

**ECONOMY, ENERGY AND FAIR WORK COMMITTEE**

**COVID-19 – impact on Scotland’s businesses, workers and economy**

**SUBMISSION FROM**

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I am writing with some of my experiences as a business owner impacted by COVID19 in Lochbroom near Ullapool.

To be honest I have to say that I am glad the period of lockdown is being implemented and that it will hopefully continue as safety is my primary concern.

I run a family tourism business established in 1963 which supports and complements farming activity. I have four workers employed and have had to make 2 redundant and 2 furloughed.

The two furloughed are the longest standing employees (38 years and 30 years’ service each). It’s not an easy time. I still have no indication of how and when the HMRC portal for this scheme will open so I am paying out full wages in good faith and hope that I can reclaim 80% back.

The bank account is being propped up by finance from the RBS and I’ve applied for a small business £10k loan that may keep it manageable. I am in a lucky position as I own the property, if I was renting I do not know what I’d do.

I feel badly for the mental health of employees who have lost their jobs and also have no occupation to do in lockdown. I do not know how industry can support this.

There is a building project we are doing at the farm through part funding from the SG rural housing fund. The contractors stood down and are only a week away from practical completion. It’s a small site and really it means only one worker in at a time.

However, government guidance states that if work is only 5 days to completion it can complete. However, my feedback on this would be that there should be an allowance of 72 hours between each trade to minimise virus risk. Eg electrician does final fix, then if he/she is an asymptomatic carrier of covid the virus could be present on hard surfaces in the house. If painter then needs to come in after that is a risk. Consequently, the site remains stood down.

For the business to turnaround it will take me probably 3-5 years. In the last two weeks I have had to make £20,000 of refunds and lost about the same value on cancelled bookings. This is just the beginning.

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