

# [Economic think tank questions Holyrood budget process](#)

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6 Feb 2017



A leading economic think tank has queried the Holyrood budget process after it emerged the Scottish Government identified an extra £220million not included in December's draft budget plans.

In a blog published on its website, the Fraser of Allander Institute said that the sources of the additional funds – found just weeks after the original budget was published – are “as yet unclear”.

The Scottish Conservatives have said that the findings raise questions about the SNP's decision to strike a high tax deal with the Greens.

**Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative Finance spokesman, said:**

“This analysis from the respected Fraser of Allander Institute destroys any claim by the SNP that they have to charge people more tax than in the rest of the UK.

“Far from suffering from so-called cutbacks, it turns out the SNP Government had tens of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money squirreled away in their accounts. Instead of returning this to working families in their pay cheques, as they could have, they instead used it to buy off the Greens.

“The SNP could have worked with us to ensure Scotland does not become the highest taxed part of the UK. Instead they chose to do a deal with a Green party which, like the SNP, wants to take Scotland back to an unwanted referendum on independence.

“The SNP did not need to tax people in Scotland more, but it did so nonetheless. This will be bad for the economy and bad for growth.”

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Link to Fraser of Allander report:

<https://fraserofallander.org/2017/02/03/boosting-the-scottish-governments-budget/>

The story is carried in the Sunday Times today:

## [News story: Social hub takes shape at Worthy Down](#)

The new building, which is part of a £250 million tri-service facility that DIO is building at Worthy Down in Hampshire, includes four bars, a large dining room, kitchens, recreational, food court and shopping facilities. The internal fit out of the CRL will now start. Once up and running the CRL will be the social hub for the Junior Ranks'. It will be a central meeting place and leisure facility for permanent staff and visiting students. The CRL is one of 26 buildings that the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) is delivering with our main contractor, Skanska. The 26 buildings we're providing are a mix of technical training and classroom facilities and accommodation.

Peter Riches, DIO Project Manager for the project, said:

DIO supports service personnel by providing a fit-for-purpose estate and accommodation so we're pleased to be working with Skanska to deliver these facilities. The CRL will provide students from the college with a first class, modern leisure and recreational facility that should make their overall experience of the college a pleasant one.

Paul Weale, Project Director for Skanska, said:

We're pleased that the CRL facility meets both the military and DIO's expectations, in terms of its function and quality. This building has been created through strong collaboration between the DIO and Skanska and will meet the needs of personnel from all three services for many years to come.

Once complete, the DCPLA site at Worthy Down will enable the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to train personnel more effectively and efficiently to deliver the best possible support for military operations. Locating the tri-services' training to one site will support centralised training and provide better resources. In addition, military personnel will have the opportunity to share best practice and knowledge to deliver the individual training requirements. Savings will be delivered through economies of scale, shared resources, technology and the disposal of selected sites.

Brigadier Steve Shirley, who will be in charge of the college when it opens, said:

The CRL building will provide both our students and staff with a modern meeting place where they can enjoy much-earned recreational time. The facilities are superb. I am very proud to be leading on such a prominent project that will bring modern, multi-purpose facilities to Worthy Down.

The college will provide specialist training facilities and modern accommodation for up to 1,500 students, designed in a series of 'villages'; one for Junior Ranks, one for Officers and one for Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs). Trainees and permanent staff will have access to sports and recreation facilities, Officer and SNCO Messes, including supporting amenities. The Royal Logistics Corps Museum will also relocate to Worthy Down into a purpose built exhibition space, which will be available for soldiers, families and community use.

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## **"Obvious benefits" to Third Menai crossing – Ken Skates**

Speaking ahead of the meeting, he outlined the work which has taken place to date and explained why the Welsh Government's preferred solution was a third Menai crossing.

