

Five things you need to know today



Scottish Budget

Royal visit to the capital

People Power

Edinburgh International Festival

Coppelia

Today at Holyrood The Scottish Government will be considering the Stage 3 Proceedings of the Budget (Scotland) (No. 4) Bill. This will then be either passed or rejected by the Parliament and in four weeks' time the bill will pass into law.

The Scottish Government intends to do the following in the next financial year:

- Secure £4.5 billion of infrastructure investment in 2015-16
- Support £330 million of further capital investment in the Scotland's Schools for the Future programme through NPD funding
- Provide £140 million to deliver 2 new college campuses through the NPD pipeline
- Continue to deliver the most competitive business tax environment in the UK
- Invest £16.6 million in 2015-16 to further take forward recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

- Drive investment in affordable housing of over £390 million to deliver 6000 affordable homes and £125m of additional financial support for the housing sector.
- Invest over £300 million over two years in extending child care to 600 hours for all 3 and 4 year olds and vulnerable 2 year olds.
- Provide additional support for looked after children
- Provide £81 million to mitigate against Westminster's welfare reform including the 'Bedroom Tax'
- Maintain a council tax freeze across Scotland
- Continue the Scottish Government's social wage commitments including free prescriptions, concessionary travel and free personal care
- Increase the health budget to over £12 billion with a funding increase of £288 million
- Invest over £170 million in 2015-16 to help drive integration of adult health and social care
- Support 1000 additional police officers
- Protect the Local Government budget
- Maintain a Scottish living wage for public sector workers covered by public sector pay policy
- Continue the commitment to no compulsory redundancies.

Scottish Labour maintain that the NHS is in crisis and they recommend that a Frontline Fund is set up to protect it.

They explain that Scotland has 22 hospitals with full front facing A&E provision; Scottish Labour's Frontline fund would be used to support spreading elective surgery over more days to avoid the weekday congestion, this would help both

scheduled and unscheduled care.

A Frontline Fund would target £100m for the incremental delivery of weekday equivalent services on evenings and weekends, starting with Trauma Hospitals.

Scottish Labour have called for the Scottish Budget to use Barnett consequentialists to establish a £100 million frontline fund. This means that they would expect the money to come from Westminster in an expected increase in the block grant paid to Scotland. The grant is calculated by applying the Barnett Formula which adjusts the public expenditure available to Scotland according to that in England or other parts of the UK.

You can watch the proceedings from Holyrood on [Parliament TV](#).

The Princess Royal was in Edinburgh yesterday and was accompanied on her busy schedule by The Lord Lieutenant the Rt Hon Donald Wilson.

The Edinburgh Reporter was at Edinburgh Erskine Home which she toured in the morning stopping to speak to many of the residents, families and staff who were waiting to meet her. [Read more here.](#)

[The Edinburgh Reporter NEWS](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

In the afternoon yesterday Her Royal Highness visited Firrhill Centre Technology Hub where she was met by the Council's Health Convener, Councillor Ricky Henderson for a tour of the facilities. [Read more here.](#)

A fund which gives community groups the power to tackle poverty and inequalities in their areas has been given a £5.6

million funding boost.

Social Justice Secretary Alex Neil confirmed community-led regeneration will be given extra support through the People and Communities Fund (PCF), on a visit to the Broomhouse Health Strategy Group yesterday morning.

The People and Communities Fund will be increased from £9.4 million to £15 million as it benefits from support through the dedicated £10 million funding for Empowering Communities announced by the First Minister last November.

This investment builds on the Government's commitment to giving people the power to take charge and make changes in their own communities.

The additional funding will be allocated to a variety of projects, including community groups who are promoting change in disadvantaged communities through training, employment, healthy eating and volunteering opportunities.

Mr Neil made the announcement ahead of yesterday afternoon's Stage 1 Debate for the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill. He said:

"We know every community in Scotland has different needs, and that we all have our own ideas about how we can make our areas better.

"This Government recognises that by giving communities the power and confidence to shape their own futures, we can tackle poverty and address inequalities more effectively.

"Through the People and Communities Fund we will provide money direct to community groups to help them tackle local issues on their own terms.

"This new money will support the aims of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill, which will give people a stronger voice in the decisions that matter to them and will help

communities who wish to take over public land and buildings.”

Since PCF launched in 2012, 156 projects have received funding worth £18.3 million those projects include the Broomhouse Health Strategy Group which was awarded almost £30,000 to run cookery and exercise sessions which encourage local people to make healthy lifestyle choices.

The sessions have helped increase self-esteem and confidence among local people, many of whom had never cooked a meal from scratch before, and it has supported their skills development with some developing the confidence to move into local volunteering roles.

Lucy Aitchison, from the Broomhouse Health Strategy Group said:

“It’s been great to develop our health and wellbeing services, and you can see them making a real difference to people’s lives.

“To give people the skills to be able to look after themselves and their family more healthily is really significant.

“We’re so pleased to have the support to be able to address these local needs.”

The brand new Edinburgh International Festival Director, Fergus Linehan, announced his 2015 programme of classical music yesterday and while the rest of the events will not be announced until 18 March, there is much to think about. [Brian Ferguson writing in The Scotsman](#) postulates that there will be a big opening event in the Usher Hall spilling over into the Festival Square. There are no details of this being released until March so you will just have to wait and see!

Here is the trailer of events announced yesterday to keep you going meantime:

At the Festival Theatre from tonight until Saturday the Birmingham Royal Ballet present Coppelia. Watch a preview [here](#):

Tickets available [here](#).

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