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## RESTRICTIONS ON ALCOHOL VISIBILITY COULD HAVE IMPLICATIONS RIGHT ACROSS THE SECTOR

Potential measures introduced in the Scottish Government's consultation on Restricting Alcohol Advertising and Promotion in Scotland, cover a wide range of extensive prohibitions on all the major sources of access to alcohol in Scotland. Including controls on in-store location and visibility, advertising outdoors and on windows, branding, media, and sports & events sponsorship.

SGF have been busy building evidence to support our retailers and producers. Holding a series of meetings with members and gathering information through surveys and case studies. We

have also written to MSPs and met with ministers to highlight the damaging impact the proposals could have.

Our recent survey of SGF members is quite telling, 75% of respondents reported that the proposals put forward in the consultation could significantly impact on their business if they are carried out in full.

SGF Chief Exec, Dr Pete Cheema OBE said: "Scotland's Food & Drink sector is globally recognised for exceptional produce. For the Scottish Government to choose this moment to introduce a consultation proposing a complete prohibition on alcohol

advertising, banning alcohol branding, and removing alcohol products from public view, is alarming.

"These restrictions could have a significant impact on our sector and thousands of businesses across the economy.

"Some operators will inevitably be forced to increase prices across their stock, to cope with the associated losses and extra costs of implementing the additional restrictions. Indirectly impacting household budgets, inflation, and vulnerable people."

SGF is encouraging all those concerned with the proposals to respond to the consultation. The accompanying documents can be found here: [www.gov.scot/publications/consultation-restricting-alcohol-advertising-promotion/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/consultation-restricting-alcohol-advertising-promotion/)

## SGF DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH CHARITY GROCERYAID



Scottish Grocers' Federation is pleased to announce a new partnership with charity GroceryAid who support industry colleagues 24/7, providing emotional, practical, and financial support.

The charity, formed in 1857, is busier and more relevant than ever with a growing demand for the crucial support which they are able to offer, indeed providing more support now than ever before in their 165-year history.

SGF chief executive Dr Pete Cheema OBE said: "We are delighted to have this partnership with GroceryAid, one which will provide vital support to our membership. These are difficult times for people as they are coping with a cost-of-living crisis and the associated pressures that can bring to bear on their daily lives – those working in the convenience industry are no different.

"That is why the access to key support

such as financial guidance and advice, online health and wellbeing support, counselling and the free helpline which is available 24/7, 365 days a year will be of great benefit. SGF looks forward to a long and successful partnership."

Steve Barnes, Chief Executive, GroceryAid said: "This is fantastic news for GroceryAid to be partnering with the Scottish Grocers Federation to provide our free and confidential services to members of such a well-respected trade association. We all know tough times lie ahead and it is establishing long-term relationships such as this that will help us drive awareness in Scotland to support even more colleagues through crises. Last year GroceryAid distributed £434k in financial grants to Scottish colleagues, of which £120k supported colleagues in independent retailers."

**Call the GroceryAid helpline on: 08088 021 122**

# NEW NATIONAL LIVING WAGE AND MINIMUM WAGE RATES FOR 2023

The Chancellor confirmed in the Autumn Statement that the National Living Wage for people aged over 23 will increase from 1st April 2023, to the hourly rate of £10.42 – this represent an increase of 9.7%. This will present local shops and in particular convenience stores with significant challenges going forward.

The NLW and NMW rates from April are set out in the table below:

WAGE RATE	CURRENT RATE	RATE TO APPLY FROM 1ST APRIL 2022	% INCREASE
NATIONAL LIVING WAGE (WORKERS AGED 23 AND OVER)	£9.50	£10.42	9.7
NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE (WORKERS AGED 21 TO 22)	£9.18	£10.18	10.9
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT RATE (WORKERS AGED 18 TO 20)	£6.83	£7.49	9.7
16 – 17 YEAR OLD RATE	£4.81	£5.28	9.7
APPRENTICE RATE	£4.81	5.28	9.7
ACCOMMODATION OFFSET	£8.70	£9.10	4.6

\* National Minimum Wage, for those aged under 23 years old.

The LPC's Report on the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and National Living Wage) can be accessed at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/low-pay-commission-report-2022](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/low-pay-commission-report-2022).

SGF recognise that these increases to the NLW and NMW will have real implications for convenience retailers who are trying run viable, sustainable businesses during these challenging times and will continue raise these concerns with government, politicians and the Low Pay Commission.

