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- Banks loan £100m extra to farmers amid CAP crisis

11 Sep 2017



Banks loaned an extra £100 million to farmers across Scotland last year, as businesses struggled to cope with the SNP's CAP payments crisis.

Official figures released today showed farm debt went up by five per cent from the previous year, a cash-terms rise of £113 million.

It means debt levels of £2.32 billion are now at their highest since records began in 1972, the Survey of Bank Advances to Scottish Agriculture confirmed.

It comes as the sector again faces challenges after the Scottish Government failed to process European payments on time.

Over the past two years, the rural community has been starved of hundreds of millions of pounds thanks to the botched IT system.

Shadow rural affairs secretary Peter Chapman said that fiasco, along with other challenges facing the industry, has forced more farming businesses to take out loans.

The statistics showed that the type of loans taken out by farmers were split roughly evenly between short and long-term liabilities.

Scottish Conservative rural affairs secretary Peter Chapman said:

“These figures show the financial state of farming businesses in Scotland has never been worse.

“Yet at a time you'd think the Scottish Government would step in to help, ministers have only made the situation worse.

“The SNP's catastrophic management of CAP payments starved the rural community of hundreds of millions of pounds.

“Only now are we beginning to see the financial impact of that on businesses right across the country.

“The SNP must address these figures urgently and set out what it intends to do to help this vital sector recover.

“If it fails, the whole country will pay the price.”

To see the full publication, visit:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00524261.pdf>

The SNP starved rural Scotland of hundreds of millions of pounds thanks to its CAP payments fiasco:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/05/snp-must-publish-secret-report-w-hich-blasts-cap-payment-chaos/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/05/snp-must-publish-secret-report-w-hich-blasts-cap-payment-chaos/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/07/snp-cap-slowdown-sees-1300-farmers-still-waiting-for-payments/>

[Decline in education standards and life expectancy to blame as Scotland slips down wellbeing league](#)

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- Decline in education standards and life expectancy to blame as Scotland slips down wellbeing league

11 Sep 2017



Scotland is falling down a global league table of wellbeing because of falling education standards and poor life expectancy, experts have warned.

A new index out today sees Scotland drop four places to 20th on a measure of social and economic wellbeing.

That's significantly behind the UK average, and means countries including South Korea, Austria, France and New Zealand are all performing better.

Economic expert John McLaren said: *“This fall was due to a worsening education performance, exacerbated by falling income levels associated with the decline in North Sea-related activity. Furthermore, Scotland’s very poor life expectancy performance failed to improve, in relative terms, over the decade.”*

In the 2006 measure, Scotland had a score of 2.13, which was the 16th best in

the world.

However, after a decade of the SNP in government, that score has now fallen to 1.98, just ahead of Slovenia in 21st place.

Scottish Conservative MSP Donald Cameron said:

“The evidence here could hardly be more stark.

“After a decade of SNP control, Scotland has tumbled down global measures of social and economic wellbeing.

“This is a damning indictment on policy areas the nationalists have had complete control over for 10 years, like education and health.

“The narrative we consistently hear from the SNP is how wonderful a place Scotland is to live.

“But now we can see, under SNP control, things are actually getting worse.

“Nicola Sturgeon cannot turn her fire on anyone else for this; the experts are clear that these matters are for the Scottish Government of the day to address.

“People will wonder what more evidence the First Minister needs to persuade her to get back to the day job.”

For more information, visit:

<http://scottishtrends.co.uk/index-of-social-and-economic-well-being-2006-2016>

[Sturgeon ‘up to her old tricks’ with devolution speech](#)

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- Sturgeon ‘up to her old tricks’ with devolution speech

11 Sep 2017



The First Minister has been accused of scaremongering following remarks made in what was supposed to be a speech celebrating 20 years of devolution.

Nicola Sturgeon said Holyrood was at risk from a “power grab” by the UK Government in the wake of Brexit, even though Westminster has consistently

said the parliament won't be diminished.

As part of the speech, she said: "On the very day we should be celebrating devolution, we are being called upon to defend it."

Her comments have been blasted by the Scottish Conservatives, who said the SNP cannot preach about "consensus" while threatening another referendum to break up Britain.

