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| **Coronavirus (Covid-19) – briefing**  |

Issued 6 May 2020

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| **Below is the latest briefing on the activity in managing the response to coronavirus (Covid-19).** **Local updates, council service changes and links to trusted sources of health guidance are published at** [***www.inverclyde.gov.uk/coronavirus***](http://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/coronavirus) |

**Plea for Inverclyde to stay home**

Commenting on the latest release of covid-19 related deaths by council area, Inverclyde Council Leader, Councillor Stephen McCabe has urged the Inverclyde community to stick to the stay at home rules.

He said: “In the past week there have been an additional six covid-related deaths in our area and though a small increase it still shows Inverclyde has the highest proportion in the country.

“We must never forget that this is six more members of our community lost to this awful virus and more families, friends, neighbours and colleagues mourning the loss of someone close to them.

“I would urge the community to stick by the social and physical distancing measures going forward. While there is a great deal of talk and even frustration across the UK at the length of the lockdown, the one thing that is crystal clear is that sticking to these rules limits the spread of the virus.

“When this ends you will have lived through an unprecedented time in world history and it should be something to tell your grandchildren about. To do that you have to live to see your grandchildren.

“We all must stick to the stay at home rules and make sure that you make our priority that the Inverclyde community lives through this.

“Please stay home and help save as many lives as possible.”

Across Scotland there have been 2,795 covid-19-related deaths while in Inverclyde there have been 99. When measured against the rest of the country deaths by covid-19 in Inverclyde are 13 per 10,000 while the Scottish average is significantly less at 5 per 10,000.

Deaths in Inverclyde are further listed by location with hospital still accounting for the largest number of deaths registered. 31 people have died in care homes, an increase of 4 from last week. 11 people have died elsewhere or in the home, a figures that has stayed the same as last week and 57 people have died in hospital, an increase of 2.

**Business grants update**

There are two amendments to the grant funding scheme, they do not significantly alter the existing eligibility criteria outlined in ‘local government finance circular 08/2020’.

Instead they expand the ways in which eligible businesses can access the small business grants fund (SBGF) and the retail, hospitality and leisure grant fund (RHLGF), under two main categories:

1. Ratepayers with multiple properties - following the initial one-off grant awarded though either Fund, each additional property for which the applicant pays rates and which also meets the eligibility criteria will qualify for a grant equal to 75% of the one-off grant.

For the SBFG the first qualifying property will be eligible for £10,000, and qualifying properties thereafter eligible for £7,500. For the RHLGF the sums will be £25,000 and £18,750 respectively.

1. Cumulative Rateable Value; For ratepayers that hold one or more properties in the Retail, Hospitality, and Leisure (RHL) sector, whose cumulative rateable value (of all RHL and non-RHL properties) is between £35,001 and £51,000. They will now be eligible for the SBGF for each of their qualifying Retail, Hospitality, and Leisure properties which has an individual rateable value that does not exceed 18,000.

**HMRC invites self-employed to get ready to make their claims**

This week, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has started contacting around three and a half million customers who may be eligible for the government’s Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) to explain the application process and help them get ready to make a claim.

The claims service opens on Wednesday 13 May and is being delivered ahead of schedule, with payments reaching bank accounts by 25 May, or six working days after the claim is made.

The scheme will benefit self-employed individuals or those in a partnership whose business has been adversely affected by coronavirus, covering most people who get at least half of their income from self-employment.  SEISS is a temporary scheme that will enable those eligible to claim a taxable grant worth 80% of their average trading profits up to a maximum of £7,500 (equivalent to three months’ profits) in a single instalment.

HMRC is using information that customers have provided in their 2018-19 tax return – and returns for 2016-17 and 2017-18 where needed – to determine their eligibility and is contacting customers who may be eligible via email, SMS or letter. We’ve also opened an online checker from Monday 4 May which will let customers check their eligibility for themselves, as well as giving them a date on which they can apply.

Customers are eligible if their business has been adversely affected by coronavirus, they traded in 2019-20, intend to continue trading and they:

* Earn at least half of their income through self-employment;​
* Have trading profits of no more than £50,000 per year; and​
* Traded in the tax year 2018 to 2019 and submitted their Self Assessment tax return on or before 23 April 2020 for that year​.

Where individuals are ineligible for the scheme, HMRC will direct them to guidance setting out the conditions to help them understand why they are ineligible, and advice about other support that might be available to them such as: income tax deferrals, rental support, Universal Credit, access to mortgage holidays and the various business support schemes the government has introduced to protect businesses during this time.

We expect our phone lines to be very busy over the next few weeks as people enter this new scheme, so are encouraging customers to only call us if they can’t find what they need on GOV.UK, from their tax agent or via our webchat service – this will leave the lines open for those who need our help most.

**Council’s policy and resources executive**

The council’s policy and resources executive sub-committee met yesterday (5 May 2020).

