

[Scotland's devolved benefits bill to soar by £68m](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Scotland's devolved benefits bill to soar by £68m

1 Jun 2018



Planned spending on welfare in Scotland is set to soar by an extra £68 million following revisions by the Scottish Fiscal Commission.

It was revealed yesterday that public services are already facing a £1.7 billion hit after the SNP was forced to concede it will collect less in taxation than it previously thought.

Now it has emerged, as well as reduced tax intake, social security spending is set to rise.

The SFC data shows, between 2019-20 and 2022-23, an additional £68 million will need to be set aside for newly devolved welfare payments.

That's significantly higher than the forecast set out in December, meaning by 2022/23 the total devolved welfare bill will be £498 million a year.

The Scottish Conservatives said this was more evidence of the SNP's drive to have a high-welfare, high tax economy, low-wage economy.

And shadow social security secretary Michelle Ballantyne urged ministers to develop a benefits plan which helped people back into work, rather than trap them on welfare.

The SNP's economic approach has been severely criticised, with the new forecasts meaning schools, hospitals and infrastructure will almost certainly have to suffer financially.

Scottish Conservative shadow social security secretary Michelle Ballantyne said:

"The SNP needs to design a benefits system which helps those who need it the most, and acts as a springboard for people to get in to work whenever possible.

"Instead, both Labour and the SNP seem to treat welfare as an inevitable trap.

"The consequence of a benefits bill our economy can't afford will see the most vulnerable in our society suffering the most.

“With the new powers coming to Holyrood, the SNP are about to find out just how difficult it is to deliver a welfare system that’s fair and sustainable.

“These figures show that under the nationalists we are set to have an economy based on high welfare spending, increasing personal taxes and low wages.

“That will only harm growth and productivity, and do nothing to encourage prosperity for all.”

Cash to fund drug and alcohol support slashed

1 Jun 2018



Money to tackle drug and alcohol addiction has been cut again, new figures have revealed.

In a letter to Holyrood’s Health Committee, it was confirmed there has been a £1.5 million reduction in funding for drug and alcohol partnerships.

This is despite drugs deaths in Scotland reaching a record high last year, and thousands dying as a result of alcohol use.

In her letter earlier this month, health secretary Shona Robison set out figures showing the total investment from a range of agencies – including the Scottish Government – reduced between 2016/17 and 2017/18.

They show the total spend this year was £101,716,000, compared to £103,211,000 in the 12 months before.

Across Scotland, there was considerable regional variation surrounding drug and alcohol addiction funding.

There were heavy reductions in Argyll and Bute (-15 per cent), Dumfries and Galloway (-13.7 per cent) and Glasgow (-11.6 per cent).

In contrast, ADP investment rose by nearly 60 per cent in Angus.

Scottish Conservative Glasgow MSP Adam Tomkins said:

“The drug problem across Scotland is now worse than ever – that’s confirmed by official statistics.

“And while some progress is being made with alcohol, our relationship with drink remains deep-rooted and complex.

“So quite why overall funding has been cut to this extent is a mystery.

“The SNP government keeps saying this is a priority area, yet it’s investing less money to help.

“ADP funding is vital to help people beat their addictions and get their lives back on track. Making a success of these would save lives and benefit both communities and the economy.

“But all the SNP seems interested in is pursuing fix rooms for people to inject heroin, something that will do nothing for those who want a life free from the scourge of drugs.”

[Petition to protect police dogs surpasses 30,000](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Petition to protect police dogs surpasses 30,000

1 Jun 2018



A petition to increase legal protection for service animals, including police dogs and horses, has exceeded 30,000 signatures.

The petition, launched on the 10 May this year, is part of a campaign organised by Scottish Conservative MSP Liam Kerr calling for a new criminal offence of causing injury to police dogs.

Currently it is not a specific crime to injure or kill a police dog. In Scotland offenders who harm service animals such as dogs or horses can only be charged under a patchwork of laws unfit for this purpose.