SGF chief executive Dr Pete Cheema OBE said: "The hike to the National Living Wage from April 2023 represents almost a double-digit increase and will hit retailers hard particularly as wage costs are a large proportion of shop costs. This in turn will jeopardise profitability, employment sustainability and ultimately business survival."

## JOINT WORKING TO REDUCE VIOLENCE AGAINST WORKERS UNDER THE NATIONAL ASSAULT PLEDGE

The Scottish Grocers Federation has joined emergency services, health colleagues and others to launch a National Assault Pledge - underlining a joint commitment to reduce violence and abuse against front line workers.

The National Assault Pledge builds upon Chief Constable Sir Iain Livingstone's Assault Pledge, developed in response to a concerning increase in violence and abuse against Police Scotland officers and staff.

The national partnership group includes prosecutors, Retailers Against Crime, British Transport Police, NHS Scotland, Scottish Prison Service, Scottish Ambulance Service, and others. The group will share best practice, develop preventative measures, and use consistent messaging in their workplace to support and encourage staff to report incidents.



SGF's recent Crime Report 2022 highlights the substantial impact of crime on convenience store owners and staff across Scotland. With 100% of respondents reporting some level of theft, abuse or violence in the previous year.

Deputy Chief Constable Fiona Taylor QPM, who has been leading Police Scotland's drive to reduce the impact violence and abuse has on officers and staff, said: "Being the victim of an assault can have a long-lasting impact both physically and mentally.

It's not simply part of the job. Working in partnership with a number of key organisations highlights our collective approach and united pledge to reduce assaults at work."

SGF Chief Exec, Pete Cheema OBE added: "Front line staff provide an essential community service, and whether they are police officers, ambulance paramedics or local shop staff, it is completely unacceptable that they are forced to turn up to work and face threatening abuse or violence.

"The National Assault Pledge, launched with partners across Scotland, is an important step forward and adds to progress taken last August with the introduction of the Protection of Workers Act. I look forward to continuing to work with our colleagues across emergency and front-line services to keep improving worker safety in Scotland."

# NearSt is turning online shoppers into in-store customers

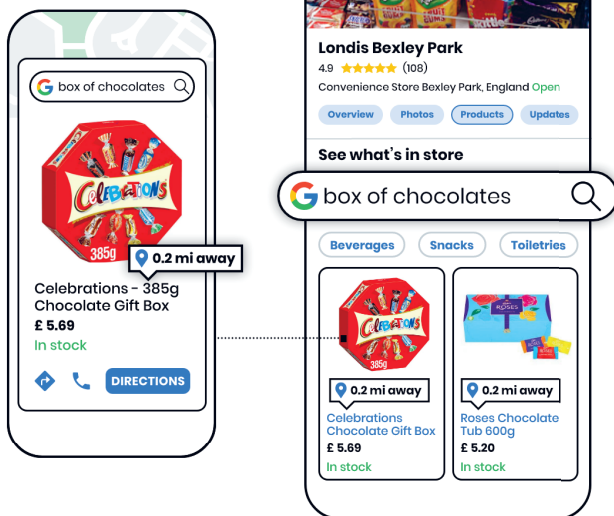
Founded by Nick Brackenbury (left) and Max Kreijn (right) in 2015, NearSt is a British marketing technology business that's getting online shoppers back into brick-and-mortar stores. NearSt came from a literal "lightbulb moment" Max Kreijn had in 2015. He was preparing for a dinner party when the bulb in his living room blew, and needed a replacement, fast. Max turned to Google, which he found was great at suggesting places he could order one online for next day delivery, but useless at telling him where he could buy one in a local shop. After visiting half a dozen shops, he eventually found it in a convenience store he didn't think to check just 100 yards away. It prompted him to ask the question:

"Why is it easier to order a product from a warehouse 100s of miles away for delivery tomorrow, than to find it in a shop nearby?"



And so NearSt was founded, with the goal of making it easier and faster for shoppers to get the products they need from a high street shop nearby, rather than ordering from an online store. The mission is all about unlocking the incredible potential currently hidden away in our high streets and levelling the playing field against the online giants.

To do this, NearSt displays retailers' live in-store inventory to local shoppers on online platforms like Google and Facebook. This is done automatically via a clever, simple integration with a store's stock keeping system.



