

# Now SNP-Green alliance plots council tax raid

1 Feb 2018



Nicola Sturgeon has refused to rule out the prospect of future tax hikes – this time in the form of a Green-inspired council tax raid.

At First Minister's Questions today, Ruth Davidson asked whether or not such increases were on the horizon in exchange for the Green Party helping through Scottish budgets.

The Scottish Conservative leader highlighted a statement made by Green "co-convenor" Patrick Harvie yesterday, in which he said he wanted "meaningful progress on local tax reform".

Translated, Ruth said, this meant the Greens were setting the scene for increases in council tax for hundreds of thousands of Scots.

And at today's exchange, Mr Harvie himself again stressed he wanted to see more action from the SNP government in hiking the amount paid by taxpayers into local government finances.

But instead of rejecting the idea, Nicola Sturgeon said the Scottish Conservatives were on the "wrong side of public opinion" on hiking tax.

## **Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:**

"The Greens got the SNP's budget through last year, and they got it through this year.

"Patrick Harvie has made it pretty clear his price for next year's budget will be hiking up council tax.

"Nicola Sturgeon had ample opportunity to rule this out, but refused.

"That will set alarm bells ringing in the homes of thousands of families right across the country.

"People in Scotland are already being charged more tax to buy a home, and more tax on their income.

"They should not have to accept the SNP-Green alliance raiding their council tax too."

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- Ruth addresses Brexit and SNP's weak economy in David Hume speech

30 Jan 2018



Ruth Davidson will this evening call for a positive approach to the challenges and opportunities thrown up by Brexit – and a renewed focus from the SNP government on delivering lasting economic growth in Scotland.

In her David Hume Institute Lecture, the Scottish Conservative leader says that UK and Scottish governments need to work together where possible to deliver Brexit and to boost Scottish jobs.

She also proposes some ideas to help boost Scotland for when Brexit takes place, such as a new environmental court based in Scotland and a new system of agricultural support to support Scotland's rural economy.

An environmental court would simplify the current system – offering people easier access to environmental justice similar to the current Scottish Land Court.

On a replacement for the Common Agricultural Policy after Brexit, Ruth calls for a more streamlined system which ensures funding is directed to farmers in less favoured areas in Scotland.

Ahead of tomorrow's budget debate, she also warns that increasing taxes on ordinary workers in Scotland – as supported by the SNP, Labour, Lib Dems and Greens – will only deter investment in Scotland leading to less, not more, money for vital public services.

## **On economic growth, she says:**

“In December, the Scottish Fiscal Commission predicted a growth rate of less than 1 per cent until 2021.

“To put that in some context, research has found this is literally the lowest projected growth rate in the developed world – lower than every other OECD, G20 and EU nation.

“If this does indeed play out, the impact on all of us will be enormous.

“To give a flavour – after the Fiscal Commission revised February's projected growth rates down in December, it reduced our expected income tax receipts over the next four years by fully £2 billion.

"In other words, thanks to lower than expected growth, that's £2 billion less going into fund schools and hospitals – just as the very moment that an ageing population pushes the cost of public services ever higher.

"I would suggest – to put it mildly – Brexit or no Brexit, hard or soft, we need to act with some urgency – because increasing prosperity is the single most effective way of improving people's lives."

**On Brexit, she says:**

"While it may not seem like it – especially this week – there will be life after Brexit.

"There is no excuse for inaction here in Scotland.

"As the Fraser of Allander Institute has noted: 'With any Brexit uncertainty affecting the UK as well, it's hard to argue that Scotland's relatively weaker performance can be explained by the outcome of the EU referendum.'

"With Brexit comes new choices – and we must start actively preparing the ground to take advantage of those choices where we can."

"More importantly, with the huge powers at the Scottish Government's disposal, we must capitalise on Scotland's strengths in research and innovation to deliver lasting economic growth.

"We must look to ourselves – and if all we hear from Scottish ministers here is a counsel of despair, we will miss the opportunities which are in our grasp.

"We must ask how we can contribute, not recriminate."

**On an environmental court, she says:**

"Brexit does provide a moment when we can make these changes – to ensure that power is held closer to people in Scotland and the UK."

"Right now, environmental justice in Scotland is utterly inefficient – with some cases heard in courts, some by ministers and others in the Court of Session."

"Creating a new Environmental Court would allow the judiciary to develop an expertise in environmental law and science, helping to ensure people can get redress where it's right to do so."

**On farmers' support, she says:**

"We can take this chance to simplify administration in Scotland – so we can be spared a repeat of the IT fiasco we've seen over recent years."

"And we need a system that takes into account our specific needs. The vast majority of land in Scotland is classed as less favoured area. In contrast, for example, to England where it is only 15 per cent.

“So we will be pushing for a system in Scotland that really targets support for low income farmers in some of our most remote communities.”

