

£350m budget bonanza for Scotland means no need for SNP tax hikes

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- £350m budget bonanza for Scotland means no need for SNP tax hikes

8 Mar 2017



The additional £350 million coming to Scotland as a result of today's budget means the SNP does not need to hike people's taxes, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Thanks to decisions made by Chancellor Philip Hammond, Scotland will receive the extra cash through Barnett Consequentials, including an additional £100 million for this coming year alone.

That – together with extra funds finance secretary Derek Mackay found in his own budget dealings totalling more than £230 million – means the Scottish Government has significantly more money for 2017/18 than it previously thought.

Shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said that means there's now no need for the SNP to make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK, and should relieve some of its cuts to public services too.

As part of today's budget, Mr Hammond confirmed the personal allowance would increase to £12,500, which takes 113,000 people out of tax altogether in Scotland.

Fuel duty will be frozen for the seventh year on the trot, which could save the average driver £10 every time they fill up at the pump.

And more support was announced for the north east with the creation of an expert group to look at helping the oil and gas industry.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“The Chancellor has struck the right balance in this budget – keeping money in reserve as we prepare to leave the EU, but at the same time handing a boost to the economy.

“For Scotland alone, his plans will deliver an extra £350 million for the SNP government to spend as it wishes over the coming years.

“The SNP's double dose of local government cuts and income tax changes to penalise middle-earners is now utterly without justification.

“The simple truth is that, if it was focused on the day job, the SNP wouldn’t need to make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK.

“With even more spending power now at its disposal, a competent government could give taxpayers a break and find the cash to support social care and schools across Scotland.

“The question facing the SNP is this – if Philip Hammond can support public services while protecting family pay packets, why can’t Derek Mackay?”

Below are additional comments from Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson, who was speaking at a Scottish Property Federation conference this afternoon:

“My message to the Scottish Government is this.

“As I said earlier, despite the Chancellor’s cautious approach on spending, his budget this afternoon means that the Scottish Government now has £350 million extra to spend over the coming years.

“That includes £100 million to spend in the next financial year alone.

“This is extra cash that the SNP had not planned for in its budget.

“With this extra money, the finance secretary’s claim that council cuts and tax rises are necessary has therefore been substantially eroded.

“So I hope that the SNP will use this extra resource to support councils which require it, and give taxpayers and businesses a break.

“We simply do not need to send out the message that higher taxes are necessary in Scotland.

“I urge the SNP to think again.”

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Children in Scotland are waiting longer now for ear, nose and throat (ENT)

appointments than ever before, new figures have shown.

The median wait for first specialist appointments for conditions like tonsillitis, nosebleeds and hearing problems was 71 days last year.

That's the highest since records began in 1999, and compares to 66 days in 2015, and as little as 44 days in 2011.

In some health boards, under 16s wait far longer.

The longest median wait was in Grampian (133 days), followed by Ayrshire and Arran (131 days) and Shetland (120 days).

The best-performing board for ENT waits was Dumfries and Galloway, where youngsters waited on average for just 43 days.

The statistics emerged following a parliamentary question from Scottish Conservative public health spokesman Miles Briggs.

Across Scotland, more than 10,000 children are admitted to hospital for ENT problems each year, mostly on an elective basis.

Conditions which come under ENT range from mouth cancers and glandular fever, to issues with snoring and vertigo.

Scottish Conservative public health spokesman Miles Briggs said:

"Ear, nose and throat problems can range from the mildly irritating to the very severe.

"But that's no excuse for the Scottish Government to preside over a system which is now recording the longest waits in two decades.

"Each year thousands of children are admitted with ENT problems, so it is not a minority area of care.

"When a child is referred for hospital treatment, it is unacceptable that – in some health board areas – it is almost five months before they are seen to.

"The trend is getting worse, and the SNP has to act.

"It's in sole charge of the health service, and has no-one to blame for this slip in performance but itself."

