

BRIEFING PAPER

Thursday 9th February 2012

The Budget (Scotland) Bill

The Scottish Parliament passed the Budget (Scotland) Bill on Wednesday 8th February 2012. The Bill, introduced by John Swinney MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, was backed by 72 members of the Scottish Parliament and rejected by 50.

The Scottish Government has pledged additional funding to cover aspects of housing, digital infrastructure and transport. Specific provisions include:

- An additional £97m over 4 years to assist with the provision of new supply affordable housing. The Scottish Government has pledged to build 30,000 affordable homes during the life of this Parliament and is 'on track' to meet this target.
- An additional £68m to support the commitment to the roll out of 'next generation' broadband throughout Scotland by 2020. The Government intends that 85% - 95% of the country will be upgraded by 2015, with an uplift in service provided to the remainder. The Cabinet Secretary pledged that investment in broadband would focus on areas where it would be *"uneconomic to deliver without subsidy"*.
- The Scottish Government is taking a strong partnership approach with Local Authorities. As a result an additional £28m has been given to the rural affairs portfolio to assist with the delivery of high speed broadband. £40m has also been pledged to Local Authorities to primarily support the rural network.
- £72m funding for key road projects throughout Scotland, including design works for dualling the A9. An additional £13m over three years has also been provided for sustainable travel which will focus on the country's cycling and walking infrastructure.
- £31.4m additional funding to support the college sector and £8m for the Funding Council to help colleges deliver the Scottish Government's 'Opportunities for All' commitments. Continuation of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was also guaranteed. Last week £5m was allocated to support employability initiatives through the college sector.
- £20m of capital funding for the Scottish Prison Service which will be *"targeted towards the needs of Scotland's female prison population"*.