

SNP rift over business rate hikes

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Pressure is mounting on the SNP after two of its politicians voiced concerns over plans to significantly increase business rates.

Mairi Evans, MSP for Angus North and Mearns, and Stuart Donaldson, MP for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine, both admitted that the SNP's Budget could result in serious issues for many Scottish businesses in the future.

After meeting with Aberdeenshire hotel owners last week, Ms Evans told the Mearns Leader that she will be "asking both Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Government what actions will be taken to mitigate the impact of the new values".

Mr Donaldson meanwhile, said: "We met some of the local business people to discuss their concerns over business rates."

He added: "We both know how vital small businesses are to Aberdeenshire and how much of a driving force tourism is to the local community".

The comments from the SNP politicians are the latest evidence of the growing internal division within its ranks over the Budget.

Last week during First Ministers Questions Ruth Davidson embarrassed the SNP after she revealed that the SNP's Banff and Macduff branch had cancelled a reservation for room hire at a local hotel which had been forced to increase its prices due to the rise in business rates.

Scottish Conservative MSP for North East Scotland Liam Kerr said:

"The SNP rebellion against the rise in business rates continues.

"Last week, it was the SNP Banff branch which pulled their business from a local hotel after it was forced to pass on costs. Now two local SNP politicians have jumped on the bandwagon as well.

"I wrote to Derek Mackay last week demanding answers, but I have not had any response at all.

"When will he get it? Fresh from slapping the highest taxes in the UK on people across Scotland, he has totally failed to face up to the outrage from across Scotland over these staggering increases.

"As Ruth Davidson said last week, if even the SNP can't support these rate rises – isn't it time the SNP leadership did something about it?"

Please see a copy of the Mearns Leader article here:

<http://www.mearnsleader.co.uk/news/politics/mp-and-msps-against-business-rates-hike-1-4355327>