The full text of the parliamentary question from Miles Briggs is below:

7 March 2017 (Holding Reply Issued 1 March 2017)

Index Heading: Health and Social Care

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservatives and Unionist Party): To ask

the Scottish Government what the average waiting time has been for (a) children and (b) adults to see an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist in each year since 1999, broken down by NHS board.

S5W-06782

Shona Robison:

The information requested is provided in the following tables. It should be noted that data prior to the introduction of New Ways of Defining and Measuring Waiting Times in 2008 is from Scottish Morbidity Records (SMR00) and are not directly comparable.

MEDIAN WAITS (DAYS) FOR A FIRST OUTPATIENT CONSULTATION IN ENT FOR PATIENTS UNDER 16 YEARS BY NHS BOARD FOR THE YEARS 1999 TO 2007

Board	Median Waits (Days) : Patients Age Under 16 Years									
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	
Ayrshire and Arran	30	25	45	43	46	49	70	76	47	
Borders	85	107	121	59	45	84	90	84	92	
Dumfries and Galloway	39	44	65	70	44	33	21	41	44	
Fife	84	61	64	79	82	90	70	70	46	
Forth Valley	57	49	58	70	75	63	77	82	45	
Grampian	70	71	76	73	82	59	65	93	48	
Greater Glasgow and Clyde	69	61	70	68	111	40	52	86	53	
Highland	46	46	58	57	55	47	59	85	100	
Lanarkshire	73	72	93	104	117	75	67	92	95	
Lothian	16	18	18	30	40	54	50	28	87	
Orkney	24	31	33	49	42	53	50	69	76	
Shetland	36	41	41	58	71	62	47	68	63	
Tayside	49	54	66	55	50	52	43	44	43	
Western Isles	78	45	49	52	72	121	124	105	95	
NHSScotland	53	52	63	63	68	50	56	68	58	

Source : ISD SMR00

MEDIAN WAITS (DAYS) FOR A FIRST OUTPATIENT CONSULTATION IN ENT FOR PATIENTS 16 YEARS AND OVER BY NHS BOARD FOR THE YEARS 1999 TO 2007

Board	Median Waits (Days): Patients Age 16 Years and Over									
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	
Ayrshire and Arran	49	49	73	50	56	107	85	70	40	
Borders	67	72	53	35	35	48	46	49	76	
Dumfries and Galloway	41	42	66	66	45	36	19	39	35	
Fife	80	45	53	76	79	83	64	52	41	
Forth Valley	54	49	54	62	63	68	73	62	42	
Grampian	84	92	99	121	111	106	119	105	106	
Greater Glasgow and Clyde	48	54	60	58	63	49	52	44	41	

Highland	44	46	54	48	41	41	50	60	69
Lanarkshire	70	69	86	94	104	109	105	78	70
Lothian	69	63	61	65	55	57	63	66	84
Orkney	24	38	35	40	47	58	63	65	70
Shetland	40	40	42	47	52	62	36	46	60
Tayside	53	74	76	83	53	59	56	46	56
Western Isles	62	41	45	43	69	85	93	99	77
NHSScotland	56	56	63	66	64	61	62	56	53

Source : ISD SMR00

MEDIAN WAITS (DAYS) FOR A FIRST OUTPATIENT CONSULTATION IN ENT FOR PATIENTS UNDER 16 YEARS BY NHS BOARD FOR THE YEARS 2008 TO 2016

Board	Median Waits (Days) : Patients Aged Under 16 Years									
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Ayrshire and Arran	57	54	54	44	62	74	82	110	131	
Borders	66	50	50	63	73	76	84	73	88	
Dumfries and Galloway	38	42	44	21	38	44	40	40	43	
Fife	42	40	44	36	37	42	41	42	47	
Forth Valley	52	49	36	58	68	99	45	63	78	
Grampian	66	55	72	81	74	63	60	108	133	
Greater Glasgow and Clyde	45	48	53	40	42	50	55	60	69	
Highland	81	61	52	56	62	80	87	118	88	
Lanarkshire	48	24	44	76	80	77	75	70	81	
Lothian	76	69	64	42	67	75	83	126	96	
Orkney	59	57	44	41	30	54	57	67	51	
Shetland	81	50	68	58	62	58	75	72	120	
Tayside	36	37	52	49	46	50	56	60	68	
Western Isles	77	45	57	59	49	85	66	39	63	
NHSScotland	51	49	55	44	52	58	61	66	71	