“That’s support which, in many cases, helps to ensure that rural communities in Scotland can continue to thrive and can retain young people living there.”

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## [Scotland on course for lowest growth in the developed world](#)

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- Scotland on course for lowest growth in the developed world

28 Jan 2018



A decade of SNP economic policy has led to the lowest growth in the developed world and the highest business taxes in Europe.

In addition, the SNP has categorically failed to meet their own economic targets.

In the week that budget discussions return to Holyrood, Scottish Conservative research shows that Scotland will have the lowest economic growth of all countries in the developed world in the next three years, falling from sixth worst in 2016.

Meanwhile, Scottish businesses and citizens are paying increasingly higher taxes.

Figures show that Scottish businesses pay business rates equivalent to 2 per cent of GDP, the highest in Europe.

Lastly, the SNP has failed to meet two key economic targets introduced in the SNP Economic Strategy in 2007.

The first was ‘to raise the GDP growth rate to the UK level by 2011’. This has now been reset to an indefinite target as Scotland has failed to match UK growth in 30 of the 42 quarters since they came to power.

The second target was ‘to match the GDP growth rate of the small independent EU countries by 2017.’ As of Q3 2017, Scottish growth was 3 per cent lower than in small EU countries, and the gap is increasing.

**Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:**

“These figures set the scene for the Scottish parliament debate on stage 1 of the budget this week.

“The simple fact is that despite ten years in power, the SNP has created a Scotland with high taxes and continuous low growth.

“To quote the independent Fraser of Allander Institute, such low trends in economic growth for Scotland have not been witnessed in 60 years.

“This clearly impacts on the amount of money available for schools, hospitals and roads.

“The SNP must concentrate on growing the Scottish economy.

“There can be no case for raising taxes while Scots are already paying so much and getting so little.”

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## [Matheson must resign after latest evidence of interference](#)

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- Matheson must resign after latest evidence of interference

28 Jan 2018



The Scottish Conservatives have called on Michael Matheson to resign after it was revealed that his department tried to interfere over the release of a Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) report.

E-mails published by the Sunday Post show that the Scottish Government tried to stop the publication of a damning PIRC investigation into SPA complaints.

It comes after evidence in the Scottish Parliament this week showed that Matheson had been instrumental in stopping Scotland’s most senior policeman returning to work, despite the SNP claiming otherwise.

**Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr MSP said:**

“These new revelations show that the SNP Government’s meddling in police matters is endemic, both at the SPA and now with the PIRC.

“Michael Matheson’s department has torn up the rule book that is supposed to protect the independence of our police service, and as such the Scottish public can no longer have confidence in him.

“Simply put, the best course of action would be for him to resign.

“It’s also clear that this issue goes beyond justice, with accusations also rife over the SNP’s tapping up of witnesses giving evidence on named person.

“Nicola Sturgeon’s government seems to think it can hector people in private in order to get its own way.

“It’s a disgrace.”

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## [‘Desperate’ SNP trying to spin its way out of flag changes](#)

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- ‘Desperate’ SNP trying to spin its way out of flag changes

24 Jan 2018



Nicola Sturgeon has been accused of desperation after claiming she didn’t want to remove the Union Flag from Scottish Government buildings – weeks after issuing instructions demanding exactly that.

It was reported this morning that the number of days the Union Flag will fly from government buildings across Scotland will be reduced from 15 to just one for 2018.

But in a “Donald Trump-style denial”, the First Minister took to Twitter late last night to claim the story was wrong, even though her own government’s guidance says otherwise.

In total, she’s tweeted 17 times on the issue in the last 12 hours.

Released on January 10, the instructions state the Union Flag should only be flown on Remembrance Day.

The previous year, the same guidance said it should be flown on a range of other occasions from a variety of official buildings, including on the Queen’s Birthday.

And it goes on to state: “The Saltire should be flown every day from Scottish Government buildings, except where indicated otherwise in the schedule.”

The Scottish Conservatives have told the SNP, if it is so concerned about the reports, to change the guidance back to the 2017 version, rescinding the

alterations made for this year.

And the party said the row suggested the nationalists were more interested in lowering Union Flags than raising standards in schools and hospitals.

**Scottish Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser said:**

“This is a desperate attempt by Nicola Sturgeon to spin her way out of trouble.

“The SNP is more interested in lowering Union Flags than raising standards in schools and hospitals.

“The First Minister’s Trump-style Twitter denial by candlelight last night does nothing to change the facts.

“The SNP issued a dictat on January 10 ordering Union Flags to be flown on one day and one day only.

“If Nicola Sturgeon is so insistent nothing will change then it’s quite straightforward – change the guidance back to what it was.

“This is classic nationalist behaviour, and nothing Nicola Sturgeon says can alter that.

“She always stresses her civic nationalism is nothing to do with flags and banners.

“The events of the last 24 hours prove otherwise.”