

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: 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.

Contact

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[China vows to continue surrogacy crackdown](#)

China will continue to crack down on the practice of surrogacy, banning medical institutions and professionals from performing surrogate techniques of any kind, the National Health and Family Planning Commission said Wednesday.

Many older Chinese couples want to have a second child after the family planning policy was loosed.

At a press conference held Wednesday, Mao Qunan, commission spokesperson, said China wants to ensure it offers safe, regulated and effective assisted reproductive services.

He said surrogacy, which raises various legal, ethical and social issues, is prohibited in many other countries.

A document on assisted reproductive technology issued by the health authority in 2001 bans surrogate techniques.

[Green Party: Better Care Fund is the latest on a long list of the Government's NHS failures](#)



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The Green Party has responded to a report showing Government plans to join up the social care and health sectors to save money and work for hospitals are failing [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“The Government appears to be in total denial about its consistent and repeated failures around our NHS, and what is at their heart. So far the Better Care Fund looks to have been a waste of time, money and effort. It simply hasn’t achieved its stated goals of savings and reducing emergency admissions, with emergency visits soaring and hospital workloads bigger than ever.

“While we welcome a joined up approach between social and health care this project simply isn’t delivering and it won’t as long as cash flow worries mount. The Government should urgently review the specific problems around the fund. But it must also face up to the wider issue of chronic under investment in health and social care.

“This is just the latest on a growing list of failures within the NHS, contributing to a growing crisis. The Government must commit to easing the pressure on both healthcare professionals and patients who are all suffering under the current mismanagement of what should be, and could be a flagship health service.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-38894593>

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[Relaunch of the West End Community and Sports Hub – survey](#)



I recently participated in a very well-attended meeting at Harris Academy aimed at relaunching the West End Community and Sports Hub. There was a great mix of local sports clubs there and much enthusiasm.

To help the West End Community and Sports Hub relaunch to assist with and build community sport in the West End, there is now an on-line survey. This takes just a couple of minutes to complete and you can access it [here](#).