

Government budget includes more funding for councils and Creative Scotland

The Scottish Government said there is an additional £223 million in the budget passed by parliament today which will be provided to local authorities to support pay awards to staff.

The government also said that the extra money for local authorities comprises a new £100 million for non-teaching staff and the £123 million announced last week for 2023-24 supporting a new pay offer for teachers which means that their salaries will rise by 11.5% from April. It also comes on top of the additional £570 million already included in the local government settlement, and increases the total settlement to nearly £13.5 billion.

The Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, said that additional funding from the UK Government in Supplementary Estimate figures this morning had enabled him to go a bit further in 2023-24. But he also sounded a warning that the financial position is still extremely challenging.

Mr Swinney said: “I am very aware of the challenges faced as we manage our way through this cost crisis and this Budget is designed to do as much as we possibly can to assist at this most difficult moment.

“None of this is easy – this is by far the hardest Scottish Budget process that I have led – with the effects of raging inflation being felt against the impact of more than a decade of austerity and Barnett funding down 5% in real terms since 2021-22.

“I hope this additional funding will enable a swift agreement in the Scottish Joint Council pay negotiations so that relevant staff receive a pay increase as early as possible in 2023-24.

“The Budget strengthens our social contract with every citizen of Scotland who will continue to enjoy many benefits not

available throughout the UK. Delivering support for people most in need, in these difficult times, is the foundation of this Budget.

“The Budget that has been set out to Parliament enables us to invest in our public services, to ensure a strong boost to local authority funding and to ensure that we help those who need it the most.”

Mr Swinney announced an increase of £6.6 million to be awarded to Creative Scotland in the Scottish Budget statement.

John Swinney acknowledged “the calls from Claire Adamson MSP, Convener of the Parliament’s Culture and Constitution Committee to continue to sustain our investment in culture and the arts”.

In his statement, Scotland’s Deputy First Minister said: “We had asked Creative Scotland to sustain investment next year by utilising £6.6 million from their accumulative Lottery reserves in place of a further year of additional grant funding to compensate for generally lower National Lottery income.

“I am now in a position now to require that and I will provide an uplift of £6.6 million for Creative Scotland for 2023-24 to ensure their reserve funding can supplement rather than replace grant funding.”

There were calls from trade unions, artists, cultural organisations and campaigners to reverse the cuts.

Last week, the Scottish Trades Union Congress wrote to John Swinney and Culture Secretary Angus Robertson on behalf of the Musicians’ Union, the Scottish Artists Union, BECTU, Equity,

the Writers' Guild, Scottish Society of Playwrights and the Society of Authors, warning that cutting arts funding is "the wrong choice at the wrong time."

Scottish Labour's Culture spokesperson, Sarah Boyack MSP said: "I welcome Scottish Government's U-turn and the decision to reverse the culture cuts.

"The proposals to cut Creative Scotland's funding should have never been put forward – they simply didn't make sense and if implemented, would have added to the huge pressure the culture sector is facing because of the cost of living crisis and rising costs.

"Culture workers have been living with uncertainty, precarious and under-paid work for years – the current crisis has only made things worse for them.

"There is so much more that the Scottish Government should be doing now to support the sector. In my own city for example the King's Theatre needs support now."

CREATIVE SCOTLAND

Creative Scotland says it warmly welcomes the announcement today which reverses the £6.6 million reduction proposed in the Draft Budget in December last year, and restores the body's Grant-in-Aid budget to £63 million.

The Board of Creative Scotland will now consider what this change means for our own Budget for 2023/24, and its implications for the funding we provide.

A further announcement will be made in due course.

Robert Wilson, Chair of Creative Scotland said: "Alongside the Board and Staff, I am very pleased to see this announcement about the Scottish Government's budget. It follows a great deal of work from Creative Scotland in setting out the impact

and implications of the proposed budget reduction, and the enormously valuable advocacy work from people and organisations across Scotland's culture sector and beyond. The Board will now consider what this means for our budget and our funding in 2023/24 and we will announce more on this as soon as possible."

OPPOSITION PARTIES

Scottish Liberal Democrat Leader, Alex Cole-Hamilton, said:

"Despite the evidence and reports of multiple committees of this Parliament, local government, trade unions, charities and frontline workers, the National Care Service Bill has still not yet been abandoned.

"When the NHS Recovery Plan was launched, 1 in 5 children were waiting too long for mental health treatment. Now it is 1 in 3. To freeze the mental health budget, on top of the £38m cut this year, is a recipe for more missed targets and scandalous long waits.

"Throughout the 158-pages of the draft budget, there was not a word on long Covid.

"We still have the government spending £17 million on the national testing of children as young as four and five. We have a budget which will lead to class sizes increasing and subjects being removed from the curriculum.

"If this budget package was right, we would support it. But the government hasn't budgeted to the degree needed to win our support. This budget is just not good enough."