

Welsh and Scottish Finance Secretaries call for end to UK Government austerity

Welsh Government Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford and Scottish Government Finance Secretary Derek Mackay will also call on the UK Treasury to abandon its plans for a further £3.5bn of unallocated cuts in 2019-20.

Speaking ahead of today's meeting between Devolved Administration Finance Ministers and the Treasury, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

"Our draft Budget was set against the backdrop of the longest period of sustained austerity in living memory – one which has seen our budget cut by 7% in real terms since 2010.

"The UK Government's failed and unnecessary policy of austerity continues to place unjustifiable constraints on public services in Wales.

"After seven years of sustained austerity the evidence is clear – it is a failed policy and must be abandoned. Public services across the UK are feeling the pinch and I urge the UK Government to change tack and invest.

"The threat of a further £3.5bn of unallocated cuts to public spending for 2019-20 continues to loom large. This could mean a further cut of up to £175m to the Welsh budget, depending on where these unallocated cuts fall.

"We have worked hard to protect devolved services from the worst of austerity in Wales but if the UK Government continues with the efficiency review it will place further unfair and counter-productive pressure on our already hard pressed front-line services."

Scottish Government Finance Secretary Derek Mackay said:

"We have repeatedly called for the UK Government to end austerity, invest in public services and reverse the cuts that are damaging our economy and hurting some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

"The UK Government will cut £2.9 billion or 9.2% from our discretionary Scottish budget in the ten years to 2019-20. And that is before taking account of the impact of the UK Government's further planned efficiency savings of £3.5 billion in 2019-20 –

which could cut another £350 million from the Scottish budget.

“While we have done what we can to mitigate the worst effects of UK Government austerity, the continued and sustained real terms reductions in our budget makes this increasingly difficult.

“The UK Government needs to abandon their obsession with austerity. The policy has failed and it is time to stimulate the economy by investing in this country’s future.”