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Peter Peacock Scottish Labour Regional MSP for the Highlands and Islands

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Failure to Invest in Inverness

Peter Peacock Highlands and Islands MSP fears the future of investment in the City of Inverness is in danger by the scrapping of the dedicated Cities Growth Fund.

In a letter to Mr Peacock, Highland Council Convenor Sandy Park has confirmed that the authority has not set aside any dedicated funds for Inverness to continue the Fund.

The cash injection was set up in 2003 by Labour Ministers and asked each of the Scottish Cities to create a 10 year investment plan - a City Vision. The Inverness City Vision was awarded £5.949 million pounds for the first five years.

Peter Peacock said, "Inverness has greatly benefited as a result of the money from this fund. Confirmation from the Convenor of the SNP/Independent run Administration the equivalent of £1million a year will no longer be guaranteed to Inverness is a worrying and retrograde step and shows a lack of ambition by the Council to guarantee the continuing improvement of Inverness as the regional capital."

"I am very surprised the Provost of Inverness, as a leading member of the SNP administration in the Council, did not secure a guarantee of this funding during the budget process. He must be seen now to stand up for Inverness.

"The deal the Council has signed up to with the Scottish Government continues to make the cash Labour gave available, the key challenge to the council now is to make sure they continue to spend it in Inverness.

"That is a test local residents and businesses will be looking to see met.

"Inverness must not lose out by this cash being diverted elsewhere when its purpose was to specifically help the city."

Inverness Councillor Jimmy Gray commented: "Inverness was recognised as a City Region and so it is particularly vulnerable and in need of support to ensure that vital infrastructure projects can be adequately financed to benefit the city and the outlying areas."

"It would be ironic that at the same time as we looking at businesses contributing more funding to city centre improvement projects by the new Business Improvement District we were to lose up to a £1million a year from the council."

Projects which have been made possible by the Fund include many city centre environmental improvements, the Ness Islands and improvements in Merkinch.

End

Website link : www.peterpeacock.org.uk