

# Cross-Party Group on Independent Convenience Stores

31 May 2022 at 6.15pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Jackie Baillie MSP  
Maggie Chapman MSP  
Maurice Golden MSP  
Daniel Johnson MSP  
Gordon MacDonald MSP (Convener)

Invited guests

Daniel Askew, Association of Convenience Stores  
Joanne Burns, Food and Drink Federation Scotland  
Barry Fisher, Keep Scotland Beautiful  
Seonag Mackinnon, National Federation of Independent Retailers  
George Maglaras, University of Stirling  
Claudia Marshall, RVM Systems Ltd  
Indya Nisbet, Biffa  
Zak Miller, Sielaff  
Colin Smith Scottish Wholesale Association  
Professor Leigh Sparks, University of Stirling

Non-MSP Group Members

Jamie Buchanan, Scottish Grocers' Federation  
Dan Brown, Lothian Stores Ltd  
Dr Pete Cheema OBE, Scottish Grocers' Federation  
Liam Forsyth, The Co-operative Group  
Maxine Fraser, Retailers Against Crime  
James Harper, One-O-One Convenience Stores  
Steve Hogarth, Scotmid Co-operative  
Andrew Kenney, UK Retail, BP Oil UK Ltd  
Dr John Lee, Scottish Grocers' Federation  
Craig Lynn, CJ Lang  
Abdul Majid, Baba's Kitchen/Costcutter  
Luke McGarty, Scottish Grocers' Federation  
Eddie McNally, The Co-operative Group

Dennis Williams, Broadway Convenience Stores

## Apologies

The Convener noted that apologies had been received from John Mason MSP, Murdo Fraser MSP, and Rachael Hamilton MSP.

## Welcome and introductions

Gordon MacDonald MSP (Convener) welcomed attendees to the meeting including Jackie Baillie MSP, Maggie Chapman MSP, Maurice Golden MSP, and Daniel Johnson MSP who were also in attendance.

## Approval of minutes and action points

The Convener (Gordon MacDonald MSP) asked for the approval of the previous minutes from the 16 March 2022 meeting. These were approved.

## Question Time: Scotland's political, economic, and constitutional challenges

John Lee outlined the broad themes for discussion and then introduced the speakers. The presentations were delivered by:

### **Maggie Chapman MSP**

The presentation by Maggie Chapman MSP covered issues such as the climate crisis, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, community wealth building, better support for town centres, and the economy including the circular economy.

### **Daniel Johnson MSP**

The presentation by Daniel Johnson MSP covered issues which included the war in Ukraine, supply side shocks, jobs and wages, net-zero, cost-of-living crisis, transport, cost of housing, retail crime and non-domestic rates.

### **Maurice Golden MSP**

The presentation delivered by Maurice Golden MSP covered issues such as the current economic outlook including high inflation and interest rates, UK manufacturing and service activity being at an all-time low, the need for a better energy mix and the forthcoming Scottish deposit return scheme.

### **Gordon MacDonald MSP**

The presentation delivered by Gordon MacDonald MSP covered a range of issues including the 40-year high level of inflation, the prospect of heading for stagflation, the UK deficit, cost of living crisis including high petrol and diesel prices and electricity and gas bills, cost of deliveries and the requirement for a mechanism to get Scotland back into the EU, that being an independence referendum.

## Questions and Answers

Following the four presentations there was discussion and questions from a range of those present.

Some of the points made were:

- Rising operational costs for Scottish businesses including that associated with the increasing legislative burden.
- Non-Domestic Rates system were not fit for purpose and required to be reviewed. The point was also made as to whether business rates between England and Scotland could be equalised. Online sales tax also needed to be considered too.
- Income tax levels and thresholds should be considered for review to ensure they were set at appropriate levels.
- Community ownership of energy generation offered a way of having cheaper energy and creating community resilience.
- Retail crime and potential link to cost-of-living crisis. Desperate times could lead people to do desperate things such as shoplifting. Convenience stores and retailers were suffering as a result. The point was made that conviction rates were low for retail crime and that many offenders were career criminals. Consideration needed to be given as to how to tackle these issues.
- Scottish independence referendum was potentially on the horizon over the next year or so. Discussion took place around the merits or otherwise of such an action and any subsequent outcomes.

The Convener thanked all the speakers for their presentations and attendees for their participation.

## Any other business

The Convener confirmed that there was no other business.

## Date of next meeting

The next Cross Party Group meeting would take place on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022. A decision would be taken in due course as to whether it would be held virtually or in-person.