The Scottish Conservatives have pledged to introduce a new criminal offence of harming or killing a service animal. This would adequately punish those who harm trained animals like dogs and horses who serve the police, fire service, military or other public services. It could also cover assistance animals like guide dogs.

Commenting on the campaign, Liam Kerr said:

“It is extremely heartening to see the fantastic number of signatures this petition has gathered in such a short amount of time.

“The support this petition has gathered simply demonstrates the widespread

public support for a change to the law to fully protect service animals.

“In Scotland, hundreds of service animals work with Police Scotland to keep us safe.

“This includes sniffer dogs, police dogs and horses; they all work with the same dedication to duty as the men and women in our Police force.

“Unfortunately, in Scotland, our laws don’t protect them the same way and currently, the law views a Police animal as little more than property.

“The Cabinet Secretary must listen to the thousands of voices calling for greater protection and status for service animals and change the law now.”

[SNP’s economy chaos to cost Scotland £1.7bn](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- SNP’s economy chaos to cost Scotland £1.7bn

31 May 2018



Scotland’s public services are set to suffer to the tune of £1.7 billion over the next five years, official figures confirmed today.

The gaping hole was revealed as it was confirmed the SNP is on course to collect significantly less in tax revenues than it had anticipated.

The Scottish Fiscal Commission forecast also showed there is an immediate £220 million gap to plug in this year’s budget in comparison to the projections set out in February.

And GDP figures have also been revised down. Scotland’s economic growth is now not expected to exceed one per cent until 2024 at the earliest.

The plummeting performance of Scotland’s economy could mean even more tax rises, increased borrowing and further cuts to public services to fill the gap.

Shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said the devastating statistics were the latest indictment of the SNP’s economic negligence.

The new figures include revised projections on income tax, business rates, LBTT, landfill tax and the new Air Passenger Duty.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“This is the most damning evidence yet that the SNP is unfit to run Scotland’s economy.

“The consequences of tax hikes, poor growth and low productivity look set to cost public finances hundreds of millions of pounds.

“Not only is this bleak news for the future, it also leaves an immediate hole in Scotland’s budget of more than £200 million.

“Unless the SNP government sorts this out, the consequences could be even deeper cuts to public services.

“That means schools, hospitals and infrastructure could all take a serious hit.

“The SNP has obsessed with the constitution for years now, and we can see the impact of its neglect on areas like the economy in these figures.”

[Sturgeon accused of ignoring everyone except independence diehards](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Sturgeon accused of ignoring everyone except independence diehards

31 May 2018



Nicola Sturgeon is more interested in appeasing independence diehards annoyed at her separation blueprint than dealing with key devolved issues, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

At today’s First Minister’s Questions, Ruth Davidson asked why the SNP government was ignoring matters like health, education and justice in favour of defending last week’s widely-criticised Growth Commission.

The Scottish Conservative leader pointed out that, just yesterday, Ms Sturgeon issued seven tweets on the document after a series of high profile independence-backers slammed its content.

But she ignored figures this week showing some of the worst waiting times ever in Scotland’s NHS, a lower rate of people from deprived areas getting places at university, and rising levels of violent crime and anti-social behaviour.

Today, former NFUS head Jim Walker lambasted the First Minister for her

government's failure to pay farmers CAP money on time.

He described the ongoing fiasco as "a national scandal of epic proportions" and "the biggest funding scandal in modern Scottish history".

And it has emerged that the state of Scotland's fire engines is so poor, Audit Scotland warned there will be an increase in vehicle breakdowns unless the SNP government takes action.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"In a week where we've seen rising waiting lists in hospitals, fewer poor young people getting to university and violent crime on the increase, Nicola Sturgeon made her priorities perfectly clear.

"Instead of addressing the concerns of patients, students and victims of crime, she chose to spend her time appeasing the diehards of her independence movement.

"These are the important issues that people across Scotland really care about.

"But the only people getting attention from the First Minister are Yes campaigners angry at the independence blueprint who she is desperate to get back onside.

"Scotland's public services have already suffered at the hands of the SNP government's independence obsession – that can't be allowed to happen again."