

News from the Scottish Labour Party in the Highlands and Islands

13 June 2008

MSP promises action for Wick High School

Highlands and Islands Labour MSPs Peter Peacock, Rhoda Grant and David Stewart are asking the Scottish Government when the first brick will be laid for a new Wick High School.

During a debate in the Scottish Parliament this morning over the cuts in the education system the SNP's depute Convener of Education, Rob Gibson said that his party's Scottish Future's Trust could "provide a way forward for" the school.

"What Rob Gibson has said is completely at odds with what SNP Ministers have been saying as it is clear the Scottish Futures Trust contains not a single penny of finance.

"However I am delighted that Mr Gibson has made this commitment in Parliament.

"I am sure the pupils, staff, parents and Education officials at Highland Council will look forward to hearing his detailed plans for when and how they will get the finance for the new school," said David Stewart.

"This is a remarkable statement given that the SNP has completely stalled all school capital programme spending for over a year while they tried to salvage their finance policy. It would have been far easier if they had just accepted a tried and tested way of delivering schools efficiently, such as we have seen in Dingwall and Portree in recent weeks.

"I would urge him to set out the detailed timetable for the new school, when it will start and when the first pupil will sit in the new school.

"I will be checking on progress and hope this is not just another empty promise waiting to be broken."

Labour MSPs were also outraged that the minority SNP government today dismissed parents and teacher concerns over cuts to their school budgets as scaremongering.

"Highland wide we are seeing teaching numbers being cut back, class sizes rising, support staff not being replaced and head teachers local budgets being cut.

"Add to this the plans to cut back on janitors and cleaning and we are seeing a pretty sorry situation for the new term," said Mr Stewart .

"As part of our CutsWatch campaign in the Highlands we have heard concerns from schools across the area including Nairn, Dingwall, Grantown on Spey, Ullapool, and Brora.

"Parents fear for their schools' capability to cope under tighter and tighter budgets and they are not scaremongering.

"The situation country wide is such a mess that the main teaching union last week authorised teacher protests over the widespread cuts affecting schools across Scotland.

"The Government must take responsibility in resolving these issues instead of sticking their heads in the sand."

Ends

web links :

Peter Peacock : www.peterpeacock.org.uk

Rhoda Grant : www.rhodagrants.org.uk

David Stewart : www.davidstewart.org.uk

Highlands and Islands Labour : www.handilabour.org.uk