The sub-committee is the only operational committee in Inverclyde Council after all others were cancelled and the delegation of full powers in the emergency to the Council’s policy and resources executive sub-committee.

The full sub-committee papers are published online at: <https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2258>

Key reports reviewed at the committee include:

* A review of the council’s response to coronavirus (covid 19) which confirmed that the current suspension of parking enforcement should remain in place for a further six weeks, subject to any significant changes to Government guidance on social distancing;
* An update was provided by the council’s chief financial officer on the council’s financial position.
* Following the publication on new detail on covide-related death statistics across Scotland by the National Records of Scotland, the council received an examination of the published data showing the impact on Inverclyde.
* A report was presented highlighting the planned process for Inverclyde’s covid-19 recovery structure and strategy.
* A request from Councillor McEleny was made on the impact on mental health of covid-19.
* A request from Councillor McEleny was made on the impact on education of covid-19.
* A report was presented highlighting changes to Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) qualifications arrangements for 2019/20as a result of covid-19.
* A report was presented highlighting national changes to placing requests and appeal hearings during the covid-19 pandemic.
* Cruise ships – councillors reviewed a report on an approach the council received about the temporary lay-up of cruise ships. The committee decided that they could not support the proposal and the council’s Chief Executive would write to the Chief Executive of Peel Ports about this. A copy of the statement issued is published on the next page.

**Cruise ship response**

Responding to proposals to lay-up cruise ships at Greenock, Inverclyde Council Leader, Councillor Stephen McCabe said: “As an area cruise ships are a strong growth market and one that, post covid-19, we would expect to continue to contribute significantly to the Scottish economy.

"We have also as a community shown that we are there for people in a crisis and that Greenock will always be a port of safe harbour. At this time though we cannot support a proposal to lay-up cruise ships in the Clyde and we would urge that any proposals are reconsidered as a matter of urgency.

"At this time during a global pandemic and health crisis it wouldn’t be appropriate to put a significant number of people into one location which has the potential to put strain on our public health services.

"We do not want to put anyone, including the crew of the cruise ships, into any harm and it is crucially important that nothing is done that interferes with the stay at home messages.

"We want many more people to visit and discover the amazing things we have in Inverclyde, but our message is not right now. The council’s Chief Executive will be writing to the Chief Executive of Peel Ports to confirm the council’s opposition to this and to urge them to reconsider any proposals at this time.”

**Council key worker testing arrangements**

The council’s Chief Executive issued the message below to managers across the council highlighting the arrangements for key worker testing:

Ensuring the safety of our workforce and getting people back to work is of vital importance to the council.

Testing for key workers will be a crucial part of us continuing to deliver our frontline services.

The UK government has established a new network of covid-19 testing facilities for key workers. This programme runs alongside the existing programme of testing in the NHS for clinical purposes and testing of key workers in the health and social care sector.

This testing will allow symptomatic key workers and their household members to know whether or not they have the virus. This will in turn keep our essential services running.

Our health and safety service is registered to refer people to this.

Below is some useful notes and attached is guidance. If you have any questions please speak with the health and safety team to ensure that your essential services are getting the support they need from the new testing services and make sure you highlight any practical issues for our colleagues or their families in accessing this service.

**Who can be tested using this new service?**

Testing will be available for the following:

* If you have a member of staff absent from work because a household member has symptoms,
* If you have a member of staff who has symptoms (but feels sufficiently well and would normally continue to work).

**How will this testing be arranged?**

If you have a member of staff who you would like to be referred, please contact the health and safety section via ICON, the council intranet or the council employee information published at [www.inverclyde.gov.uk/cornavirus](http://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/cornavirus) where guidance and a referral form can be downloaded. This referral form must be submitted to health and safety by 1:30pm daily to ensure that a referral can be made that day.

Guidance on this and a copy of the referral form can be downloaded from Icon and the website and is attached.

Please note: testing is only available in the first five days from the onset of symptoms so it is important to make a referral as soon as possible.

It is possible for your staff to be able to self-refer, however this should only be used by Inverclyde Council employees when advised to do so by their line manager on advice from health and safety. Information on how to self-refer will be provided as required.

**Continuing with current guidance on symptoms and social distancing**

Please remember this is solely a testing service and does not include clinical assessment. If anyone is concerned about worsening symptoms, they should call NHS24 on 111.

Until test results are known households should continue to follow guidance on self-isolation from NHS Inform - [https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19#](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19)

Staff with a household member who tests positive for covid-19 muststay at home for 14 days from the start of their symptoms, even if they do not have symptoms.

Thank you once again for your continued support in keeping our workforce and our community safe.

Thank you

Aubrey Fawcett
Chief Executive

**Local government ‘consequentials’ message**

The Convention of Scottish Local Government has issued a statement today about the Scottish Government’s use of UK Government conseqentials.

