

Today at Holyrood – Derek Mackay will present his third Scottish Budget

The Finance Secretary Derek Mackay says he will present a strong budget at Holyrood this afternoon to support transformation of essential public services.

He says that it will strengthen Scotland's economy and deliver long term investments to transform public services.

This will be Mackay's third Scottish Budget and he said the government's spending plans will prepare Scotland's economy for future challenges and opportunities.

Investment in health and education will be prioritised, while the Scottish Government will use the full powers of devolution to help mitigate against UK austerity and the impact of Brexit.

Mr Mackay said: "The Programme for Government set out our vision to build on the progress of the last decade and the budget I present to the people of Scotland will help realise those ambitions and ensure we remain focused on delivering for the needs of today while investing for tomorrow.

"The 2019-20 Budget will set out how we will prepare the country for the future. Our spending plans for the year ahead will include long-term strategic investments that allow us to protect our essential public services, boost our economy and deliver on our commitments to the people of Scotland.

"Despite the UK Government's promises, this budget will be set against a backdrop of continuing UK austerity which has devastating impacts on the most vulnerable in our communities.

"This is also a budget presented under the shadow of the UK

government's chaotic approach to Brexit which hangs over our economy, our public services and risks making us all poorer in the future."

LABOUR WANT FUNDING FOR PUBLIC SERVICES

The Scottish budget must deliver investment to cut poverty, grow the economy and ensure proper funding for public services, Labour said today.

Scotland needs a budget which works for the many, not the few.

Here's what we want to see pic.twitter.com/U0m2CGaLwI

– Scottish Labour (@scottishlabour) [December 12, 2018](#)

The party has produced a video wrapping up its key pre-budget demands:

- Proper funding for councils to stop the cuts to schools and services
- A £5 per week increase in Child Benefit and an end to the two-child cap on tax credits
- A freeze on ScotRail fares in the New Year
- A women's health fund to further research and support for women-specific conditions
- A £10million cash injection into discretionary housing payments to help tackle the roll out of Universal Credit
- A £20million Community Policing Fund to reverse local police cuts

Scottish Labour Finance spokesperson James Kelly said: "Our communities are being held back by Tory austerity and inaction from the SNP, who are failing the people of Scotland.

"The economy has stagnated, our NHS is in crisis, councils are facing a cliff edge, headteachers are writing to parents about unprecedented cuts, our rail system is on its knees, homelessness and rough sleeping are on the rise, and one in four children in Scotland are living in poverty.

"The time for tinkering at the edges is over. We need a real

change of direction in this budget. In government, Labour will do things differently, but we have the power to make different choices in Scotland now.

“We are urging the SNP to take action to prevent more cuts to local services, to end the abhorrent two-child cap on social security, and to increase Child Benefit to lift 30,000 children out of poverty.

“We need real change so our schools can deliver a first-class education, real change so our NHS can provide the best care to those who need it, and real change to end the housing crisis, fix our failing rail system, and put police back into our communities.

“We need an economy that works for the many, and not just the few.”

CONSERVATIVES WANT A BUDGET FOR ALL OF SCOTLAND

Finance Secretary Derek Mackay should deliver a “Budget for all of Scotland” rather than yielding to pressure from the Greens, the Scottish Conservatives have said today.

The SNP is widely expected once again to give in to demands from the Scottish Greens for a raft of unpopular tax rises as the price of a Budget deal.

However, shadow Finance Secretary Murdo Fraser said today that the Scottish Conservatives stood ready to back a Budget that delivered for families and businesses.

The Scottish Conservatives have said they are open to supporting a SNP Budget that rules out an unwanted second referendum on independence and addresses the widening tax gap between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Mr Fraser added that the SNP had no need to increase the tax burden on Scots given the extra £950m he has received from the UK Government following the Chancellor’s Budget last month.

Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary

said: “Once again, the SNP appears ready today to sign on the dotted line with their fellow independence travellers in the Green party. We know what that will mean: higher taxes for ordinary families.

“My message today to Derek MacKay is to back blue, not Green.

“Rule out a second referendum on independence, address the widening gap between tax rates in Scotland and the rest of the UK – and let’s talk.

“This Budget is a massive opportunity for the SNP Government. Thanks to decisions made by the Conservative UK Budget, he has an extra £950 in his back pocket to spend. There is no need to keep driving up taxes. Mr Mackay can choose instead to back economic growth.

“We need a Budget for growth. Let’s see if Mr MacKay is up for the challenge.”