



Peter Peacock
Scottish Labour Regional MSP for the Highlands and Islands

news release

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Minister refuses to restore HIE Budget

The SNP Government has refused to restore the HIE budget after being challenged in parliament by Highlands and Islands Labour MSP, Peter Peacock, on the effect of major cuts in budgets to community and voluntary organisations across the Highlands and Islands as a result of changes the government is forcing on HIE.

Peter Peacock told the Minister of Enterprise Jim Mather that there was mounting evidence and concern at the negative effect of the massive budget cuts being made right across the Highlands and Islands and asked him to restore the budget of HIE and undertake an appraisal of the effect of the cuts.

Peter Peacock said: "I have been made aware of a number of concerns from local groups across the Highlands and Islands of the effect of the cuts HIE are now being forced to make by the SNP Government.

"Sport and the arts seem to be the worst affected currently.

"When I challenged the Minister on this he appeared to be in denial.

"Not only did he not recognise there was a problem, he seemed to imply things were better as a result of the cuts he is forcing on HIE!

"This shows just how out of touch the Minister is from the reality of what is going on.

"The SNP government is forcing cuts on HIE and have not even asked HIE for an appraisal of the effect of the cuts before they had to make them.

"I asked the Minister to restore HIE's budget to allow an appraisal of the effect of the cuts to be made.

"Sadly, the Minister refused to acknowledge there was an issue and refused to confirm he would restore the budget.

"I am continuing to press HIE for information on the effect of the unwelcome changes being forced on them and I will continue to highlight the effect of the cuts on good local initiatives, support HIE has been able to give for many years to help strengthen Highlands and Islands communities, but which it is now prevented from giving.

"One of the reasons we have seen the fortunes of the Highlands and Islands improve over the recent decades is because of the support HIE used to be able to give.

"The SNP government don't seem to understand the value of what HIE has done, or the damage they are doing to HIE now."

Peter Peacock said he would be happy to hear from any local groups affected by the HIE budget reductions in local funding applications by e mailing him at peter.peacock.msp@scottish.parliament.uk or writing to him at the Scottish Parliament.

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Website link : www.peterpeacock.org.uk