

Greens to lead two Holyrood debates today

✘ Two Green MSPs are leading debates at Holyrood later today first about cuts to additional support needs and secondly on the need to strengthen local democracy.

Next year Scotland will vote for new councillors across the country and the Green Party see these issues as key campaigning points in those elections.

Ross Greer MSP said: “The First Minister has said education is her number one priority, so today’s debate on Additional Support Needs is a real test for her Government. Funding cuts to this area are harming the opportunities for children and young people who need support, such as those with autism, hearing or visual impairment, or dyslexia. It’s simply shocking that the number of ASN teachers has fallen 13 per cent in five years.

“Councils, who are responsible for school budgets, have been unfairly squeezed by the Scottish Government, and ASN has taken the hit. As we approach local government elections in five months’ time we need a clear sign from the Scottish Government that it will improve funding for local authorities to enable them to repair the damage that has been done. We cannot have, as experts warned this week, a lost generation of children who didn’t get the support they need.”

The motion reads:

That the Parliament believes that professionals who provide additional support for learning play a vital role in Scotland’s classrooms; welcomes international comparisons that demonstrate that Scottish schools are inclusive, but is concerned that public sector cuts threaten the opportunities that are available to children with additional support needs;

notes that real terms revenue cuts to the Scottish budget have been disproportionately focused on local authorities, where education is the biggest spend, and that the number of additional support for learning teachers and support staff has fallen by 13% and 8% between 2010 and 2015, and calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward a budget that raises more revenue to support local educational priorities.

Andy Wightman Lothians MSP who will lead a later debate seeking endorsement of the final report of the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy.

He said: “Creeping centralisation by successive governments has impoverished and weakened local democracy and left local authorities with little flexibility and choice in responding to local needs. The Scottish Parliament needs to properly debate the future of local democracy and agree that the situation as it stands is unacceptable.

“There is broad consensus across the parties that local democracy needs revived in Scotland. Today’s debate is an opportunity for government and opposition parties to prove that they are serious about devolving real power from Holyrood to local level.

“All parties took part in the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, which found that fifty years of centralisation has not tackled the inequality in our society. By endorsing the Commission’s findings, Parliament can send a signal that it intends to give power to the people and strengthen and deepen local democracy.”

You can watch the debates live on [Parliament TV](#).