



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Economy and Fair Work Committee

Kate Forbes MSP
Deputy First Minister and
Cabinet Secretary for
Economy & Gaelic

The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Sent by email only

Economyandfairwork.committee@parliament.scot

27 June 2024

Dear Kate

Report on Inquiry into Town Centres and Retail in Scotland

In November 2022, the Committee reported its findings following an inquiry into town centres and retail in Scotland. The Scottish Government responded in [February 2023](#).

Last November, the Committee asked for an update on three matters: allocations made from the £100m pledged by the Scottish Government to support business digital capability, progress to establish a retail Fair Work agreement and the Scottish Government's plans to reform Compulsory Purchase Orders.

The then Cabinet Secretary's [response](#) advised that the Scottish Government had funded £38 million of financial and advisory support to businesses through four schemes: Digital Development Grants; Digital Development Loans; the Digital Boost National Programme; and a pilot project on digital productivity but that programmes were currently paused due to "extraordinary pressure on public finances and the emergence of new priorities".

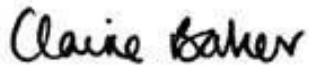
The same response advised that the development of a retail Fair Work agreement was being progressed by a sub-group of the Retail Industry Leaders Group. On compulsory purchases, the Committee was advised that the Scottish Government was committed to reforming and modernising legislation and, as a first step, an expert practitioner panel was to be set up. The Committee welcomes the establishment of a compulsory purchase reform advisory group, notes that terms of reference were published earlier this month and asks when the Scottish Government intends to bring forward proposals for reform.

At its recent business planning discussion, the Committee agreed to seek updates on Scottish Government actions to realise the vision for Scotland's town centres and implement the Scottish Government's Retail Strategy. In February 2023, the Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community advised that the first Town Centre Action Plan Forum had been held jointly with COSLA. No updates seem to

have been received since. The Committee would be grateful for one now. The Committee also requests an update on Scottish Government investment to support business digital capability and the status of the paused programmes. Finally, the Committee requests an update on the work of the Retail Industry Leaders Group, when it last met, what was discussed and what progress has been made towards establishing a retail Fair Work agreement.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claire Baker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Claire Baker MSP
Convener