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- Hammond's spring statement delivers £260m for the Borders

13 Mar 2019



The Borders will benefit from £260 million of UK Government investment, it has been confirmed by Chancellor Philip Hammond.

As part of today's spring statement, he said the money would arrive as part of the Borderlands Growth Deal.

Scottish Conservative MSPs and MPs across the south of Scotland have welcomed the news.

The deal is the latest in a string of agreements for towns, cities and regions across Scotland aimed at boosting economic growth.

Scottish Conservative MSP for Etrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire Rachael Hamilton said:

"This shows what can be achieved when both of Scotland's governments work together.

"The integral economic and social links between Northumberland and the Borders are vitally important, and this deal solidifies these further.

"This is another Scottish Conservative manifesto commitment delivered, and this deal has the ability to bring transformational change to the Scottish Borders, a region that has its own unique challenges but massive potential.

"I am looking forward to the deal progressing further and for lasting and positive changes to come about as projects come to fruition."

Scottish Conservative MP for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk John Lamont said:

"Borderlands has huge potential for the Scottish Borders and I am pleased that it will be backed by £260m of UK Government money.

"Every pound spent in this growth deal helps the entire region.

"The SNP may not like it, but the truth is the border is just a line on the map and the economic health of the Scottish Borders is closely linked to the health of Northumberland, Carlisle and Cumbria."

Scottish Conservative MSP for Dumfriesshire Oliver Mundell said:

“This package of economic stimulus represents the most comprehensive government intervention in our borderlands since devolution.

“Every penny spent on both sides of the border will bring real benefit to businesses and families based in Southern Scotland.

“It will strengthen cross-border links and it means that yet another key Scottish Conservative manifesto pledge has been delivered.”

[Scottish schools lose almost 1,000 Maths and English teachers in 10 years](#)

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- Scottish schools lose almost 1,000 Maths and English teachers in 10 years

12 Mar 2019



Subject teachers in Scottish schools have declined dramatically since the SNP came to power, according to the latest statistics released by the Scottish Government.

The Teacher Census 2018, published today, shows that since 2008, more than 500 fewer Scottish secondary school teachers are taking English as their main subject, a drop from 2992 to 2473.

In addition, there are over 400 fewer secondary school Maths teachers than when the SNP began their administration. Over the last ten years, the number of secondary school teachers taking Maths as their main subject has declined from 2787 to 2364.

This represents a combined drop in Maths and English teachers in Scottish schools of 942 since 2008.

Secondary school French teachers have also dropped by nearly 400 over the same period, and the number of STEM-related teachers in Scottish Schools is also down with cuts to the numbers of teachers taking physics, chemistry, geography, business studies, computing and technical education as their main subject.

The Scottish Conservatives have said that the SNP's inaction on this issue is

'completely unacceptable'.

Liz Smith, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary said:

“Parents will be very angry when they see this evidence of the decline in teacher numbers especially in core subjects like English and Maths.

“This comes at the same time as many people in education are expressing their deep-seated concern about the reduction in subject choice – the damning evidence for which is currently before the education committee at Holyrood.

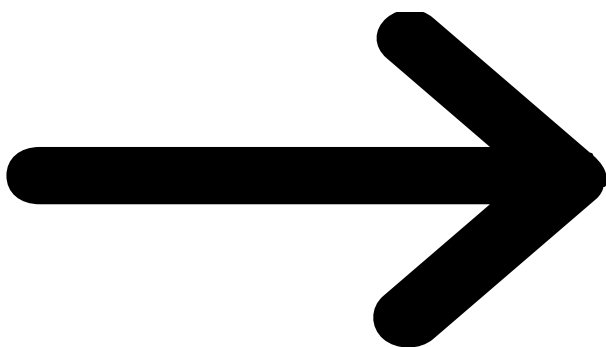
“It is completely unacceptable that the SNP has allowed this situation to develop.

“They were warned about the implications several years ago and ministers have done nothing to address the problem. Meanwhile, young people in our classrooms are losing out on vital education.”

[SNP deputy leader must clarify his position on IndyRef2](#)

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- SNP deputy leader must clarify his position on IndyRef2

8 Mar 2019



The Scottish Conservatives today have written to SNP deputy leader Keith Brown urging him to clarify his position on a second independence referendum.

It comes after Nicola Sturgeon yesterday appeared to rule out a so-called “wildcat” referendum – something Mr Brown had proposed in a private meeting with SNP activists only last month.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw has today written to Mr Brown to ask whether he stands by his comments to SNP activists or not – and,

if so, whether he believes he can carry on as a credible deputy to Nicola Sturgeon.

