

MSP criticises plans to give £12.5m to African schools programme

East Lothian MSP Craig Hoy has called on the Scottish Government to put people first instead of those in the 'Holyrood bubble' after plans to include £12.5 million in education aid for African were revealed.

Mr Hoy, who represents South Scotland region, says the decision to commit overseas funding showed a lack of common sense at a time when local authorities are struggling to fund services.

And the politician, who is based in Haddington, questioned why they were announcing the multi-million pound plans, saying it was not a devolved matter.

Speaking after the announcement of the funding by First Minister John Swinney, Mr Hoy said: "However worthy this programme may be there must be questions asked about why the SNP government can announce overseas education funding, which is a reserved and not a devolved matter.

"This move comes as education secretary Jenny Gilruth is holding back £145m from Scottish schools and councils, such as East Lothian, face huge financial pressures in delivering for pupils and parents.

“The SNP must think again on this. Being in government is about priorities and it’s high time the SNP started to take a common-sense approach to our finances and put ordinary Scots’ priorities ahead of those of the Holyrood bubble.”

Two programmes – one working with disabled children and another helping girls to complete secondary school – in Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia will receive the funding, which will for part of the Government’s spending plans

Confirming the funding during a meeting with the High Commissioners of Malawi and Zambia and Deputy Commissioner of Rwanda this week, Mr Swinney said: “This funding aims to overcome some of the persistent barriers faced by women, girls and children with disabilities, to ensure they have equal access to education, and are fully included in the social and economic life of their communities.

“The Scottish Government has prioritised this work as part of our commitment to international development and good global citizenship, working in partnership with our counterparts in Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia to meet the aims of the UN Sustainable Development goals.

“So I am very pleased to confirm this additional funding in support of those efforts.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter