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## PROTECTION OF WORKERS BILL PASSES KEY PARLIAMENTARY VOTE

Scottish Grocers' Federation enthusiastically welcomed the decision in September 2020 by MSPs to back the Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Bill at the crucial Stage 1 vote thereby accepting the general principles of the Bill. This will now be followed by two more legislative stages before the Bill can be made law.

Daniel Johnson, MSP for Edinburgh Southern, said "I'm delighted to see my bill pass the first hurdle in the legislative process and it was encouraging to see all parties get behind this important issue. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank SGF, who have supported this from day one."

"With further COVID restrictions just announced for the country, we will see more pressure on our retail staff, especially with an uncertain Christmas on the horizon."

"I look forward to working with other political parties and key stakeholders to ensure it passes the remaining parliamentary stages and becomes law, in order to afford retail workers the protection they deserve under the law."

SGF CEO Dr Pete Cheema OBE said, "We are delighted that MSPs have voted to accept the general principles of the Protection of Workers Bill. This is a significant step forward in the right direction and it is crucial that we continue to get the message across to our politicians that abuse and threatening

behaviour towards shop staff is unacceptable and that suitable additional legal protections must be put in place. Daniel Johnson's Bill provides that opportunity and we will continue to work with him – as we have been doing since 2016 - to secure a step-change in Scotland's approach to retail crime."

SGF has been a committed supporter of the Bill – put forward by Edinburgh South MSP Daniel Johnson - throughout the parliamentary process and will continue to make the case to Scottish government ministers and MSPs as to the vital protections which the Bill would provide to retailers and shop staff.



## DEPOSIT RETURN SCHEME – SGF INVITED ONTO KEY INDUSTRY ADVISORY GROUP

The real impact of Deposit Return for retailers in Scotland is beginning to move closer. The Scottish government has invited SGF to become a member of an industry advisory group which will develop the DRS retailer exemptions framework. The DRS regulations, approved earlier this year by the Scottish Parliament, state that the exemptions process will go live in January 2021. The two main criteria for exemptions will be proximity to another return point

and if a retailer can show there is no reasonable way to operate a return point on their premises without being in breach of legal obligations such as food safety.

The advisory group will provide expertise and advice from a range of backgrounds to support the Scottish Government in developing an assessment policy that will ensure fair and consistent assessment of exemption applications in line with the DRS Regulations. Dr John Lee, SGF Head of Public Affairs, commented,

"We are very glad to accept the

invitation to be a key member of the advisory group. DRS will simply not be workable for many retailers and they must have the option of taking an exemption. The process has to be fair, consistent and transparent. The application process goes live in January and we have to get ready for it now."

The group will be chaired by the Scottish Government and secretariat support will be provided by the Scottish Government's Circular Economy Unit. Representatives of Zero Waste Scotland and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency will attend as observers.



01

JAN

2021

**NEW RULES FOR BUSINESS  
ARE COMING**

**THERE ARE DEFINITE  
ACTIONS BUSINESS  
SHOULD TAKE NOW**

**ACT NOW AT  
GOV.UK/TRANSITION**

-  Check
-  Change
-  Go

# SCOTTISH LOCAL SHOP REPORT 2020 PUBLISHED

**The Scottish Local Shop Report (SLSR) which is published each year in partnership with our colleagues at the Association of Convenience Stores provides a key breakdown of the facts and figures for Scottish convenience sector showing the scope and scale of the industry in Scotland, its impact on the economy and on our communities.**

What is clear from the newly published edition of SLSR is that the convenience sector in Scotland continues to play a crucial role at both a national and local level.

Some key points from the report include:

- There are 5,025 convenience stores in Scotland, and this represents year on year increase over the last three years and reflects how strong and resilient the sector really is;
- Convenience stores currently provide around 47,000 jobs which since 2019 represents an increase of approximately 3,000 jobs thereby offering also offering local jobs for local people;
- Over the last year convenience stores in Scotland have invested £62m in their businesses and shows retailers are committed to raising standards;
- Retailers are incredibly hard working and indeed SLSR shows that 14% of shop owners in Scotland work more than 70 hours per week with 18% taking no holiday at all.
- 85% of independent c-store retailers in Scotland are regularly engaged in community activities.

