

# Scottish Secretary responds to November GDP figures in Scotland

News story

These show a fall in GDP of 1.4% in Scotland for November compared to a UK wide fall of 2.6%



Scottish Secretary, Alister Jack said:

Today's figures reflect the challenges we continue to face as a result of this global pandemic.

The UK Government has invested over £280 billion to safeguard lives and livelihoods across the country – including through our furlough scheme which has protected nearly 780,000 jobs in Scotland. This direct support is on top of £8.6 billion extra funding given to the Scottish Government.

Hope is on the horizon with the roll out of vaccines and we are taking steps to kick start the economic recovery through our Plan for Jobs, expanding City and Regional Growth Deals in Scotland and investing in a new Shared Prosperity Fund.

As we continue to see during these challenging times, the strength of the Union and support offered by the UK Treasury has never been more important.

- The UK Government furlough scheme, paying 80 per cent of wages, will run until the end of April. The self-employed support scheme has also been extended to the end of March and will increase from 55% to 80% of average profits – up to £7,500. At their peak in the summer our furlough and self-employed support schemes were supporting more than 930,000 jobs in Scotland.

- More than 90,000 businesses in Scotland have been supported from UK Government business loans worth £3.4 billion.
- The UK Government is investing billions to help people of all ages back into work, including our £2 billion Kickstart scheme for young people, expansion of sector work experience programmes and recruitment of thousands of Work Coaches in Jobcentres.
- This support is on top of an additional £8.6 billion upfront funding given to the Scottish Government this financial year for their Covid response.
- At the Budget in March the Chancellor will outline the next phase of our plan to provide certainty and growth in the months ahead.
- The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of Covid testing in Scotland and has moved quickly to buy vaccines, securing 367 million doses from seven developers with Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines currently being rolled out across the UK.

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## [Government reviews law on access to land for digital infrastructure](#)

A government [consultation has been launched](#) on whether to make changes to the law around digital infrastructure, such as phone masts and broadband cabinets, with a view to providing more homes with improved internet and mobile coverage.

Announced by Digital Minister Matt Warman, the consultation will review the legal framework for building and maintaining these structures on private and public land.

While progress has been made since the UK's Electronic Communications Code was reformed in 2017, stakeholders have reported that negotiations do not always progress smoothly and agreements can take a long time to complete. This is holding back homes and businesses from accessing better mobile coverage and much faster gigabit broadband.

The consultation will explore whether changes to the Code are required to

encourage faster and more collaborative negotiations between landowners and telecoms providers. It will also examine whether there are ways that the use of existing infrastructure can be improved.

Matt Warman, Minister for Digital Infrastructure, said:

As part of our vision to level up the UK with better connectivity and faster broadband speeds, we're looking at reforming the law so people can get the benefits of better connectivity as soon as possible.

We're also investing £5.5 billion to roll out nationwide gigabit broadband and improve poor mobile coverage.

The consultation seeks views on: issues that have arisen relating to obtaining and using Code agreements; rights to upgrade and share infrastructure; and difficulties relating to the renewal of expired agreements.

The consultation proposes reviewing automatic rights which can be used when a phone mast needs to be upgraded from 4G to 5G or shared among operators to remove coverage blackspots, to make clear when these rights should be available.

Views are also being sought on whether greater certainty is needed for operators and landowners about what will happen when their land agreements come to an end and how they can be renewed.

The 2017 reforms to the Electronic Communications Code were made to support faster and easier rollout in rural areas, balancing the need for digital infrastructure with the rights of landowners and other site providers.

Hamish MacLeod, Director at Mobile UK, said:

The Government has set ambitious targets on extending coverage and capacity and getting the regulatory framework right to enable operators to deploy their networks is essential. We welcome the consultation on the Electronic Communications Code as a vital part of this strategy.

**ENDS**

## **Notes to Editors**

- The consultation will provide all interested parties with the opportunity to comment on the scale and scope of potential reforms. The deadline for responses is 24 March 2021.
- The Electronic Communications Code is the legal framework underpinning agreements between landowners and communications operators in the UK.

The Code was substantially reformed in 2017 to make it cheaper and easier for electronic communications apparatus to be deployed, maintained, shared and upgraded. Now, more than ever, it is important that operators are able to do this at pace.

- The purpose of this consultation is to understand whether changes to the Code are needed. Whether changes are introduced will depend on our findings from this consultation. A full response to the consultation will be published in due course, and will provide further information on any changes to be made and, if so, the timescales for that. Should the government decide that reforms to the Electronic Communications Code are needed, this would require primary legislation.

