

Workplace parking levy in Scottish budget – for and against

In the Scottish Budget agreed earlier this evening, plans were laid down to impose a workplace parking levy.

The City of Edinburgh Council's Transport and Environment Committee already agreed last summer to conduct research on the levy which was one of the key commitments in the coalition administration's business plan .

The levy would be paid by the employer for parking spaces made available to their employees. In Nottingham employers with more than 10 parking spaces pay £402 per space each year and the proceeds are invested into public transport. There the levy has paid for the extension of a tram system and other public transport improvements.

Responding to the announcement Friends of the Earth Scotland's Air Pollution Campaigner Gavin Thomson said:

"It is welcome news that Councils will be given the powers to reduce the level of cars travelling into our towns and cities at peak times. This policy can be used to discourage car use whilst encouraging public transport use, with benefits for air pollution and climate emissions and so should be welcomed by all."

"In most Scottish cities, a large proportion of people don't have access to a car. Public transport users are disproportionately lower paid workers or those seeking employment, so finding funding mechanisms that improve the

availability and accessibility of public transport begins to address the fundamental unfairness of our current transport system”.

“It was revealed this week, that 7 sites across Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee have air pollution levels that are breaking the law, and endangering the health of the young, the old and those with existing illnesses.”

But the Scottish Conservatives say that taxing people hundreds of pounds to park at their place of work is part of an SNP triple-tax bombshell. They also point out that as part of today’s statement, the Finance Secretary confirmed the further widening of income tax rates between Scotland and the UK, and raised the cap at which local authorities can increase council tax.

They claim that it means councils will be able to hike charges by 4.79 per cent, instead of the three per cent previously agreed.

They have also accused nationalists of breaking manifesto commitments on tax, including capping council tax rises and protecting low-paid workers.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said ahead of the vote : “Thanks to the SNP, Scots across the country are about to be hit by a triple tax bombshell.

“We will pay the highest income taxes in the UK, council tax will go up, and now you might even be taxed hundreds of pounds a year for taking your car to work.

“Derek Mackay has torn up the promises he and Nicola Sturgeon made to voters at the last election on tax.

“They said they would cap the council tax at three per cent and protect low paid workers.

“All that has been dumped. This disgraceful betrayal of

Scottish voters shows once and for all that Nicola Sturgeon's government simply cannot be trusted.

"The truth is that none of these tax rises were needed.

"The SNP's budget is rising by £2 billion this year and today Derek Mackay revealed he was being bailed out by a further Barnett consequential of funding from the UK Government.

"Yet the SNP has the brass neck to attack the UK Government in the same breath.

"Derek Mackay is squandering this union dividend, and it is taxpayers who are having to pay.

"We need a Scottish Government that will grow the economy, protect taxpayers and – once and for all – dump its plan for an unwanted second referendum on independence.

"This budget delivers on none of those objectives and so the Scottish Conservatives will oppose it."