

Teachers should be exempt from SNP car park tax

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1 Feb 2019



Teachers should be exempt from paying the SNP's new car park tax in the same way NHS workers are, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

In yesterday's budget, finance secretary Derek Mackay outlined plans to charge hundreds of pounds a year to firms whose staff took their car to work.

He said health service staff wouldn't be affected by this charge, which was one of many punitive conditions of the SNP winning Green support for the budget.

Now shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser has argued – if the SNP government is insistent on ploughing ahead with the controversial plan – that teachers should also be removed from it.

He said this was particularly important if ministers wanted to agree a pay deal with teaching unions, in the face of recent threats of industrial action.

In addition, he urged the Scottish Government to start speaking to smaller firms to see how these extra levies would work and what impact they would have.

A similar pilot scheme in Nottingham resulted in charges of more than £400 a year for workers who drove to work.

The car park tax was part of a triple-tax bombshell unveiled yesterday, alongside the widening of the tax gap between Scotland and the rest of the UK, and further council tax rises.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“If the SNP wants to crash ahead with this unpopular and ridiculous car park tax plan, the least it could do is exempt teachers.

“The nationalists find themselves in an absurd position of negotiating a pay rise for teachers, while threatening to charge them hundreds of pounds a year for the sake of driving to work.

“That will jeopardise current negotiations with unions, and could lead to

them coming good on the industrial action they've recently threatened.

"If Derek Mackay thinks NHS workers are worthy of exemptions, then so too are teachers.

"As a matter of urgency, the SNP government also needs to start speaking to smaller firms who could be badly hit by this nonsense tax.

"It needs to establish how this levy will work and what impact it will have on this important part of our economy."

[Deposit Return Scheme must include glass](#)

1 Feb 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have called for the SNP government to include glass in the forthcoming deposit return scheme.

Maurice Golden, Scottish Conservative shadow environment secretary has written to Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for the environment to press the case that including glass in a deposit return scheme would allow Scotland to increase levels of recycling whilst also tackling waste.

Recent figures from the Marine Conservation Society have highlighted that glass is a significant litter issue.

Producing recycled glass consumes 30% less energy than creating it from scratch.

A deposit return system would separate glass by colour, making it easier to convert into new bottles.

Scottish whisky producers could then take advantage of this new quality and environmentally-friendly product, enabling the creation of a circular glass economy.

Maurice Golden, Scottish Conservative shadow environment secretary said:

"This is an opportunity to create an ambitious and inclusive UK wide system deposit return system, including glass, which will tackle litter and improve recycling rates.

"This would be a challenge for local government but local councils should see cost savings, partly because the substantial reduction in litter as well as

less waste in bins.

“Glass manufacturing is a billion-pound industry in the UK, contributing thousands of jobs directly and in the supply chain.

“Once we have produced the recycled glass bottles we have one of Scotland’s most iconic sectors, namely whisky, on hand ready to utilise these environmentally friendly packaging products.

“Many of Scotland’s high-quality brewers, like Black Isle and Williams Brothers, support deposits and would much prefer to use recycled glass.

“Including glass in a deposit system will help to discourage litter and encourage recycling which will create and maintain jobs while helping to tackle climate change.”

[Now SNP wants to tax parking at work](#)

31 Jan 2019



Taxing people hundreds of pounds to park at their place of work is part of an SNP triple-tax bombshell outlined in today’s budget.

Finance secretary Derek Mackay stated today he wants councils to penalise those who take their car to work, after striking a controversial budget deal with the Greens.

As part of today’s statement, he also confirmed the further widening of income tax rates between Scotland and the UK, and raised the cap at which local authorities can increase council tax.

That means councils will be able to hike charges by 4.79 per cent, instead of the three per cent previously agreed.

The SNP budget looks certain to pass after Green “co-convener” Patrick Harvie offered his traditional backing of the plans.

The nationalists have also been accused of breaking manifesto commitments on tax, including capping council tax rises and protecting low-paid workers.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“Thanks to the SNP, Scots across the country are about to be hit by a triple tax bombshell.

“We will pay the highest income taxes in the UK, council tax will go up, and

now you might even be taxed hundreds of pounds a year for taking your car to work.

