

SNP slammed for “unnecessary” tax grab

8 Feb 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have attacked the SNP Government today after it emerged that it will impose the highest taxes in the UK on people – despite having had £185m to spare in its kitty.

The extra cash was only revealed last week when the SNP used it to buy off the Scottish Greens.

□The £125m underspend, plus £60m in the business rates pool is far more than the £108m the Scottish Government says it will collect by setting higher thresholds on income tax than the rest of the UK.

That decision is now set to cost jobs and stymie growth, amid warnings from business leaders that it will put off investors and firms from committing to Scotland.

Finance spokesman Murdo Fraser said:

“Throughout this entire budget process, Derek Mackay has tried to hide the facts from taxpayers in Scotland. Now we know why.

“It turns out Mr Mackay had more than enough money to pay for his budget and pass on a tax break to working families. Yet he opted instead to keep the cash in his back pocket in order to buy off the Greens.

“The SNP could easily have turned to us for support in giving taxpayers a break. But Nicola Sturgeon is a First Minister who would rather stitch up a deal with her independence supporters in the Green party than give taxpayers a break.

“We are about to become the highest taxed part of the UK. Now we know: it is not just bad government, and bad policy – but it is utterly unnecessary as well.”

Press release: Statement from Priti Patel on UN Yemen appeal

From:

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Part of:

International Development Secretary comments on the launch of the United Nations 2017 funding appeal for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

The United Nations has today (8th February) launched an appeal for US\$2.1 billion to provide life-saving assistance to 12 million people in Yemen in 2017.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

Today, the UN has launched its new humanitarian plan for Yemen, setting out the steps it will take to save lives in 2017 and the funding it requires to be able to do that.

Last year, UK aid ensured life-saving food, medical supplies, clean water and emergency shelter reached more than one million Yemenis in desperate need across the country and we will once again be supporting this new appeal.

At the UN General Assembly last September, the UK Government secured more than \$100 million [approximately £80 million] in new funding for Yemen and a commitment from UN agencies to strengthen their response to the crisis. As the UN launches its new appeal today, we will continue to push donors and partners alike to step up their efforts and to keep pace with the UK response.

It is imperative that all parties to the conflict ensure lifesaving assistance can get through and aid agencies get the unfettered access they require. At the same time, the international community must provide the UN with the funding it is calling for along with the political pressure to ensure aid reaches those who need it.

Notes to editors

1. More detail on the UN appeal can be seen here:
<http://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-un-and-partners-appeal-21-bln-provide-life-saving-assistance-12-million-people>

[Speech: Matt Hancock's speech at the](#)

Launch of the New Schools Network arts report.

Thanks everybody for coming today, and thank you to Dr Nick Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery for hosting and opening up early especially for us.

I hope that everybody here heard very clearly the commitment and the passionate advocacy of cultural education from Nick Gibb as the Minister of State for School Standards and the importance of cultural learning in our education system.

I could too make the argument for how the combination of technical expertise and creative cultural content are the point at which Britain will earn its crust over the 21st century. But I think it is far better for that argument is made by Nick, because you would expect it from me as the Minister for Digital and Culture. But you can see that this is an argument that the whole of Government adopts and buys.

But of course how you do this has been a point of contention recently. But we believe strongly that the arts should be for everyone and not just a privileged few and perhaps most importantly that arts should be used as the potential to be an incredible force for openness and social mobility.

This is drilled through our Industrial Strategy, which sets out the combination of our creative flair and technical expertise, and underpinning that as a direction of travel must be the necessity of the next generation to be well prepared and have a well-rounded education.

Over the last few months I think we have seen some significant, positive developments in arts education and I want to build on that momentum.

The first was the work of DfE in saving art history A-Level.

Now Art History A-Level may have only had a relatively small number of entries of around 1,000 each year – and that was part of the problem – but the symbolism of when it was made not available and then when it was saved and the amount of people who have been through Art History A-Level and who see that as the grounding for their career in the arts is incredible, so I am delighted at the work to save it.

But it is part of a much bigger drive. DfE also announced £300 million to help children from all backgrounds to enjoy the benefits of music and the arts and in the Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced funding towards work between the RSA and Education Endowment Foundation to pilot and examine through scientific research based on randomised control trials the impact of cultural education on disadvantaged pupils. And if like me you believe in the hypothesis that high-quality rigorous cultural education enhances people's life chances then this research is the opportunity to see this hypothesis

proven.

Nick has spoken about Ebacc and how this welcome report from the New Schools Network puts to rest arguments that the policy is stifling cultural education.

But I will make just one further point.

In order to win this argument that we in this room believe in about the importance of art in education, we have to make the argument in the right way.

We all believe in the intrinsic value of the arts.

I am not an artist by profession. But artists know how to relate to an audience.

And we have got to understand that our audience is the education profession. We need to help support and persuade them to deliver this rounded education.

Our audience is the teachers and head teachers who are focussed through their life's passion and life's work and life's passion on driving up exam results and driving up life chances.