Just last week, the First Minister appeared happy to put the constitution to one side as she unveiled her Programme for Government.

But less than seven days on, the SNP's constitutional agenda has once again become clear.

Scottish Conservative MP Paul Masterton said:

"This is shameless scaremongering from Nicola Sturgeon, who seems to be up to her old constitutional tricks again.

"People in Scotland are sick to death of the First Minister using Brexit to manufacture more grievance.

"She cannot preach to others about consensus while she refuses to take the threat of another referendum off the table.

"The UK Government has made it perfectly clear, on numerous occasions, that the powers of the Scottish Parliament will not be diminished through this process.

"In fact, the opposite will be the case.

"It's less than a week since Nicola Sturgeon appeared before the Scottish Parliament promising to get back to the day job.

"But already she's back to what she and the SNP do best – stoking up manufactured trouble with the constitution."

[Tens of millions spent on soaring diabetes bill](#)

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- Tens of millions spent on soaring diabetes bill



The NHS bill for treating patients with diabetes rose again last year by millions of pounds, as Scotland continues to struggle with an obesity crisis.

New figures have revealed £93.4 million was spent prescribing drugs to treat diabetes in 2016/17, an increase of £4.5 million on the previous year.

More than 3.6 million items were handed out as more patients are diagnosed with the condition, the ISD Scotland statistics show.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said while obesity wasn't always the reason for someone to be diagnosed with diabetes, it was none the less an indication of an increasing problem.

Earlier this week, it emerged that one of Scotland's biggest health boards – NHS Lothian – was treating children as young as two for obesity-related conditions.

And recent official figures also suggested just 11 per cent of youngsters north of the border do the recommended levels of exercise and activity each week.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“People can develop diabetes for a number of reasons, and it would be wrong to suggest obesity lies at the root of every case.

“Nonetheless, diabetes is a well-known consequence of obesity, and if more people are seeking treatment for it, it would suggest that problem is increasing.

“This is fast-becoming one of Scotland's major public health crises.

“It affects people of all ages, and from all backgrounds, and we need to see more action from the Scottish Government in tackling this, while personal responsibility must also come into play.

“The increasing diabetes drugs bill and growing obesity levels again call in to question the SNP government's decision, breaking its own manifesto pledges, to scrap health checks for all men and women when they reach the age of 40.

“This is something we would review as part of a focus on preventative health measures.”

[Merger of British Transport Police and Police Scotland should be put on hold](#)

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- Merger of British Transport Police and Police Scotland should be put on hold

9 Sep 2017



The integration of British Transport Police with Police Scotland should be put on hold given the leadership vacuum in the national force, the Scottish Conservatives have said

It comes after the Chief Constable of Police Scotland, Phil Gormley, stepped aside on Friday while he contests allegations of gross misconduct.

The Scottish Police Authority is also without a permanent chair following the resignation of Andrew Flanagan in June.

Scottish Government Ministers previously rejected a call by opposition parties to push back the date for implementing the BTP merger with Police Scotland from spring 2019.

The Scottish Conservatives are now calling on the Scottish Government to think again, given the crisis in the force, and the leadership vacuum at the SPA.

Liam Kerr, Scottish Conservative justice spokesman said:

“Even before the latest crisis at Police Scotland, there were major question marks over why the takeover of British Transport Police was taking place. Now that the national force is facing such disruption, it would seem to be the height of recklessness to go ahead.

“The SNP Government has refused to listen to anyone over the BTP takeover. Nor has it ever given a good reason for it to go ahead. Surely now it must take heed. With Police Scotland in crisis, the sensible thing to do would be to put the entire business on hold.

“A failure to do so would only confirm that this SNP Government puts its own political ends before good decision-making.”

Police Scotland’s chief constable announced yesterday he was stepping aside <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-41201281>

The Scottish Conservatives have made repeated warnings about the BTP/Police Scotland merger

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/transport/plan-to-merge-btp-and-police-scotland-criticised-1-4224867>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/03/btp-outlines-extraordinary-risks-of-merging-force-with-police-scotland/>