



Gordon Macdonald

Member of the Scottish Parliament
for Edinburgh Pentlands

February 2019

A £43 Billion Budget Deal for Scotland

Reading Force



The Scottish Budget for 2019/20 has been passed by 66 votes to 58 in the Scottish Parliament. The Budget delivers on all of the Scottish Government's priorities, where, amid the ongoing Brexit chaos at Westminster, it provides stability, protects public services, supports the economy and helps build a fairer country. The budget includes: -

- £730 million increase to £14 billion to the health budget.
- £90 million increase to £11 billion to local authorities.
- £5 billion capital investment including more affordable homes.
- £1 billion to universities and £600 million to colleges.
- £180 million to raising attainment in schools, including £120 million delivered directly to head teachers to close the attainment gap.
- £500 million to the expansion of early learning and childcare.
- £27 million to direct investment in mental health, taking overall funding to £1.1 billion including funding to provide support in schools.
- £130 million to establish a Scottish National Investment Bank.

Gordon noted, "At a time of Westminster-imposed austerity we have increased funding and ensured that 55% of taxpayers will pay less than they would in England. The Budget deal with the Greens also means we will bring forward plans to give local authorities the power to introduce a Transient Visitor Levy, which is common in virtually every other European city, ensuring that tourists help support local services that they currently benefit from free of charge."

Cross-party discussions will take place on alternatives to the council tax and the possibility of legislation to allow councils the power to introduce a work place parking levy on employers.

Gordon Macdonald sponsored an exhibition highlighting the work of Reading Force.

The charity helps armed forces families stay close and connected through shared reading. Veterans, ex-forces, and reservists, and their wider families, can also benefit by receiving books from Reading Force.

The Deputy First Minister & Education Secretary, John Swinney, took time to speak to Fiona from Reading Force about their valuable work.

Commenting, Gordon said, "Reading Force are a wonderful charity that help soldiers remain a part of their children's lives even whilst serving away from home. It is often forgotten that when a soldier is placed on deployment, there is often a family back home missing a father, a mother, a husband, or a wife."

Out and About...

Reverse Vending on Broadway



This month, Gordon joined pupils from Pentland Primary School's *Eco Group* and Joanna Cherry MP for the launch of the 3-month trial of Broadway Convenience Store's new reverse vending machine for recycling cans and bottles.

"These pilot schemes will prove to be important for learning how a deposit return scheme can best work for retailers, particularly Scotland's many independent stores. I'm delighted that stores in Edinburgh are at the forefront of these initiatives and I look forward to seeing how customers respond to the trial scheme and to the new technology in store."

The machine accepts any plastic bottle or can and dispenses a voucher for 10p per item which can either be donated to the Pentlands Primary School or exchanged for cash.

Gordon noted, "I commend Dennis and Linda from the Broadway Convenience Store on securing one of Scotland's first reverse vending machines to help the community take action against plastic waste and litter, and at the same time supporting Pentland Primary."

Working with Openreach



Gordon was invited to mark the rollout of ultrafast, full-fibre broadband in his constituency with engineers from Openreach.

Gordon noted, "Edinburgh is one of the first places in the UK to be included in Openreach's rollout of resilient, high-capacity Fibre-to-the-Premises technology that can carry broadband at speeds of up to 1Gbps—22 times faster than the current UK average."

"This highlights that the Scottish Government's Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband partnership is having a positive impact in broadband speeds in Edinburgh."



Innovation Centre Visit



The Construction Scotland Innovation Centre welcomed Gordon and his MSP colleagues Colin Beattie and John Mason as part of the Scottish Parliament's Economy Committee inquiry into the construction industry.

Gordon noted, "We are undertaking an inquiry to understand the challenges of Scotland's construction sector, and are looking for a wide range of views on how the industry can be developed to help further drive the Scottish economy. The Construction Scotland Innovation Centre are known to help deliver transformational change."

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Monthly Surgeries — No appointment needed

- 1st Monday of the month, 6.30pm Wester Hailes Library
- 2nd Monday of the month, 6.30pm Carrickvale Community Centre
- 3rd Monday of the month, 6.30pm Currie Library
- 4th Monday of the month, 6.30pm Oxfgangs Library (Not 24 Dec)
- 5th Monday of the month, 6.30pm Ratho Com. Centre (Not 31 Dec)

NB: NO SURGERIES DURING PUBLIC AND BANK HOLIDAYS

Working for Edinburgh Pentlands