facebook private member community, and monthly goal setting and accountability workshops.

Following the success of the first cohort, the UK-South Africa Tech Hub scaled up the partnership, funding a mix of full and partial bursaries to support a further 70 women for the Future Females Business School and a further 200 women through the Future Females online membership programmes. This second cohort graduated on 13 December 2019.

For more information

Read local media coverage of the partnership:

[Future Females, UK-SA Tech Hub partner to train 50 SA women tech entrepreneurs](#)

[WATCH: UK-SA Tech Hub to launch a future females business school](#)

[WATCH: UK-SA Tech Hub to launch a future females business school](#)

Local media reports on the graduating cohort:

[Aspiring female entrepreneurs graduate from UK-SA tech hub](#)

['Future Females online course gave my business strategic direction'](#)

[50 Female Tech Entrepreneurs Graduate From Future Females Business School](#)

More about Future Females Business School and the UK-South Africa Tech Hub

To learn more about Future Females Business School and the UK-South Africa Tech Hub please contact: info@uksatechhub.com

The UK Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) is building a global network of Tech Hubs. The International Tech Hub Network aims to forge innovation partnerships between the UK and international tech sectors, stimulate local digital economies; and build high-end digital skills to drive sustainable jobs and growth.

Contact the network at: international-tech-hub-network@culture.gov.uk

[Winners of Ministry of Defence Sanctuary Awards announced](#)

The 29th annual Sanctuary Awards have been held in central London. The awards event recognised groups or individuals and their commitment to sustainability, energy saving, wildlife conservation, archaeology and environmental protection throughout the Defence estate.

The 5 categories for the 2019 Sanctuary Awards were; Heritage Project Award, Sustainability Project Award, Individual Achievement Award, Environmental Project Award and the Utilities Project Award.

The winners of each category were then considered for 2 further awards.

The coveted Silver Otter trophy is awarded to the conservation group, individual or MOD-led project that was deemed most impressive by the judges. This year's winner of the Silver Otter and of the Environmental Project Award was the Bird Trapping Steering Group in Cyprus. The steering group was established to combat illegal bird trapping in the area. Military colleagues have been working with local police and bird conservation groups to develop anti-poaching strategies resulting in a decrease in bird trapping levels.

The Sustainable Business Award is presented to more commercial projects that have achieved success in ensuring sustainable solutions while also supporting the commitment to enable the armed forces to live, work and train. The winner of this award also won the Utilities Achievement Award for the Fuel Efficiencies and Emissions Reduction Project based at Air Mobility Force headquarters, RAF Brize Norton.

In the other categories, the Army Basing Programme's refurbishment of the Sandhurst Block at Catterick Garrison won the Heritage Project Award. This

was a complex scheme to create a fit-for-purpose office space for 21st century soldiers in a Grade II listed 1930s accommodation block.

The Sustainability Project Award was presented to Project Anvil at RAF Marham. This was an infrastructure investment project to improve facilities at the East Anglia airbase in preparation for the arrival of the F35 Lightning aircraft.

Dickie Bennett was the Individual Achievement Award Winner. Dickie is the founder of Breaking Ground Heritage, a group that supports veterans and provides logistics support to Operation Nightingale. The project aims to assist the recovery of wounded, injured and sick military personnel and veterans through involvement in archaeology projects.

Graham Dalton, Chief Executive of DIO, commented:

It was great to see so many innovative projects, throughout the UK and overseas, which demonstrate the positive impact we can have across the Defence estate. The standard of entries was high and I know that the Sanctuary Awards Board had a difficult decision in determining the winners. Well done to the winners and thank you to all the teams and individuals for their enthusiasm and commitment in helping the MOD as we work towards making the estate more sustainable.

The ceremony also marked the launch of the 48th edition of Sanctuary magazine, the MOD's longstanding annual sustainability publication, which demonstrates how the MOD is protecting and maintaining the defence estate throughout the UK and overseas. [Sanctuary magazine](#) is available online.

Further information

[DIO website](#)

Twitter: @mod_dio

Read [DIO's blog](#)

[Severn Trent Water sewage pollution leads to charity donation](#)

The financial contribution is part of an Enforcement Undertaking (EU) offered to the Environment Agency for causing the pollution which occurred on the Rothley Brook, Leicestershire in August 2016. The payment has already been received by Trent Rivers Trust, a charity dedicated to the rivers, streams,

people and wildlife of the Trent catchment.

The pollution was caused by 2 blockages in the Severn Trent Water foul sewer, which led to a discharge of sewage into the Thurcaston Brook, a tributary of the Rothley Brook.

The money will be used by the charity for water quality and restoration projects relating to the Thurcaston / Rothley Brook catchments, as well as other catchment improvements in the area.

The company also paid the Environment Agency's incident response and enforcement costs in full. Severn Trent Water have also agreed to take positive action at this site to improve their current infrastructure, inspection regime and raise staff and contractor awareness of pollution prevention and control.

Lee Whitehouse, Environment Officer with the Environment Agency, said:

"Enforcement Undertakings allow polluters to positively address and restore the harm caused to the environment and prevent repeat incidents.

"The Environment Agency is increasingly using this method of enforcement for suitable cases to restore the environment, improve practices of the offending company and avoid longer criminal court cases. However, we will prosecute in appropriate cases.

"Please report any environmental issues to the Environment Agency's 24 hour incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60."

Kim Jennings Senior Catchment Manager (East) at Trent Rivers Trust said:

"The funds received from this Enforcement Undertaking have provided valuable financial support to enable many of our partners to deliver work in the catchment that would otherwise have not been possible.

"Several charities and local authorities are delivering projects to enhance the water quality and biodiversity of particular areas within the catchment. In addition we are able to work with others such as a university and local community groups to increase general understanding and awareness of the impact of water pollution.

"Our planned work will increase the number and range of habitats and its overall value for wildlife. It will not only address the impact of the pollution event, but help restore both brooks to a healthy state for future generations to enjoy."