

Edinburgh council agree to Greens motion backing Robin Hood tax

The Green group lodged a motion at today's full council meeting which looked like something else that would be cast aside by the overwhelming majority of the Coalition administration. That was until the speeches started, and it became clear that the administration were actually minded to agree that the council should tell the UK government that they would like the so-called Robin Hood tax looked into at the earliest opportunity.

The idea behind this tax on financial transactions is that if central government can raise some extra cash then it would not be left to local authorities to either raise funds themselves by whatever means they can, which naturally would involve cuts to services.

The original motion was as follows:-

"This Council:

Recognises the impact of the UK Coalition Government's public sector and welfare cuts on this City and its residents;

Believes that the levy of a Financial Transaction Tax on speculative financial transactions could provide a way of raising revenue and mitigating cuts to public services;

Therefore agrees that the Council Leader should make representation to HM Government calling for the Financial Transaction Tax to be introduced at the earliest opportunity."

The motion was amended by changing the word 'introduced' to 'explored' and was passed by a majority of councillors.

✖ Green councillor Steve Burgess said:-“Pressure is mounting on the Government with over 100,000 people in the UK actively supporting a campaign to introduce a Robin Hood tax. Councils across the country are making official representations and I’m pleased to say they have today been joined by Edinburgh Council.

“The Robin Hood tax or Financial Transaction tax would place a very small levy, 0.01 to 0.1%, on financial transactions such as the sale of stocks and bonds. Because the total value of financial transactions is so massive, the tax could raise as much as £20billion. This amount could go some way to offsetting the UK Government’s swingeing budget cuts that are impacting on everyone, as services are cut and welfare is slashed.

“Eleven other European countries, including France and Germany, have already agreed to implement a Robin Hood tax but prompted by the banks and the US government, the UK Government has lodged a legal challenge against it in the European Court. They say it’s unworkable, despite the fact the UK already has a similar tax called ‘stamp duty’ on share dealing that raises £3billion a year.

“Despite the opposition of the current UK Government hopefully a Robin Hood tax will go ahead across Europe and there will be an opportunity for a future Government, be it UK or Scottish, to implement this very fair measure in the not too distant future.”