

# [Mackay was warned about business rates crisis – and did nothing](#)

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16 Feb 2017



The SNP government was warned about business rates increases last year – but did nothing to help.

Leading business groups wrote to finance secretary Derek Mackay as early as October 2016 spelling out the damaging impact the revaluation would have on hotels, pubs and businesses in Scotland.

The British Hospitality Association said it would have a “severe impact” and “likely lead to an increase in rateable values, and rates payable, by hotels of between 30 and 50 per cent”.

And in November, the Scottish Retail Consortium warned a Holyrood committee: “It will be very difficult to absorb some of the potential costs.”

Cosla even offered to help the Scottish Government do some modelling work on the rates rise, an offer it said “has not been taken up”.

However, the SNP’s response was to insist the revaluation had nothing to do with the Scottish Government – and is still refusing to act in order to help.

The Scottish Conservatives are today repeating their call for Mr Mackay to make a statement to Holyrood next week, and to order an immediate review of the revaluation before it comes into effect.

The party has also slammed Mr Mackay’s comments in the press this morning, when he insisted it was for councils, not central government, to respond.

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

“Business groups were warning about the impact of this revaluation last year.

“Yet, from the very start, the SNP’s response has been to pass the buck and insist it is nothing to do with them.

“It is a complete abdication of responsibility.

“Once again, we see a Scottish Government so obsessed with its campaign for independence that it has fallen asleep at the wheel on the issues that actually matter to people.

“Derek Mackay this morning has once again washed his hands of the matter and declared that it is for councils to act.

“This is from the man who has an extra £500m to spend next year, and who found nearly £200m down the back of the sofa two weeks ago in order to do a deal with the Greens.

“Mr Mackay should come before parliament to set out a clear statement that he will review this revaluation process before it is too late for firms which face going to the wall.

“Anything else will show that this SNP government has lost touch entirely with a crisis it knew was coming – but ignored.”

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The SNP government was repeatedly warned by business groups about the crisis, most prominently by the British Hospitality Association.

### **British Hospitality Association**

‘The 2017 rates revaluation in Scotland is likely to lead to an increase in rateable values, and rates payable, by hotels of between 30-50%. BHA has challenged this with the Assessors and has made known to the Scottish Government its concern over the impact of this on the profitability and sustainability of hotel businesses’ (*British Hospitality Association*, 18 October 2016, [link](#)).

### **William Macleod, British Hospitality Association**

‘BHA is concerned, from what is known about the impact on hospitality and hotel businesses of the potentially severe impact of the 2017 revaluation that TR is likely to be required in the hospitality sector to allow businesses to cope with significant (between 30-50%) increases in rates’ (*William Macleod, British Hospitality Association – Consultation Response: 2017 Non-domestic rating revaluation – consultation on possible transitional arrangements*, [link](#))

### **Councillor Keenan COSLA**

‘More than a year ago, we made an offer to the Government that we would do modelling work on business rates, because we realise that there would need to be some equalising factor across areas, as some industrial areas can raise much more. We would look to do that work but, because that opportunity has not been taken up, we are probably a year or so behind where we could be. If that joint work was going on, we would have an indication of where the figures are.’ (Local Government and Communities Committee Official Report, 28 September 2016, [link](#)).

### **David Lonsdale, Scottish Retail Consortium**

‘Committee members will know some of our gripes about business rates, the large business supplement and the apprenticeship levy—I have a large list

that I can bore the committee with at a later date, if you like. There will be some genuine challenges if retailers are to absorb some of those costs, so they will be looking for sharper deals with suppliers to see whether they can get a better price. They will also be shopping around, just as we advocate that consumers do, to see whether they can get the same quality of produce at better prices. As I said, it will be very difficult to absorb some of the potential costs, but it will be difficult to pass them on to consumers, given the current climate and the stiff competition out there.’ (Official Report, *Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee*, 24 November 2016, p18, [link](#))

### **Scottish Retail Consortium**

‘It is far from clear why firms operating in Scotland should pay more in rates than firms in comparable premises elsewhere in the UK, particularly when many have options over where to invest elsewhere in the UK or indeed abroad. Next year’s rise in the headline poundage rate for all other firms should also be shelved. After all, stimulating business investment is more difficult when costs are rising as it means diverting cash and resources away from growing the business The SRC supports the principle behind the new local discretionary rates relief in the interim period prior to fundamental rates reform. It is a welcome acknowledgement of the need to keep down costs for business. However, we remain to be convinced that its use by councils will either be widespread or substantive enough to be effective’ (Scottish Retail Consortium, *retail industry recommendations for the Scottish Government for its Budget & Spending review* 1 August 2016, p6, [link](#))

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## **[Press release: Change of Her Majesty’s Ambassador to Paraguay](#)**

From:

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Part of:

Mr Matthew Hedges has been appointed Her Majesty’s Ambassador to Paraguay

Mr Matthew Hedges has been appointed Her Majesty’s Ambassador to Paraguay in succession to Dr Jeremy Hobbs, who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Hedges will take up his appointment in August 2017.

## Curriculum Vitae

Full name Matthew James Hedges

2015 – 2016 Princeton University, Master in Public Policy – International Relations  
2012 – 2015 Rangoon, Deputy Head of Mission  
2009 – 2012 Tokyo, Head of Political Section  
2008 – 2009 Turks & Caicos Islands, Head of Governor’s Office  
2006 – 2008 House of Commons, International Development Select Committee, Senior Clerk  
2005 Basra, Head of Chancery  
2005 – 2006 FCO, Team Leader, EU Constitutional Treaty/Future of Europe, EU Directorate  
2001 – 2005 Rabat, Second Secretary Political  
2000 UK Mission to the UN in New York, Adviser  
1999 – 2000 FCO, Desk Officer, NATO Enlargement, Security Policy Department  
1999 Joined FCO

## Further information

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## [News story: Appointment, reappointment and extensions of Parole Board members](#)

Ministers have approved the appointment, reappointment and extensions of Parole Board members. Appointments are subject to security clearance.

Parole Board members are appointed under Schedule 19 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003. The appointment of Parole Board members are made after an open, transparent recruitment process which complies – save for judicial members – with the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (CPA). There are currently 214 Parole Board members.

The Parole Board is an independent body that works with its criminal justice partners to protect the public by risk assessing prisoners to decide whether they can be safely released into the community.

The Parole Board was established by the Criminal Justice Act 1967. It is an Executive Non Departmental Public Body sponsored by the MoJ.

## Appointments

Ministers have approved the appointment of 104 Parole Board members:

## **Independent members**

The members below were appointed from 1 December 2016 until 30 November 2019:

- Shazia Ahmed
- Katy Barrow
- Daniel Bunting
- Dr Rob Cawley
- Joanne Chambers
- Michelle Coulson
- Jo Dowling
- Jacki Duff
- Robert Edmondson-Jones
- