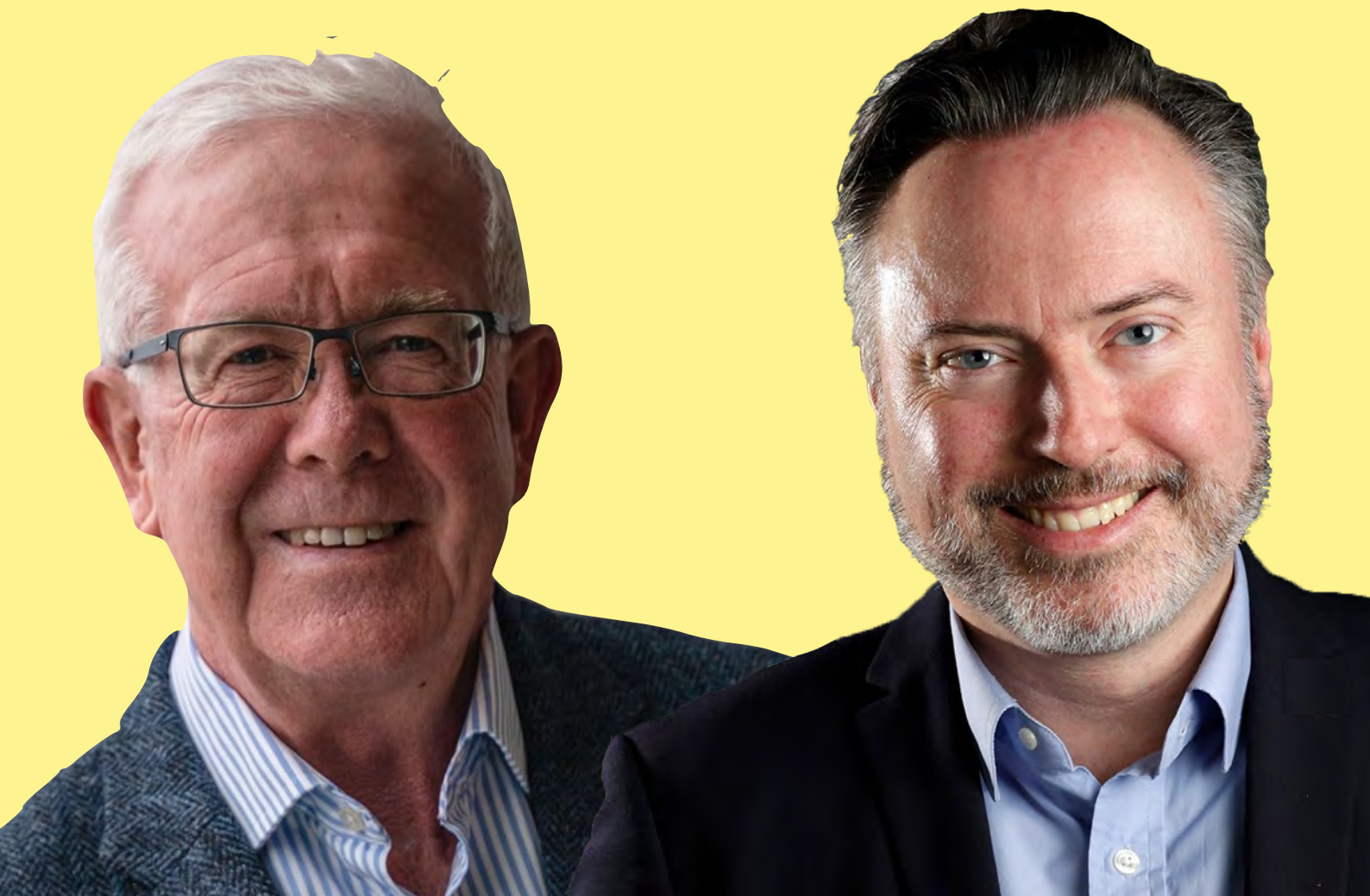


SUPPORTING STIRLING'S BUSINESSES DURING CORONAVIRUS



BRUCE CRAWFORD MSP & ALYN SMITH MP

The Coronavirus pandemic has led to serious economic challenges, particularly as lockdown has meant that many businesses were simply unable to operate for an extended period of time.

Days prior to the announcement of lockdown, Alyn issued a video statement on Facebook.

In the statement, Stirling's MP committed to working with Stirling's MSP, Bruce Crawford, stating that both representatives and their teams would be available to support those who needed it throughout this crisis - including businesses.



