

# **Swinney urges parliament to back the budget**

**Deputy First Minister John Swinney has urged MSPs to back The Scottish Government's Budget for 2023-24, saying that it "delivers for the people of Scotland".**

Speaking ahead of Thursday's Stage One Budget Bill debate, Mr Swinney said that in a difficult financial environment the Budget focused resources on the three key priorities of delivering sustainable public services, transforming the economy to deliver a just transition to net zero and taking direct action to eradicate child poverty.

He also said that it includes more than £13 billion for health and social care and £1 billion for early learning and childcare provision.

The draft budget also supports those hardest hit by the cost of living crisis, with £442 million invested in the Scottish Child Payment and £20 million for the Fuel Insecurity Fund to help households at risk of self-disconnection or self-rationing their energy use.

Mr Swinney said: "These are fair and ambitious spending plans for the coming year which have been developed during one of the most challenging financial environments since devolution.

"To govern is to choose and we have chosen a different, distinctive path that commits substantial resources to protect the most vulnerable from the impact of decisions made by the

UK Government.

“We are asking people to contribute to a fairer society that provides benefits such as free prescriptions, free access to higher education and concessionary travel not available in other parts of the UK.

“The progressive choices we propose on Scottish income tax also mean that next year the Scottish Government can direct additional investment towards our NHS. That investment will help drive forward our recovery plan, improve primary health care services and help reduce the harms associated with drugs and alcohol.

“At the same time, the majority of people in Scotland will still be paying less in Income Tax than if they lived in the rest of the UK. The Budget also delivers the number one ask of businesses by freezing the non-domestic rates poundage and providing a package of reliefs worth an estimated £744 million.

“Our spending plans will help ensure we can deliver a net zero future achieved through sustainable economic growth. We are investing £1.4 billion to maintain, improve and decarbonise Scotland’s rail network and almost £467 million on peatland restoration. And by doubling the budget for the next phase of the Just Transition Fund to £50 million, we are helping regional economies in the North East and Moray move away from the industries contributing to the climate emergency and diversify into others.

“This is a meaningful and progressive Budget that delivers for the people of Scotland. I urge all MSPs to unite behind it.”



Deputy First Minister and temporary Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Economy, John Swinney MSP, delivers the Scottish Budget for 23-24 to The Scottish Parliament.. 15 December 2022. Pic-Andrew Cowan/Scottish Parliament