For convenience store retailers like Nishi Patel (pictured above), owner of Londis Bexley Park in Dartford, using NearSt has doubled the number of people viewing his Google business listing. "Since joining NearSt I have had a surge in phone calls for products that I am stocking in store," he said. "From the first day of going live, I saw an increase in footfall and a rise in queries for niche and special-offer products."

Retailers looking to find out more about NearSt can do so at [www.near.st](http://www.near.st), where the company is currently offering a 30-day free trial of their £29/mo 'Lite' plan for independent convenience stores.



## CONTACT INFO

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 020 3870 3617

# Business Rates

Plans to strip out rates relief in the Small Business Bonus Scheme could scuttle some small businesses and retailers in Scotland, just when they need support the most.

South of the border, the UK Chancellor has committed to providing 75% business rates relief for properties in the retail, hospitality, and leisure, in England.

However, proposals set out by the Deputy First Minister last December, as part of the Scottish Budget, will see a reduction the threshold for 100% rates relief, down from a rateable value of £15,000 to just £12,000. These changes are due to be introduced in just weeks from now, for the 2023/24 financial year.

The threshold for 100% business rates relief was previously set at a £15,000. Now, businesses higher than £12,000 will see a tapered decrease in the support they receive, down to just 25% at £15,000, and then a further tapered decline dropping to 0% at £20,000.

Dr Pete Cheema OBE, SGF Chief Exec, said: "The Scottish Government's reduction in the Small Business Bonus Scheme, for some businesses, will undoubtedly put many of our key economy drivers at a competitive disadvantage, when compared their counterparts across the rest of the UK.

"SGF has repeatedly called on the Scottish Government to take urgent action to alleviate the pressures on businesses and the convenience retail sector.

"We have now joined with leading representatives across the sector in Scotland, the Scottish Retail Consortium, the British Independent Retailers Association and the Booksellers Association, to call for this urgent support. Highlighting the vital role retail has in the Scottish Economy.

SGF are urging convenience retailers across Scotland to contact both their local MSP and the Minister for Public Finance to signal the damaging impact of this cut in funding and to call on the Scottish Government to match the rates relief provided to retail businesses in England. SGF has provided a template letter for members to use, again underscoring the importance of the retail sector in Scotland.

Small businesses still pay a higher share of non-domestic rates than their share of Scotland's GDP. On top of that, non-domestic rates are still at record highs. This is despite the welcome freeze to the Basic Property Rate ('poundage') at 49.8p, which has been a long time coming, and again sees Scotland falling behind other parts of the UK.

The retail sector in Scotland employs close to 230,000 people and is key player in driving economic growth, both within communities and throughout the country. Convenience retail alone represents 49,000 staff and retailers, over 5,000 stores in total.

Dr Pete Cheema OBE added: "At the very minimum, the Scottish Government should match the targeted support announced for retail in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement."

"Producers, suppliers, and households all benefit when local



[DATE] 2023

Dear [NAME (optional)] MSP,

In December, the Scottish Budget set out the Scottish Government's proposed spending and tax plans for 2023 to 2024.

It was with great disappointment that [COMPANY NAME] noted the opportunity was not taken to further support businesses at this critical time by offering comparable support to that available in England and Wales where - in the case of the former - the Chancellor of the Exchequer has committed to provide 75% business rates relief for properties in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors for the 2023 to 2024 tax year, up to a maximum of £110,000 of relief per business.

We believe that the Scottish Government should act now and provide, at the very least, similar assistance in Scotland while at the same time ensuring that current supports and reliefs available are not impacted or other business-related rates increased.

Shopper footfall has yet to reach pre-pandemic levels and retail sales are subdued given the cost-of-living crisis for consumers. In addition, retailers are having to contend with their own pressures such as soaring business energy costs, rising inflation, and supply chain disruption.

Unfortunately, however, businesses find themselves in a situation where they do not have the access to this additional assistance which our counterparts in the rest of GB will have to help sustain and support them to continue trading during this critical period for the economy.

We welcome the decision to freeze the headline Business Rate poundage for the coming year, in line with the rest of GB. However, Scottish businesses still face a higher property rate poundage which is above that levied down south, and the new tapered Small Business Bonus Scheme could significantly reduce the support available for many retail businesses with RVs between £12,001 and £15,000, which means many will face additional and potentially unsustainable costs of doing business.

The retail sector in Scotland which employs close to 230,000 people will need to be a key player in driving economic growth and enabling communities to socially benefit from thriving high streets. If that is to be achieved however, they need support now.

