

# Scottish Government fails to tackle lengthy sheriff court delays

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- Scottish Government fails to tackle lengthy sheriff court delays

4 Nov 2017



More than half of sheriff courts are taking longer to process cases than they were last year.

In addition, only half of sheriff courts are meeting the 26 week target (from issuing a caution or charge to reaching a verdict) in less than 70% of cases.

Only three courts – Portree, Lerwick, Lochmaddy – managed to meet the target for 100% of cases in any month in 2017.

Out of all Scotland's 39 sheriff courts, 21 are performing even worse than a year ago.

The statistics were revealed following a parliamentary question by Shadow Justice Secretary Liam Kerr.

The Scottish Conservatives warned against court closures, arguing delays like this would occur, while lawyers have also been critical of the decision.

## **Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:**

“This situation is a direct result of the Scottish Government's ill-conceived policy of closing courts, which they were warned about.

“The Scottish Conservatives have already raised this issue time and again but nothing has been done and the situation is continuing to get worse.

“These lengthy, and growing, delays have serious knock-on consequences for the witnesses and victims of crime.

“The SNP has to take this issue seriously, put sufficient resources into the remaining Sheriff Courts to ensure that innocent people are not waiting a ridiculously long time for justice.

“The Scottish Government caused this issue, now they must fix it.”

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# Tax plans risk recession

3 Nov 2017



A deal to inflate tax rates risks pushing Scotland back into recession, the Scottish Conservatives are warning.

The Scottish Government's own analysis in its tax discussion paper concludes that Labour, Lib Dem and Green plans all will negatively impact Scottish economic growth – currently at just at 0.1%.

The Scottish Conservatives are today warning that the SNP government risks economic decline if the First Minister adopts any of these proposals – slashing the money available for schools and hospitals.

It comes as the Scottish Conservatives are also highlighting the fact that as many 890,000 current basic rate taxpayers, or 40% of the total, face a new higher 21% rate, under yesterday's proposals.

This is despite the fact that Nicola Sturgeon promised before the 2016 Scottish election that the basic rate of income tax would be unchanged.

**Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser MSP said:**

“We have got to focus on stimulating economic growth, because that is how we will pay for our public services.

“Yet the SNP now seems ready to do a deal with any one of Scotland's left-wing parties which they know could push it back into recession.

“The First Minister also has some serious explaining to do to basic rate taxpayers.

“She couldn't have been clearer before the election – she said the basic rate would not rise.

“Yet under these plans, nearly 900,000 basic rate taxpayers face paying a higher rate than they do right now.

“That would be a clear breach of a major SNP promise. Nicola Sturgeon must think again.”

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# Earn 24k – pay more under the SNP

2 Nov 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have hit out at SNP proposals to increase taxes on those earning over £24,000.

At First Minister's Questions, party leader Ruth Davidson also challenged Nicola Sturgeon to do more to support economic growth – amid further evidence that the SNP is failing to meet its own commitments.

Today's tax discussion paper issued by the Scottish Government proposes higher rates of income tax for basic rate taxpayers – breaking a central SNP manifesto pledge not to do so.

And while the SNP is now backing higher taxes, it has failed to follow through on two key economic commitments.

New freedom of information questions show that its £500 million Growth Fund is still to issue a single penny to Scottish firms, a year on from its inception.

The SNP has also missed a deadline to announce its new Strategic Board for Enterprise and Skills by the end of October.

## **Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson MSP said:**

“We support a competitive tax regime because we believe that will develop Scotland's economy – boosting the tax income we need for our schools and hospitals.

“We don't think it's right that every Scot earning over £24,000 should have to pay more.

“The SNP has its priorities all wrong. Just this week we learn that its £500 million Growth Scheme – announced a year ago – is still to distribute a single penny.

“Furthermore, it has failed to meet a pledge to set up a new Strategic Board to take forward its plans on Enterprise and Skills by the deadline.

