

# The lowdown and the views on The Smith Commission Report



The Smith Commission issued its report today on the shape and form of the devolved powers promised to Scotland by the political parties at Westminster in the days before and after the Scottish Independence referendum.

We are sure that many people will have proofread the draft before it was finally published today, but try as we might Paragraph 52 makes no grammatical sense to us. If it does to you, then please share your thoughts with us!

You can read The Smith Commission report in full below.

The main points as far as we can see are these:

- *The Barnett Formula for calculating the block grant made by the UK Government to Holyrood will remain in place.*
- *Air Passenger Duty will be devolved to the Scottish Parliament.*
- *Holyrood will control the rate at which income tax in Scotland is set*
- *Holyrood will have full powers over Scottish Parliament elections and council elections across Scotland, and will be able to extend the vote to 16 and 17 year-olds in the 2016 Scottish Parliamentary Election. No two elections will be held on one day in future.*
- *Holyrood will decide how many MSPs there are and whether any should be disqualified at any time.*
- *The management of the Crown Estate's economic assets (the seabed, certain tracts of land across Scotland, mineral and fishing rights and the foreshore) will be*

- transferred to Holyrood, and then where appropriate devolved down further to the relevant local authority.
- The BBC is run under a Charter and from now on the BBC's annual report and accounts will be presented to Holyrood, in the same way it does to Westminster. Similar arrangements will apply to OFCOM which is responsible for regulating communications, Ofgem the energy regulator, and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and Northern Lighthouse Board.
  - Pensions remain the responsibility of the UK Government and up to a point so will Universal Credit which is currently being rolled out. The Scottish Government will have powers to vary the so-called 'bedroom tax' (although they have to pay for this if they do).
  - A suite of other benefits will be devolved to the Scottish Government including Attendance Allowance and Personal Independence Payment and Discretionary Housing Payments.
  - The National Minimum Wage will remain the responsibility of Westminster.
  - The Scottish Government can introduce rules on 50/50 gender quotas in public bodies.
  - The Scottish Government will have control over speed limits, road traffic signs, the British Transport Police (presumably henceforth the Scottish Transport Police?) as well as control over rail franchises .
  - Holyrood will control fracking in Scotland as licensing of onshore oil and gas extraction is devolved.
  - Holyrood will control the income tax rates charged here along with the UK government who retain control over the amount of the personal allowance (the amount you can earn before paying tax). Income tax received by Holyrood will mean an adjustment to the block grant received from Westminster. All other taxes are reserved to Westminster.
  - The first 10 per cent of VAT will be paid to the Scottish Government's budget and again will affect the

*block grant.*

- *Air Passenger Duty will be devolved to Holyrood. If the Scottish Government decides to impose a replacement tax then it will be free to do so, but compensating arrangements must be made to Westminster.*
- *The two governments will work together to ensure that double taxation is avoided.*
- *Other matters which may be considered later include food labelling, foreign students being allowed to remain in Scotland for a time after graduation, a visa for those who are victims of human trafficking, the possibility of fines imposed by Scottish Courts remaining in Scotland and powers relating to the Health and Safety Executive.*
- *Finally the government in Edinburgh will have the right to borrow to ensure stability in the Scottish economy.*
- *The UK Government will produce the draft legislation for all of the new devolved powers by 25 January 2015.*
- *The Prime Minister and the First Minister are to meet shortly after 25 January to discuss details of both governments working together more effectively in future.*
- *The Scottish Parliament holds its first meeting [about further devolution](#) next Tuesday at Holyrood.*

✘ Lord Smith has been careful to point out in his report that not everyone will be happy with his conclusions, but we have scoured our inbox to see what those with a view think about the new devolved powers.

What do you think? Please add your comments below.

Candidate for the Labour leadership Jim Murphy said: “This is a historic day for Scotland. Change is coming to our great nation.

“The Vow made during the referendum campaign has not only been

delivered – it has been exceeded.

“This huge package of new powers is a good deal for Scotland. More decisions about Scotland will be taken here in Scotland, without losing the financial security that comes with the Barnett formula.

“The days of political parties in Scotland promising the earth but blaming someone else for their failure to deliver are well and truly over. There will be no hiding place for those parties which preach social justice but duck for cover when called to act.”

Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive, Edinburgh Airport, said: “We welcome the Smith Commission’s recommendation that APD is devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

“This should not and need not wait for legislation on other tax changes.

“We strongly believe that there is a real case to see it devolved as soon as possible so that Scotland can capitalise fully on the benefits of this fantastic year where we have been in the global spotlight.

“The removal or reducing of this tax will see millions of more passengers come to Scotland as our major airlines have indicated.

“Airline planners are finalising 2015 now and we run the risk of losing that momentum as those people who wish to visit us are deterred by the highest aviation taxes in the world.”

Edinburgh’s Liberal Democrat MP, Mike Crockart has welcomed plans published by the Smith Commission for extensive new powers for Scotland.