Yours sincerely,

[NAME]  
[COMPANY NAME]

high streets are thriving. That is exactly what the Scottish Economy requires during the current crisis and that is why representatives from across the retail in Scotland have sent the Scottish Government a very clear message. Retailers in Scotland should have at the very least, the same level of access to additional assistance which our counterparts in the rest of GB have."





# How important is The National Lottery to your community?

With around 60% of the adult population playing National Lottery games and £47 billion having been raised for Good Causes since 1994, The National Lottery touches communities across Scotland and the length and breadth of the UK, benefiting millions of people's lives – just as the independent retail sector does.

The National Lottery is a huge category for retail, with many shoppers visiting a retailer to buy their ticket and then purchasing other items while they're in store, helping drive footfall and boosting basket spend. Not only does it help increase stores' sales, retailers help generate over £30 million each week for Good Causes by selling National Lottery products, something you should feel hugely proud of.

Whether it's funding that combats loneliness, provides support for the elderly, or supports physical and mental health in the community – these extensive funding packages span the arts, community and charity, heritage, education, environment and sports sectors.

The following project 'Space' is a fantastic example of how National Lottery funding provides invaluable support to local communities, especially during times of need.

The daily struggle caused by rising costs is not a new phenomenon in Broomhouse, an area affected by deprivation in south west Edinburgh. "For areas like Broomhouse, the cost of living crisis simply got a lot worse," says Martin Allen, Relationships and Fundraising Manager at Space at the Broomhouse Hub. "It's not just energy bills, it's an ongoing battle with the cost of food and other essentials."

Determined to help out, Space at the Broomhouse Hub is using

funding made possible by National Lottery players and retailers, to offer regular events ranging from craft sessions to quizzes and special celebrations, such as a recent Burns Night celebration – all of which include free, nourishing food for anyone who wants it.

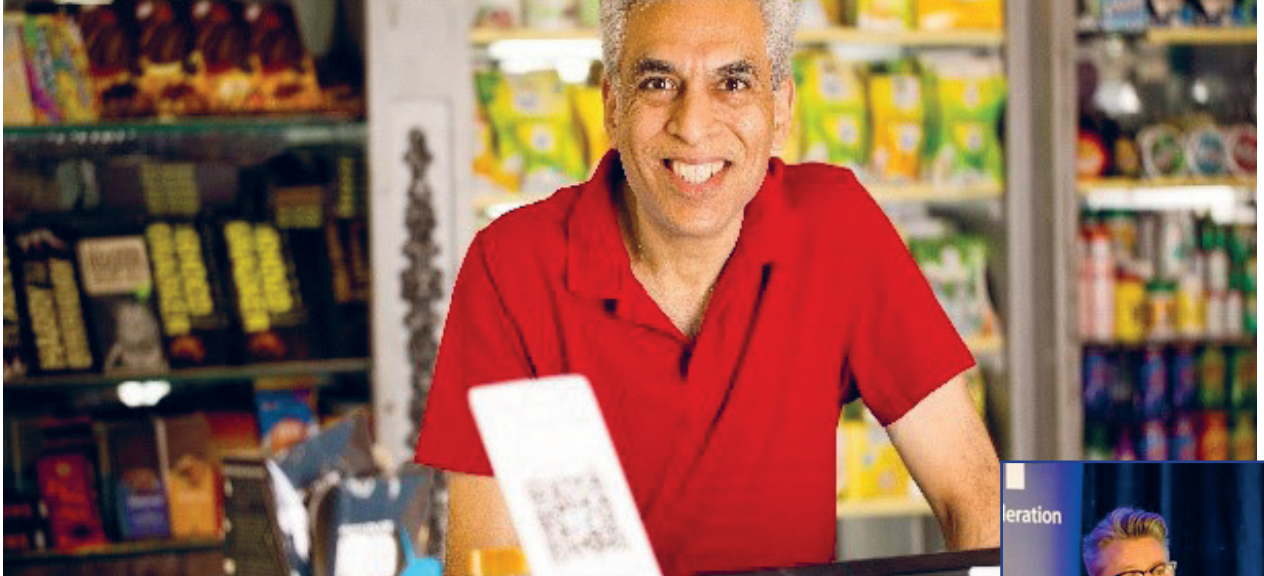
In addition, the sessions offer expert advice on issues, such as benefits and the Scottish Government's Warmer Homes programme. The point, says Martin, is that local people are free to choose whether to access the event, the food, the expert advice or all three. It's their call. "What's brilliant about the National Lottery funding is that it takes into account the fact we're trying to be inventive. It takes that into account and allows you to be a bit more innovative and address people's needs in a new way."

