

## **ECONOMY, ENERGY AND FAIR WORK COMMITTEE**

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

#### **SUBMISSION FROM**

**Brian Stirling**

I am a Lloyds of London insurance broker, I refuse to work in London and have worked from home close to Nairn for some 20+ years, there is no change for me but I see the economy in this area being affected badly because the rules on self-isolation refer to both urban and rural communities. I see massive differences in working practices in different areas and if people can work on their own I think they should be allowed to do so.

For example, one of my sons has a manufacturing joinery business, he works in his workshop by himself making wooden windows, stairs, doors etc. he has no employees, truly a one man band. He produces things for other joiners to fit, painters to paint etc. so there is a link in a chain, he can't get wood or glass but if a very limited amount of people were allowed to say drive a forklift then a lorry he could have the goods he needs. There is a local painter who was painting houses that had just been renovated and were unoccupied on his own, he can't get paint. There is a local blacksmith/fabricator, again on his own, serving the local farmers along with other local businesses with repairs and manufacture of machinery and implements, he can get material.

We have a local horticulture nursery with a lot of plants that people want to buy, he will allow people to buy online and he will deliver to the end of your garden, this is the sort of thing that should continue.

All these people have families and if they don't work they don't eat. The Westminster scheme and benefits are next to useless for them and they will probably have two months before they get any money, in my son's case it will be £94.00 per week, try living on that.

I feel the supply chains should be allowed to open up and if people can genuinely work on their own they should be allowed to do so. My son drives to his yard, parks his van inside and locks the gates and goes in his workshop and locks the door. There are hundreds of self-employed people who can do the same with no risk of contact with anyone else. It is not an urban area here, but the rules are designed for urban areas.

I had cause to go to Northern Norway in early February and after my trip I note that the urban areas, cities and towns are in lock-down and if people go into the rural areas they have to remain in isolated quarantine for 14 days then are allowed to mingle with the local community, distance rules apply and there are still restrictions but people can work.

If people can't work they can't buy food or pay bills, rates, electricity, gas, phone and internet bills should all be stopped, big companies are not feeling any pain at all.

I am concerned about suicide rates as well. Debts are going escalate and people will not see a way to repay.

Please keep small businesses going, there are very little benefits available for the one-man band and there is certainly a big difference between rural and urban life.

Thanks, I hope my opinion helps.