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| **CORONAVIRUS UPDATE FROM CHAMBER CHIEF EXECUTIVE** |

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| Dear Members,These are unprecedented times and we are all having to get used to a new reality with things changing daily and even hourly right now.As a chamber, we are following the new guidelines from Government and my team and I will be working from home by Monday 23 March.  Naver Business Centre will also be closed to the external public.  This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and we will act in accordance with any guidelines.  However, for the Chamber, it is business as usual as much as possible, in as much as we are here on hand for all types of business support.  We have a critical role to play in supporting our members, ensuring you have the right information, being a listening ear and helping and supporting wherever we can.  As a business we too are vulnerable, and we are literally in it together with the thousands of businesses across Scotland and the wider UK.  We are however a business support organisation and my commitment to you all is that we will work through this together. What we can do for you is lobby governments for support and inform them of key issues on the ground and ensure that you have the right information.  As you can imagine, there is a lot of misinformation out there.Some initial things you can do if you haven’t already, is contact HMRC and get VAT, NI and PAYE deferred if you need to.  Helpline number is 0800 015 9559.  Also contact your bank and see what support is available.  In terms of government support the non-domestic rates reliefs and grant funding measures announced by the Chancellor in March 2020 apply in England.  They are not applicable in Scotland.  The Scottish Government has announced a £2.2 billion package of support for businesses as a result of COVID-19 to support businesses from 1 April 2020 for a year. Specifically:* All properties across Scotland will receive a 1.6% rates relief, effectively reversing the planned uplift in the poundage for 2020-21.
* Retail, hospitality and leisure properties will be eligible for 100% rates relief.
* The ratepayers for small businesses in receipt of Small Business Bonus Scheme relief (SBBS) or in receipt of Rural Relief, or eligible for SBBS and in receipt of either Nursery Relief or Disabled relief, will be eligible for a one-off £10,000 grant.
* The ratepayers for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with a rateable value between £18,000 and up to and including £51,000 will be eligible for a one-off grant of £25,000.

 The reliefs will be in place for one year from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 for eligible properties.Grant funding will also be available from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 for eligible properties.  These reliefs will be administered by local councils.  We are waiting to get further information from Scottish Government and will share as soon as we have. In the meantime you can also access this website set up by Scottish Government [findbusinesssupport.gov.scot](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcaithnesschamber.us6.list-manage.com%2Ftrack%2Fclick%3Fu%3D934014e74afc77c3868a2f52c%26id%3Dd6129fc97c%26e%3Dfcbede44ff&data=02%7C01%7C%7C49e48b21a3d343e66d5408d7cbe795a7%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637202067814983318&sdata=3gACtZG2tp5vrsmN7n1ll9dkC6gpGWodsVtd3uMQQ9k%3D&reserved=0" \o "Protected by Outlook: https://caithnesschamber.us6.list-manage.com/track/click?u=934014e74afc77c3868a2f52c&id=d6129fc97c&e=fcbede44ff. Click or tap to follow the link." \t "_blank) Please do not hesitate to contact me or my team.  We can be contacted as normal on our landline, mobiles and emails.  We will be constantly putting communications out, so forgive us if you get bombarded, but at this time we would much rather be giving you too much information, than too little. These are exceptional times but we are #inittogether.  I wish you all the very best at this time for you, your staff, and personally for your families.  Stay safe.With very best wishesKind regards,Trudy |

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