

LibDems call for emergency budget to tackle bin strikes

Emergency budget changes need to tackle bin strikes and cost of living crisis.

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Alex Cole-Hamilton has called for The Scottish Government's emergency budget review to deliver more support for both the cost of living and local authorities, as strike action by hundreds of GMB and Unite union members in Edinburgh has left bins overflowing.

This is the fifth day of Edinburgh's 12-day waste collection strike. The strike will end on 30 August, shortly after the end of the festivals.

Busy areas such as the city's Grassmarket and streets outside Edinburgh Waverley are some of the worst affected.

Mr Cole-Hamilton said: "The effects of the strike are depressingly visible. We are seeing mountains of filth piling up. The blame for these strikes lies entirely in the hands of a SNP/Green Government which has cut £1 billion from local government budgets in recent years and hardly lifted a finger to tackle the cost of living crisis.

"We all know that August is perhaps the most important month in Edinburgh's calendar. This situation risks jeopardising the capital's reputation among festival visitors from across the UK and the world.

"Refuse workers are being hit hard by the cost-of-living crisis. They need emergency changes to the budget which will properly fund local government and support those in

need. The Scottish Government must fund local authorities so that they can afford to give workers a proper pay rise and put an end to this sorry mess.”

On Friday COSLA held a special meeting of council leaders and offered an improved 5% to the unions. Unite the union CEC Branch has confirmed their local government committee will meet on Monday to decide whether to reject the offer or take it to their members for consultation.

GMB Scotland are meanwhile holding a comedy event in Edinburgh on 24 August to raise funds for the striking workers who were praised during the pandemic, saying: “These workers have gone from the frontline to the breadline”.

On Friday 19 August, GMB Scotland Senior Organiser, Kate Greenaway said: “The latest proposals will be considered by our local government committee, but the principle of a flat rate award is a key demand of the trade union pay claim. For any offer to be deemed worthy of our members full consultation the biggest cash increases must go to the lowest paid.”



View from George IV Bridge to the Cowgate on Sunday 21 August.
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Rubbish accumulated at a street bin on Chambers Street. PHOTO © 2022 The Edinburgh Reporter