

**Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee
Business Support inquiry - Inverness
3 December 2018**

Business Gateway Inverness

Meeting hosted by: Danny Gallagher, Business Gateway Manager, Mark MacKintosh, Business Advisor, Lloyd Cornfield, Business Advisor and Diane Swanepoel, Workshop/Events Co-ordinator

Members in attendance: Jamie Halcro-Johnson, John Mason and Gordon MacDonald

A range of topics were discussed with the staff at the local BG office in Inverness, including:

- The Business advisors told members that there was a real mix of businesses from all sectors who seek support from BG.
- It is beneficial to have a shop on the high street as it raises awareness, but also has the ability to acknowledge greater engagement in the local community (e.g. not stuck on the third floor of a building or out with the centre where travel could be an issue) and gives people somewhere to call into. There is a consistent level of inquiries.
- Many seek support in writing business plans and this helps businesses apply for finance from banks.
- In terms of workshops and events, it was suggested that participants should pay a deposit to keep their space as last minute cancellations can be a problem. However, the administration for this could also prove troublesome. It was raised that there is no evidence to suggest that free events are of a lower quality and BG were not convinced that charging for workshops would actually increase participation.
- Businesses are currently cautious due to political uncertainty and Brexit. There is a general concern about skills shortages and seasonal labour. Businesses are not currently experiencing employer difficulties, but there is a perception that this will be problematic in the future.