

Rt. Hon Alex Salmond MP/MSP, Leader of the Scottish National Party, explains what the SNP has been doing to help small businesses in Scotland

The SNP, both in government in Scotland and in Europe, are strong supporters of small businesses. First and foremost, we have launched the Small Business Bonus Scheme, which has reduced or abolished business rates for tens of thousands of small businesses, with an average saving for small businesses of £1400 a year. We've provided extra financial support to SMEs through the extension of the Regional Selective Assistance scheme, and created a common access point for SME support services.

Access to state of the art telecommunications is absolutely essential for small businesses to partake in the global economy, particularly in rural areas, and we have supported the investment of almost 1 billion EUR of European money in extending the reach of high speed broadband to rural areas. We also recognise that public procurement offers significant opportunities for our small businesses, and thus have been leading the fight for the EU to relax State Aid rules to encourage the provision of public procurement opportunities to local SMEs. The SNP supported proposals to improve the supply of microcredit.

The new Parliament will consider the Small Business Act, which we believe should be made legally binding. We will support proposals that will make it easier for SMEs to trade across Europe, and which will allow Member States to apply reduced VAT rates for locally supplied services. We will support all measures to reduce administrative burdens on small businesses: for example, creating one-stop-shops, applying the "Once Only" principle for the submission of data, and applying a "Small Business Impact Assessment" to new legislative proposals.

Fundamentally, we will fight for the economic powers Scotland needs to encourage SMEs.