

Drug seizures in Scotland on the rise

19 Mar 2019



Police are seizing record numbers of class A drugs in Scotland, new figures have revealed.

Officers made 1600 seizures last year, the equivalent of more than four a day, which is a four-year high.

The number is higher than last year's figure of 1562, and compares to just 1051 raids in 2014/15.

Among the seizures, the quantity of crack cocaine and ecstasy reached new levels.

And the 118kgs of heroin removed in 2017/18 was more than double that of the previous year.

In addition to class A seizures, police also made around 2000 cannabis-related interventions.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said the statistics showed police officers themselves were doing more than ever to tackle Scotland's drug problem.

But he added the rest of Scotland's justice system was letting them down, as serious drug offenders are routinely let off with lenient sentences.

He also said the SNP government was failing to help addicts who wanted to beat their habit altogether.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

"Police officers are expected to do more than ever when it comes to ridding our streets of class A drugs.

"They now need to be backed up by the rest of the justice system.

"Instead, we have an SNP government which is far too soft on the issue of hard drugs and refuses to get tough on drug dealers.

"Last year, the police presented the courts with hundreds of opportunities to come down on drug dealers like a ton of bricks.

"But we have an SNP administration more interested in making it easier for people to take drugs, instead of giving them the support they need to beat the habit altogether."

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19 Mar 2019



A leading rural GP has quit a government body after accusing ministers of failing countryside practices.

Dr David Hogg, vice chair of the Rural GP Association of Scotland, told the Scottish Government's Rural Short Life Working Group that the new GP contract was widely opposed by doctors who are not based in urban settings.

He also revealed the findings of a survey which found 82 per cent of rural GPs "believe that the outlook for rural healthcare is worse under the contract", with a third saying services in those areas will have to be "curtailed" as a result.

This is despite the SNP government claiming the GP contract was popular across the country, with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon boasting: "It is good for the profession and it will also be good for patients."

In his letter, Dr Hogg said: "I have become increasingly despondent about us seeing any pragmatic, realistic proposals to reverse the damaging effects of the new GP contract in rural Scotland."

He then added that his duties in the role may not be replaced as "most of my colleagues have found themselves increasingly occupied trying to safeguard local services from the threats created by the new contract".

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"Nicola Sturgeon seems to think her GP contract was a rip-roaring success.

"In fact, it's failing the bulk of Scotland's land mass and a fifth of our population.

"GPs are now feeling so strongly about this they are having to step back from positions just to focus on their everyday work.

"It's just the latest example of the SNP obsessing about the Central Belt and paying next to no heed to rural Scotland.

“This letter should ring alarm bells for the SNP government, which is continuing to fail patients right across the country.”

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Jeremy Corbyn would “rather get into bed” with the nationalists than stand up to them, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It follows revelations in The Times that the Labour leader has written to his SNP counterpart in Westminster Ian Blackford over Brexit.

He wants to “work together” with the SNP over the UK’s departure from the European Union.

However, the Scottish Conservatives have warned the obvious price for such a negotiation will be agreeing for the nationalists to hold a second referendum on independence.

Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said:

“It’s no surprise to see Labour and the SNP reaching out to each other again.

“And Jeremy Corbyn doesn’t care a jot that the price of such an arrangement will be a second referendum on independence.

“It proves yet again that Labour would rather get into bed with the nationalists than stand up to them.

“Only the Scottish Conservatives are serious about honouring the view of the majority of Scots who voted No in 2014.”

SNP government inundated with car park tax complaints

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15 Mar 2019



The SNP government has received an influx of letters from members of the public criticising plans to introduce a car park tax.

Dozens of letters have been published through Freedom of Information blasting the controversial proposals.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, finance secretary Derek Mackay and transport minister Michael Matheson all received furious emails from people who would be impacted by the scheme.

And some SNP MSPs even forwarded on concerns from constituents about the move – which would cost people who drive to work £500 a year.

One member of the public told Ms Sturgeon: “I’ve voted for the SNP for the last 44 years ... but this ridiculous tax on workers driving to work is totally wrong.”

Another added: “I have always been an SNP supporter and voter ... I have absolutely no shadow of doubt that <SNP-run> Glasgow City Council and others will seize the opportunity to raise revenue via this unfair tax and it will fall on people like me to just stump up.”

A correspondent told Mr Matheson: “I’m getting in touch to let you know that I’m worried about the SNP/Green proposal to tax people who park their cars at work ... I’m worried about the impact that this would have on our household budget.”

And 11 employees of Glasgow Airport contacted Mr Mackay to register their disgust, with one saying: “It is unfair and unreasonable to impose a workplace car park tax when I have no realistic alternative to using my car.”

One charity worker who said they simply couldn’t afford to pay the charge even persuaded her MSP Annabelle Ewing to contact Michael Matheson on her behalf.

And another SNP MSP, Angela Constance, forwarded the following message to her ministerial colleagues from a voter: “This appears to have been added to the budget late, to get it through parliament, without really considering how it will affect employers and their employees.”

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“After being inundated with views from members of the public, the SNP should be left in no doubt about just how unpopular this plan is.

“Hardworking people are outraged that they should be charged even more just for driving to work, and many simply cannot afford it.

“If Nicola Sturgeon won’t listen to the Scottish Conservatives on this matter, she should at least listen to the people who’ll be affected.

“She should abandon this scheme right now, and reassure workers and motorists that the Scottish Government is actually on their side.”

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Scottish farming continues to struggle according to the latest figures released by the Scottish Government.

The statistics, released in the Scottish Agricultural Survey this week, show that numbers of some livestock continue to decrease and Less Favoured Area rents continue to rise.

While winter-planted crops increased over the past year, last year’s dry weather resulted in slight drops in grass silage/haylage production.

This drop in hay production has led to some farmers reporting a shortage of animal feed and increasing costs.

Donald Cameron, Scottish Conservative shadow rural economy and connectivity secretary said;

“Sadly these figures do not show the kind of growth and dynamism that we would like to see in the Scottish farming sector.

“The pressures of increasing rents on LFA land and increasing feed costs due to shortages of winter feed are clearly hitting farmers hard.

“It is therefore crucial that the SNP government gets appropriate and long term funding in place for the sector to ensure stability and security post Brexit.

“It is quite clear that Scottish farming needs the new approach that the Scottish Conservatives set out in our recent policy document.

“Now is the time to secure a vibrant future for this industry, not the managed decline the SNP appear to think is inevitable.”