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- Export figures highlight importance of UK single market to Scotland

24 Jan 2018



Figures revealing Scottish trade in 2016 highlight the vital importance of the UK single market to business north of the border, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Scotland's trade with the UK single market continued to be almost four times more valuable than trade with EU countries.

Official statistics from the Scottish Government showed that 61 per cent of Scotland's trade is with the UK single market, while 17 per cent goes to other EU nations.

Trade with countries outwith the EU rose from £10 billion in 2015 to more than £17 billion the following year, accounting for 23 per cent of Scotland's trade.

Shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said that particular improvement showed there were opportunities for Scotland in the context of Brexit.

However, overall trading volumes for Scotland in 2016 declined by five per cent.

These trade figures are the latest indication of Scotland's economy failing under the SNP.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

"These figures confirm that far and away our most important market is the rest of the UK.

"Scotland's priority must therefore be to deepen our trading partnership within the UK single market to ensure we all benefit.

"The SNP is so obsessed with Brexit it is in danger of ignoring the opportunities for growth offered by our own internal marketplace.

"And with exports to the rest of the world on the rise, the SNP would do well to realise the decision to leave the EU offers as many opportunities as it does challenges.

“The overall decline in Scotland’s trade in 2016 is real cause for concern.

“After last week’s figures showing that Scotland’s economy grew by only 0.2 per cent, these trade figures are another indication that this anti-business SNP government is harming growth, jobs and our economy.”

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A major jobs fair for health workers in Scotland’s capital city has been snubbed by every one of the country’s 14 regional NHS boards.

The summit will take place in March and is described by organisation Health Sector Jobs as the largest one of its type in the country.

Despite that, only NHS 24 has agreed to attend, despite the staffing crisis hitting health boards across the country.

Organisers have now written to health secretary Shona Robison asking her to explain the widespread rejection.

In their letter, they state the lack of involvement “sends a clear message that Scotland is not interested in either recruiting or retaining healthcare professionals”.

The letter adds: “This year, as with the two previous years, healthcare professionals including hundreds of nurses, midwives and doctors working in Scotland’s strained health system will again ask us why there are no regional health boards in attendance.

“We will again listen to their criticism of your government as well as how recruiting and retaining nurses and doctors is simply not a priority for the majority of Scottish health boards.”

Last year, both nursing and consultancy vacancies reached record levels in Scotland’s NHS.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“It’s incredible, especially given the staffing crisis in Scotland’s NHS, that the SNP government isn’t taking this event seriously.

“If ministers really want to address the recruitment issue, the least they could do is ensure delegations are at this event from across the country.

“From failing to train enough nurses to ignoring demographic changes over many years, the SNP has been utterly negligent when it comes to stewardship of the NHS.

“And by failing to engage with events like this, patients and NHS staff will continue to suffer thanks to this nationalist government.”

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Deputy chief constable Iain Livingstone has told MSPs on the Justice Committee that “significant issues” with the BTP merger “will not be resolved by 1 April 2019”.

The issues identified by Mr Livingstone included officer terms and conditions, pensions, IT and pre-existing third party contracts.

He said work would continue after integration to resolve them, but when asked by shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr when the issues would be resolved, Mr Livingstone said: “I can’t answer that specifically.”

In response to questioning from Scottish Conservative MSP Maurice Corry, Mr Livingstone added: “This is not a merger of like with like. I can’t give you comfort we have resolved the issue.”

The new chair of the Scottish Police Authority Board, Susan Deacon, also confirmed they were not seeking to appoint a member to the board with experience of the railway industry, as was recommended in a recent report by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“Iain Livingstone has confirmed today what we all know – which is that the SNP’s reckless plan to merge British Transport Police with Police Scotland by next year won’t work and will cause further turmoil if it goes ahead.

“Tomorrow the Scottish Conservatives will put this issue to a vote, so the full parliament can have its say.

“It is time the merger was put on hold before any more damage is done.

“Police Scotland can’t be expected to manage this major overhaul when it is already in the middle of a leadership crisis.

“Nicola Sturgeon and Michael Matheson must listen for once.”

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23 Jan 2018



Pledges the SNP made on NHS paediatric facilities “simply can’t be trusted”, after health secretary Shona Robison attempted to defend the closure of children’s ward in Paisley.

The SNP government repeatedly promised not to close Ward 15 at the Royal Alexandra Hospital.

However, she confirmed to Holyrood today that those services will now move to the Sick Kids hospital in Glasgow, describing it as being in the “best interests” of children.

In May 2016, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said: “There are no proposals to close that particular ward. I believe in local services with access for local people.”

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said it was more evidence of the SNP neglecting paediatric care across the country.

He pointed to similar closures at St John’s Hospital in Livingston in recent months.

And in Edinburgh, the building of a replacement Sick Kids hospital is now more than five years late.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“It seems Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP government forgot the promises made to the public just before the 2016 election.

“There are now questions as to whether the public was misled just before that vote on a key election pledge.

“It’s more evidence that the SNP simply can’t be trusted when it comes to maintaining children’s hospital facilities.

“As well as the closure of the ward at the Royal Alexandra, there are ongoing issues with the paediatric inpatient ward at St John’s, and ridiculous delays to the new Sick Kids in Edinburgh.

“Patients cannot trust a word this SNP government says on the NHS.”

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18 Jan 2018



The row over Scotland’s justice secretary intervening to stop the country’s top policeman returning to work is evidence of the SNP’s “secret Scotland”, Ruth Davidson has said.

Michael Matheson is under pressure over a meeting he held with the Scottish Police Authority about the future of chief constable Phil Gormley.

Following that meeting, the SPA opted not to reinstate Mr Gormley, and the justice secretary said he would make the minutes of the meeting available to show the public how that sudden decision had been reached.

The SNP government then claimed no minutes were ever taken.

Today, the Scottish Conservative leader raised the issue at First Minister’s Questions, adding that a change in the law was required to ensure there was more transparency surrounding the appointment of top police chiefs.

However, Nicola Sturgeon defended Mr Matheson's conduct, saying he'd "acted entirely appropriately".

The Scottish Conservatives have also published a dossier setting out the timeline of the SNP's police leadership crisis.

The document asks whether or not the justice secretary has acted lawfully over the Phil Gormley fiasco, and 20 questions he must now answer on the issue.

It also exposes eight times he claimed he couldn't intervene in disciplinary matters, even though he did exactly that in the case of the chief constable.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"This fiasco exposes the SNP's secret Scotland, and it stinks.

"The justice secretary has taken a massive decision to intervene in order to stop the head of Scotland's police force returning to work.

"But, despite saying he'd be happy to share the details of this, it turns out no written record was ever taken.

"That is a shocking way to run government yet, at First Ministers' questions, Nicola Sturgeon said it was 'entirely appropriate'.

"Michael Matheson has repeatedly said he can't intervene in various disciplinary matters, including some high-profile cases at the end of last year.

"But in this case, an intervention most definitely did take place, but mysteriously the Scottish Government wants to keep its details secret.

"The SNP's single police force was meant to be the most transparent and accountable public body set up in Scotland.

"These revelations show precisely the opposite has happened."

To see a copy of the dossier and timeline of events, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/the-snps-police-leadership-crisis/>