

Supermarkets should create 'local produce' aisles

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- Supermarkets should create 'local produce' aisles

5 Jan 2019



Supermarkets should be encouraged to create specific shelves or aisles for produce generated in their local area, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

With the support of government, major retailers would be able to point customers to fresh food and drink made locally, supporting nearby smaller firms in the process.

The party's wellbeing and sport spokesman Brian Whittle said it would be a straightforward enough change for supermarkets to make, expanding options for customers and encouraging healthier consumption.

He said some shops already had specified aisles and sections for food from certain parts of the world, and that a "local produce" aisle could operate alongside those.

The plans will be included in future Scottish Conservative blueprints for boosting smaller firms and improving the health of the nation through healthier eating.

Scottish Conservative wellbeing and sport spokesman Brian Whittle said:

"Most major supermarkets have sections showcasing food from around the world, so there's no reason why this can't be replicated specifically for local produce.

"It would signpost people to where they can get food and drink made in their local area, which will be popular among those passionate about supporting small, local businesses.

"The relationship between major supermarkets and local firms hasn't always been great, but this presents an opportunity to improve that.

"And if shoppers aren't keen on this and want to continue as normal, they can just walk straight past.

"For smaller producers who might struggle to meet the demands of a nationwide contract, this would be a chance to build lasting relationships with major retailers.

“A local produce aisle would also give consumers the opportunity to support local firms without losing the convenience of being able to buy a wide range of products under one roof.

“We know Scots’ diets need to improve, and buying fresh, local produce is an important way of doing that.

“With some government support and the goodwill of major retailers, there’s no reason why this cannot become a reality.”

[Fresh NHS staffing crisis as consultant retirement surge looms](#)

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- Fresh NHS staffing crisis as consultant retirement surge looms

4 Jan 2019



Scotland’s hospitals could be set for a fresh staffing crisis, after a potential retirement boom of consultants was revealed.

According to latest figures, more than a fifth of consultants working for the NHS in Scotland are now aged 55 or above.

That’s a significant increase compared to previous years, with more than 100 consultants now working despite being over 65.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives showed those aged 55 and over, and therefore able to consider retirement, accounted for 21.34 per cent of the consultant workforce as of September 2018.

That compares to 20.23 per cent the year before, and just 18.68 per cent in 2014.

And in the 50-plus age group, the percentage rose from 37.15 per cent to 39.8 per cent in the space of five years.

It’s the latest grim forecast for the future of staffing within Scotland’s NHS.

In December, the Scottish Conservatives revealed the number of doctors in training was at a five-year low.

Around the same time, BMA Scotland expressed fears that the official vacancy

figure for consultants (set at 6.8 per cent) is more likely to be around 14 per cent.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“We’re going to have even more serious staffing issues in Scotland’s hospitals if the SNP government doesn’t take urgent action.

“We already know the numbers of doctors in training have fallen to a five-year low.

“Now we learn, at the other end of the spectrum, the consultant workforce is ageing at a considerable rate.

“Even in just a few years the number of consultants who’ll be considering retirement has risen, and now accounts for more than a fifth of that workforce.

“It’s another indictment of the SNP’s shambolic workforce planning, and patients and those workers left over will be the ones who suffer.”

[Hundreds of 999 calls to Scottish jails each year](#)

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3 Jan 2019



Ambulances have had to race to Scottish prisons on more than 2000 occasions over the past three years, new statistics have revealed.

Figures obtained by the Scottish Conservatives have shown paramedics responded to 999 calls from the country’s 15 jails and youth detention centres on 2049 occasions since 2016.

The research states 319 of these were dealt with as “immediate life-threatening” situations.

Barlinnie prison in Glasgow received the most call-outs, with 363 incidents in almost three years, followed by HMP Edinburgh with 300.

The troubled Polmont facility, which houses 16-21-year-old offenders, was forced to summon an ambulance on 88 occasions, including for 15 life-

threatening situations.

The prison has been under the spotlight following suicides there in recent times.

Scotland's only female facility, Cornton Vale, had 65 ambulance visits over the time period identified.

The Scottish Ambulance Service revealed that a total of 710 emergency calls were made in 2016, 803 in 2017 and 536 for roughly the first 10 months of last year.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

"Prisons need to be absolutely secure and safe environments for both inmates and staff.

"It would be unrealistic to expect there to be no incidents, but it's extremely worrying to discover that ambulances are having to attend 999 calls on such a regular basis.

"Many of these are considered life-threatening matters, so it's clear security needs to improve inside Scotland's jails.

"Paramedics are under enough pressure without having to make these trips into Scotland's prison estate.

"It's also of particular concern that so many emergency calls have come from Polmont, a youth facility which has not had its troubles to seek.

"I hope the SNP government can offer more support to the Scottish Prison Service to ensure there are far fewer incidents to which ambulances have to respond in future."

[Call to double fines for anti-social behaviour](#)

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2 Jan 2019



Police should have the power to issue stiffer fines for anti-social behaviour, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The party wants to create a two-tier system of the punishment, allowing officers to double the current penalty from £50 to £100 for the more serious offences.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said it would hand police more flexibility to deal with offences like vandalism and breach of the peace.

The increased on-the-spot fine would also dissuade some people from embarking on behaviour which causes misery for communities across Scotland, he added.

A two-tier system exists elsewhere in the UK, and police in Scotland are understood to be keen on mirroring that approach here.

The higher level of fixed penalty notice would be intended for offences who currently receive a £50 fine, not incidents deemed serious enough for the courts system.

Nearly 1000 anti-social behaviour reports are received by Police Scotland every day, ranging from noise disturbances to neighbour disputes.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“Doubling the fine handed out for the more serious anti-social behaviour offences would be relatively easy to do, and would give officers more flexibility in dealing with this problem.

“It means we can get tougher on the troublemakers who vandalise communities and intimidate their neighbours.

“This isn’t about allowing dangerous criminals to dodge court.

“But increased fines means more crime could be punished, delivering swift justice to low-level offenders who might otherwise be let off the hook altogether.

“It would be up to police when to impose this stiffer penalty but, from speaking to officers, we know they feel some of the more serious offending warrants a tougher punishment.”

[Revealed: Scotland sending even more waste abroad](#)

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- Revealed: Scotland sending even more waste abroad

28 Dec 2018



A record amount of waste has been exported from Scotland, harming the global environment and putting wildlife at risk, the Scottish Conservatives have warned.

New figures show more than 1.5 million tonnes of rubbish left the country in 2016, up from 1.3 million in the previous year.

Included in that is a record 806,000 tonnes of waste to the rest of the UK, on top of 680,000 tonnes to Europe.

And more than 70,000 tonnes of rubbish was exported even further outside the continent, where it can end up in rivers and seas.

The export figures, published by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), make up 14.4 per cent of the total waste produced in Scotland for 2016.

Even though the overall waste produced (10.79 million tonnes) decreased from 2015 (11.6 million), the rate of exports have gone up.

Scottish Conservative MSP Donald Cameron said:

“There’s clearly a major missed opportunity for Scotland here.

“If the rest of the UK, the EU, and even far-flung parts of the world can deal with our waste, why can’t we?

“It could provide jobs and further recycling and energy-generating opportunities, and ensure we’re wholly responsible for the waste we produce as a country.

“All political parties need to get their heads together and find a way to improve this situation.

“It’s simply unsustainable to continue washing our hands of millions of tonnes of waste each year.

“And what’s more, when this waste is exported beyond the continent, there’s a fairly good chance it ends up in rivers and seas.

“With all we know about the damage that’s being caused to the environment right now, it’s incumbent on all parties in the Scottish Parliament to find a solution here.”