Bruce was clear throughout the pandemic in his support of the cross-party, four-nations approach.

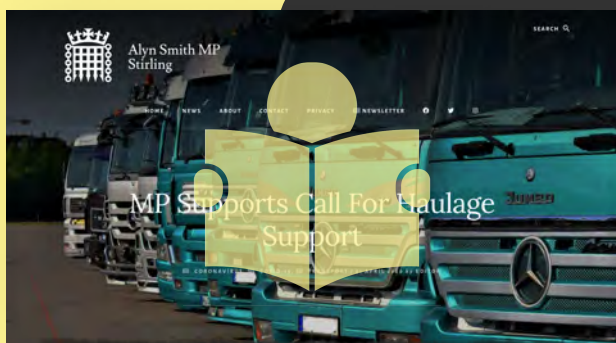
Bruce also stressed that if certain nations and regions of the UK began to exit lockdown at different times, it was vitally important that the existing support for businesses would continue to be available.

Alyn and Bruce have worked closely with local and national government to ensure that the support available to businesses and communities in Stirling benefitted as many people as possible.



At the start of March, Alyn called on the UK government to provide support for travel insurance companies. Not only was this to support these businesses and their employees, but also to ensure that as many UK nationals as possible could return home, and get clarity from their insurers, as the crisis continued.

Both Alyn and Bruce urged against panic buying at the start of the lockdown. Thanks to the hard work of those in the local food retail sector, local shops overcame the initial challenges brought about by panic buying, with regular stock levels replenished quickly.

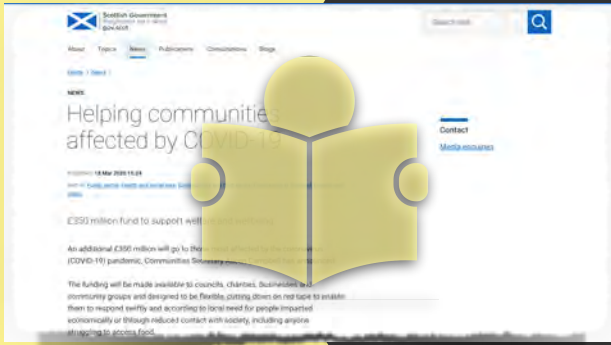


Alyn joined calls to support the Scottish Haulage industry. During the crisis, both Stirling and Scotland needed a robust transport and logistics network to sustain and support the recovery of all other businesses and the wider economy.

Alyn joined calls for a waiver on alcohol duty for alcohol based hand sanitiser. When the Government announced its intentions to implement this, Alyn welcomed the move. This enabled local businesses, like McQueen Gin in Callander, to assist in combatting the spread of Coronavirus, by providing hand sanitiser.

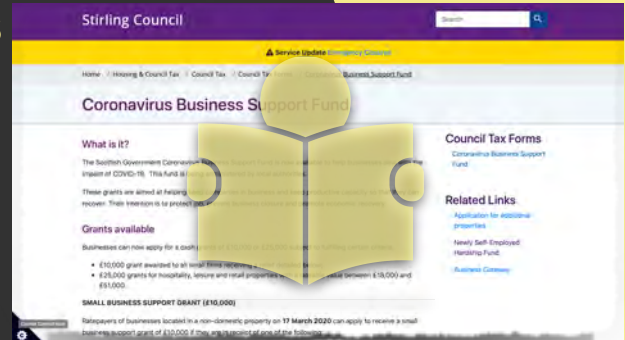


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The Scottish Government welcomed the various forms of support announced by the UK Government at the start of lockdown, and encouraged everyone to seek that help where possible - including businesses. In addition to this, the Scottish Government announced a £350 million support package for those facing financial and social risks as a result of the crisis.

The 'Scottish Government Coronavirus Business Support Fund' was announced, and is administered by local authorities. In Stirling, this made grants of up to £25,000 available to eligible businesses. More information can be found at the attached link.



By the end of April, 73.4% of Stirling Business Support Applications had been processed. This is a good number - Alyn and Bruce were keen to draw attention to the work that Stirling Council and the Scottish Government had done together on this. In a number of cases, Alyn and Bruce worked closely with Stirling Council and Scottish Government departments to see that the support reached as many local businesses as possible.



The Scottish Government implemented significant rates relief for businesses. Alyn and Bruce both support these measures as another way to lift the financial burden off businesses during this crisis.



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The UK Govt support for self employed people is welcome, but has not gone far enough. Forgotten Ltd campaigned to include those who have been left out from this much-needed support. Alyn and Bruce both support the Forgotten Ltd campaign.

