



Peter Peacock
Scottish Labour Regional MSP for the Highlands and Islands

news release

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Highland Council to pick up charges for school meals

A Highlands and Islands Labour MSP is calling upon the SNP Scottish Government to ensure councils in the north do not have to cut teacher numbers to fund its promise to introduce Free School Meals for pupils of parents who are in receipt of maximum child tax credit and maximum working tax credit.

Peter Peacock recently contacted all councils in the Highlands and Islands asking them for costs of implementation and whether they have received funding from the Scottish Government to pay for the measure.

"Most councils could not give me figures but confirmed that the measure would be costly.

In the case of the Highland Council it was facing a bill of £1,520,000 and they have not as yet made any provision to cover this cost

"The councils also confirmed that no budget allocation has been made available," he said.

"We have the ludicrous situation where the Government say they have funded the move but the councils which would have provided the estimated costs do not even know what the cost would be in most cases.

"This is a farce.

"This is just the money to help those most in need who are claiming benefits - if Councils are already telling the Government they can't fund this - how will they ever fund meals for all Primary 1-3s too.

"It is widely known that the SNP led Scottish Government is incapable of managing its finances properly but this beggars belief.

"How can you claim to have funded something without even knowing how much it would cost?

"I am, therefore, asking the Scottish Government to revisit the issue and ensure that sufficient funds are made available to councils to implement the measure without teacher numbers having to be reduced to

pay for it."

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