Mr Carlaw said:

“On its main and only priority, the SNP is in total disarray, with leader and deputy leader at odds on what plan to take forward.

“Mr Brown needs to clear things up: does he stand by his comments from last month, backing a so-called ‘wildcat’ referendum? Or does he now back his leader’s apparent position that such a plan must be ruled out?

“If he stands by his position, Mr Brown needs to answer another – how is it credible for him to serve as Nicola Sturgeon’s deputy?

“Mr Brown can’t hide away from this – non-clarifying clarifications won’t cut it. He speaks loudly and plainly when it suits him – let’s hear him speak now.”

[Carlaw welcomes mesh implant removal announcement](#)

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8 Mar 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have welcomed the latest announcement by the Scottish Government on the issue of mesh implant removal.

In response to a parliamentary question asked by Jackson Carlaw, the Scottish Conservative interim leader, the Health Secretary, Jeanne Freeman confirmed that the Scottish Government will “look again at the course of care for patients suffering complications. In particular and where reasonable, I want them to ensure women have some choice regarding the place of treatment and the clinicians involved.”

The Health Secretary also committed to a series of measures that would engage with international experts, review the course and organisation of care for patients, and identify the resource requirements to provide the service patients need.

The Scottish Government will also organise a meeting with a representative

group of campaigners in order to seek their views on service development.

The move follows a debate in the Scottish Parliament calling on the SG to allow a St Louis based surgeon, Dr Dionysis Veronikis to carry out full mesh removals in Scotland. Dr Veronikis has offered his services, stating that he would come for the initial period of one month to conduct full mesh removal surgery.

Jackson Carlaw, Scottish Conservative interim leader said;

“I welcome this announcement from the Health Secretary.

“This is a step forward for women in Scotland seeking full mesh removal and is a great result for campaigners, Elaine Holmes, Olive McIlroy and Marion Scott.

“This announcement opens the door to more clinical working with mesh experts in other parts of the world.

“This battle has been a protracted one but this does look like a victory.

“I now, very much hope that the SNP government will stick to their word and give mesh survivors these much needed options.”

[SNP must implement three month waiting time target for autism patients](#)

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- SNP must implement three month waiting time target for autism patients

8 Mar 2019



The Scottish Conservatives are calling for the SNP Government to introduce a three month waiting time target for autism patients, from referral to first appointment for autism assessment.

Delays in assessment and diagnosis of autism are extremely traumatic for patients and their families.

The National Audit Association Scotland (NAS) has highlighted the appalling experience of Sarah and her fight to get her son Tom diagnosed with autism.

The process they were forced to endure lasted several years and meant Tom couldn't get the support he needed during that time.

Sarah is calling on the diagnosis process to be significantly speeded up.

Collaborating with NAS, the Scottish Conservatives have published a plan to improve the provision and availability of autism services, with measures that are already in place in the rest of the UK.

The plan calls on the Scottish Government to:

- Introduce a national waiting time target of three months from referral to first appointment for autism assessment.
- Record, publish and monitor autism diagnosis waiting times in every area.
- Introduce a national audit looking at the benefits of faster diagnosis

Further research from the NAS highlights that over 40 percent of respondents found the current process stressful, with over 25 percent saying they had been misdiagnosed.

Scottish Conservative public health and equalities spokesman, Annie Wells MSP said:

“The autism diagnosis process is currently failing patients – the SNP must introduce a three month waiting time target and take direct action to tackling delays in autism diagnosis.

“Having worked closely with the National Autistic Society, it is clear that many youngsters are missing out on vital support in their formative years.

“The SNP must record, publish and monitor autism diagnosis in every health board area, which would give a greater understanding to health professionals.

“These are all measures already in place in the rest of the UK.

“These delays in diagnosing autism cannot simply be allowed to go on and on; instead we must have a SNP Government focused on tackling this as a key mental health priority.”

Nick Ward, Director of The National Autistic Society Scotland, said:

“Many autistic people and parents describe receiving their diagnosis as life changing.

“It can explain why someone has always felt different, help them access vital support and enable them to take control of their lives.

“We know that far too many autistic people have to wait many months, sometimes even years, for a diagnosis because of inadequate and overstretched services where they live.

“These long waits can often be traumatic for people who are desperate for help and at risk of developing mental health problems.

“We hope all the political parties will support the Scottish Conservatives’ call for a waiting time standard from referral to assessment of autism to be

introduced.

“We believe this is an important step towards ensuring autistic people right across Scotland can access the support they need.”