

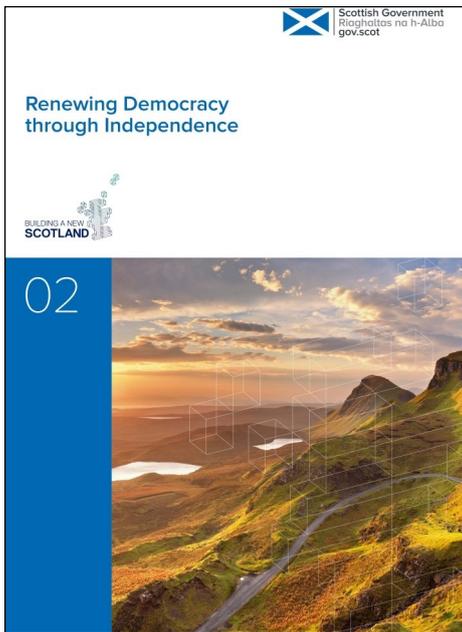
Gordon Macdonald

Member of the Scottish Parliament
for Edinburgh Pentlands

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Renewing Scotland's Democracy



New analysis has been published showing the extent to which the UK Government can override the Scottish Parliament.

Commenting, at a recent press conference announcing the release of the second paper in the *Building a New Scotland* series, *Renewing Democracy through Independence*, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said, "The only way Scotland can ensure decisions are taken in the best interests of its people is with independence".

The paper outlines how under the current system it is still only the

UK's Government and Parliament that can make decisions about certain issues that impact significantly on people's lives in areas such as whether Scotland should be in the EU, key energy policies, cutting or increasing taxes, pensions, and benefits, and powers over migration.

Gordon said, "Devolution did not protect Scotland from being taken out of the EU despite 62% of Scottish voters in the 2016 voting against doing so — this 'hard' Brexit has been imposed by the UK Government.

"Similarly, we are limited in the legislation we can use to apply to renewable projects and use to implement an overall energy strategy that reflects Scotland's net zero targets."

The paper exposes the significant and increasing democratic deficit that Scotland suffers as part of the Union, which has real life consequences for individuals, families, and businesses across Scotland — from the impact of austerity to the implications of a Brexit we did not vote for.

Gordon concluded, "Only with independence can we strengthen democracy in Scotland and have a chance to fulfil our potential."

£12 Million Redevelopment



The Scottish Government has announced investment of £12 million in redeveloping and regenerating an industrial park.

The site, currently known as Grayfield House, is located on Bankhead Avenue in Sighthill.

Around 125,000 square feet of industrial space and hundreds of jobs will be created at the site, using a loan from the Scottish Partnership for Regeneration in Urban Centres fund (SPRUC).

Gordon noted, "This major redevelopment will create 18 industrial units, help stimulate the local economy, attract investment, and create new local jobs.

"This demonstrates progress in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, which looks to promote greater productivity and encourage innovation."

ALSO THIS MONTH...

Record Social Security Spending



The SNP Government's recent spending review has outlined record social security spending to help households facing pressures from the Tory-made cost of living crisis.

Gordon commented, "The focus on supporting households reflects the SNP's commitment to create a fairer Scotland by tackling child poverty, reducing inequalities, and supporting financial wellbeing. This builds on current efforts to help families and mitigate Westminster welfare cuts."

Despite the Scottish Budget being cut in real terms by 5.2% by the Tory UK Government, the SNP will spend £770 million on cost of living support, including measures not available elsewhere in the UK, such as:

- Doubling the Scottish Child Payment to £20 per child per week with plans to increase it to £25 and extend it to under 16s.
- £86m to mitigate the bedroom tax.
- Uprating eight Scottish social security payments by 6%.
- Low-Income Winter Heating Benefit.
- Carers Allowance Supplement that will support around 90,000 carers with an additional £450 a year.
- Free school meals to all in P1-5 and over 140,000 eligible children.
- Free bus travel for nearly half the population through concessionary travel.

New Affordable Housing



Plans have been submitted for a proposed development at Murrayburn Gate on the site of the former Social Work and Wester Hailes Health Centre buildings.

The City of Edinburgh Council's plans propose the building of 73 affordable homes of various sizes. The plans also include a central shared public space. The development will feature five or six storey buildings varying to align with the gradient of the hill.

Gordon commented, "This is an excellent use of a brownfield site located right beside amenities. There is a huge need for such housing and I am pleased the previous Council Administration proposed this development and that the current Administration are continuing with it."

Low Income Winter Heating Assistance



Gordon has welcomed the planned introduction of the new Low Income Winter Heating Assistance benefit to help households across Scotland pay their energy bills.

The support is being introduced by the SNP Scottish Government and will guarantee an annual payment of £50 to around 400,000 low income households from Feb 2023.

It replaces the UK's Cold Weather payment, which is only triggered after 7 days below zero, whilst the new payment will provide a reliable, stable payment in winter, no matter the weather.

Gordon commented, "Once again the SNP Government is stepping up to support households within its limited budget despite the majority of powers lying with the Tories at Westminster."

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Weekly Surgeries

Gordon is now holding open surgeries for constituents to attend every Friday at 10am. The locations for these can be found at: -

<https://www.gordonmacdonaldmsp.info/surgery>

Working for Edinburgh Pentlands