

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S DRAFT BUDGET 2018-19

SUBMISSION FROM WAULKMILL CIDER

1. What types of budget support does the sector need to grow its capabilities and build markets?

- Access to capital for SMEs
- Access to starter units / production space in rural Scotland
- Well informed specialist advice, not generalists
- Well-resourced local support organisations who can facilitate sector development, like encouraging distribution hubs to help overcome distribution challenges in rural Scotland.

2. Is what is currently offered by the Scottish Government and Public bodies effective in terms of providing the support needed?

It is not effective in meeting the needs of my business. I have tried to access support and informed advice to help me grow my business on a number of occasions over the past year, with much frustration. The reason for seeking advice was to help me transition from small craft cider producer through incorporation, business diversification into speciality food production and distilling, and business premises relocation to support the growth in volume production of my products.

Over the past year I have won Artisan Producer of the Year at the Scottish Rural Awards, I've been the first Scottish producer ever to win a national award at the CAMRA Real Cider Championships, I've won a BBC Good Food Show Producer Bursary, been named as a New Producer Champion by Speciality Food Magazine (the only business in Scotland to have achieved this), was joint winner in the Scotsman's Craft Beer / Cider award and I found out today I've been shortlisted in the Rural Enterprise and Innovation category of the Rural Awards 2018. My business is doing well and is achieving industry recognition in the fields of rural interest, environmental sustainability and in the UK-wide food sector. However, my business appears not to be a good fit with the Scottish Government's' priorities and support mechanisms for food and drink sector support. This would seem to suggest a disconnect with the industry and with government / Scottish industry organisation priorities.

I have sought advice from SDI and Connect Local. Both promised much but delivered very little. SDI wasted my time for a day, asked me to tick their output boxes and delivered nothing. Connect Local provided some advice, but that advice did not add significantly to what I already knew.

I have explored funding opportunities via FPMC, LEADER and Business Loan Scotland. None meet my business needs, the FPMC application process takes too long and with little guarantee of success, LEADER requires a cash lump sum as match funding to be evidenced prior to application – as a growing business it makes absolutely no sense for me to ringfence

cash when I need to be using cash reserves to fuel business growth. Verbal information provided on Business Loan Scotland puts me off application.

An application to Scottish EDGE was refused on the grounds of displacement, which evidenced a glaring lack of understanding of the industry by the assessment panel. Scotland Food & Drink lack meaningful knowledge of my industry sector and their focus seems to be on getting businesses signed up as paid members.

Support by the local Council has been at a very small scale as they lack any significant resources. Advice and marketing support by the local food and drink interface organisation has been significant and extremely helpful, but again with no resources I am aware this support has been provided on a voluntary basis by the contractor delivering this service in her own time.

If the government is putting money into food and drink, then this money is totally failing to reach the businesses and organisations who can actually make a difference to businesses like mine in the south of Scotland.

The one organisation that did make a big difference to my business in the early days was Savour the Flavours, but the local council pulled the plug on funding that several years ago. As far as I'm aware there is no funding available for a local organisation like this whose sole purpose is to make a difference to local businesses.

3. How can tax measures be used to help the Food and Drink sector deliver on food policy objectives?

The tax measures that could make a difference to my business are reserved to Westminster and are not within the power of the Scottish Government.

4. What should be the over-riding objective(s) of support?

Sustainable economic growth should be the priority in the south of Scotland, our local economy is a mess.

Waulkmill Cider
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