As part of its efforts to combat the cost of living crisis, Space at the Broomhouse Hub is also hoping to organise a film night and a 'swishing' event where parents swap clothes their children have outgrown. Martin says his organisation will also use the National Lottery funding to provide free meals for young children in the summer months when term ends and they are not able to get free food at school.

To all National Lottery retailers, thank you for your support – without your hard work, none of this would be possible. To read more stories about how The National Lottery has helped change the lives of winners and Good Causes, visit:

[www.national-lottery.co.uk/life-changing](http://www.national-lottery.co.uk/life-changing)

# SGF TEAM UP WITH BARCLAYCARD



In 1966, Barclays saw a need to make it easier for people to do business – for consumers to buy and shopkeepers to sell. In response, they created Barclaycard. Barclaycard would be open to everyone – not just Barclays clients – and would make payments faster, more secure and convenient.

And since we opened our doors for business, much has changed. The world we live in has constantly evolved, fuelled by the possibilities of the digital age. And the Barclaycard brand has evolved with it.

From the introduction of the first credit card in the UK to contactless ways to pay; from zip zap machines to e-commerce solutions and from statements in the post to mobile apps.

Today, we're as relentless and passionate about serving our customers as were in 1966. With fearless curiosity we continue to push the boundaries and challenge the status quo – creating the payment innovations of today and defining the possibilities of how people will pay tomorrow.

In short, we're not standing still. Because just like we did in 1966, we're here to make things easier for everyone.

Our Barclays heritage

Barclaycard brought us the first credit card in 1966, but there's no denying that being part

of Barclays continues to be at the heart of our identity.

For Barclaycard, the benefits are equally clear. The brand's success is rooted in our strong relationship with Barclays, which gives us global reach. We also work hand in hand to develop new ways to bring buyers and sellers together, creating products and services that break new ground in retailing and consumer finance.

Whether they're buying face-to-face, online or a mix of both, you could be taking payments for less with our specially negotiated discount on merchant service charges. So, let your customers pay quickly, easily and securely – while you could benefit from next-day settlement\* at no extra cost and with no cancellation fees.\*

**Find out more by calling us on 08000 468290.**

\*The partners may receive commission from each other. Please check merchant's terms and conditions at [barclaycard.co.uk/takingpaymentsresources](https://barclaycard.co.uk/takingpaymentsresources). Subject to application, financial circumstances and borrowing history. To receive next-day settlement, transactions need to be taken before 9pm. T&Cs apply. Call charges may apply.



*Moniaive retailer Graham Watson, of Watson's Grocers said: "Since choosing Barclaycard earlier this year, I have benefited from their payment expertise which has enabled me to make financial savings and to enjoy better terms. They also provide a helpful, efficient and supportive service which in turn enables me to offer a smooth payment experience for my customers."*

 **barclaycard | payments**



# UK GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED 'ENERGY BILLS DISCOUNT SCHEME' FOR BUSINESSES, FROM 1ST APRIL

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has confirmed that a reduced level of support on energy bills will be available for non-domestic energy users, after current scheme ends in on 31st March.

Businesses will now receive a unit discount, until 31st March 2024. However, the discount that non-domestic consumers will be eligible for has been significantly reduced from the previous scheme. Down to 0.7p per kWh for Gas and 1.96p per kWh for Electric.

Furthermore, the discount will only apply after prices reach a threshold of 10.7p per kWh for Gas and 30.2p per kWh for Electricity. The discount will automatically be applied to bills by suppliers.

Scottish Grocers' Federation Chief Exec, Dr Pete Cheema OBE, said: "The hike in energy prices that many convenience retailers will

have to cope with from April, will leave many reeling from shock. SGF's recent poll shows that some retailers could face a five hundred percent increase to their energy costs.

"The discount on offer from the UK Government is nowhere near the level of support needed to sustain a healthy retail sector. It's urgent that ministers in both the UK Government and the Scottish Government act quickly to support our sector and recognise that many businesses will be at risk of closing the doors if this cut to support goes ahead."

Read the full UK Govt Press Release here: [www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-unveils-new-energy-bills-discount-scheme-for-businesses](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-unveils-new-energy-bills-discount-scheme-for-businesses)



NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

As Community Shop went to press you can't have failed to have noticed the furore over the imminent DRS (deposit return scheme) as former SNP Cabinet Minister Fergus Ewing MSP called for the scheme to be paused, describing it as "reckless".