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## **Domestic Abuse Bill 2020: letter from Baroness Williams to Peers following second reading**

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## **OPSS Awards return to celebrate regulatory excellence in challenging times**

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) will hold the Regulatory Excellence Awards 2021 on 10 June 2021. We will be highlighting current excellent regulatory practice by hosting a showcase virtual event for our stakeholders.

This year more than ever it is important to celebrate outstanding regulatory practice that has achieved positive outcomes in supporting businesses and protecting consumers. The awards will also demonstrate to the public the vital role that regulation can play in supporting and rebuilding the economy.

We have included four categories from previous years: Primary Authority, Better Business for All, Innovation and Technical, and Product Safety, and

have introduced a new Coronavirus category. The judging panel will consider entries in these categories with a timeline that includes the second half of the 2019 calendar year, 2020, and the first quarter of 2021. We encourage stakeholders who submitted entries for the cancelled Regulatory Excellence Awards 2020 to resubmit them.

The five categories are open to individuals, and organisations of any size, whose work is relevant to operations in the UK. We look forward to receiving entries from a wide range of stakeholders including engineers, scientists, technicians, businesses, trade associations, and frontline regulators. The awards for all categories are winner, highly commended, and commended.

- **Primary Authority:** for anyone involved in the development and management of primary authority partnerships.
- **Better Business for All (BBfA):** open to BBfA partnerships, organisations, and individuals working in the BBfA programme.
- **Product Safety:** open to individuals or teams in business or regulatory organisations who have made a significant contribution to product safety.
- **Innovation and Technical:** open to anyone working in technical and scientific fields (including metrology and hallmarking) who have developed novel or technical solutions that have in some way contributed to protecting consumers and supporting business.
- **Coronavirus:** open to anyone who have demonstrated excellent regulatory practice in their response to the pandemic. This may include helping keep people safe whilst businesses trade, supporting businesses to comply with new regulations, and aiding businesses economic recovery by helping them reopen.

Entry is simple, via a 500-word statement which demonstrates how the individual or organisation has made a real difference in protecting citizens and supporting the business community, using better regulation tools and principles. We are asking all stakeholders to submit a simple video with their entry. All finalists will be asked to make a video that may be shown at the virtual awards ceremony.

Follow #RegEx2021 on Twitter and help spread the word.

## **Criteria and entry**

The Awards are open to anyone involved in the delivery of regulation and compliance e.g., local authorities, national regulators, businesses, and trade associations.

Individuals, teams, or organisations can be nominated by others and/or themselves.

Entry forms are available from [Regulatory Excellence Awards 2021 Entry Form](#) (MS Word Document, 345KB) or from [OPSSRegExAwards@beis.gov.uk](mailto:OPSSRegExAwards@beis.gov.uk)

Deadline: entry forms must be returned to the Office for Product Safety and Standards by Friday 30 April 2021. Entries must be submitted online.

Short external endorsements may be included with entries.

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## [UKEF supports iRob through Coronavirus pandemic](#)

### **About the transaction: iRob**

<b>Region</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Sector</b>	Manufacturing/Automotive
<b>UKEF support</b>	Export Working Capital Scheme

Warwickshire-based iRob specialises in robotics and automation, providing a range of manufacturing services to large scale exporters in the automotive industry. The company turned to UKEF after securing a high-value contract with Jaguar Land Rover to deliver new automated facilities for a range of new models.

UKEF's local export finance manager, Jane Cooper, worked with Barclays to put a [working capital facility](#) in place that would allow the company to buy materials and pay staff while retaining cash in the business. We were also able to help extend the payment deadline after COVID-19 disruptions led to factory shutdowns and inevitable changes to the project timelines.

Giles Oberheim, Managing Director of iRob, says the impact of the support has been transformational:

This support has been the difference in being able to deliver this project and not. We wouldn't have been able to do this alone without the support of both UKEF and Barclays.

Barclays and UKEF worked tirelessly to get us going. We fully intend to carry on expanding as a business and see UKEF as a key part of our future.

Jane Cooper, Export Finance Manager for Birmingham, Coventry and Warwickshire, Leicestershire, said:

UKEF's mission is to ensure no viable UK export fails for lack of finance from the private sector. That mission remains the same in all economic climates. I urge every UK exporter who is concerned about their ability to continue trading overseas to look at how UKEF can support them through the pandemic.

Putting the right finance and insurance in place can give you the exporting edge, helping you to win contracts, fulfil orders and get paid.

[Tell us about your business](#)