So we need to articulate the value of cultural education in the language of life chances and exam results.

I passionately believe that cultural education – arts, music, drama, drawing, dance, even portraiture – is complementary not contradictory to success in maths and English.

This should not be an argument about a battle between the arts and other subjects, but instead a battle for stronger, better, well-rounded education.

Ultimately, the best schools in the country do this. They combine excellent cultural education to complement excellence in other academic subjects. This report backs up that analysis. It looks at the data and says if you want to drive up standards across the board, push your arts and music offer.

Rigorously taught, music complements maths; drama complements English; and the study of art complements history. The rigour matters but so does the breadth.

Of course, everyone can play their part in this debate and we need your help directly to support schools too. Everyone can do their bit.

We are actively encouraging leaders in the arts, as in other fields, to make a direct, personal contribution through organisations like Speakers for Schools, which arranges talks in state schools by successful people to inspire pupils. Both Nick Gibb and Nick Cullinan have played a big part in making that happen, and if you are not involved then you are not doing your bit so I urge you to get involved.

So let's concentrate on how we win this argument and that is by concentrating on the complementarity on how arts education drives up standards. And not by engaging in a false battle between arts and science and English and maths. But instead by saying that if you've got the talent and if you want to spark somebody's motivation and imagination in an artistic subject then let's make sure that everybody in our country has the opportunity to embrace the arts, and in so doing drive up their success in science and maths and English too, and ultimately enhance their life chances are enhanced.

I think we have got a chance to do this now and I look forward to working with all of you on it. But ultimately our goal is that every single person has the chance to fulfil their true potential. Let's do that based on the evidence and let's work together to make it happen.

Press release: Work begins on major £18 million Newhaven flood defence project

Construction work on the Newhaven flood alleviation scheme started on 3 January 2017, after 2 years of development including consultation with the local community. After a competitive tendering process, the Environment Agency has employed the services of contractors JacksonHyder to carry out design and construction of this scheme.

The Newhaven flood alleviation scheme has been developed in partnership with Lewes District Council, East Sussex County Council, the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and South East LEP to reduce the flood risk to approximately 431 homes and 387 commercial properties by significantly improving the standard of existing tidal defences in the East Sussex town.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This £18 million flood defence scheme is a great example of our commitment to better protect the Sussex coast from the kind of devastating flooding experienced in 2013.

All along this coastline, communities are thriving and growing. But we understand the region's full potential cannot be realised without tackling flood risk. That's exactly what we're working with our partners to achieve in Newhaven and throughout the country.

Gordon Wilson, Environment Agency Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager, said:

I am delighted that construction has started and I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Newhaven community for their invaluable feedback and support throughout the design, consultation and planning processes.

In order to improve the current aging flood defences, unavoidably there may be some disruption whilst essential construction work takes place. We always aim to keep any disruption to a minimum and we thank the community in advance for their ongoing support.

When the whole project is complete in 2019, the scheme will reduce the tidal flood risk to hundreds of homes and a significant number of commercial properties in the area, as well as protecting important local infrastructure such as the road network, railway tracks and the train station. This scheme will also support the wider regeneration of Newhaven, helping to bring new investment, jobs and homes to the area.

Councillor Andy Smith, Leader of Lewes District Council, said:

I am very pleased that work is underway on this hugely beneficial project for the future of Newhaven and its residents.

Most importantly, it will give a high level of protection to homes and businesses as well as the transport network, greatly reducing the risk of a repeat of the 2013 floods which caused widespread damage and upset. In addition, the scheme also supports the wider regeneration of Newhaven and will help to bring new investment, jobs and homes here.

Councillor Rupert Simmons, lead cabinet member for economy at East Sussex County Council, said:

We're delighted that the Environment Agency has started work to improve flood protection for Newhaven. When the scheme is completed it will significantly reduce the risk of flooding, benefitting residents and providing a real boost for businesses in the town.

Councillor Steve Saunders, Town Mayor of Newhaven, said:

I welcome the start of work on these flood defence works by the Environment Agency. This is good news for Newhaven because they will provide much needed protection to local homes, businesses and infrastructure as well as enabling regeneration to take place in the town.

The Coast to Capital LEP and South East LEP are each contributing £1.5

million, as part of their wider commitment to regeneration in Newhaven. This funding has allowed the scheme to start construction in January 2017.

Tony Middleton, chief operating officer at Coast to Capital LEP, said:

It's exciting to see the flood defence project starting to come to life. The LEP has funded this scheme because the construction of the defences will act as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of Newhaven and continue to protect the vital local infrastructure surrounding the area, drawing in new investment, jobs and homes for the area.

Chris Brodie, Chairman, South East Local Enterprise Partnership, said:

South East LEP welcomes this important milestone and is pleased to be able to support this vital project which is important, not only in protecting the existing business community of Newhaven and local infrastructure, but significantly improves future opportunity for investment in new jobs and homes.

- All media enquiries: 0800 141 2743 (please ask for the duty press officer)
- Email us at: southeastpressofficel@environment-agency.gov.uk
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