The Economy and Infrastructure Secretary said:

"I have long been clear in my commitment to a third Menai crossing,

and the obvious benefits it would bring to local communities and the economy. The current system is often at or over capacity and with major projects such as Wyfla Newydd in the pipeline it's imperative that we act quickly to look at how we can improve accessibility.

"We've looked in detail at all possible solutions to the existing Britannia Bridge, from providing three narrow lanes with tidal flow on the existing bridge to moving the eastbound merge to smooth traffic flow. These options have been ruled out following significant safety issues identified in risk assessments and concerns raised by the emergency services.

"We are now developing a preferred option for a new bridge in consultation with interested parties to see what's possible. As part of this process, we continue to explore with the National Grid opportunities for a combined road and cable crossing – something which could provide added benefits to the scheme for all concerned."

Turning his attention to other transport projects currently taking place in North Wales, the Economy Secretary said:

"The A55 is clearly another priority for Welsh Government, with several multi million pound improvement schemes to improve resilience, reduce traffic delays, tackle pinch points and upgrade junctions already in progress, and the consultation into the £200m Deeside Corridor project almost under way.

"Alongside rail modernisation, our first Wales and Borders franchise and our plans for a North Wales Metro, these are exciting times for transport in North Wales. I'm keen to progress these projects at the earliest opportunity so that communities across North Wales can feel the benefits as soon as possible."

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## **BBI Group and Welsh Government announce multi-million pound boost for South Wales Valleys**

BBI Group, which is currently headquartered in Cardiff, has a number of manufacturing facilities in the UK. Following an internal consultation, the move to the Border Technology Park, Crumlin, will enable the company to

centralise manufacturing and development activities from Blaenavon, Cardiff and Dundee under one roof, creating a Centre of Excellence for multiple technology streams and a new Global Headquarters for the Group.

With a Welsh Government grant of £1.8m, the investment will see employment in Wales increase from 180 to 366 by 2020. It will provide excellent career opportunities in the South Wales Valleys region, foster closer links to the scientific and academic community, and provide a significant boost for the local economy.

Economy Cabinet Secretary Ken Skates welcomed the news today and said:

“BBI Group is a made-in-Wales success story; a highly successful company and a strategically important player in the life science sector globally.

“I am particularly pleased WG support helped secure this significant investment for Wales. Founded in 1986 as a Cardiff University spin out, BBI Group has grown to become a £60m turnover company and this expansion project will secure the company’s long term sustainable future in Wales.

“It will not only create and safeguard a significant number of high quality jobs but will also support the local economy through an annual spend of more than £1m with supply chain companies. In addition, the fit out and alterations of the building will support around 75 FTE jobs in the construction industry.”

BBI Solutions operates in the global diagnostics market manufacturing enzymes and assays for use in diagnostics for a wide range of disease areas as well as the development of proteins for use in cell culture tissue.

CEO Lyn Rees, said;

“This investment represents a significant step towards realising our strategic goals. Through investing in our manufacturing footprint in Wales we are increasing our capacity to support long term growth.

“Our new state of the art facility in Crumlin will allow us to operate more efficiently and to a higher regulatory standard, giving us the pedigree to compete more effectively in our expanding markets across Europe, USA and China. It also has excellent links to the M4 corridor and Cardiff International Airport.”

“We’re excited to embark on this new phase in the company’s growth, and sincerely grateful for the assistance provided by Welsh Government, Cardiff Council and Caerphilly County Borough

Council.”

Skills and Science Minister, Julie James said:

“The life science sector in Wales continues to go from strength-to-strength and is certainly gaining a very strong reputation both nationally and internationally as the place to do business.

“Increasing the amount of research, development and innovation undertaken in Wales is vital for economic growth and creating high quality jobs and our commitment to increasing Wales’ STEM capabilities is unwavering.

“We already have a number of world class researchers and companies working in diagnostic and regenerative medicine and BBI’s expansion in Wales will undoubtedly be key to stimulating further growth and raising the profile of what Wales can offer this important sector.”