Source: ISD Waiting Times Warehouse

MEDIAN WAITS (DAYS) FOR A FIRST OUTPATIENT CONSULTATION IN ENT FOR PATIENTS 16 YEARS AND OVER BY NHS BOARD FOR THE YEARS 2008 TO 2016

Board	Median Waits (Days) : Patients Aged 16 years And Over									
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Ayrshire and Arran	53	47	56	65	78	73	82	78	57	
Borders	53	38	36	43	55	61	74	62	46	
Dumfries and Galloway	32	34	35	14	29	24	28	38	41	
Fife	34	34	33	28	27	28	26	26	30	
Forth Valley	51	42	31	44	58	83	40	55	66	
Grampian	79	68	40	27	31	38	35	39	55	

Greater Glasgow and Clyde	35	36	37	40	43	48	55	59	55
Highland	46	34	31	35	41	50	59	78	76
Lanarkshire	45	40	47	49	58	73	75	70	59
Lothian	48	45	54	35	51	70	49	52	42
Orkney	57	45	41	32	32	51	63	69	50
Shetland	71	44	60	54	58	45	74	62	84
Tayside	25	38	43	43	42	48	44	45	36
Western Isles	56	35	51	56	46	62	47	32	48
NHSScotland	43	41	41	37	43	49	49	51	49

Source: ISD Waiting Times Warehouse

In 2015/16, there were 10,052 admissions of under 18s in Scotland for ENT issues:

<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Hospital-Care/Inpatient-and-Day-Case-Activity/>

A list of ENT conditions are set out here:

<http://patient.info/health/ear-nose-throat-mouth-1246>

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7 Mar 2017



The SNP’s hated named person policy “has run aground and should be scrapped”, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Education secretary John Swinney told Holyrood today that he would bring forward a new bill for state guardians in the summer, and aimed to have it up and running by 2018.

Following the policy being ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court, he added some changes would be made to the data-sharing provisions.

However, shadow education secretary Liz Smith said the policy should be scrapped and, as it stands, will only be heading straight back to the courtroom.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“This is a scheme that has run aground and the fact the delay is now at two years shows exactly that.

“If the SNP had been listening properly it would have recognised months ago that it is completely unworkable and unwanted.

“Every opinion poll on the policy has made clear that the vast majority of parents do not want it, and it’s clear many professionals tasked with delivering it are extremely concerned.

“Rather than muddy the waters even further, John Swinney should scrap this policy once and for all.

“As it stands, the named person policy is heading straight back to court.”

The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly opposed the named person scheme: <http://www.scottishconservatives.com/named-person/>

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7 Mar 2017



Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney are being urged to “come clean” over the SNP’s claims of an oil “bonus” after independence, after a close ally admitted this week it was made up.

The head of the SNP’s Growth Commission Andrew Wilson admitted that oil formed part of the “basis” of the SNP’s figures for independence – and was “baked in” to their assumptions.

His comment has exposed the SNP’s previous position, which repeatedly stated that oil would be a “bonus” that could be used to top up spending on the NHS, education and other public services in Scotland after independence.

Former First Minister Alex Salmond – one of the most enthusiastic proponents

of the myth – has so far failed to speak out over Mr Wilson’s comments.

The Scottish Conservatives are today publishing a dossier of quotes from Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney from the referendum campaign on oil.

Both claimed that an oil “boom” was coming – with Mr Swinney even saying that an oil fund could be set up on day one of an independent Scotland.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“Never mind bringing forward plans for a second referendum, the SNP needs to own up to the lies it told in the first.