The Scottish convenience sector has also responded positively to the unique challenges presented by Covid-19.

Some key points from the report include:

- Over the course of the pandemic, most stores have seen an increase in sales and an increase in basket spend;
- Convenience stores are now providing 600,000 home deliveries a week in their communities;
- 33% of stores offer 'card not present' transactions, helping volunteers to shop for vulnerable people locally;

SGF chief executive Dr Pete Cheema OBE commented, "The Scottish Local Shop Report gives us the hard numbers we need to show clearly how important the convenience sector is to the national economy, the local economy and to our communities. Retailers continue to invest massively in the businesses and this shows how determined they are to drive up standards. The effort retailers have put into expanding home deliveries is a tribute to their willingness to support vulnerable customers and to adapt to the impact of the pandemic."

**The Report is being distributed to MSPs and all Scottish MPs. You can download a copy of here: <https://www.sgfscot.co.uk/publications/the-scottish-local-shop-report-2020>.**



## The Scottish Local Shop Report 2020

A report by the Association of Convenience Stores and the Scottish Grocers Federation

ACS | the voice of local shops

SGF

# MANAGING COVID-19 – LOCAL PROTECTION LEVELS INTRODUCED



The Scottish Government published their 'Scotland's Strategic Framework' document in October which set out a five-level framework to tackle COVID-19 with measures to reduce virus prevalence while proportionate to the scale of the problem in different parts of the country - and in a way that minimises, as far as possible, the other harms caused by the pandemic.

The Scottish Parliament debated and approved the framework on 27th October and the local protection levels contained therein came into effect across the country on 2 November 2020.

The five protection levels go from Level 0 through to Level 4 (this being the highest protection level) with each local authority being placed in one of them. You can find out more these protection levels and what you can and cannot do at each level at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-protection-levels/>.

The Scottish Government will review the protection level in each local authority area on a weekly basis to determine whether any changes are required. Thereafter they will aim to confirm any decisions to the Scottish Parliament on a Tuesday with any changes thereafter coming into force on the following Friday.

As part of this the Scottish government have created

a Postcode checker which allow members of the public to check COVID restrictions by protection level in areas of Scotland. This can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.scot/check-local-covid-level/>.

Ongoing financial support is set out in the framework and will be available to businesses which are required to close or which can remain open but will be directly affected by restrictions. Financial support measures will include:

- A grant of £2,000 or £3,000 (depending on rateable value) for business required to close by law, payable every four weeks for the duration protective measures are in place;
- A hardship grant of £1,400 or £2,100 (depending on rateable value) for businesses that remain open but are specifically required to modify their operations by protective measures, payable every four weeks for the duration measures are in place

These grants will be provided regardless of protection level, to eligible businesses, and paid in fortnightly instalments (subject to discussions with local authorities). Keep up-to-date with business support measures at: <https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/coronavirus-advice>.

## FACE COVERING EXEMPTION CARDS LAUNCHED

The Scottish Government announced that the digital and physical face covering exemption card for those who are exempt in the regulations and guidance has now been developed. These cards are available for people to request.

You can read the announcement here: <https://www.gov.scot/news/face-covering-exemption-cards-launched/>.

The face covering exemption card is branded with the Healthier Scotland and NHS Scotland logos

under the FACTS for a Safer Scotland campaign. A physical card can be used to wear on a lanyard or hold in a wallet, while a digital card is also available to be displayed on a phone, tablet or other device. The reasons someone might be exempt are available at: <https://exempt.scot/face-covering-exemptions/>.

The cards will be delivered by Disability Equality Scotland (DES) on behalf of the Scottish Government and are accessible at [www.exempt.scot](http://www.exempt.scot) or via the free helpline on 0800 121 6240.

# CORONAVIRUS JOB RETENTION SCHEME EXTENDED

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 5th November 2020 that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) – also known as furlough scheme – would be extended for a further five months up until the end of March 2021 for all parts of the UK. The Job Support Scheme is postponed.**

Under CJRS, eligible employees will receive 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. Businesses will have flexibility to use the scheme for employees for any amount of time and shift pattern, including furloughing them full-time. In addition, there will be no employer contribution to wages for hours not worked. Employers will only be asked to cover National Insurance and Employer pension contributions for hours not worked. The UK government will review the policy in January to decide whether economic circumstances are improving enough to ask employers to contribute more.

