

# First Minister putting Scotland on the agenda at Westminster

✘ Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond will meet senior UK Government ministers and deliver an address to the Foreign Press Association in London this week.

The meetings are expected to cover a range of issues including:

how the UK Government's Scotland Bill legislation can be improved to strengthen the Scottish Parliament's economic powers

Scotland's £200 million Fossil Fuel Levy funds

electricity market reforms

industry fears over the recent North Sea oil and gas tax hike and the Scottish Government's alternative proposals which would protect exploration and development activity

The FM is due to meet Chancellor George Osborne at the Treasury this morning, Secretary of State for Energy & Climate Change Chris Huhne later in the day and Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg on Tuesday afternoon. Mr Salmond, who was sworn in as First Minister of Scotland for a second term on Thursday following the Scottish Parliament elections, will also address domestic and overseas media at the Foreign Press Association this afternoon.

The FM said: "The priority of the new Scottish Government, for which we carry the overwhelming mandate of the Scottish people, is to ensure we strengthen the Parliament's ability to build sustainable economic growth and create new jobs and future prosperity from our nation's great resources. That

objective was made clear in the manifesto on which we were elected with an unprecedented majority at Holyrood and it is the objective that underpins our engagement with the coalition administration at Westminster.

I am keen that we make progress in improving the Scotland Bill, currently proceeding through Westminster, to give it real economic teeth. The people of Scotland voted for the Scottish Parliament to take on greater financial responsibility and new job-creating powers, including an enhanced borrowing ability and responsibility for Corporation Tax and Excise Duty as well as for the Crown Estate – so we can ensure that Scottish communities benefit from the generation of our vast renewables resources offshore.

The new Scottish Government will also continue to press for unfettered access to Scotland's £200 million Fossil Fuel Levy funds to support green energy development. That is Scotland's money, currently and ludicrously locked away in a London bank account, which must now be released.

I will also urge the Chancellor to rethink the Treasury's recent damaging tax hike on North Sea oil and gas. We must work to support investment in the energy sector rather than to put it at risk. I will offer alternative proposals which demonstrate how it could be possible to focus the tax increase on those who are taking excess profits out of the North Sea, while still incentivising those companies prepared to invest."I look forward to my discussions with the Chancellor, the Secretary of State and the Deputy Prime Minister. I want the Scottish Government, together with all those elected to the Scottish Parliament, to be able to build a new relationship with Westminster – a partnership of equals that truly reflects the 'respect agenda', as well as the clear ambitions of the people of Scotland."