“Andrew Wilson has admitted that even the SNP knew its claims about an oil ‘boom’ were rubbish.

“Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney should now come clean.

“Time and again during the referendum campaign the nationalists told people in Scotland that we’d be rich thanks to the ‘bonus’ we’d get from a second oil boom.

“They now must stop hiding and – as Mr Wilson has done – admit they tried to deceive people.

“We can only be grateful that two million Scots saw through it and kept our union of nations together.”

Pre-Referendum quotes on oil

Nicola Sturgeon

· **Nicola Sturgeon said that independence would bring a ‘second energy bonanza’.** ‘A no vote means Shetland’s natural wealth continues to flow to London, with a Yes vote Shetland can reap the benefits of a second energy bonanza’ (*Scottish Energy News*, 27 August 2014, [link](#)).

· **Sturgeon said that it was ‘Project Fear’ to argue that Scotland is better able to manage the fluctuations in its oil industry as part of the UK.** ‘According to Project Fear, small nations can’t manage oil. Someone really should tell Norway with its £470 billion oil fund’ (*Nicola Sturgeon Twitter*, 2 September 2013, [link](#)).

· **She said that there were ‘boom years ahead’.** ‘Oil Analysis shows boom years ahead’ (*Nicola Sturgeon Twitter*, 11 March 2013, [link](#)).

· **She failed to listen to warnings that the oil price could fluctuate.** ‘Let us hear no more from #no about oil being a problem’ (*Nicola Sturgeon Twitter*, 9 January 2014, [link](#)).

· **Sturgeon claimed that Scotland could establish a ‘national energy**

fund' with oil revenues. 'Shetland showed the rest of Scotland the way when it established its oil fund in 1976. That charitable fund has grown to £200m and the investment it has made in Shetland communities is here for all to see. Independence means the rest of Scotland can take the same approach and invest in our future through a national energy fund, but it also means a new opportunity for Shetland communities to benefit from the industry off their shores' (BBC, 27 August 2014, [link](#)).

· **She described oil revenues as a 'massive advantage' that other countries would give their 'eye and teeth for'.** 'And yes we have oil and gas in abundance. And I'll let you into a wee secret – having oil and gas reserves worth £1.5 trillion is not really a problem. It's not the sum total of our economy, but it's a massive advantage that other countries would give their eye and teeth for. And it's high time Scotland started getting the benefit of it (Daily Record, 24 March 2013, [link](#)).

· **She also said that setting up an 'oil fund' was one of her six reasons to vote Yes** (Glasgow Evening Times, 19 March 2014, p4).

John Swinney

· **John Swinney said that Scotland was on the verge of a 'massive oil boom' and that it could not 'afford to be independent'.** 'Crucially, at the same time as this expected surge in price, the North Sea is experiencing a renewed boom, as underlined in the recent report from industry body Oil & Gas UK which says that the additional investments which have been ploughed into the sector in the last couple of years will generate an extra £3bn in revenues in 2017 when these new developments will be coming on stream. Taken together, this surge in investment and the rising price of oil mean that the early years of an independent Scotland are timed to coincide with a massive North Sea oil boom.... The question every voter in Scotland must ask themselves between now and the autumn of next year is whether, given all these facts, Scotland can afford not to be independent.' (The Sunday Herald, 10 March 2013, [link](#)).

· **At the same, a leaked SNP Government briefing paper warned Swinney of the 'volatile' nature of oil tax revenue.** The paper said 'North Sea tax receipts have been more volatile than onshore receipts... Given the relative importance of North Sea revenues to Scotland's public finances, these downward revisions have resulted in a deterioration in the outlook for Scotland's public finances... In an independent Scotland this will have important implications for budget setting and estimating public sector borrowing requirements... However, this would, on present assumptions about on-shore tax revenues, require some downward revision in current spending.' (Better Together, Leaked Scottish Government briefing to John Swinney, 6 March 2013, [link](#)).