Commenting, Mr Crockart said: “I am extremely proud that Liberal Democrats are delivering Home Rule for Scotland. The all-party agreement delivers on ‘the Vow’ and I am confident

that it meets the ambitions of the vast majority of the Scottish people.

“Under this agreement, the Scottish Parliament will get £20 billion of tax powers and £2.5 billion of new welfare powers. This is a big deal for Edinburgh and Scotland as a whole and I am delighted that the Scottish Parliament will finally have the financial muscle it needs.

“This package means that the Scottish Parliament will raise the majority of the money it spends and will be able to do things differently if it chooses to. I am looking forward to the Scottish Government and UK Government working constructively together to create a strong and positive future for families and communities in Scotland.”

Scottish Labour leadership candidate, Sarah Boyack MSP said: “I want to congratulate the members of the Smith Commission for their report today.

“It represents the next chapter of home rule and is a substantial package of new powers and accountability for the Scottish Parliament. It sets out a renewed Devolution settlement for Scotland within the UK.

“If elected as Scottish Labour Leader I will ensure that this strengthening of our devolution settlement is fully implemented and that the new powers are used to benefit the people of Scotland.”

Community trade union has welcomed the Smith Commission recommendations published today. Reacting to the recommendations, John Park, Assistant General Secretary of Community, said:

“These are radical proposals, which rightly respect the outcome of the referendum and the desire of all parties to see more decisions taken directly in Scotland. The referendum demonstrated a massive demand for change in the way that

Scotland is governed and the Smith Commission should be commended for answering that call. Importantly, the report has also avoided firing the starting gun in a race to the bottom that would hurt working people. Essential safeguards for workers, such as the minimum wage, have been protected.”

Friends of the Earth Scotland Director Dr Richard Dixon commented:

“We welcome the recommendation of the Smith Commission that onshore oil and gas licensing powers are devolved. While we are clear that the Scottish Government could stop the roll out of unconventional gas and fracking with existing powers, these changes would leave them with absolutely no excuse not to take tough action against this dirty industry. The Scottish Government should instead continue its transformation of our energy system by focusing on renewables, living up to our world leading climate commitments in doing so.”

“ We welcome proposals regarding energy efficiency, regulation of the energy market and devolution of Air Passenger Duty but caution that the Government must use these additional powers responsibly. Ministers must resist calls from the business lobby to cut Air Passenger Duty and instead use this levy to maintain its commitment to reduce emissions from aviation.”

Willie Sullivan, Director of Electoral Reform Society Scotland, said:

“The Smith Commission report goes some way towards respecting Scottish public opinion in devolving further powers over tax and welfare to the Scottish Parliament. There are still questions about whether these powers are merely administrative or genuinely transformative, and how changes will be made law when the outcome of the UK general election poses so many unknowns.

“The Society warmly welcomes the fact that the Scottish Parliament will be given authority over its own elections,

particularly as it will most likely mean votes at 16 will come to Holyrood elections. Giving 16- and 17-year-olds the vote is a crucial part of closing the gap between politics and people, and it is heartening to see Scotland continuing to lead the way on this.”

Then of course Twitter took hold of the proposals:

*. I hope those at Holyrood pay attention to the first paragraph, at the top of page 6, of [#smithcommission](#) report: <https://t.co/BXx5J9kkiK>*

*– Cllr. Andrew D Burns (@AndrewDBurns) [November 27, 2014](#)*

*The [#smithcommission](#) proposals are welcome as far as they go... But they will NOT deliver the powerhouse parliament promised. [#VoteSNP](#) – Stewart Hosie (@StewartHosieMP) [November 27, 2014](#)*

*Check out our statement in which our Chief Executive [@IanMWelsh](#) reflects on today's [#smithcommission](#) recommendations <http://t.co/oEoxmE95MX>*

*Welcome progress had been made but still work to be done to achieve Home Rule [#smithcommission](#) <http://t.co/A1B2E65LJw>*

*– Scottish Home Rule (@ScotHomeRule) [November 27, 2014](#)*

*– The ALLIANCE (@ALLIANCEscot) [November 27, 2014](#)*

*70% of taxes and 85% welfare -constituent thought that was a good deal until I told him that's what stays at Westminster !*

[#smithcommission](#)

– Fiona Hyslop (@FionaHyslop) [November 27, 2014](#)

*.@JohnSwinney tells @BBCNews new powers welcome but agreement doesn't fulfill the expectations of the people of Scotland*  
[#smithcommission](#)

– The SNP (@theSNP) [November 27, 2014](#)

And finally.....

*Pleased [#smithcommission](#) has agreed to devolve road signs to Scotland. Here are our first designs. @DerekMackayMSP*  
[pic.twitter.com/15rSN5QFDt](#)

– Transform Scotland (@TransformScot) [November 27, 2014](#)

[http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/The\\_Smith\\_Commission\\_Report-1.pdf](http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/The_Smith_Commission_Report-1.pdf)