Mr Ewing even said on BBC Scotland's The Sunday Show: "It's as though the captain of the Titanic, when he left and sailed from Southampton, deliberately set course to hit the iceberg."

I touched on both DRS and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis in my last column in Community Shop – I have no doubt that both will be mentioned in my next one too. However, they are both issues that hold many concerns for all of us and we simply can't avoid discussing them as we navigate them as best we can, we must remain focussed on the start date in August & not be consumed by the noise in the press around issues with the scheme.

Something else I've said before is that we cannot forget about all the other issues that we need to keep on top of. It's easy to allow ourselves to become distracted by the headlines but it's important to focus on the day-to-day running of our businesses and do what we do best: providing the best possible service to our customers and communities.

Elsewhere in Community Shop, our CEO Pete Cheema touches on the possible introduction of measures to restrict alcohol advertising, marketing and promotion in Scotland. This, of course, will impact on convenience stores but let's be clear: it is just a consultation at this stage and we know that Nicola Sturgeon, following some pretty harsh questioning during First Minister's Questions, stated that the

Scottish Government would look at "sensible measures".

This is definitely one to watch, of course, but SGF will present our own measured views and opinions – and I would urge all of you to also respond to the consultation before it closes on March 9.

Meanwhile, I'm looking forward to seeing you at our Crime and Wellbeing Seminar at Hampden Park on March 7 when we'll be shining a spotlight on the ongoing scourge of crime in our sector. Incidents in our stores, no matter how minor they may be, do impact on the health and wellbeing of retailers and their staff who are the sharp end.

As well as focusing on two very important areas, the seminar also provides an opportunity to network with colleagues – retailers and our much-valued suppliers alike.

Collaboration is what brings these events to life and on the issue of collaboration, SGF has recently held an extremely fruitful meeting with our colleagues at the Scottish Wholesale Association to discuss areas of mutual concern where we can work together – it absolutely makes sense to pool resources and do that.

That old adage "it's good to talk" has never been more important than it is now. So, please don't hesitate to drop me an email if you want to discuss any of the many issues affecting our sector.

*Craig*



# MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT JW FILSHILL

JW Filshill has repositioned its business to put mental health and wellbeing at the “heart of everything we do”, with health and safety manager Amanda Casey driving the wholesaler’s strategy to support staff through a range of measures.

Amanda, who joined Glasgow-based Filshill in 2020 not long after the first lockdown, initially focused on ensuring the ongoing safety of staff, customers and shoppers during the coronavirus pandemic. Since then, she has expanded her remit by engaging heavily with the workforce on health and wellbeing with a particular focus on mental health.

Meanwhile, under Amanda’s leadership, the wholesaler has set up a Wellness Group and there are now over 20 fully-trained mental health first aiders in the business who are supporting not just their colleagues but their friends and family too.

“With the Wellness Group and organised activities such as hillwalking, we bridge the gap between homeworkers and those on site to promote the physical health and mental wellbeing



of all employees,” Amanda explained. “Activities are based around culture, sleep, exercise, meaningful activities, social connection, helping others, and stress management.

According to Amanda, who is a Graduate Member of the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), the most challenging element has been around the stigma associated with mental health and wellbeing. “We take both a formal and informal approach to this,” Amanda explained. “The formal approach consists of our wellbeing meetings and calendar of events, while the informal aspect involves ‘corridor conversations’, relaxed chats and engagement sessions.”

Now firmly at the core of Filshill’s overall business strategy with each manager required to introduce a new wellbeing/safety objective every 90 days, the mental health and wellbeing focus will continue to evolve and adapt to meet future challenges. Staff are invited to participate in regular surveys outlining what they would like to see.

## SGF 2023 EVENTS BOOK NOW!

**Crime & Wellbeing Seminar**

**MAR 7**

*Hampden Park, Glasgow*

**Golf Day**

**APR 19**

*Gleneagles*

**Mini Summit**

**MAY 18**

*Macdonald Inchyra, Falkirk*

**Annual Conference**

**OCT 12-13**

*Crowne Plaza, Glasgow*

All events free to attend for independent retailers

For more information, scan the QR code or visit [www.sgfscot.co.uk/networking-events](http://www.sgfscot.co.uk/networking-events)

\*Golf day is fully booked for retailers and only has availability for corporate companies to sponsor