

IMPACT REPORT 2024



Scottish
Chambers of
Commerce

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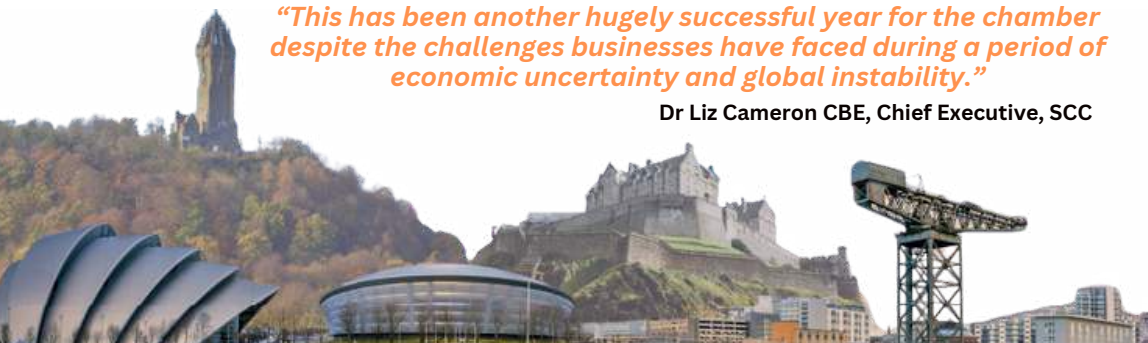
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“This has been another hugely successful year for the chamber despite the challenges businesses have faced during a period of economic uncertainty and global instability.”

Dr Liz Cameron CBE, Chief Executive, SCC



FOREWORD

“The SCC has been instrumental in holding politicians and policymakers to account on economic and business policy.”

Running a business in Scotland often means we are dealing with challenges beyond our control, whether from Holyrood, Westminster or global events.

The Chamber Network exists to advocate for the Scottish business community and amplify the voices of our 12,000 business members across 30 regional Chambers of Commerce.

We have called on Holyrood and Westminster to ease regulatory burdens and work in partnership with business to reinvigorate growth and investment. In the lead up to the General Election we issued a 15-point action plan developed by business for business, to create long-term growth and jobs, unlock investment and help firms build towards a sustainable future.

Growth, investment and innovation are sorely needed yet many of our businesses are still being hindered by obstacles placed in their path, from rising operational costs to labour and skills shortages. We will continue to hold key decision-makers in both Holyrood and the newly elected UK Parliament to account and ensure our priorities are at the top of the agenda.

There is too much to recount in a short foreword so let me end with a heartfelt thank you to our Network. Scotland's economy has had to go through transformation amidst unstable geopolitical landscapes, from global trade tensions to Brexit impacts, yet the Network has refused to stand still.

This impact report highlights the outstanding achievements of the talented team at SCC. From our Executive Team, led by Chief Executive Dr Liz Cameron CBE, to the SCC Board of Directors, our unrivalled local Chamber Network, and the many volunteers providing us with expertise and knowledge.

We continue to raise the bar year after year, and through close collaboration we will build a more resilient, entrepreneurial, prosperous and sustainable economy for the future.

Stephen Leckie

President, Scottish Chambers of Commerce



INTRODUCTION

“In these challenging times, the need for a strong voice to represent Scottish business has never been greater.”

As we navigate a new UK government and global political and economic unrest, the Scottish Chamber of Commerce Network remains Scotland's leading voice for business.

Nationally and internationally we play an essential role, setting the business agenda and promoting the interests of our members and partners.

The concerns and priorities of Scotland's business community are heard, consistently and credibly, across Holyrood and Westminster and our business research informs the most senior levels of government.

We successfully ensured Non-Domestic Rates is a key policy issue with focus on reform and making it competitive for business, securing the rates appeal extension benefitting hundreds of businesses. This work will continue until we see major change to business rates.

Long-standing calls for changes to the apprenticeship levy and legislation to support sustainable aviation fuel were committed to in the King's Speech, as well as the retention of the graduate route visa after review.

We empower Scottish businesses to thrive in the global marketplace. Our international trade partnership with the Scottish Government has secured £37.5 million achieved and projected sales with 1200 participating businesses and 113 trade missions delivered.