“The First Minister wants to start a debate about raising taxes. She would be better off focusing on her own plans to boost the economy.”

## **Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser added:**

“The SNP is trying to face both ways and simply risks satisfying nobody.

“None of the tax raising plans they've announced today will increase public spending by a huge amount – but they will all add to the growing perception

that Scotland is a high tax country.

“Just as she did with her ill-judged plans for a second referendum, Nicola Sturgeon has rushed ahead with this plan without taking account of the evidence or the facts.

“The Scottish Conservatives will take a measured approach on tax, with sustainable economic growth at its heart.”

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## [Diabulimia must be medically recognised](#)

2 Nov 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have called on diabulimia to be medically recognised by the NHS

Speaking in a debate on her motion regarding Raising Awareness of Diabulimia, Annie Wells highlighted the urgent need to raise awareness of the condition.

Diabulimia is an eating disorder which involves a person with Type 1 diabetes omitting insulin to lose weight.

It is estimated to affect around 40% of young women aged 15-30 and 11% of teenage boys with Type 1 diabetes, yet is not officially-recognised-medically, despite the threat it poses to its victims.

Statistics have shown that while the 10-year mortality rate for people with diabetes is 2 per 1000 people and for anorexia, 7 per 1000 people, diabulimics face a much higher mortality rate of 35 per 1000 people affected.

**Scottish Conservative public health spokesman Annie Wells MSP said:**

“Diabulimia is an extremely serious condition, and we need to urgently raise awareness of it.

“However despite the number of people who suffer from it, and the high mortality rate, there are no current NHS guidelines on how to deal with the issue.

“Currently patients are not always treated with the interdisciplinary approach that is needed, and we have to see more integrated thinking across the country when it comes to diabulimia.

“By having this condition officially medically recognised, I believe this

would be a major step forward in helping raise awareness of the disorder as well as help to gain better support for those living with diabulimia.”

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## [Scottish Government must take action on housing](#)

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1 Nov 2017



Speaking at today's Homes for Scotland Conference, Scottish Conservative housing spokesman Graham Simpson joined the call for greater and more radical action on homebuilding in Scotland.

Figures show that the total number of new homes being started in Scotland by the private sector has fallen by 11% between 2015 and 2016, the latest available annual statistics. In fact, since 2007 the numbers have fallen by 40%.

In addition, the average decision time for major housing development planning applications in 2016/17 was four weeks slower than the previous year.

### **Scottish Conservative housing spokesman Graham Simpson said:**

“The SNP Government has presided over a crisis in housing. With longer planning delays and a considerable decline in private house building, the system is grinding to a halt.

“With fewer houses being built, fewer people have any reasonable access to owning their own home and gaining all the benefits this brings to their families and finances.

“The Scottish Conservatives have already suggested innovative policies that would tackle this decline and help everyone own their own home.

“We are committed to delivering 100,000 new homes over the course of this parliament – with half of them affordable housing.

“We would create a dedicated Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Infrastructure to give housing the recognition and impetus it deserves.

“We would create a new Housing and Infrastructure Agency whose only aim would be to consider infrastructure development and could be responsible for the

administration of Developer Infrastructure Loans.

“For smaller builders, Developer Infrastructure Loans would help to finance significant infrastructure requirements, with the loans paid back by developers over the longer term. For smaller builders local authorities would be able to start developing serviced plots directly themselves – something which Glasgow City Council is leading the way with.

“These are just some of our innovative policies that will free up our planning system and revitalise our housebuilding sector. We are dedicated to working with all stakeholders to make this commitment a reality.

“The Scottish Government must take more radical action. This is a housing crisis that it has the powers to solve.”

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Private homebuilding figures are taken from

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS/NewBuildPrivate>

The average decision time for major housing development planning applications in 2016/17 was 44.9 weeks which is four weeks slower than the previous year,

<https://news.gov.scot/news/planning-decision-times-published-3?platform=hootsuite>).