

Scotland has to invest in taxation

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Reports [that Scotland has not invested sufficiently in the tax systems](#) it will have to use to exercise the new powers it has been granted are worrying.

Any state has to take the issue of taxation seriously. The ability to tax is the ultimate definition of statehood. The failure to tax fairly is a clear sign of state failure. This is why the tax gap is so significant. Failed tax administration is not just about revenue lost, important as that is; it is at least as much about a failure of competence and even more significantly, a failure to commit to uphold the rule of law and to deliver the social justice that is one of the fundamental reasons for tax in the first place.

In that case the suggestion that Scotland has not yet created the systems for the taxes for which it will definitely be responsible next year is worrying.

The further suggestion that there is just one key person responsible for developing systems for devolved income tax, if true, is even more worrying.

And the suggestion that as yet no clear why of deciding who might be subject to a Scottish income tax shows a weakness at the heart of the potential system that would undermine everything that devolved government should stand for. If you do not know who you are governing then quite clearly you're not in charge, and there is no greater accusation you can make against a government than that.

Scotland aspires to statehood and I have little doubt that the SNP has serious aspiration to raise the referendum issue again in the next parliament. Why else would Alex Salmond wish to go to Westminster? But all of that could be undermined by a failure to invest in tax systems now. Scotland has to get this right, and very soon.