



## Rhoda Grant

Scottish Labour MSP for the Highlands and Islands

12 March 2008

## HighlandCutsWatch launched

Highland Labour MSPs Peter Peacock, Rhoda Grant and David Stewart are launching a HighlandCutsWatch website as part of their campaign against the Highland Council cuts in vital public services.

The MSPs have created the website – [www.highlandcutswatch.org.uk](http://www.highlandcutswatch.org.uk) - to allow Highland council tax payers to monitor the cuts to their services as a result of the Highland Council budget.

Rhoda Grant said,

"Education is to be the focus of the first site and it will provide parents with information about the cuts and a means for people to register their interest and report how the cuts are affecting them.

"After years of building up education services and seeing class sizes fall at key stages of school, we are seeing all that progress beginning to be put into reverse.

"It is becoming very clear that teachers jobs are to go and many of the most experienced teachers are to be paid off and newly qualified younger teachers employed because they cost less.

"We will see an increase in posts frozen and cuts in visiting teachers and specialists support to school.

"As if that were not bad enough, the Council is determined to reduce pre-school spending, cut the number of janitors and school cleaners and raise the price of a school meal.

"And it is all so unnecessary.

"At the same time as vital services are cut and jobs are lost, the Council is banking a cash stash of £17 million. A small proportion of that would keep all our education services intact."

The MSPs have written to every parent council in the Highlands about the cuts to school budgets and to alert them to the EducationCutsWatch web site.

The site not only gives information, it links to an e-petition which parents, grandparents and any other concerned individuals can sign.

Rhoda Grant concluded:

"The Council hoped to get all the bad news out over a few days around their budget decisions, but the effects of these cuts will last all year.

"The site allows us to keep on top of monitoring the Council and bringing maximum pressure to bear to reverse their damaging decisions.

"My colleagues and I will be working with our Labour Councillor colleagues on the Council who tried to stop the cuts."

Councillor Jimmy Gray leader of the Labour Group on Highland Council welcomed the launch of the sites.

He said:

"This will help us monitor this short-sighted and unambitious SNP Independent Council and highlight the decisions the Council has made.

"If everyone with a concern demonstrates that concern it becomes difficult for the Council to continue with their public service cuts agenda.

"I encourage people to visit the site, keep up to date with the full effect of what the Council are up to and register their protest."

ENDS

Rhoda Grant's website : [www.rhodagrants.org.uk](http://www.rhodagrants.org.uk)

HighlandCutsWatch : [www.highlandcutswatch.org.uk](http://www.highlandcutswatch.org.uk)

EducationCutsWatch : [www.educationcutswatch.org.uk](http://www.educationcutswatch.org.uk)

Highlands and Islands Labour : [www.handilabour.org.uk](http://www.handilabour.org.uk)