On behalf of the SCC Executive team, I extend our sincere gratitude to our advisory groups, partners, the Chamber network and all their teams for outstanding support, commitment and valuable contributions.



Starting, sustaining and growing a business takes courage, sacrifice, determination and resilience. I congratulate everyone for demonstrating those qualities during another exciting and fun year.

The future may be unclear but what is certain is that by working together we can continue to grow Scotland's economy and support our businesses.

Dr Liz Cameron CBE

Chief Executive, Scottish Chambers of Commerce

YOUR EXECUTIVE TEAM

Supporting the Scottish business community
& the Chambers' 12,000 members



Stephen Leckie
President, SCC
Chair & CEO, Crieff Hydro Ltd
Chair, Visit Scotland



Dr Liz Cameron CBE
Director & Chief Executive



Charandeep Singh BEM
Deputy Chief Executive



Ros Wardley-Smith
International & Operations
Executive



Colin Campbell
Communications & Research
Executive



Shamona Yousuf
Finance Executive



Mansi Dwivedi
Business Administration &
Projects Executive



Cameron McKendrick
Marketing & Events
Executive



Janette Young
Business Specialist (HR &
Talent)



Scan here for more information
& contact details

OUR DIRECTORS



Neil Amner

Director, Anderson Strathern



Rodney Ayre

Senior Department Production
Manager, Mitsubishi Electric Air
Conditioning Systems Europe Ltd



Claire Baird

CEO, Ayrshire Chamber of
Commerce



Bruno Berardelli

Chief Operating Officer, AMP
Clean Energy



Stuart Cresswell

Scotland Manager,
Associated British Ports



Jacqueline Dobson

President, Barrhead Travel



Dr Poonam Gupta OBE

Chief Executive, PG Paper
Company Ltd | Vice President,
Scottish Chambers of Commerce



Dr Hina Khan

Executive Director, Space Scotland



Colin Loveday

Founder & CEO, Predict
Mobile



Stewart Nicol OBE

Scottish Business Leader



Doug Smith

Consultant, CBRE Scotland



Mary Ann Smith

Director, We Achieve
Associates Ltd

STRATEGY 2024 & BEYOND

As the leading voice of business in Scotland and the Scottish Chamber Network as the most effective business-to-business organisation, we are driving forward with a new dynamic Vision, Mission and Approach.

OUR VISION

- **Enable** a modern, collaborative, joined-up and global Scottish Chamber Network
- **Engage and support** individual Chambers to strengthen engagement and raise our profile
- **Maintain** a positive brand synonymous with credibility, delivery and influence
- **Commercialise** opportunities to increase the sustainability of SCC and Network

OUR MISSION

- **Engage, connect and understand** the issues of members and ensure they are heard at the highest level of government and society
- **Raise** the profile of the Chamber Network and Chamber brand
- **Maintain** a sustainable business model which secures our long-term future

OUR APPROACH

- **Lead** the Chamber Network by identifying, communicating and representing the issues that affect every member
- **Support individuals Chambers** by working with them, advising and supporting them
- **Deliver** through events, engagement opportunities and helping to resource and support the Network
- **Be commercially sustainable** by identifying opportunities and delivering projects
- **Have global reach** by expanding and securing new international trade opportunities

With a network of 30 Chambers, we represent more than 12,000 companies and over 50% of Scotland's private sector workforce.

GROWING SCOTLAND'S INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The SCC Network is an internationally leading business-to-business network and part of the global Chamber brand representing 45 million companies across 100 countries and in every continent.

As an International Chambers of Commerce partner we have access to global policy decisions which impact strategically and operationally on Scottish business. In addition, we contribute to the UK Government's Strategic Trade Advisory Group identifying key opportunities and challenges in any Free Trade Agreements.

Our powerful network identifies business connections and market opportunities, providing market research and practical advice. We know what it takes to sell, attract investment and innovate to stay ahead of the competition.



112

Trade Missions Delivered



1200+

Participating Businesses



£185k+

Private Sector Contributions



£37.5 million

Achieved & Projected Sales

“The Chamber’s unwavering commitment to supporting the Scottish business community is truly commendable.”

Annie MacDonald, Stories of Scotland

“The Chamber is a good and effective strategic partner in our business growth into China.”

