

£350m budget bonanza for Scotland means no need for SNP tax hikes

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The additional £350 million coming to Scotland as a result of today's budget means the SNP does not need to hike people's taxes, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Thanks to decisions made by Chancellor Philip Hammond, Scotland will receive the extra cash through Barnett Consequentials, including an additional £100 million for this coming year alone.

That – together with extra funds finance secretary Derek Mackay found in his own budget dealings totalling more than £230 million – means the Scottish Government has significantly more money for 2017/18 than it previously thought.

Shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said that means there's now no need for the SNP to make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK, and should relieve some of its cuts to public services too.

As part of today's budget, Mr Hammond confirmed the personal allowance would increase to £12,500, which takes 113,000 people out of tax altogether in Scotland.

Fuel duty will be frozen for the seventh year on the trot, which could save the average driver £10 every time they fill up at the pump.

And more support was announced for the north east with the creation of an expert group to look at helping the oil and gas industry.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“The Chancellor has struck the right balance in this budget – keeping money in reserve as we prepare to leave the EU, but at the same time handing a boost to the economy.

“For Scotland alone, his plans will deliver an extra £350 million for the SNP government to spend as it wishes over the coming years.

“The SNP's double dose of local government cuts and income tax changes to penalise middle-earners is now utterly without justification.

"The simple truth is that, if it was focused on the day job, the SNP wouldn't need to make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK.

"With even more spending power now at its disposal, a competent government could give taxpayers a break and find the cash to support social care and schools across Scotland.

"The question facing the SNP is this – if Philip Hammond can support public services while protecting family pay packets, why can't Derek Mackay?"

Below are additional comments from Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson, who was speaking at a Scottish Property Federation conference this afternoon:

"My message to the Scottish Government is this.

"As I said earlier, despite the Chancellor's cautious approach on spending, his budget this afternoon means that the Scottish Government now has £350 million extra to spend over the coming years.

"That includes £100 million to spend in the next financial year alone.

"This is extra cash that the SNP had not planned for in its budget.

"With this extra money, the finance secretary's claim that council cuts and tax rises are necessary has therefore been substantially eroded.

"So I hope that the SNP will use this extra resource to support councils which require it, and give taxpayers and businesses a break.

"We simply do not need to send out the message that higher taxes are necessary in Scotland.

"I urge the SNP to think again."