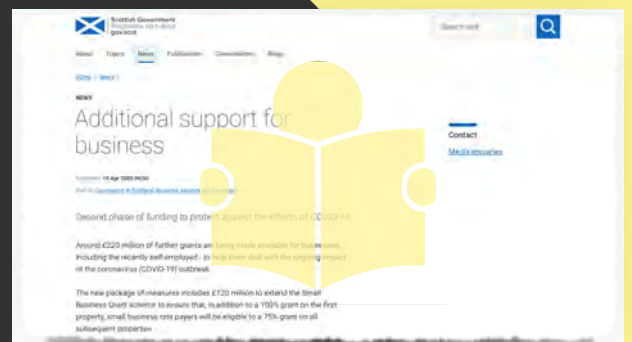
Alyn also supports 'Excluded UK', which plays a similar role, in highlighting the injustice done to the three million individuals who are exempt from UK government support. This includes newly self-employed people and many new businesses.

Alyn has written an article, published in a national newspaper, outlining his support for these groups.

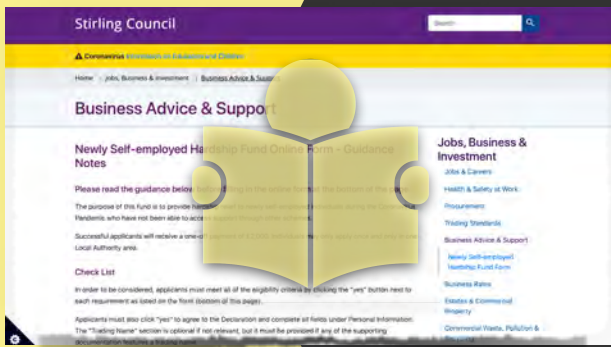


Confirmation from developers that the new business complex at Craigforth will go ahead was very welcome. This is a vote of confidence in the Stirling economy, and highlights that Stirling is very much open for business.

In April, the Scottish Government announced a second phase of funding to support the economy, which included £120 million to extend the Small Business Grant scheme.

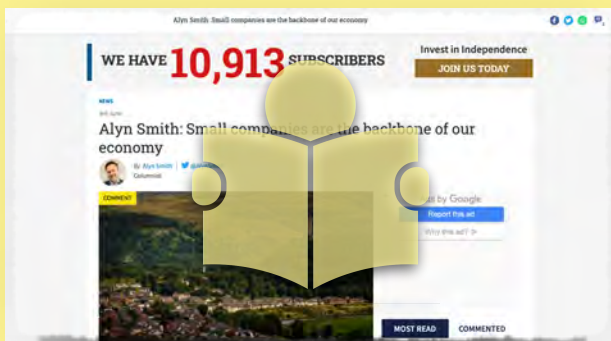
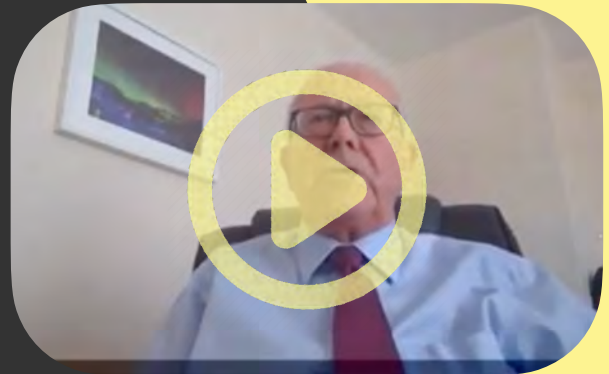


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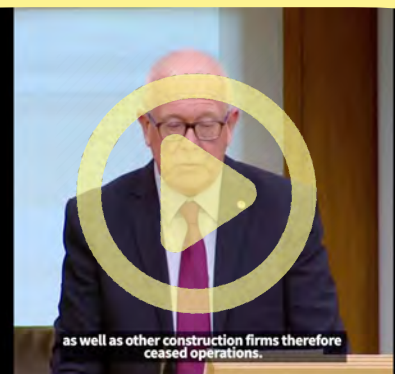
The Scottish Government announced a £100 million fund for newly self-employed people, and other groups which were ineligible for existing Scottish or UK Government schemes. This new funding, provided by the Scottish Government, was administered by Stirling Council.

During a virtual parliament session, Bruce asked the Rural Economy and Tourism Secretary about the support available for pubs, restaurants and hotels - which are of vital importance to tourism in Stirling – particularly for those which might find it challenging to implement social distancing measures as a result of their size.