“Derek Mackay has torn up the promises he and Nicola Sturgeon made to voters at the last election on tax.

“They said they would cap the council tax at three per cent and protect low paid workers.

“All that has been dumped. This disgraceful betrayal of Scottish voters shows once and for all that Nicola Sturgeon’s government simply cannot be trusted.

“The truth is that none of these tax rises were needed.

“The SNP’s budget is rising by £2 billion this year and today Derek MacKay revealed he was being bailed out by a further Barnett consequential of funding from the UK Government.

“Yet the SNP has the brass neck to attack the UK Government in the same breath.

“Derek Mackay is squandering this union dividend, and it is taxpayers who are having to pay.

“We need a Scottish Government that will grow the economy, protect taxpayers and – once and for all – dump its plan for an unwanted second referendum on independence.

“This budget delivers on none of those objectives and so the Scottish Conservatives will oppose it.”

[Attack on police horses demonstrates urgent need for Finn’s Law](#)

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31 Jan 2019



The Scottish Conservatives are calling on the SNP government to hurry up and start the process of implementing Finn’s Law, which would create a new offence of harming or killing a service animal.

Less than a fortnight ago three police horses were allegedly attacked by a

football fan on his way to the Scottish Cup clash between Celtic and Airdrie.

Earlier this month, Mairi Gougeon, SNP minister for rural affairs and natural environment spoke of her ambition to publish the consultation before the end of this month. It is now the last day of January and this has not yet happened.

The Scottish Conservatives have been campaigning with PC Dave Wardell and Police Dog Finn to change the law in order to introduce a criminal offence for those who harm trained animals like dogs and horses working with the police, fire service, military or other public services. It could also cover assistance animals like guide dogs.

It is still not a specific crime to injure or kill a service animal in Scotland. Offenders who harm service animals such as dogs or horses can only be charged under a patchwork of laws unfit for this purpose.

The SNP has already committed to introducing Finn's Law in Scotland by the end of this Parliament.

The Scottish Conservatives are therefore urging the Scottish Government to stop dithering and publish the consultation of this law as soon as possible.

Liam Kerr MSP, Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary said:

"Scotland is already behind the rest of the UK in this important area.

"In Scotland, hundreds of service animals work with Police Scotland to keep us safe.

"Just two weeks ago three police horses were allegedly attacked, by a thug, while they were protecting others.

"Without the tireless efforts of PC Dave Wardell and PD Finn, we wouldn't have a commitment from the SNP to give service animals the legal protection they deserve.

"The Scottish Conservatives will continue to keep the pressure on the SNP government to implement Finn's Law.

"The SNP government must stop dithering and publish the consultation immediately."

Sturgeon warned that inmates are taking advantage of 'breaking point'

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- Sturgeon warned that inmates are taking advantage of 'breaking point' prison guards

25 Jan 2019



Scottish prison officers have warned the First Minister that they are at "breaking point", and inmates are now "taking advantage" of the situation.

In a letter published by the Scottish Government through Freedom of Information, one prison officer – who described himself as an SNP voter – laid bare the bleak situation going on in prisons.

He told her: "The prisoners can see we are basically at breaking point and are taking advantage of this for their own agenda."

In addition, he criticised potential staff cuts in jails at a time of "higher NPS use, staff assaults, prisoner assaults, prisoners getting younger and more violent, convictions of organised crime gangs".

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr outlined his concern at the revelations, adding that the SNP's soft-touch approach is undermining discipline throughout the justice system.

He repeated a call made last week by the Scottish Conservatives for all prison officers to be given body-worn cameras to increase protection, and urged ministers to ensure guards are sufficiently resourced to deal with increasing challenges inside.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

"This allegation is truly shocking.

"The SNP-supporting prison officer appears to be suggesting that the party's prison policy is giving convicted criminals an 'advantage' in jail.

"That would severely undermine discipline and safety within Scottish prisons at a time of rising threats.

"Scottish prison officers are dealing with the most dangerous criminals on a daily basis – the SNP simply cannot expect them to do that without proper support.

"As a first step the SNP must consider rolling out of body-worn cameras to all prison officers, as they have been in the rest of the UK.

“Prison officers clearly feel unsafe, the SNP must urgently address that.”