

Murdo Fraser MSP

Welcome to my e-Newsletter



Dear colleague,

February is budget season at Holyrood, and I spoke in the first debate on the Budget Bill which is going through the various Parliamentary stages.

It is fair to say that this SNP-Green budget has attracted a more hostile reaction than any I can recall in the past. Everyone has lined up to criticise it, the business community, local authorities, third sector organisations, the universities and colleges, and housing campaigners.

Despite the overall budget being at record levels, what the SNP have delivered is cuts across all key services. There has been a furious reaction from COSLA, the body that represents local government, to the funding settlement, which is likely to see local services being slashed once again. Locally we will see public toilets, leisure facilities and libraries all being closed as a result.

At the same time, the tax differential between Scotland and the rest of the UK is set to increase further, leading to warnings from many in business that this will make Scotland an even less attractive place to invest. Ultimately, unless we can focus on growing the economy, we will never be able to generate the tax revenues we need to fund our vital public services.

There are many other current issues ongoing and I hope that this newsletter will give you an update on where things stand in relation to these. As ever, please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss any issue.

Kind regards,
Murdo



Murdo calls on Perth and Kinross Council to build international size ice rink in Perth

Murdo is pushing for an international size ice rink to be built in Perth as part of the local authority's PH2O plan.

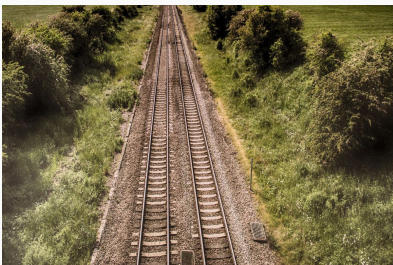
This follows a meeting of Perth and Kinross Councillors, when they considered a paper which included proposals for the future of the Dewar's Centre, Perth Leisure Pool and the Bell's Sports Centre. The council plan to close all three venues and replace them with the single-site PH2O project.

Although the Council has promised they will include ice rink and swimming provision in the plan, they rejected the Scottish Conservative Councillors' amendments which asked for an international size ice rink to be built in Perth – one that is capable of holding national competitions.

Perth and Kinross Council's original plan did not include ice rink provision.

Murdo said: "The Leader of Perth and Kinross Council promised he would ask for ice rink provision to be included in their PH20 plan but sadly the SNP-run Council have plumped for an ice rink that will not be suitable for international competitions. Their proposals also mean that all types of swimmers – those training and those using the pool for fun – will be sharing the same space in the proposed new pool at the venue.

"This is not the answer we and many local residents were looking for after the Council's original plan was met with opposition from many quarters, including from the Scottish Conservatives. As usual, we see an SNP-run Council go for an option that is totally unsatisfactory on many levels."



Murdo says ScotRail must keep to promise to have better rail service for Fife commuters

Following talks with ScotRail at a Scottish Parliamentary briefing, Murdo was told by ScotRail officials that a new, improved service will be in place in the Kingdom in the summer, offering more carriages and ending the short-running of trains.

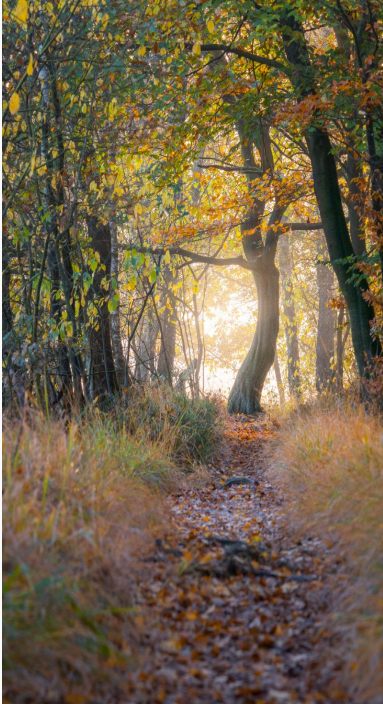
Murdo said: “The present rail service to rail commuters in Fife who are travelling into Edinburgh is an absolute shambles. I have personal experience of it myself.

“I recently waited for a train due to arrive at Inverkeithing but it was 10 minutes late, and when it did arrive the guard told the commuters they couldn’t get on as there were already too many people. Then when the next train came, which was also late, we were squeezed in like sardines when we boarded it.

“This has happened to me before and is a common complaint I hear from irate constituents.

“It is high time this outdated practice of using just two or three carriages came to an end and the long-suffering rail commuters in Fife finally get the better service that they deserve. It is time to stop this chaos.”

Murdo continued: “From my recent discussions with ScotRail they acknowledged that there has been a problem in Fife using ‘short trains.’ ScotRail said they are addressing this issue and have promised that there will be an improvement for Fife rail commuters in the summer, with more carriages being used. I will be keeping a very close eye on this to make sure we see the end of ‘short trains.’”



Murdo delighted that Perthshire was named most welcoming region in the world by online travel site

Murdo has lodged a Motion at the Scottish Parliament, following the announcement.

He said: “This is a fantastic achievement and I am delighted that Perthshire was named the most welcoming region in the world by online holiday website Booking.com. It was notable that the holiday website highlighted the region’s 200,000 acres of woodlands and ‘charming rivers and waterfalls’ as part of its appeal.

“To those of us who live in Perthshire, we are well aware of the regions’ beauty and understand why it is so popular to visitors and tourists. We have an abundance of factors that attract people to visit Perthshire, ranging from its spectacular scenery to its hospitality, to its tourist attractions such as The Black Watch Castle and Museum and its many distilleries.

“This amazing accolade only really sinks in when you see the other regions in the world that were named below Perthshire in this table, such as Penghu in Taiwan, Boyaca in Colombia, Trentino in Italy and Otago in New Zealand.”

Booking.com looked at more than 309 million verified customer reviews focusing on consistently excellent service and hospitality.



Murdo says residents are being let down by 'painfully slow' roll out of R100 broadband programme

Murdo was commenting following data provided to the Scottish Conservatives through Freedom of Information which showed that as of November 30, 2023, a total of 17,751 properties in Mid Scotland and Fife are expected to benefit through both the R100 and North contracts.

However, the SNP Government has confirmed that to date, only 5,160 of those connections have been delivered.

Murdo said: “The data provided by the SNP Government reveals that they are well behind with their roll-out of their superfast broadband in Mid Scotland and Fife.

“A large part of my mail inbox comes from constituents who either have poor broadband or are waiting on broadband being installed, so these figures tie in with that.

Murdo continued: “It really is not good enough that many residents living in Mid Scotland and Fife still experience a poor broadband service. This data shows the SNP Government have let these residents down with their painfully slow roll-out of their flagship R100 broadband programme.

“With more and more people and businesses working from home these days, it is vital that they have access to superfast broadband – broadband that they can rely on. It is blatantly obvious that the SNP’s R100 broadband programme will take years to complete, which is not good enough.”



Murdo welcomes UK Government funding for pavilion at Perthshire park

Murdo has welcomed the award of more than half a million pounds in funding for Blairgowrie and Rattray Community Football Trust from the UK Government.

It has been announced that £510,000 will go towards a new pavilion at Davie Park in Rattray, Blairgowrie.

Forty projects are to receive funding that will go towards facilities such as changing rooms and pavilions and state of the art 3G artificial grass pitches. Work is already underway on 30 of these projects, with the remaining 10 to commence shortly.

Murdo said: "The news that the UK Government Grassroots Sports fund has provided £510,000 towards the cost of building a new changing pavilion at Davie Park, Rattray, is fantastic. It will be warmly welcomed by everyone involved with Blairgowrie and Rattray Community Football Trust and local residents as well."