

# Independent Convenience Stores

## Supporting Communities and the Local Economy

Scottish Grocers Federation is the national trade body for the independent convenience store sector. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, local convenience stores stayed open, they provided essential grocery products and services to communities including post offices and access to cash, supported vulnerable customers, and boosted the local economy. Ensuring a vibrant and successful convenience store sector is vital to our communities and to our local economies. The next Scottish government (and the Scottish Parliament) have a crucial role to play.

### 1 **THE CHALLENGE: The Cost of Doing Business – Business Rates**

The cost of doing business is the most crucial challenge facing small retailers. Business Rates are always amongst the top-3 costs faced by our members.



### **THE SOLUTION:**

- Continue with the Small Business Bonus Scheme for the lifetime of the next parliament.
- There should be no conditionality attached to receiving the Small Business Bonus. The eligibility threshold should be raised to a single threshold of £50,000 (for both individual and combined premises).

### 2 **THE CHALLENGE: COVID Recovery – Support Retailers**

Policy and legislation from government – however well intentioned – always has a disproportionate impact on smaller retailers. They do not have large scale back office functions which can reduce the impact of compliance, they do not have the financial strength to cope with the sudden increases in cashflow and they cannot pass costs onto customers as efficiently as larger retailers.



### **THE SOLUTION:**

- To support the convenience sector as it recovers from the pandemic there should be a 12-month moratorium (August 2021–August 2022) on any new legislation which would materially impact on the convenience store sector.
- Any legislation to restrict food promotions must include meaningful exemptions for local convenience shops that would be disproportionately impacted by restrictions on the location of products in stores.

### 3 **THE CHALLENGE: Supporting Local**

The capacity of local convenience stores to support Scottish suppliers and manufacturers should be enhanced. This is vital to enable the food and drink sector in Scotland to recover from the impact of the pandemic.



### **THE SOLUTION:**

- The next Scottish government should commit to developing a funding stream for convenience stores to connect with local manufacturers and boost the local, Scottish offering in convenience stores.
- The next Scottish government should commit to taking forward a Retail Strategy built around the local economy.

### 4 **THE CHALLENGE: Retail Crime**

Coping with impact of retail crime is a major issue for local shops. Remarkably neither the Scottish government nor Police Scotland collect data on retail crime. There is no accurate picture of the prevalence of crime, no year-on-year comparisons are available, and the impact of retail crime is not accurately understood.



### **THE SOLUTION:**

- The next Scottish government should commit to collecting and analysing all instances of retail crime.
- The next Scottish government must work with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to implement robust, appropriate sentencing and recording for retail crime, particularly shoplifting.

### 5 **THE CHALLENGE: Traffic and Road Management – Do Not Damage Businesses**

Convenience stores are part of a complex supply chain. In the modern convenience stores, stock control is based on a just in time system. Any change to road layout, parking spaces and street usage can severely impact on speedy and effective stock delivery.

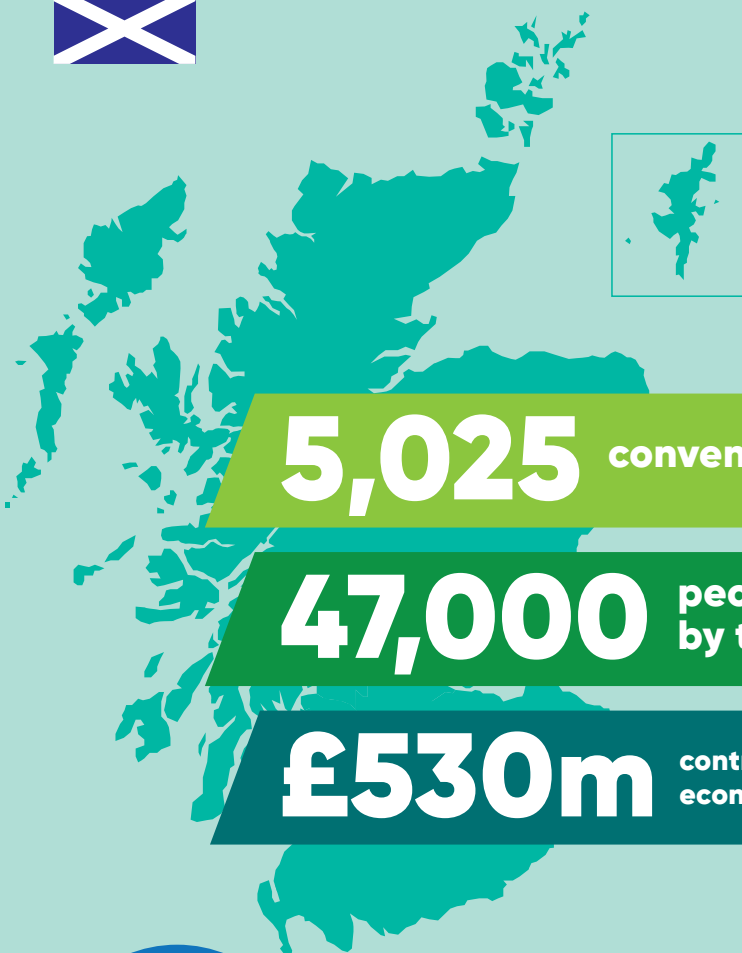


### **THE SOLUTION:**

- The next Scottish government should ensure that local authorities have a statutory requirement to conduct robust businesses impact assessments when developing Traffic Redirection Orders or extending bus lanes, cycle path, on-street parking restrictions and parking charges. The cumulative impact of these interventions restricts customer access to vital local shops.

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In 2020 convenience retailers invested **£62m** in their businesses

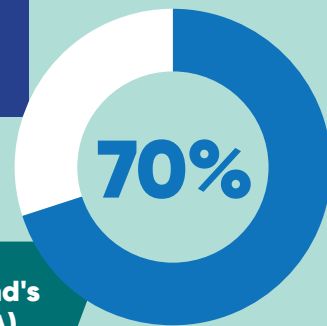


**£4.5bn** in annual sales

**5,025** convenience stores

**47,000** people are employed by the sector

**£530m** contributed by the sector to Scotland's economy in Gross Added Value (GVA)



70% of customers know their local retailer well enough to have a chat with them



On average convenience stores are open:

**14** hours per day



Local stores in Scotland are now providing



**60,000** deliveries per week to customers