

## Reform Scotland

### Daily Political Newspaper Summary: 14 July 2010

All newspaper references refer to Scottish editions. Where there is a link to a newspaper's website, the relevant page reference is blue and underlined.

In addition to the newspaper stories outlined below, further news coverage can be found online at [BBC News Scotland](#), [STV News](#) and [Sky News](#).

## Politics

**Fiscal responsibility:** A think tank today claimed devolution had failed to address Scotland's social and economic problems and said new powers for Holyrood were not the answer. Policy Exchange argued Scotland already had enough powers, but had failed to use them in the right way. It said the Calman Commission proposals should be implemented because they "have the merit of emphasising Scotland's existing powers rather than extending them significantly" - but there should then be a "generational truce" on constitutional matters. ([Scotsman](#), Telegraph page 1, Peter Jones comments in the Scotsman [page 29](#), Neil O'Brien comments in the Telegraph [page 20](#) )

**Lockerbie:** Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed al Megrahi, the Libyan who was freed early from prison last August because he was expected to die within three months, has failed to respond to chemotherapy. According to the latest bulletin about his condition, all treatment for prostate cancer has stopped and he is now receiving only palliative care. Doctors are also said to be concerned that he is struggling to come to terms with his prognosis. East Renfrewshire Council and the Scottish Government is sent a monthly report on Mr Megrahi's progress but there has been growing scepticism about the various medical views involved because the Libyan has survived for 11 months rather than three. (Herald [page 6](#))

**Benefits:** George Osborne will come under pressure to adopt a more radical approach to his overhaul of the economy after the OECD warned that Britain needs to take a tougher stance on public sector pay, benefit claimants and inefficient education and health systems. The OECD, the Paris-based think tank, will tell the chancellor at a meeting tomorrow that while it supported austerity measures outlined in last month's budget, it would recommend stronger incentives to "make work pay" including tackling "high levels of disability benefit claimants". Osborne will also be told to scrap VAT exemptions on food and children's clothes to "increase the efficiency of the tax system" and raise funds for investment. (Guardian [page 23](#))

## Economy

**Research spending:** The SNP has been warned it is putting at risk Scotland's ability to emerge from recession, after a new report revealed that spending on research and development is lower per person than in the rest of the UK. Official statistics showed average spend was £344 per person north of the Border, compared with £418 in the UK as a whole, during 2008. The report also revealed the difference between Scotland and EU spending as a percentage of GDP has broadened, at a time when Scotland has pledged to narrow the gap. (Scotsman [page 1](#))

**VAT increase:** VAT is set to rise to 20 per cent from January after the UK coalition Government saw off an attempt in the Commons to thwart the hike last night. MPs voted 321 to 246. It is estimated the increase will cost every household in Britain £400 per year. (Scotsman page 2, Herald page 1)

## Justice

**Recruitment freeze:** Scotland's biggest police force has imposed an instant recruitment freeze as concerns grow over a spending squeeze. Strathclyde Police said the move was due to uncertainty over public sector budgets, as the funding crisis for frontline services

continues to grip Scotland. The decision means that a planned intake of 100 probationary officers to the Scottish Police College between August and October will not now go ahead. (Scotsman [page 12](#), Herald [page 11](#), Times page 15, Telegraph [page 7](#))

## Transport

**Edinburgh airport:** A controversial £1 drop-off charge at Scotland's busiest airport has suffered a major blow with ministers joining the mounting opposition to the plan according to The Scotsman. The Scottish Government said Edinburgh airport's proposal for the country's first terminal drop-off fee "is not supported by ministers". Signalling a preference for persuading rather than punishing motorists to reduce their car use, it said this was best achieved by improving public transport. (Scotsman [page 1](#))

**Public transport:** Tory MSP Jackson Carlaw questioned the value of the £15 million being spent on the Scottish Government's Smarter Choices, Smarter Places initiative "to hector the public out of their cars". Mr Carlaw said that in one of seven projects taking place across the country, £1.36m was being spent sending a team of six personal travel advisers around 5,000 homes in Barrhead, East Renfrewshire, telling residents how to take advantage of public transport. Despite the efforts of the Go Barrhead team, a report evaluating the scheme showed it was failing to change attitudes. One conclusion said "the vast majority, 78%, of respondents strongly agree/agree that they like travelling by car and very few respondents disagree with this statement". (Herald [page 6](#))

## Local Government

**Spending cuts:** A Scots council has become the latest local authority to announce it is drawing up plans to save millions of pounds over the next three years. Dumfries and Galloway councillors will be asked to approve the cuts this week, starting with £21.8m for next year alone, with subsequent cuts raising the target to £36.6m in 2012-13 then £51.4m the following year. The cuts could lead to significant job losses in the area and the figures could even be revised upwards when the Scottish Government announces the local authority financial settlement at the end of the year. (Herald [page 7](#))

## Health

**Breast cancer research:** Scottish scientists have made an "exciting" breakthrough in the search for drugs to treat women with a common form of breast cancer. The team from Edinburgh University looked at the role of genetics in the type of the disease known as HER2 positive breast cancer, which affects 800 Scottish women and 9,000 UK women each year. For the first time, they were able to identify the key role played by a specific gene in helping the cancer to spread to other parts of the body. The findings will help in the development of new drugs which will benefit women whose cancers become resistant to other treatments. (Scotsman [page 4](#), Herald [page 1](#), Press and Journal [page 1](#))

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