

COVID-19 Network Support

# YOU ASKED WE DELIVERED

Caithness Chamber of Commerce  
and Network



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# VIEW FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## — *Pride In Our Response*

The past two months have been uniquely challenging both for the Chamber and the businesses that we represent. I'm proud of the response that the business community of the North Highlands had had to this crisis and the role that the Chamber has been able to play in representing and supporting our members.

Working locally, regionally, and nationally as part of the wider Scottish Chambers network, we have been able to bring the concerns of businesses in the North Highlands to decision-makers in both UK and Scottish Government, and secure the support that our members need.

We have a long and challenging journey ahead of us, but we are in this together and we will continue the important work of ensuring that the voice of business in the North Highlands is heard in these extraordinary times.

Trudy Morris  
Chief Executive  
Caithness Chamber of Commerce



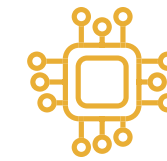
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# CCOC'S APPROACH

*Caithness Chamber of Commerce* and its wider network's policy platform has supported millions of employees and businesses through the Covid-19 crisis.

Our policy platform has focused on three 'Policy Pillars' which are applicable to every sector and every geographical area of Scotland, highlighting the Network's unique position in the marketplace to represent all businesses.



## PROTECTING JOBS



## GETTING CASH TO BUSINESSES QUICKLY



## ECONOMIC RECOVERY



# PROTECTING JOBS

— Protecting Jobs in Scotland was a clear priority from the Chamber Network and business community.

## CHAMBER ASK

Caithness Chamber called for the Government to provide support to businesses quickly to protect jobs and livelihoods.

Our asks were:

- Financial support for businesses for employee sickness related to Covid-19;
- Immediate Salary Support for all employees in all sectors;
- Specific support for self-employed; and
- Recognition of seasonal workers and support for Directors.

## RESULTS

- Introduction of the Coronavirus Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme for employers;
- Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme was created to help protect jobs;
- The scheme was further extended by a month as a result of the Chamber and business lobbying;
- Self-Employment Income Support Scheme by UK Government; and
- Scottish Government's newly self-employed hardship fund.



## ONGOING ASKS

Caithness Chamber is continuing to raise the following priorities:

- Further support for employees;
- Flexibility and extension (post-June) of furlough and self-employment income support scheme's;
- Further support for Directors; and
- Support for seasonal workers.



# CASHFLOW AND PROFITABILITY

— Getting cash to businesses quickly is the immediate priority for *Caithness Chamber of Commerce* and its wider network. We called on Scottish and UK Government's to provide grants and financial relief.

## CHAMBER ASK

- Cash grants for all businesses;
- Immediate business rates relief;
- 100% of Barnett Consequential funding applied to business support;
- Alignment on distribution of grants between Scottish/UK Government;
- Additional support for hardest hit sectors;
- Specific support for businesses with a rateable value of £51k or above; and
- Easy to access business loan schemes with reduced burdens and barriers.

## RESULTS

- 100% of Barnett consequential funding committed to business support;
- Business rates reliefs applied by Scottish Government to hardest-hit sectors;
- Sectoral support for tourism, hospitality, fisheries, creatives and airports;
- Alignment of grants leading to 75% for any additional properties in Scotland;
- The BounceBack Loan Scheme;
- Pivotal Enterprise Fund of £45m to support businesses with RV of £51k+; and
- £20m Hardship Fund, for business not in receipt of business rates relief.



## ONGOING ASKS

Caithness Chamber is continuing to raise the following priorities:

- Additional sectoral support i.e. self-catering establishments;
- Amending Rateable Value threshold beyond £51k+ to expand support to even more businesses; and
- Amending business classification list to include more definitions of businesses.



# ECONOMIC RECOVERY

— *Caithness Chamber and its network* has prioritised the need to have time to plan and prepare to enable business transition, job security and long-term economic recovery.

## CHAMBER ASK

- Increased clarity and guidance of how and when businesses can return to work;
- A joint approach to business and economic recovery between business and government; and
- A framework for business operations and economic recovery.

## RESULTS

- Scottish and UK Government published guidance for businesses to operate under health guidance;
- Creation of an Economic Resilience Advisory Group in which Caithness Chamber will be contributing to on behalf of the business community; and
- The Scottish Government published its 'Framework for Decision Making', which included high-level strategy on a return to work.



