



THE COMMISSION ON LOCAL TAX REFORM

WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF LOCAL TAXATION IN SCOTLAND?

Tell us what you think

We are an independent Commission that brings together expertise and experience from across Scotland to look at ways of delivering a fairer system of local taxation in Scotland. The Commission is chaired by Marco Biagi MSP, Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment, and Councillor David O'Neill, President of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. The Commission will present its findings in late 2015. You can find out more information about our membership and remit at www.localtaxcommission.scot

We want to begin our work by hearing your views and suggestions about what happens now, and what the future might be.

This call for evidence is only our first step in listening to you. Any information that you give us now will help start the debate, but we also want this to be an ongoing conversation. Over the next few months we will be setting up different ways in which you can meet us or tell us what you think. A good way to find out about these is by signing up to our newsletter by following @localtaxscot on Twitter.

How to Respond

We will use your information to develop our work, and so what you tell us is really important. For that reason, we want to hear from you by **22 JUNE 2015**, or sooner if you can. *However, let us know if you need more time.* Please also feel free to share any other information with us.



You can complete and return this form electronically to:
evidence@localtaxcommission.scot



You can also respond online via our website:
<http://localtaxcommission.scot/initial-call-for-evidence/>



Alternatively you can post a copy of this form to:

The Commission on Local Tax Reform
Verity House
19 Haymarket Yards
Edinburgh, EH12 5BH

If you are responding as an individual we would be grateful if you could also provide some other information at the end of this form. This will help us develop an overall picture of the information we have. This is optional and will be used anonymously and remain strictly confidential.

If you have any queries please contact info@localtaxcommission.scot or call us on 0131 474 9332.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

To help us make the most of your response, please tell us about yourself and how you want us to use the information you provide. There are some questions marked * and these must be answered by all respondents, unless you are directed past this question.

* I am responding as:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An individual
	<input type="checkbox"/> An organisation/group
Name of Organisation (if appropriate)	
Forename	Alan
Surname	Arnott
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone	
Email	
Do you consider yourself or your organisation as from or representing?	
<input type="checkbox"/> a rural area	<input type="checkbox"/> an urban area
<input type="checkbox"/> an area with both urban and rural parts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> don't know / not applicable
Would you be happy to be approached by the Commission for further discussion about your submission?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If you are responding as an individual:	
* Do you agree to your response being made available to the public on the Commission's web site?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
* If you have agreed to your response being made available to the public, please tell us if we may also make your name and address available. (Please select one option only)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, make my response, name and address all available	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address	
<i>If you are responding as an individual we would be grateful if you could provide some additional information at the end of this form. This is absolutely optional but will help us get an overall picture of the information we receive.</i>	
If you are responding as a group or organisation:	
* The name and address of your organisation will be made public on the Commission's web site. Are you content for your response to also be made available?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Which of the following best describes your organisation? (Please select one option only)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Group	<input type="checkbox"/> A business
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> A government department or agency
<input type="checkbox"/> Other public sector organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> A social enterprise
<input type="checkbox"/> Third Sector organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional body	
Short description of the main purpose of your organisation:	

Tell us what you think

We have not provided a long list of questions, but we do want to hear what you have to say about some themes. Please respond to as few or as many as you wish. If you would prefer to send us other information, please feel free to do so. However, it would be helpful to keep your response to no more than eight pages.

If you are able to, please provide evidence or examples in support of what you say. This will help us explore your ideas further.

1. SCOTLAND'S CURRENT SYSTEM OF COUNCIL TAX

To what extent does the current system of council tax deliver a fair and effective system of local taxation in Scotland? Are there any features of the current system that you wish to see retained or changed?

You may wish to illustrate your answer with examples from your own experience.

Any tax based on property is bound to be unfair.

While there are schemes which allow for reductions in charges, these are clumsy and generally require the submission of the claimant to intrusive questioning and complex forms, which not all are comfortable or able to handle.

Having said that, an element of tax based on assets is acceptable.

2. REFORM OF LOCAL TAXATION

Are there alternatives to the current system of council tax that you think would help to reform local taxation in Scotland? What are the main features of these, and why do you think they would deliver improvement?

Do you have any examples of why this is the case?

It is impossible to discuss council tax without discussing the form of governance. At present, there is a disconnect between the delivery of services and the collection of money to pay for them. It is, therefore, impossible for a voter to assess properly how effectively local government is working. Neither is it clear which part of government is responsible for which service. This makes the current system profoundly undemocratic.