Alyn continued to make it clear that the needs of Scottish businesses must be committed to during the pandemic crisis.

Bruce was also keen to ensure that the construction industry could return to business as soon – and as safely – as possible, asking the Scottish Government what considerations were being taken on this vital issue.



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During the crisis, it became clear that some insurers were seriously letting down businesses who took cover from them in good faith. These businesses were covered for infectious diseases but weren't getting a pay out, as COVID-19 isn't specifically mentioned in the policy. Alyn urged the UK government to hold these insurers to account, and intervene.

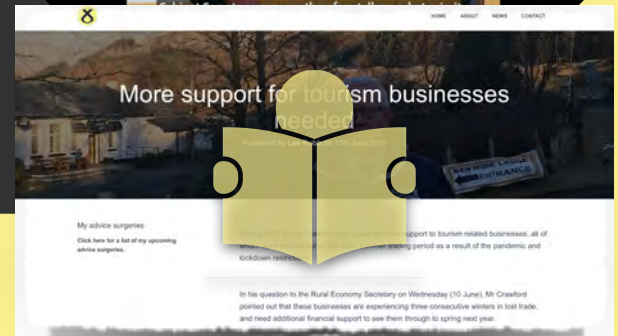
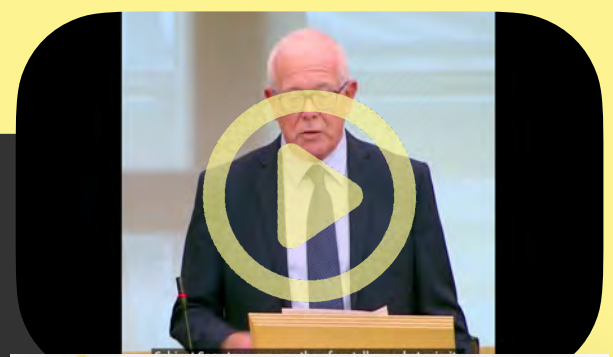
Stirling University is central to Stirling's local economy. However, like many sectors, the University is facing hardship - with a multi-million pound deficit. Bruce asked the Scottish Finance Secretary what measures they were taking, along with the UK government, to ensure Universities were financially supported at this time.



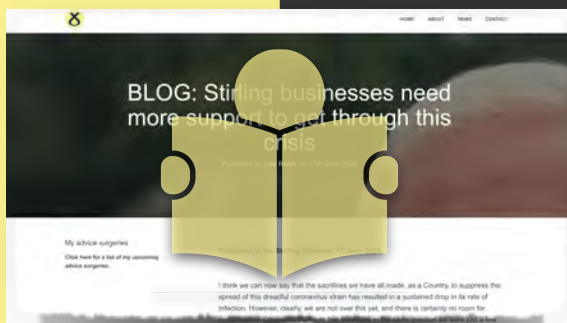
Bruce welcomed the measures implemented by the Scottish Government to support businesses. However, both Bruce and the Scottish Government recognised that there were still some gaps in these schemes, and that some businesses were losing out. Bruce asked what the Scottish Government was doing to support businesses which fell through the cracks, such as B&B's operated from domestic properties.

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Once the provisional date of 15th July for the re-opening of the tourism sector was set, Bruce called for further financial support for businesses in the tourism industry, which had lost out on large amounts of income as we entered the summer months.



Following various meetings between Bruce, Alyn and local business leaders, it became clear that continued support for businesses was necessary. Bruce wrote a column, published in the Stirling Observer, on this subject, stressing that the Scottish Government would continue to press the UK either for more funding, or more financial powers. As always, Bruce made clear that both his and Alyn's team were available to help in any way they could.



In light of the current situation, Bruce called on the Scottish Parliament to have borrowing powers, in order to mitigate the Coronavirus crisis in a far better way than the current constitutional arrangement allows. Bruce also suggested that these borrowing powers could perhaps be temporary, in order to build a cross-party consensus for meaningful financial support for business.



Bruce Crawford MSP
the Scottish Government and UK Government,

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Bruce took part in a debate in the Scottish Parliament, looking at what support was needed for an economic recovery from COVID-19 as the lockdown began to gradually lift. Bruce mentioned the importance of Stirling's Hospitality and Tourism industry, stating that a specific approach was needed. Bruce called for the Scottish Government to consider a reduction in business rates for these businesses, and for the UK to reduce VAT for the sector.

Alyn continued to support the Excluded UK and Forgotten limited campaigns - and is a member of the MP Group. This group looks at how millions of self-employed and company directors have been ignored by UK support, and what can be done to press their case in Westminster



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