

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road, Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Our ref: SCC/FM/31082021

**Scottish Government Programme for Government**

Dear First Minister,

In advance of the publication of the Scottish Government's Programme for Government, I want to outline some of the key issues that businesses in Scotland hope to see addressed over the coming Parliamentary year as they seek to begin their recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Front and centre of the Scottish Government's agenda must be a Covid Recovery Plan that will support businesses and Scotland's economic recovery. With many lifeline business support measures, such as furlough coming to an end, mounting business debt and growing supply chain issues, the economic recovery remains fragile and the long-term viability of many businesses and jobs remains in the balance

Scottish Chambers of Commerce have submitted a robust submission to the Scottish Government's National Economic Transformation Strategy and we hope to see additional funding and schemes put in place to help transform Scotland's economy through partnerships with the private sector to develop and grow Scotland's economy and meet environmental targets.

Skills and training will be crucial to meeting the ambitions for a National Economic Transformation and businesses want to see greater investment in developing the young workforce, boosting digital skills, creating more green jobs and supporting a Just Transition for those sectors heavily invested in oil and gas.

The rapid growth in on-line sales and trading means that there also must be greater investment in Scotland's digital skills capacity and infrastructure to match this increased demand. Coupled with training, upskilling and re-skilling at every age and level.

We know that Scotland's cities are hubs of economic activity and it's vital that the Scottish Government puts in place measures to help our high streets recover and create the necessary capacity for recovery and then longer-term transformation.

Rebuilding our urban and rural economy offers a huge opportunity to rethink our economy and with COP26 taking place in Glasgow, this offers businesses a chance to engage in a global event and promote Scotland's green technology sector, attract investment and enable them to meet Scotland's ambitious Net Zero goals, with the support of the Scottish Government.

To support businesses and aid economic recovery, it's vital the right economic environment is created and dropping plans to introduce a Workplace Parking Levy and a ban on large retailers trading on New Year's Day, would send an important signal that Scottish Government is listening to business

In addition to the Programme for Government, SCC hope to see the Scottish Budget for 2022-23 reflect the realities that many businesses are facing at this critical juncture for them, with a commitment to reducing upfront business costs and reforming Non-Domestic Rates.

Alongside this letter I have attached a copy of SCC's business led action plan for recovery, '*Rally for Growth*', which sets out in greater detail what businesses need to enable them to begin driving Scotland's economy forward again.

Whilst the recent return to economic growth and increasing optimism around Scotland's economy is welcome, recovery remains extremely fragile, and we therefore urge the Scottish Government to carefully consider the needs of businesses throughout the passage and implementation of its legislative programme and to use every lever at its disposal to secure a recovery that will create jobs and growth in every part of the country.

Yours Sincerely,



**Dr Liz Cameron OBE**  
**Director & Chief Executive**  
**Scottish Chambers of Commerce**