Amir Bawi, Founder, Glenroy

GROWING SCOTLAND'S INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The SCC embarked on a transformative partnership initiative with the Scottish Government to boost Scottish businesses' capabilities in exporting, accessing new markets and nurturing global connections.

With a focus on practical advice, pragmatic support and facilitating real B2B opportunities, SCC and the Chamber network is at the forefront of empowering businesses to navigate the complexities of international trade. We are committed to empowering Scottish businesses to thrive in the global marketplace.

The key objectives and associated outcomes for the International Trade Partnership include:



To increase the number of Scottish businesses exporting



To increase the value of new and existing Scottish exports particularly for SMEs



To align activity with the Scottish Government's Export Growth Plan & Vision for Trade

TOP MARKETS

1. United States of America
2. Canada
3. Germany
4. China
5. France

TOP SECTORS

1. Energy 15%
2. Food & Drink 14%
3. Business Services 14%
4. ICT 10%
5. Manufacturing 9%

“Being part of an organised trade mission that focuses on how that country does business and the culture, gives you way more information that you could get by just visiting yourself.”

“The trade mission provided invaluable learnings on how to do business, at the same time forging new relationships which will no doubt bring new business opportunities in the coming months and years.”

GROWING SCOTLAND'S INTERNATIONAL TRADE

SCC Network is committed to expanding and growing the business and economic partnership between Scotland and the USA, aligned with the Scottish Government's Trading Nation strategy. The programme included business meetings alongside participation in the world-renowned Tartan Week and annual Parade. During the visit, SCC met with stakeholders including the US Department of Commerce, Greater New York Chamber of Commerce, the New York City Partnership and His Majesty's Consul General to the USA.



USA

"Our culture and heritage inspire 630,300 Americans to visit Scotland every year. Similarly, 350,000 Scots visit the USA. Tartan Week is an opportunity to display our culture and attract more Americans to visit Scotland in the future."

Dr Liz Cameron CBE

PAKISTAN

SCC hosted an inward delegation from Pakistan with a series of B2B meetings attended by 30 leading businesses from both nations.

The B2B meetings helped to fast track bilateral business relationships.



GROWING SCOTLAND'S INTERNATIONAL TRADE

From Scotland to Dubai, to New York, SCC is influencing for the Scottish business community at the highest level of economic policy and decision making.



COP28

SCC led a delegation to COP28 UAE with the Scottish Government to showcase Scotland's innovation in key Net Zero sectors and speak with decision-makers and influencers to create future collaboration opportunities in the UAE and the wider GCC region, and share its world-leading energy transition story.

DUBAI

SCC held discussions with H.E. Hassan Al Hashemi, Vice President of Dubai Chamber, the largest business organisation representing Dubai's private sector. We look forward to collaboration between Scotland the UAE and developing this important partnership to trade and investment.



“Scottish Chambers of Commerce and its wider network plays an important contribution to seizing Scotland’s economic and investment opportunities particularly through the support it offers to businesses and helping promoting the significant exporting opportunities many businesses across Scotland have.”

Humza Yousaf, Former First Minister of Scotland

INFLUENCING BUSINESS

The SCC proudly represents Scottish businesses in London, engaging with key politicians and influencing forums in the capital.

FUTURE OF TRADE

SCC participated in the Future of Trade with the British Chambers of Commerce Global Network and shared our approach to winning new deals abroad, helping SMEs increase international sales, secure investments & reach new markets. We attended the BCC Global Annual Conference, representing Scottish businesses among the UK Chambers of Commerce. This network comprises 50,000+ businesses which employ 6 million workers.



“Collaboration between Chambers & Government is key to shift the dial.”

Charandeep Singh BEM

SCC NETWORK LONDON



We participated in meetings at 10 Downing Street and HM Treasury to discuss the priorities of the SCC Network including economic growth, international trade and improved collaboration between business & government.

Meetings included Tan Dhesi MP of UK Labour, Stephen Flynn MP of SNP, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the International Chamber of Commerce UK.

INFLUENCING POLICY & GOVERNMENT

SCC actively represents the views of members and the wider business community at the highest levels to influence and shape business policy at Standing Committees & Advisory Groups.



