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6 Apr 2018



An urgent statement on the NHS Tayside scandal must be the first priority of the Scottish Parliament when it returns after the Easter recess, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The health board has been mired in financial difficulties, culminating in reports that charity cash was used for the day-to-day running of hospitals.

Today, chairman John Connell stood down amid "special measures" being implemented by the Scottish Government.

Now shadow health secretary Miles Briggs has demanded urgent action from his counterpart in the SNP government, Shona Robison.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"The actions from Shona Robison and the SNP which we have witnessed over the last 24 hours demonstrate a government which has lost control of our NHS and which has lost what remaining respect it had from NHS staff.

"NHS Tayside is not the only health board facing serious financial management issues.

"SNP ministers have presided over a situation where financial scrutiny of NHS Boards and the Integrated Joint Boards has been at best insufficient and at worse incompetent.

"After 11 years of Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP centralisation and mismanagement it will clearly now suit incompetent ministers to blame NHS senior management for the failings and financial difficulties which we have seen across the board.

"Perhaps it's time they started to look closer to home."

9 out of 10 bike thieves get away with it

5 Apr 2018



The overwhelming majority of bicycle thefts in Scotland go unsolved, new figures have shown.

Nearly 90 per cent of reports of a stolen pedal bike went without a culprit being found in the last year.

The figures obtained by the Scottish Conservatives revealed there were 5394 recorded crimes for bike thefts in the 10 months to January 31, the equivalent of 17 a day.

However, just 548 of these were recorded as “detected”, according to the Police Scotland data.

The number of thefts is on course to be significantly higher than 2016/17, when 5424 incidents were reported for the entire year.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said a new focus was required from the single force to improve clear-up rates of bicycle thefts.

There was also huge disparity in the solving rate across the country.

In Edinburgh, just one in every 23 cycle thefts were solved, compared to nearly 50 per cent in Fife.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“The stealing of pedal bikes may not be the most serious crime to come across the desk of police each day.

“But it’s serious none-the-less, and to see the overwhelming majority go undetected is extremely worrying.

“It sends out a terrible message that, if you decide to nick someone else’s bike, the chances are you’ll get away with it.

“In places like Edinburgh, there’s almost a cast-iron guarantee the police won’t catch you.

“Bicycle owners deserve better. We’re supposed to be encouraging healthy living and getting more people on two wheels is a key way of doing that.

“But if hundreds of pounds of worth of equipment is so easily stolen, with so little chance of it being recovered, that will harm that initiative.”

[Funding cut results in fewest ever attempts to quit smoking](#)

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- Funding cut results in fewest ever attempts to quit smoking

4 Apr 2018



The number of smokers who tried to kick the habit last year fell to its lowest since quit-attempt records began, as the SNP government also cut funding into a scheme to help.

According to official figures there were 59,767 attempts to stop smoking last year, half the rate of five years ago.

At the same time, cash from the Scottish Government into smoking cessation and related initiatives reduced to its lowest since 2010.

The £134,000 spent in 2016/17 compares to nearly £600,000 the year before.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said while fewer people than ever now smoke in Scotland, ministers could not afford to get complacent about the issue.

Lung cancer is one of the most common causes of death in Scotland, claiming the lives of 4000 people last year.

And rates among people from deprived areas are significantly higher than in wealthier parts.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“Scotland, like many other countries, has taken great strides in reducing smoking in recent years.

“But these figures show complacency is beginning to creep in.

“It’s clear that a significant reduction in funding for smoking cessation has coincided with a big fall in smokers who try to quit.

“It’s essential we don’t allow that to slip – quitting smoking is a very difficult thing to do and, when people want to do so, it’s important the NHS is on hand to support them.

“I hope the SNP government addresses this issue next year and places more

importance on smoking cessation than it is currently doing.

“It is important to see a renewed commitment from SNP ministers and I have written to ask for answers.”

[GDP figures confirm Scotland's growth is half of the UK's](#)

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- GDP figures confirm Scotland's growth is half of the UK's

4 Apr 2018



New growth figures have confirmed Scotland's economy only performed half as well as the UK's over the whole of 2017.

According to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) statistics, growth for Scotland was 0.3 per cent in the final quarter of last year.

That means, for the whole year, the economy grew at 0.8 per cent, compared to the UK figure of 1.7 per cent.

Construction declined again by 2.6 per cent in the last three months, the eight consecutive fall, while agriculture, forestry and fishing also reduced.

Shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said the SNP couldn't blame Brexit or Westminster for the poor performance, and only had itself to blame.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

“This is confirmation that Scotland's economy under the SNP is growing at less than half the rate of the UK economy as a whole.

“That damning statistic is all on the SNP, a party which has been in charge of Scotland's economy for more than a decade.

“The impact of this is fewer jobs, less investment and lower tax receipts – all of which mean public services suffer.

“The SNP cannot blame anyone else for this.

“It's not because of Brexit and not because of Westminster – it's been caused by the actions of a short-sighted, high-tax and anti-business SNP government.”

Kids as young as 8 referred for housebreaking

3 Apr 2018



Hundreds of children, some as young as eight, have been reported for housebreaking in the last three years.

Figures obtained by the Scottish Conservatives have revealed the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) have received 517 referrals since 2014/15 for under 18s.

Of those, 186 occurred last year, a figure that has remained much the same for the past three years.

At least one eight-year-old in both East Ayrshire and the Highlands was referred for breaking into someone's house, as well as at least three children aged nine and seven aged 10.

The local authority area with the most children reported for housebreaking was Glasgow, with 79 reports over three years, followed by Edinburgh with 65 and North Lanarkshire with 42.

The statistics, gathered through Freedom of Information, revealed 15 was the most common age for a youngster to be referred for housebreaking to the SCRA, with 208 instances over three years.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said it was essential work was done with those referred to ensure housebreaking wasn't an offence that would be repeated in later life.

In September, it was revealed by Scottish Government statistics that housebreaking has a police clear-up rate of just 22.5 per cent.

Last month, the Scottish Government outlined its intentions to increase the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland from eight to 12.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

"Being broken into and robbed is one of the most upsetting things that can happen to a household.

"For victims, it's irrelevant what age the perpetrators are, it remains terrifying and can leave a lasting impact.

"It's alarming that hundreds of children have been referred for this crime

across Scotland in recent years, and the trend isn't improving.

"We need to get in and ensure these youngsters are put on the right path, because once people start out on this road to a career in crime, it's extremely hard to get them off it.

"When children who haven't even reached their teens are being referred for this, questions really do have to be asked about the parents too.

"Housebreaking generally is a problem across Scotland, with an extremely poor clear-up rate.

"Having hundreds of under 18s contribute to this only makes things worse."