

[GP crisis set to worsen as doctors in training hit 5-year low](#)

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4 Dec 2018



The number of doctors in training in Scotland has sunk to a five-year low, sparking fears the country's GP crisis is set to worsen.

Figures published today have revealed there were 6009 doctors in training as of September 2018, a 2.1 per cent drop from the previous year.

It's also the lowest since 2013, when there were 5984 in training.

The drop comes despite repeated warnings over the years from various experts, including the Royal College of GPs, that there will be even more acute shortages of GPs in the future.

Most recently, the organisation said Scotland could be short of more than 800 family doctors by 2021.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said this was the latest example of the SNP government's "chaotic workforce planning", and warned difficulties people are experiencing in accessing GP appointments will only get worse.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"These figures are going in the wrong direction at the worst possible time.

"We are in the grip of a GP crisis, while hospitals right across the country are struggling for doctor numbers.

"But instead of increasing the number of doctors in training, the SNP government now finds they are at a five-year low.

"That's yet more irresponsible government, and more evidence of the nationalists' chaotic workforce planning.

"The SNP's incompetence over the last 11 years has brought the NHS in Scotland to its knees, and still the mistakes are being repeated."

Scotch Whisky Association backs Brexit deal

4 Dec 2018



The Scotch Whisky Association, one of the country's most influential industry bodies, has thrown its weight behind Theresa May's Brexit deal.

The organisation said the text "stands up well against the Scotch Whisky industry's Brexit priorities" and warned against the chaos of a no-deal scenario.

It's the latest major business group to give support to the deal, which will be voted on by MPs next week.

The SWA stated: "On balance, the draft Withdrawal Agreement and accompanying Political Declaration on the Future UK-EU Relationship stand up well against the Scotch Whisky Industry's Brexit priorities. The SWA therefore supports approval of the two negotiated texts by the UK and European Parliaments. If the deal is rejected, this will create considerable uncertainty for the industry and greatly increase the potential of a no-deal Brexit in March 2019."

It comes a day after leading businessman and oil tycoon Sir Ian Wood also gave his backing to the deal.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

"This is another major player in the Scottish economy backing Theresa May's Brexit deal.

"We now have senior representatives from Scotland's most important industries – whisky, oil, farming and fishing, among others – saying this now has to happen.

"MPs voting on this now need to consider what's important here, and who is worth listening to.

"And as for the SNP and Labour, if they troop through the lobby in attempt to force a no-deal scenario, the people of Scotland will simply not forgive them.

"This deal honours the vote of 2016, and means we can leave the EU in an orderly manner without sparking the chaos and misery a no-deal would likely bring."

Save Our High Streets

1 Dec 2018



The Scottish Conservatives are calling on the SNP to save Scotland's high streets.

On Small Business Saturday, the Scottish Conservatives are joining the chorus of businesses demanding action from the SNP to revitalise Scotland's high streets and introduce a series of measures that would enable local councils to support Scotland's retailers.

Scotland's high streets are facing unprecedented threats from increasing business rates, SNP tax hikes, a stagnant economy and a dramatic increase in online retail.

Over the last year, a number of high profile firms have collapsed showing the precarious nature of the sector.

Indeed, almost 300 stores went out of business across Scotland in 2017. That's a rate of 5.5 per week, the worst in the UK.

To address these issues, the Scottish Conservatives are promoting a plan to support Scotland's high streets to become dynamic, flexible, welcoming spaces, able to provide a range of different experiences for our communities.

The measures would also incentivise businesses to stay and grow in the local area, reduce business rates and give local councils and businesses more opportunity to regenerate town centres creatively.

The Save Our High Streets campaign calls on the SNP to –

- Cut business rates including the large business supplement
- Permanently change business poundage increases to CPI
- Support BIDs across Scotland
- Free up planning restrictions in town centres
- Increase the use of public procurement to support the local economy

Dean Lockhart, Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary said:

“Scottish high streets are the lifeblood of towns and villages across the country.

“SNP policies to increase business rates, increase income tax and its failure to implement a proper business rates appeal system have damaged Scottish retailers – and Scottish high streets continue to struggle.

“The Scottish Conservatives have suggested concrete, constructive solutions to support our high streets not just to survive, but to thrive.

“These are challenging times for our high streets and the SNP has completely failed to respond appropriately.

“Vibrant Scottish high streets are crucial for communities and for businesses.

“Saturday 1 December is ‘Small Business Saturday’, a day on which we should celebrate the vibrancy and diversity of Scotland’s small businesses including those operating on our high streets.

“The SNP must ‘Save Our High Streets’ to ensure that they can, once again, become the beating heart of our communities.”

[Leonard must call out Thornberry](#)

30 Nov 2018



Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard has been challenged to oppose plans for a Labour-SNP pact as set out by shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry yesterday.

On ITV yesterday evening, Mrs Thornberry talked up the potential of Labour forming a minority government with the support of the Scottish National Party in order to get its own Brexit deal through parliament.

Ahead of the meaningful vote on Theresa May’s Brexit deal in the House of Commons on 11 December, she was asked whether Labour would go into a minority government with SNP support.

“Anything, frankly at this moment is possible”, Mrs Thornberry said.

John Lamont, Scottish Conservative MP for Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk said today:

“Emily Thornberry has shown, once again, that you can’t trust Labour to defend Scotland’s decision to stay in the UK.

“It’s clear that Corbyn’s Labour are ready to act as Nicola Sturgeon’s little helpers. They would agree to a second referendum on independence in a heartbeat in order to get into power.

“You’d expect Scottish Labour to be demanding a retraction from Mrs Thornberry. Yet once again, Richard Leonard has simply gone into hiding.

“He needs to come clean: does he also want to hand Nicola Sturgeon the keys to Number Ten? Is that a price he believes is worth paying to get Mr Corbyn into government?”

“Mr Leonard’s Scottish Labour branch office appears to have zero influence over Mr Corbyn. It’s time he showed up for once”

[Scottish Conservatives launch circular economy Food Producers Fund](#)

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30 Nov 2018



The Scottish Conservatives will redirect unspent money from the existing Circular Economy Investment Fund to support food producers and rural communities.

The new Food Producers Fund would drive down costs for rural businesses whilst increasing recycling, energy recovery and maximising value from waste.

The Circular Economy Investment Fund has allocated approximately £5 million so far even though the total funding available to small and medium sized businesses is £18 million.

The Food Producers Fund would focus on:

Onsite anaerobic digestion – to help farmers and other food producers with the capital and technical costs to establish facilities and improve existing facilities in order to produce energy and heat.

Equipment and infrastructure funding – to provide direct funding for equipment to make farms more environmentally friendly and efficient.

Micro-plastic recycling facilities – to position micro plastic-recycling facilities across rural Scotland which would reduce costs and increase convenience for rural and island communities.

Waste hubs – these localised hubs would act as a single access point for groups of businesses, reducing costs and logistics issues and providing an alternative option for farmers banned from burning plastic as of January 2019.

Maurice Golden, Scottish Conservative shadow environment secretary said:

“Our Scottish Conservative food producers fund would give rural communities and farmers the ability to recycle as close to home as possible.

“The SNP is on course to miss key recycling targets and has spectacularly failed to substantially increase the amount of waste Scotland is recycling.

“Indeed, the SNP ban on plastic incineration will leave farmers, particularly those in rural communities, with very few viable options for recycling.

“The Scottish Conservative plan would remove the barriers to recycling that many farmers and rural communities face.

“Simply put, our plan would work with farmers and communities to enable them to recycle and reduce waste; that’s good for all of us.”