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Sir,

Andrew Rawnsley is surely correct in suggesting (Comment 22nd March) that public services will have to bear their share of belt tightening.

When this happens it is essential that the cuts fall where they do not damage essential services but are directed at areas where real savings can easily be made. This will mean politicians accepting that some of their favourite schemes are a luxury we can no longer afford (if we ever could).

In the NHS the glaring example is the artificial separation into purchaser and provider in order to facilitate a market based system. The limited form of market introduced in the early 90's was shown to have doubled administrative costs. It is difficult to get figures on the additional financial burden of the much more complex structure now imposed but it must be enormous. In a recent series of meetings spokesmen for all three major parties declined to consider a change but unless they are prepared to alter their priorities we will have more cases like Stafford.

Scotland has already abandoned the market system, Wales and Northern Ireland are to do likewise. We in England must not be too proud to follow their example.

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