POLICY WINS

KING'S SPEECH

Our long-standing calls for reform of the apprenticeship levy and legislation to support sustainable aviation fuel were committed to in the King's Speech.

POST-STUDY VISAS

Students in the UK will be allowed to stay, work, or look for jobs for at least two years after graduation, or three years for those on a PhD, following the last UK government's decision to retain the graduate route visa.

- SCC called for more established channels for industry to share feedback and sectoral intelligence with Government. These have both been included as recommendations in the final report.
- SCC has been successful in including a specific recommendation for Scottish Government to develop a process which looks at removing regulations, shifting the Government's focus away from simply introducing regulation. Other focus areas include impact assessments, costs and how regulations are developed.
- SCC secured additional monitoring and reporting for government departments on business resilience, use of a consistent set of metrics that can also be used in Business Regulatory Impact Assessments, including cashflow; risk of insolvency; confidence in meeting debts; and difficulty recruiting employees.
- SCC has been successful in including Non-Domestic Rates as a policy issue with a focus on making sure it is competitive for business. It will also be included in the new Holyrood Taxation Advisory Group – SCC is a formal member. SCC successfully secured the business rates appeals deadline extension.

INFLUENCING POLICY & GOVERNMENT

POLICY SUBMISSIONS

- SCC were involved in a public campaign alongside Heathrow Airport, calling for the introduction of a new, internationally competitive, tax-free shopping scheme for international visitors at the 2024 Spring Budget. SCC continues to make the case for such a scheme.
- **In February 2024, SCC joined 15 other business representative groups to jointly write to the Scottish Government to voice alarm at the Scottish Government's consideration of a new business rate surtax and what it means for wider tax policy towards commerce. The government has established the Tax Strategy Group of which SCC is a member, with the surtax being shelved.**
- The tourism tax bill which formally devolves the power to apply the tax to local authorities was passed by the Scottish Parliament in May 2024. While now a local matter, SCC continues to stress that businesses must have a voice should any councils enact the tax and that revenue raised through the tax is spent on the local visitor experience.
- **SCC submitted a response to the Scottish Government proposed regulations to restrict the promotions of foods high in fat, sugar or salt (HFSS). We believe there are significant disparities with UK legislation which are of concern to many across Scotland's world-renowned food and drink sector.**

POLICY WINS

Following SCC representations to the Treasury, the last UK Government committed to the freezing of Alcohol Duty in the 2024 Spring Budget, protecting Scotland's invaluable whisky industry.

After a joint campaign by Scottish business organisations, including SCC, the Scottish Government committed to a freezing of the business rate poundage in December 2023.

In October 2023, the Scottish Government published the New Deal for Business Implementation Plan. The plan, designed with input from SCC and others, has set in motion improved frameworks between the government and the business community.

RALLY FOR GROWTH

The country succeeds when business succeeds. That's why we are asking Prime Minister Keir Starmer to work with the business community to deliver the most pro-growth policies to turbo-charge investment. SCC issued a 15-point action plan to government built by business for business:

ACCELERATE INVESTMENT:

1. **Introduce a Green Industrial Strategy to drive investment through incentives, green skills and enable technologies such as sustainable aviation fuel and Carbon Capture Usage & Storage.**
2. Implement the Union Connectivity Review by boosting air and rail links between UK nations and regions.
3. **Instil confidence and unlock investment in the oil and gas sector by committing to maintain investment allowances and future exploration, as well as consider ending the Windfall tax.**
4. Creating a detailed just transition plan to net zero for the oil and gas sector, to protect jobs and investment as well as ensure energy security as we move to new sources of energy.
5. **Fund the futureproofing of Scotland's town and cities, by investing in their resilience, growth, regeneration and attractiveness to citizens, businesses, visitors and investors.**

BOOST GLOBAL TRADE:

1. Increase exports by increasing the number of exporting SMEs and improve EU access.
2. Prioritise and invest in air routes of strategic importance including exporting and tourism routes.

PRIORITISE PEOPLE & TALENT:

1. Help people transition from Universal Credit into work, by increasing taper relief, boosting uptake of bootcamps, and providing quality careers advice.
2. Develop a skilled migration strategy to attract international students, including tailoring for Scotland's skills and working population needs.
3. Recognise the value of international students and retain the post-study visa ensuring the UK is competitive with global education hubs.

