

Scotland on course for lowest growth in the developed world

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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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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

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.”

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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.”