



PRESS RELEASE

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Scottish Wholesale Association joins Scottish Tourism Recovery Taskforce

The Scottish Wholesale Association (SWA), the trade association for Scotland's food and drink wholesale businesses, has been invited to participate in the new Scottish Government Tourism Recovery Taskforce (STRT).

Chaired by Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism and Jamie Hepburn, the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills, the group will look at the needs of the tourism and hospitality sector as it recovers from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

SWA chief executive Colin Smith, who will sit on the new group, said: "The Scottish Government acknowledges the key role of wholesalers within the food and drink supply chain so I am delighted that the SWA has been asked to join this taskforce.

"Wholesalers supply thousands of businesses operating in the tourism and hospitality industry and many of our members are in a precarious position after three months of next to no income," he continued. "Yet they are still expected – with greatly depleted resources both financially and physically – to help the industry reopen as it moves out of lockdown.

"It's going to be a challenge for the whole economy but we hope the taskforce will help ensure that businesses open successfully and transition from opening with a reduced customer base to surviving until 'normality' and full viability returns in the longer term.

"Everyone must work together and support each other through the restart phase- and this includes recognition that the Scottish Government may need to continue to support operators and the supply chain behind them."

He added: "The taskforce will be responsible for strategic oversight of recovery plans in response to the Covid-19 impact on Scottish tourism and hospitality. It will challenge and advise on the plans to ensure that the sector receives the appropriate support."

Fergus Ewing has previously said "it is very clear there are exceptional circumstances facing this sector that must be recognised". He also confirmed that the Scottish Government is "pushing the UK Government to do more, including a review of VAT rates and to consider extensions to schemes such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme".

Yesterday's announcement by the First Minister that outdoor areas in Scotland's pubs and bars are to remain closed at least until next month was disappointing, Smith added, as it had been expected that pubs and restaurants would be able to open outdoor spaces and beer gardens in phase two of the Scottish Government's four-phase route map aimed at ending lockdown while continuing to suppress Covid-19.



Smith said: “With the decision now delayed until new evidence is received on July 2, operators face another anxious period for the survival of their businesses and this may also have a knock-on effect for the reopening of indoor areas on July 15 – the provisional date previously set for when tourism businesses may be able to resume operations, dependent on public health advice.”