

DRAFT BUDGET 2015-16: INCREASING EXPORTS

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH YOUTH PARLIAMENT

Introductory remarks

The Scottish Youth Parliament is the democratically elected voice of Scotland's young people. Our vision is of a stronger, more inclusive Scotland that empowers young people by truly involving them in the decision-making process.

In working towards our aims, we support the following values:

- (a) **Democracy** – All of our plans and activities are youth-led, and we are accountable to young people aged 14-25. Our democratic structure, and the scale of direct participation across Scotland, gives us strength and sets us apart from other organisations.
- (b) **Inclusion** – We are committed to being truly inclusive. The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that all young people have a right to a voice, it doesn't matter who we are or where we come from. We celebrate our diversity.
- (c) **Political independence** – We are independent from political parties. Only by working with all legitimate political parties can we make progress on the policies that are important to young people.
- (d) **Passion** – We believe that drive and energy are key to successful campaigning. We are passionate about the key issues and believe that young people are part of the solution, not the problem.

The Scottish Youth Parliament welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's Call for Written Evidence on the findings of its report on the Draft Budget 2015-16. We also welcome the Scottish Government's focus on increasing export as a means of generating economic growth and employment. Our consultation and engagement has demonstrated that economic development, employability and skills development are a key priority for young people.

Our submission to this inquiry is based on the policies selected and passed by our democratically elected Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) at our tri-annual National Sittings, where MSYPs meet in plenary to debate policy issues of importance to their constituents. Our contribution is further grounded in the policy statements contained in our youth manifesto, "Change the Picture", which received almost 43,000 consultation responses.¹ Therefore, our remarks are shaped by the genuine views of young people.

The following policy statements, contained in our "Change the Picture", reflect the key economic priorities of Scotland's young people:

¹ You can see the list of SYP Policy, including our youth manifesto here: <http://www.syp.org.uk/policy-W21page-340->

- (a) There should be an emphasis on the long-term development of young people as part of the labour market, emphasising the provision and the availability of apprenticeships and placements which will equip young people with important skills and experience on which to build careers.
- (b) All young people should have the chance to participate in work experience.
- (c) Entrepreneurship and enterprise opportunities should be encouraged and promoted through the provision of start up funding and support geared directly at young people.

Our response to the Draft Budget 2015-16: Placing young people at the heart of an export led economy

The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that young people are Scotland's most valuable assets. Young people wish to be active and engaged participants, contributing to a thriving and dynamic economy. We believe that Scotland's young people should be at the heart of any economic strategy and accompanying budget, including a specific focus on increasing exports. We are concerned that the present budget proposals, as assessed through the Scottish Government's National Indicator, "Increase Exports", do not place enough emphasis on the important role that young people play on creating a thriving, export led economy.

The Scottish Youth Parliament has worked extensively with the Scottish Government, and the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. Young people made a substantive contribution to the final proposals which have the potential to make a positive impact on youth unemployment, and by extension the numbers of young people contributing to export led growth through entrepreneurship and employment in Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

We are concerned about the trend of declining resources for Higher Education Resource and a major decline in Youth Employability and Skills.² We believe that a reduction in resources in these areas demonstrates a lack of appreciation of the link between high quality academic and vocational education and increasing exports and economic development.

The Scottish Government has committed to implementing the proposals put forward by the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce.³ The Scottish Youth Parliament is concerned that a reduction in funding in Youth Employability and Skills, Higher Education Resource, and the College Resource budget in real terms, places the effectiveness of this implementation in jeopardy. Maintaining, and indeed increasing,

² Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee Report into the Draft Budget 2014/15, www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/70879.aspx. Table 3 which shows the budget plus changes for the three years between 2013-14 – 2015-16 in real terms. The tables indicate a planned decline in "College Resource", "Higher Education Resource" and "Youth Employability and Skills."

³ Scottish Government Press Release, Workforce Blueprint Published, <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Workforce-blueprint-published-d1e.aspx>

investment in these areas is vitally important for developing Scotland's future workforce, and indeed, Scotland's future exporters.

Therefore, we would encourage the Committee to consider the link between the current youth employability and skills agenda, informed most recently by the final report from the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, and the current budget proposals focused on boosting exports. We believe that this link could be significant strengthened by diverting more resources into the areas noted above presently outlined for reductions.

The Scottish Youth Parliament also notes that the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's report on the 2014/15 Draft Budget asks for a number of updates from the Scottish Government and the Equal Opportunities Committee in relation to the involvement of women and the ethnic minority community in SME start up and in issues of equal access to policies and programmes in Skills Development Scotland.⁴

We believe that the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee should consider seeking assurances about young people in relation to these matters, given the importance that has been placed on the youth employment and skills development agenda.

The Scottish Youth Parliament would welcome the opportunity to provide the Committee with further written evidence or oral evidence in relation to the concerns we have outlined.

⁴ Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, Report on the draft Budget 2014-15 to the Finance Committee, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/70879.aspx> para 9-25