The statement read:

Councillor Gail Macgregor, COSLA’s Resources Spokesperson described the decision by Scottish Government to pass the £155 million of Consequentials from the UK Government in full to Councils as a positive step in the right direction.

Councillor Macgregor said: “Today’s announcement of the full £155million coming to Scottish Local Government is a positive step in the right direction and we look forward to engaging with Kate Forbes, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, to get this money to Councils quickly.

 “Scotland’s Councils are doing a heroic job in keeping a huge range of essential services running to meet the needs of communities and to be responsive locally. The costs to Local Government in dealing with this pandemic and coping with the loss of income are going to be substantial. COSLA is working closely with all councils on an ongoing basis to understand the scale of these costs and to ensure that Scottish Government recognises that this could well exceed the £155m Consequentials.”

**Short-term prisoner release**

The Scottish Government and Scottish Prison has announced more information on a planned covid-19 early release of prisonsers and highlighted a ‘triple-lock’ restrictions in place as regulations are laid before Parliament.

The statement read:

Regulations to allow a limited number of short-term prisoners nearing the end of their time in custody to be released early have been laid in Parliament to help tackle the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The move will help prison and healthcare staff continue to safely manage those who remain in their care during the outbreak and follows prisoner release measures taken across the world, including elsewhere in the UK.

The scheme is limited to those sentenced to 18 months or less and who on 4 May have 90 days or less left to serve in custody. Detailed restrictions will be in place to exclude certain groups of prisoners from the process, based on their previous offending.

With the regulations in place, prison governors can take further steps, including liaison with local authorities and third sector community justice partners, to prepare for appropriate individuals to be released gradually over the next 28 days.

Up to 450 prisoners will be considered for early release. Reductions in Scotland’s relatively high prison population will increase the availability of single-cell occupancy, in turn helping to contain the virus and making prisons safer for inmates, prison officers and NHS staff.

**Aid for private rental landlords**

A £5 million fund will offer interest-free loans to landlords whose tenants are having difficulty paying rent during the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.

The Private Rent Sector Landlord COVID-19 Loan Scheme will offer eligible landlords up to 100% of lost rental income for a single property.

It will support private-sector landlords who are not classified as businesses, have five or less properties to rent and have lost rental income due to tenants unable to pay rent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Read more about the new fund at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-landlord-and-letting-agent-faqs/>

**Inverclyde foodbank**

Inverclyde Foodbank will be closed on Friday 8 May 2020 due to the public holiday.

The foodbank will reopen and resume deliveries on Monday 11 May 2020. Referrals for those who are likely to be in need over the weekend are encouraged to be processed where possible before 1pm on Wednesday 6 May 2020 to enable delivery that afternoon.

Please also note that all parcels contain supplies for 3-5 days of food. If you have any queries please don't hesitate to be in touch by email inverclydefoodbank@gmail.com or by calling 01475 787177.

**New bereavement resources**

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has published new bereavement resources on their website for anyone who has lost a loved one due to COVID-19. It also includes information for any death at this time. The pages include practical advice on steps after a death, registering a death and funeral arrangements. It also contains NHSGGC bereavement support services available to patients and their families, as well as links to external support.

Here is a link to the web pages: <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/your-health/health-issues/covid-19-coronavirus/for-the-public-patients/bereavement-information-and-support/>

**Coal mining charity support**

The Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) has asked us to share information about the support they have available through their personal welfare service during COVID 19 outbreak.

Their support is available to former mineworkers, partners, widows and any dependent children or adult dependents with a disability.

The information they have sent and contact details for Scotland are below:

During this difficult period, CISWO is continuing to provide our personal welfare service and are accepting referrals from individuals themselves, family members and other agencies. The majority of our services can be delivered remotely and we are working hard to provide support by telephone, email, and post. Our free and confidential service includes;

• Assistance with welfare benefit applications and industry related compensation schemes.

• Advice on mining related issues including illness and disability.

• Help to access mobility equipment including walking aids and wheelchairs.Support to reduce loneliness and social isolation.

• Advocacy to enable you to express your views and concerns, and defend and promote your rights, including access to information and services.

• Emotional support including loss and bereavement, illness and caring responsibilities.

• Financial assistance at times of exceptional hardship through CISWO grants or assistance through other agencies and charities.

• Access to holidays and convalescence.

• Access to CISWO educational grants for former mineworkers and their dependents.

Our support is available to former mineworkers, partners, widows and any dependent children or adult dependents with a disability.

We have also extended our services to those in our client group most in need, particularly those who are self-isolating and have limited local support and can provide access to essential shopping and prescription collection in some areas.

Please contact your local office if you think we can help:

Scotland 2nd Floor, 50 Hopetoun Street, Bathgate, West Lothian, EH48 4EU.
01506 635 550 Scotland@ciswo.org.uk