The extended CJRS will operate as the previous Scheme did, with businesses being able to claim either shortly before, during or after running payroll. Claims made for November must be submitted to HMRC by no-later than 14 December 2020. Claims relating to each subsequent month should be submitted by day 14 of the following month, to ensure prompt claims following the end of the month which is the subject of the claim. Neither the employer nor the employee needs to have previously claimed or have been claimed for under CJRS to make a claim under the extended CJRS (if other eligibility criteria are met).

Job Retention Bonus (JRB) will not be paid in February 2021 and the UK government advise that they will redeploy a retention incentive at the appropriate time. The purpose of the JRB was to encourage employers to keep people in work until the end of January. However, the UK government indicate that as the CJRS is being extended to the end of March, the policy intent of the JRB falls away.

In relation to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme to support self-employed individuals who are

experiencing reduced demand or cannot trade due to the effect of coronavirus, the UK government are increasing the overall level of the grant. It is calculated based on 80% of 3 months' average trading profits, paid out in a single instalment and capped at £7,500.

In terms of guarantee loan schemes the UK government have announced that they plan to extend the application deadline for loan schemes – those being, the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Future Fund, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme – to the end of January 2021. They state that they will give businesses two extra months to make loan applications (relative to the current deadline of 30 November).

They have also indicated they will also adjust the Bounce Back Loan Scheme rules to allow those businesses who have borrowed less than their maximum (i.e. the lower of £50,000 or less than 25% of their turnover) to top-up their existing loan. Businesses were able to take-up this option from early November; they can make use of this option once.

Further information or any subsequent updates about these schemes can be found at the UK government website at: GOV.UK or at the FindBusinessSupport website at: <https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/coronavirus-advice>.

SGF will also ensure that regular updates are disseminated to members through our usual communication channels.



# ISLAND RETAILER LAUNCHES 'THE SANDAY WAVE'



**An island retailer in Orkney has launched an innovative campaign to encourage investment in the local economy of Sanday this Christmas.**

Sinclair General Stores on the small island of Sanday has teamed up with a local graphic designer and a local print business to create seasonal gift vouchers – ‘The Sanday Wave’ – redeemable only on the island. This voucher campaign is designed to support local economic regrowth.

The scheme aims to encourage friends and relatives who cannot be together at Christmas to send their loved ones a voucher which they can use to select a precious gift or special service, retaining as much trade as possible within the island.

There are no rules about where the vouchers can be spent, and no business is obliged to take the vouchers but it is hoped as many traders as possible on the island will choose to accept them. However, those redeeming them simply return them to the store to receive payment.

Jackie Sinclair the store’s owner said “We decided to launch a campaign this Christmas to encourage residents to

look to local businesses before their keyboard, and help Sanday to recover from a devastating year. We usually sell a lot of gift vouchers for our own shop and thought this year we would broaden their scope.”

Jackie commented “The ‘Sanday Wave’ is a phrase coined to describe how we greet one another as we pass in our cars. More than a greeting, these vouchers support us to pull together as community and repay the amazing community support we have given one another throughout 2020.”

SGF Policy Manager Luke McGarty said “Convenience stores are at the heart of their local communities and now more than ever have an increasingly important role to play particularly during the current Covid-19 emergency, providing a consistent supply of essential groceries and vital services.

The seasonal gift voucher campaign which Jackie has launched is an excellent idea and one which will help sustain local businesses and local jobs and of course encourage customers to shop local. We wish the campaign every success.”

The campaign will be supported by social media posts on the store’s Facebook page highlighting the broad range of goods and services available on the island.

No profit is taken from the operation from the voucher scheme. At the end of their validity, residual funds will be paid over to a community fund. Vouchers became available to purchase on-line from 1st November – see the website: <https://sandaywave.square.site/>.