## ONGOING ASKS

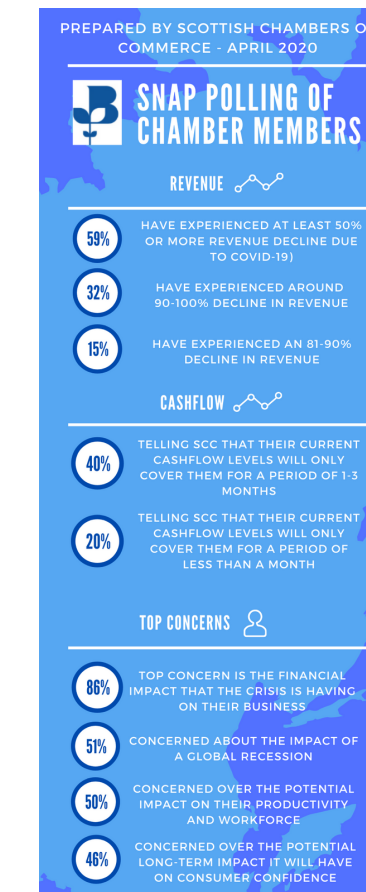
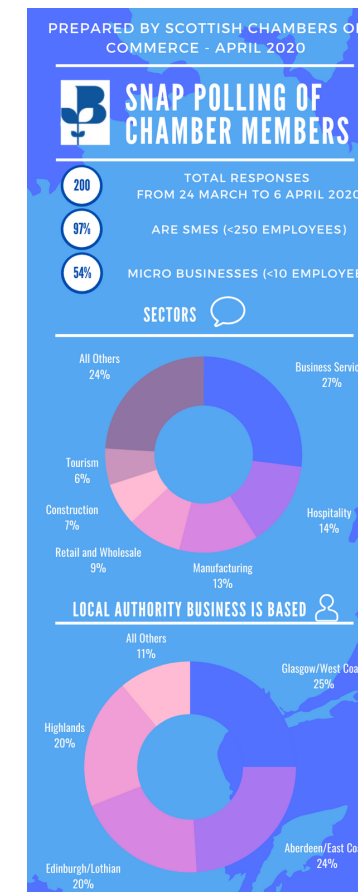
Caithness Chamber and its network is continuing to raise the following priorities:

- Establishing a timeline for return to work;
- Continue to push for clarity on behalf of key sectors and industries; and
- An economic recovery plan, including sectoral support and exporting/trade support.



# BUSINESS PANELS

Caithness Chamber and its network has provided three phases of business panels throughout the entirety of the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been a vital resource to enable businesses to have a voice and raise their needs and concerns. With over 650 responses so far, this has supported vital policy requests by CCoC to both the UK and Scottish Governments and has been a critical part in gaining the support measures to date.



PREPARED BY SCOTTISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE - APRIL 2020

**SNAP POLLING OF CHAMBER MEMBERS**

"My concern is that just under half of my regular customers have cancelled or postponed their monthly payments or contracts in March due to the impact this has had on their businesses."

"I still have 60% of them to service but my team can't help me to achieve this while furloughed. I can't afford the wages without the contribution from the job retention scheme and if the customers don't get serviced then there will be no customers, no business and no jobs."

"The issue for me as I see it is having a team who aren't allowed to lift a finger while I have to find their wages for April (80% or 100% makes very little difference) which I may or may not see a timely reimbursement for. There's work to be done, customers willing to pay, a team waiting to undertake it and it's all being ground to a halt by the furlough rules."

HOSPITALITY FIRM IN THE HIGHLANDS

"I'm having to furlough workers to keep the business afloat but then not being able to take them out of furlough to make them available for manufacturing emergency product. Also if they are accruing holidays during the furlough period, this is just adding to a problem when we start back."

MANUFACTURER IN FIFE

"My biggest concerns:

- How long can business be closed?
- When we reopen, will consumers go out and spend at the same level?
- Will my retailers be able to pay their outstanding bills that they owe me?
- How quickly will the Job Retention scheme payout? I've 110 staff currently on the scheme. This will affect cashflow in April if it is not paid by the end of April.
- How long will the Job Retention scheme last? Currently end of May?
- We are trying our best to avoid redundancies but the longer we are closed the longer it will take to recover."

RETAIL FIRM IN GLASGOW

## BUSINESS GUIDES

To try and enable a consistent voice and a clarity of message and delivery, CCoC has delivered tailored guides to date to support local Chambers and their members. The guides have covered the two critical areas for businesses currently - finance and employment and have been regularly updated as and when new information or support has been confirmed.



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# ENGAGING WITH BUSINESS

— *Caithness Chamber* has provided opportunities for members and Scottish businesses to have a voice, while providing practical advice through tailored support guides.



# NETWORK PROFILE

— To further support messaging, *Caithness Chamber and its network* has delivered a relevant, regular and consistent delivery of media releases and comment on behalf of our membership.

- 35 Newspaper Articles
- 15 TV Appearances
- 80,000 Reach across Social Media
- 15,000+ Newsletter Reads





# INFORMING DECISION MAKERS

— *Caithness Chamber and its network* continues to maintain dialogue with senior Ministers at the Scottish and UK Government's, raising the most important issues and challenges facing Scottish businesses. In addition, CCoC engages regularly with the Scottish Political Party Leaders.

## CABINET SECRETARY FIONA HYSLOP + MINISTER JAMIE HEPBURN MSP

The main topics discussed covered support measures for businesses in relation the economic impact that Covid-19 is having on their ability to operate and survive through this crisis. Chambers highlighted considerations and gaps in current support measures for the Scottish Government to take forward. These three areas were:

- Business Rates Reliefs & Business Support Grants;
- Support for industries and sectors; and
- Support for employees.

## SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND ALISTER JACK + UNDERSECRETARY DOUGLAS ROSS

The Secretary responded to Chambers questions providing views on a variety of issues, including the future of Scotland's tourism, transport and Oil and Gas sectors, the support mechanisms put in place so far, the ongoing discussions and the relationship between the UK/Scottish Governments. Mr Jack took away a number of points to feed into the UK Cabinet and Cobra meetings on the same day that the lockdown was extended.



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# INFORMING OUR MEMBERS



## DAILY UPDATES

— SCC's daily newsletters, *with more than 15,000 reads*, have ensured the wider Chamber network continues to be kept up to date with the latest developments, announcements and support available to businesses.

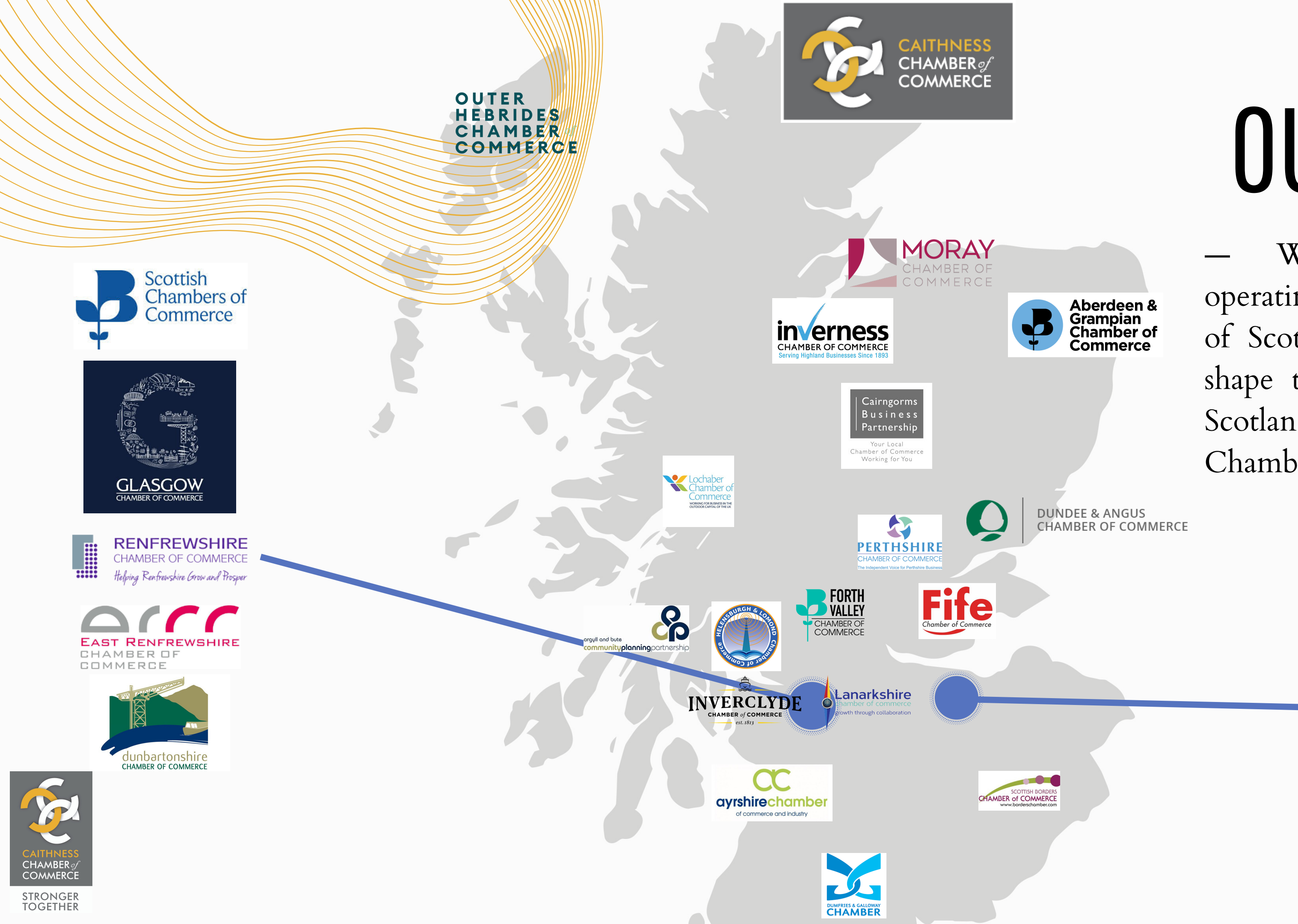
## COVID-19 SUPPORT HUB

— CCoC created a publicly available Covid-19 Hub, which has been accessed over *4,500 times*, with access to business support measures, including helplines, financial grants and employment support.



# OUR VOICE

— With local Chambers operating the length and breadth of Scotland, your business can shape the economic future for Scotland through the Caithness Chamber of Commerce team.





# CONTACT CAITHNESS CHAMBER FOR ENQUIRIES

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