

# Covid-19 (Impact on Arran Economy)

## **Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):**

To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Fraser of Allander institute report,

*“The Impact of Covid-19 on the Arran economy”*, including its comments on how this has affected tourism. (S5O-04662)

## **The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):**

I agree that the situation is concerning. We know that Covid-19 continues to have a profound impact on our island communities. We are currently working closely with our partners, including North Ayrshire Council, Taste of Arran and the Arran Economic Group.

I do not underestimate the impacts and I understand that a tailored approach will be necessary. Our £30 million pledge to deliver the national islands plan and our new £2 million islands green recovery programme will be vital in stimulating new economic activity across our islands, helping businesses recover from the impacts of the pandemic and creating new high-quality jobs.

## **Kenneth Gibson:**

The report states:

*“on average, each day of ferry operation contributes just under £170,000 to Arran’s economy.”*

That is just more than £62 million a year. How can the Scottish ministers optimise the ferry service at this difficult time?

Can the cabinet secretary go even further than he has already gone in supporting island businesses, to ensure that Arran’s economy survives and can ultimately thrive?

## **Fergus Ewing:**

I absolutely agree that the ferry is essential to Arran.

It is a lifeline service and the gateway for everybody who visits the island. It is a marvellous tourism offering and there have been real difficulties over the Covid period. Businesses have been facing constraints during lockdown and beyond.

Mr Gibson is absolutely right to say that we need to ensure that the ferry service is reliable, and we need to look to the future to see what more we can do for the service. As the Fraser of Allander institute recognises, the Arran economy is extremely different from the North Ayrshire economy.

I know that Mr Gibson, who has been a forthright advocate for Arran over the years, will continue to ensure that the arguments are kept to the fore.

ENDS