# SGF CALLS FOR EXTENSION OF RATES RELIEFS

**Scottish Grocers' Federation responded to the Scottish Government's recent 'Budget 2021/22: Supporting the COVID-19 Recovery' consultation which sought views on the role of Scotland's devolved taxes and Fiscal Framework in supporting the COVID-19 economic recovery in advance of the Scottish Budget 2021-22.**

The Scottish Government earlier this year had announced that extra reliefs would be available to non-domestic properties from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. This included the decision that retail, hospitality and leisure businesses would get 100% rates relief during this period.

In its consultation response SGF acknowledged that that this support was very welcome, but asked

that the 100% rates relief should be extended at the least into the first quarter of the new financial year in 2021 and thereafter any reintroduction tapered so to avoid any sudden (and substantial) increase to costs.

SGF also asked that the Scottish Government not only ensures the continuation of Small Business Bonus Scheme (SBBS) but that it also increases the cumulative rateable value limit to £50k for 100% relief to aid the recovery and profitability for businesses. In maintaining the SBBS, SGF stated there should also be no conditionality attached to it. SGF will continue to make the case for such support from government given the vital role being played by convenience retailers.

SGF recognise that 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic has presented the Scottish convenience sector with incredible challenges and demands. Throughout this however the sector has been strong and resilient and has also shown the vital contribution it makes to the national and local economy.

During the COVID-19 crisis convenience stores – with the support wholesalers and suppliers - have ensured a consistent supply of essential groceries and have continued to provide vital services to their communities. Some examples of initiatives taken forward by retailers include, delivering food to anyone self-isolating or who is unable to leave their home to buy food; creating a Hardship Fund with its key focus being to use money from it to pay for groceries and to help pay the energy bills of the most vulnerable, and teaming up with local churches to provide free essential foods to pensioners who are unable to leave home and have no family or friend network to help. Also, over the past year an incredible 85% of independent Scottish retailers engaged in some form of community activity.

In fulfilling this key role, it should be recognised that convenience store retailers are essentially working extended hours, seven days a week. The newly published Scottish Local Shop Report 2020 indicates that 14% of shop owners in Scotland work more than 70 hours a week and up to 18% take no holiday per year.

As responsible community retailers we have ensured that both staff and customers alike are able fully informed about social distancing, the mandatory use of face masks and associated mitigation measures such as using hand sanitiser



and the introduction of PPE. Also stores have been adapted to ensure one-way systems are in place and that customers can still come in and find what they want, when they want.

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19 the sector is adapting and thriving as people recognise more than ever the value of their local convenience store and the benefits of shopping local. The sector has gained new customers and the challenge going forward into 2021 will be continually adapting to the needs and requirements of these customers so as retain their custom. As a sector we are well placed to do this and will remain responsive to shopper missions and spend patterns.

SGF membership continues to grow and we have a range SGF events planned for 2021. These events provide an excellent platform to network and to generate business opportunities. We will ensure that you are kept updated on our programme of events and how to register.

In 2021, SGF will continue to ensure our members interests are represented and promoted in our communications and lobbying with government ministers, MSPs/MPs and key stakeholders. Now more than ever the SGF is recognised as the voice of the Scottish convenience sector and will use this position to ensure that we continue to have a sustainable and prosperous convenience industry in Scotland.

*Dan*

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

SAVE THE DATE

# UPCOMING EVENTS 2021

SGF ARE DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE THAT WE HAVE SCHEDULED THE FOLLOWING EVENTS FOR 2021. PLEASE BLOCK THESE DATES OFF IN YOUR CALENDARS - WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

**Wednesday**  
**2nd June** **SGF GOLF TOURNAMENT**  
TRUMP TURNBERRY, AYRSHIRE

**Thursday**  
**17th June** **SGF CATEGORY SPECIFIC EVENT**  
DOUBLETREE, BY HILTON WESTERWOOD, GLASGOW

**Wednesday**  
**30th June** **SGF & RAC CRIME & WELLBEING SEMINAR**  
MACDONALD INCHYRA HOTEL, FALKIRK

**Thursday 16th &**  
**Friday 17th September** **SGF ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL, GLASGOW (TBC)

**Thursday 18th**  
**November** **SGF MINI SUMMIT**  
MACDONALD INCHYRA HOTEL, FALKIRK

THESE DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CANCELLATION SHOULD FURTHER LOCKDOWNS OCCUR DUE TO COVID-19