

High flying SRUC student wins prestigious national award

A high-flying student from the Ayr Campus of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) has been named regional winner for Scotland at a prestigious national education award.

Green Party responds to Trump state visit announcement



Green Party

14 February 2017

The Green Party has responded to news the Government has said it will press ahead with plans to give President Trump a state visit despite public opposition. [1]

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“It is deeply disappointing that in its desperation to pander to the new US President the Government has ignored almost 2 million British people who made it clear they do not want to give a racist misogynist the highest honour our country has to offer.

“Donald Trump’s presidency has already been marked by an utterly disgraceful travel ban, while his apparent intent to withdraw from the Paris Agreement highlights his contempt for environmental protection.

“We should be showing backbone and leadership by taking a stand against the President’s damaging policies – not rolling out a red carpet.”

ENDS.

For more information contact: press@greenparty.org.uk / 0203 691 9401

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/14/government-says-trump-receive-full-courtesy-state-visit-petition>

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Davy McCracken, Head of SRUC's Hill & Mountain Research Centre, recently paid a flying visit to Brussels.

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The announcement of a new teacher-training fund is a step in the right direction, the Scottish Conservatives have said, but more needs to be done.

The Scottish Government's investment for new teachers has been welcomed by shadow education secretary Liz Smith, but she warned it would not make up for a decade of educational neglect.

Just one of the many issues local authorities have faced under SNP leadership is the recruitment process for schools and maintaining the services of specialist teachers.

Figures have shown that schools have struggled over the years to attract the necessary number of teachers, with some councils even being forced to offer financial incentives.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“This will be welcome news for Scotland’s teaching profession which has had to bear the full brunt of the SNP’s successive cuts to teacher numbers since 2007.

“It has been abundantly clear for some time that Scotland has too few professionally trained teachers particularly in some core subject areas and we know that several local authorities have found it impossible to fill key vacancies with the obvious costs to education in the classroom.

“The key test is not only the provision of more teacher training places but an improvement in the employment rates for newly qualified teachers.

“Scotland cannot afford to lose its talented pool of teacher trainees nor can it allow the SNP to fail again in its workforce planning.”

For more on the story, visit:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-38969970>

New approach to building resilient communities announced

The approach is focused on employment, early years and empowerment, and will involve phasing out the Communities First programme.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“We have listened very carefully to thousands of people who have been involved in Communities First, either as employees or participants. While it is clear that Communities First was successful in its impact on many individuals, it has not had an impact on overall poverty levels in these communities, which remain stubbornly high.

“We are clear, as a Government, that we must now transition into a new phase in our fight against poverty in Wales. Our support for those who need it most will not end with this programme. Indeed, our aim is to intensify our efforts to give people the tools they need to have a more equal share of this nation’s prosperity. At the centre of this must be the promise of good, secure work.

“A new approach is needed which deals with the root causes of

poverty.. We will take forward a cross-government, all-Wales approach focused on helping people into work, giving children the best start in life, and ensuring people's voices are heard in the design of local services."

Funding at 70% of current levels will be provided to the Communities First programme until March 2018. A legacy fund of £6m a year, to enable some of the programme's most effective projects to continue, will be introduced in April 2018.

In addition, the Community Facilities Programme will receive an extra £4m a year from 2017/18, with priority given to Communities First areas, to help protect valuable community assets such as community centres.

A new £12m a year grant to support those who are furthest from the labour market will also be launched. This will build on the success to date of the Communities for Work, Lift and PaCE programmes and will feed into the wider Welsh Government Employability Plan led by the Minister for Skills.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

"In total, including these and other ongoing projects, we will continue to put over £25m annually directly into deprived communities. This figure cannot be viewed in isolation. Across the Welsh Government, there is increasing investment in a range of initiatives which are crucial to preventing and alleviating poverty. These include increasing our investment in apprenticeships to over £126m and investing over £93million through the Pupil Deprivation Grant in 2017-18 to help close the attainment gap of disadvantaged children. In addition we are establishing the Valleys taskforce and creating the North and South Wales metros."

Investment in Flying Start and Families First, both of which provide practical support to thousands of families and their children across the country, will continue, while the development of Children's Zones and the establishment of a new Adverse Childhood Experiences hub have already been announced. Support for the Streetgames programme which engages young people in positive activities, and for Citizen's Advice, will continue.

The Cabinet Secretary added:

"Investing in our children is an investment for the long term. It is the most sustainable means of building a more prosperous future.

"I have been encouraged by the very positive response to the development of Children's Zones and the establishment of an "ACEs Hub", to help organisations, communities and individuals across

Wales tackle Adverse Childhood Experiences, which can have such a devastating impact on children's life chances.

"These initiatives, together with our continued investment in our successful Flying Start and Families First programmes, will ensure there is comprehensive support for children as they grow up.

"Building resilient communities is the work of Welsh Government as a whole. We are committed to prosperity for all, a strong economy that creates sustainable, quality employment opportunities accessible to all.

"Together we can build the resilient, safe, strong communities that we all want. And we will continue to engage with communities and stakeholders as we move forward.

"Change is never easy. But we cannot ignore the combination of new and deep-rooted challenges we face. We must have the courage to find fresh ways to respond. That is what I and all of my government colleagues are determined to do."