· **He also hailed the oil 'bonus' that Scotland would receive from independence.** 'North Sea oil is a bonus, not the basis for Scotland's economy, and with up to 24 billion barrels of oil left worth an estimated £1.5 trillion, it will continue to contribute to the wealth of Scotland for a long time to come' (Herald Scotland, 3 September 2013, [link](#)).

· **He said oil would provide an ‘economic bonus’ only made possible by Scotland becoming independent.** ‘If we pursue the policies that only an independent Scotland will be able to pursue then we can deliver an oil fund from the point of independence and secure an economic bonus that can only be delivered by independence’ (*BBC News*, 25 May 2014, [link](#)).

· **A spokesperson for Swinney, even after the Referendum, said that they expected the oil price to recover and that claims otherwise were ‘clearly ridiculous’.** ‘Oil is a bonus, not the basis of Scotland’s economy – and most independent forecasts expect the price to rise again next year, with OPEC predicting a price of \$110 per barrel for the rest of the decade and around \$100 in real terms in the long-run. Labour’s calls for an inquiry are clearly ridiculous. At time of the Scottish Government’s publication in March last year, the \$113 price assumption was the average price over the previous two years.’ (*The Telegraph*, 17 December 2014, [link](#)).

Alex Salmond

· **Alex Salmond said that Scotland was moving into a ‘second oil boom’.** ‘This bulletin shows the impact that increases in investment could have on production and revenues, and examines a range of scenarios. It demonstrates that, when the expected increase in production to two million barrels a day is taken into account, there can be little doubt that Scotland is moving into a second oil boom’ (*BBC*, 11 March 2013, [link](#)).

· **Salmond said that oil was a ‘huge bonus’.** ‘If oil is taken out of the equation, then Scotland’s economic output per head is almost identical to that of the UK. The benefit we get from oil and gas will be a huge bonus’ (*The Sunday Times*, 21 July 2013, [link](#)).

· **He said that Scotland could create ‘an oil savings fund’ as soon as it became independent.** ‘Scotland in strong position to start an oil savings fund from the point of independence’ (*Alex Salmond Twitter*, 28 May 2014, [link](#)).

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7 Mar 2017



Statistics released today have shown the health boards in Scotland where more than half of those referred for mental health treatment are being made to wait too long.

The ISD Scotland data revealed two NHS boards where children were more likely to miss the 18-week referral-to-treatment standard than be seen on time.

In addition, figures from the last quarter show one health board where 56.5 per cent of adults also missed the target.

It is the latest report showing shortcomings in psychological treatment north of the border, despite the Scottish Government claiming it has a parity of esteem with physical health.

The SNP states at least 90 per cent of adults referred by a GP for treatment should begin that within 18 weeks.

However, between October and December last year, just two health boards – Lanarkshire and the Western Isles – managed this.

In NHS Forth Valley, only 43.5 per cent were seen on time, while in NHS Lothian the figure was around two-thirds.

And for under 18s the picture is similarly grim.

In NHS Grampian 55 per cent of youngsters missed the 18-week target, along with 51.7 per cent in the Lothians.

Scottish Conservative public health spokesman Miles Briggs said:

“For a Scottish Government which says mental health is a priority, this is well short of the expected performance.

“No-one’s saying this is an easy situation to address, particularly with increasing awareness of the need to raise concerns about psychological problems.

“But for some health boards to be missing the target more often than they’re hitting it, for children and adults, that is utterly unacceptable.

“Unless these statistics are dramatically improved, no-one will believe the SNP when it says it wants to give parity of esteem to mental health.

“These figures show thousands of vulnerable people across Scotland, young and old, are being failed by a system which is supposed to help them.”

To access the full reports, which were published today by ISD Scotland, visit:

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-03-07/2017-03-07-WT-PsychTherapies-Report.pdf>

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-03-07/2017-03-07-WT-PhysicalTherapies-Report.pdf>

[07/2017-03-07-CAMHS-Report.pdf](#)

The Scottish Conservatives published a policy paper on mental health at the end of last year:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Scottish-Conservative-Mental-Health-Policy.pdf>