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- Doctors slam SNP over cuts to alcohol and drug funding

12 Sep 2017



A huge reduction in funding for drug and alcohol support by the Scottish Government has been criticised by doctors.

In a submission to Holyrood's health committee, the British Medical Association said the 22 per cent cut to alcohol and drug partnerships (ADPs) in last year's budget was a "false economy".

It criticised ministers for not restoring the funding in the 2017/18 budget, adding the move "will only increase pressures on the health service and general practice in particular".

BMA Scotland also told MSPs: "It is hard to see how this decision is compatible with the Scottish Government's stated priorities in relation to reducing alcohol harm. Funding to ADPs should be restored to 2015/16 levels in the next Scottish budget."

It emerged following April's budget that many health boards – including Lanarkshire, Grampian and Fife – would lose hundreds of thousands of pounds in funding for ADPs.

The reduction comes despite the fact Scotland has one of the worst drug death rates in Europe, and around two-and-a-half times that of the UK.

In 2016, there were a record 827 drug-related deaths in Scotland.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"The BMA is quite right to criticise the SNP over these funding cuts.

"It's very clearly the wrong thing to do while Scotland battles such major problems with drug and alcohol addiction, among the very worst in Europe.

"Doctors know best when it comes to these matters, and ministers ought to listen.

"It was a mistake for the Scottish Government to cut ADP funding, and now it must reverse those changes.

"If it does not, we risk seeing even more lives wasted in future years

because people with drug and alcohol problems simply won't have the support network they need."

[Banks loan £100m extra to farmers amid CAP crisis](#)

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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/>

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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.”

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- Tens of millions spent on soaring diabetes bill

10 Sep 2017



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.”