Those politicians responsible for spending public money should be clearly and openly the ones who are collecting it.

Governance needs to be remodelled, as Campbell Christie's report clearly stated, to be service-based. The organizational structures need to reflect this, which at present they do not.

Current council tax does not meet the requirements for a fair tax.

I do not propose that all local spending should be served by a local income tax but some should. Business need to pay their share too. Also, there is a crying need for land reform, so that ownership of land has an annual cost.

The current system of block grant from central government needs to cease. Central taxation needs to be cut, so that local taxation can raise the necessary funds for local spending.

3. LOCAL PRIORITIES

How well do you think that communities' local priorities are accounted for in the way that local taxation operates at the moment? If there is room for improvement, how should things change?

Do you have any ideas or examples about how this could improve people's lives?

Because local government is so opaque, it is impossible to judge how local priorities are currently accounted for.

First, local governance is too remote, secondly it is unresponsive and slow to adapt.

There is justification for more, smaller organizations, who raise their own funds and have a much more interactive role with their community, who have more power to act, along with the associated visible fiscal responsibility.

Politics must change to accommodate the new mechanisms that are available for consultation and decision making. We need less bureaucracy and more effective means of communication.

What will work for a city will not work for a rural community.

For example, roads should all be looked after by a single authority, centrally funded.

Education needs to be much more local than currently.

While there may be several, separate levels of organization in a new structure, all collection could be shared using one or more providers. This would save considerable costs and make payment much easier.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

We would like to keep the conversation going. Please tell us about any events, networks or other ways in which we could help achieve this.

A Constitutional Convention is needed to decide on the future format of governance. Neither the Scottish Parliament nor existing local authorities can be trusted to achieve the necessary changes. They are too close to the existing framework and there is considerable conflict of interest. Clearly, their expertise needs to be heard but they are not in a position to dictate what should be done.

A wide consultation should be undertaken, so that innovative ideas can be discussed. There are many out there with thoughts, some interesting, some apparently outlandish, but they all need to be heard.

It is not about getting it right first time. We cannot foretell the future, so we must be prepared to have further changes as time goes by.

The overarching issue is the vested interests in the existing structures, from Westminster down. Power needs to be released from the centre and passed down to the lowest level that it can function. It will not be easy to wrest these powers from the top.

We also need to introduce much more science into decision making. We suffer too many outrageous costs caused by grandiose schemes that are ill planned and poorly executed. While many of these are formulated at Westminster, local government is not beyond reproach.

Thank you for your submission. If you have any queries about the Call for Evidence please contact us at:

19 Haymarket Yards
Edinburgh EH12 5BH
0131 474 9200
email: info@localtaxcommission.scot
twitter: [@localtaxscot](https://twitter.com/localtaxscot)

This document is available, on request, in easy to read, audio and large print formats, and in community languages. Please contact:

Aby otrzymać niniejszy dokument w innej wersji językowej, na kasecie lub w wersji z powiększonym drukiem, prosimy o kontakt:

اس دستاویز کی مزید کاپیاں آڈیو کیسٹ پر اور بڑے حروف کی چھپائی میں اور کیوٹی کی زبانوں میں طلب کیے جانے پر دستیاب ہیں، برائے مہربانی اس پتے پر رابطہ کریں:

এই ডকুমেন্ট-এর (দলিল) অভিন্নতা কপি, অডিও এবং বড় ছাপার অক্ষর আকারে এবং সম্প্রদায়ের ভাষায় অনুরোধের মাধ্যমে পাওয়া যাবে, অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন:

Gheibhear lethbhreacan a bharrachd ann an cruth ris an èistear, ann an clò mòr agus ann an cànan coimhearsnachd. Cuir fios gu:

इस दस्तावेज़/कागज़ात की और प्रतियाँ, माँगे जाने पर, ऑडियो टेप पर और बड़े अक्षरों में तथा कम्यूनिटी भाषाओं में मिल सकती हैं, कृपया संपर्क करें:

ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼/ਕਾਗਜ਼ਾਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਹੋਰ ਕਾਪੀਆਂ, ਮੰਗੇ ਜਾਣ 'ਤੇ, ਅਓਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ ਉੱਪਰ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਕੰਮਿਊਨਿਟੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ, ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ:

此文件有更多備份，如果需要，語音版本和大字體版本及少數種族語言版本也可提供，請聯絡：

يمكن أن تطلب النسخ الأخرى من هذا المستند كالتسجيل الصوتي والخط الكبير ونسخ بلغات أخرى، يرجى الإتصال على:

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