UNLEASH BUSINESS GROWTH:

1. Commit to no new UK taxes or levies on business for the lifetime of the next Parliament.
2. Cut VAT for hospitality, leisure and tourism sectors to boost spending, stimulate demand and support footfall.
3. Reduce alcohol duty to ensure the industry is competitive, supported to grow, export, and create jobs.
4. Restore an internationally competitive, tax-free shopping incentive for overseas visitors.
5. Invest in new and existing innovation districts across Scotland's cities.

LEADING BUSINESS RESEARCH

Scottish Chambers of Commerce shares the views of members to decision makers at Holyrood, Westminster and beyond.

QUARTERLY ECONOMIC INDICATOR

We place insight and intelligence at the heart of our messages to government. Factual, timely data is collated, analysed and presented to influence policy design and decisions. Our research is conducted in partnership with the Fraser of Allander Institute, enhanced by the expertise of our Business Advisory Group. Working closely with our colleagues at the British Chambers of Commerce we ensure business opinion and views are heard.

We are rightly proud of our successes.

QEI COVERAGE

We continue to receive extensive coverage in national media, including The Times, The Scotsman, The Daily Mail, The BBC, The Herald, The Courier, The Press & Journal & STV among others.

POLICY INFLUENCE

The results of the QEI have directly influenced major business policy such as the cuts to National Insurance, and the freezing of the business rates poundage. Businesses remain concerned with increased levels of taxation in Scotland. This is being kept under review by the Scottish Government and will remain a key issue for SCC.



OUR SCOTTISH BUSINESS ADVISORY GROUP BRINGS TOGETHER BUSINESS LEADERS FROM SCOTLAND'S KEY SECTORS TO ANALYSE AND REVIEW SCOTLAND'S ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE.

GROWING SCOTLAND'S BUSINESS

SCC and the Network is recognised as an industry leader in private sector B2B support. We run one of Scotland's largest peer-to-peer mentoring support networks, with over 400 experienced business individuals in our National Mentor Pool.

Our Business Mentors come from all sectors, geographies and business sizes. They support, in a voluntary capacity, hundreds of businesses each year. SCC is currently delivering Business Mentoring with our partners UK Finance.



10,000 +

businesses successfully matched with experienced mentors



94%

of businesses increased turnover in first 12 months of mentoring



Hundreds of New Jobs

created as a result of business mentoring and B2B support



“Business Mentoring is about putting something back. Mentoring makes you think outside the box and in a world which is rapidly changing, we sometimes need someone with a different perspective to put us back on track and continue on our journey.”

Dr Jeanette Forbes OBE,
CEO, PCL Group

BRANDING & COMMUNICATIONS

SCC continues to invest in its Communications output ensuring we are providing real-time updates to the Network, leading the economic agenda and sharing high-quality content about Scotland's business community.



SCC's **DAILY UPDATE** newsletter continues to act as an important source of communications to the business community with a growing subscription. The annual open rate is now 70,000.

The official publication of the SCC, **Business Scotland Magazine** continues to perform exceptionally well providing a national platform to share Chamber Network and business success stories.

With a readership of over 30,000+ and an average of 122k+ page views annually, no other publication has such a powerful audience in Scotland.



105k+

LinkedIn
Impressions

31k

SCC Social &
Digital Media
followers

80k+

Page
Impressions of
SCC Websites



OUR NETWORK



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ANNUAL BUSINESS ADDRESS

Our flagship event is one of the most prestigious events in the Scottish business calendar, bringing together hundreds of business leaders, media, and politicians from across Scotland/UK. **Join us on 28 November 2024** where global influential leaders and visionaries will gather to explore exciting opportunities and celebrate Scotland's success.



**Dr Liz Cameron CBE, Chief Executive,
Scottish Chambers of Commerce**



**Dame Katherine Grainger DBE,
Olympic Gold Medallist**



Kaye Adams, TV Presenter and Journalist



**Nigel Milton, Chief Communications &
Sustainability Officer, Heathrow Airport**



**Dr Hina Khan, Executive Director,
Space Scotland**



Chris Ball, CEO, ESO Sports

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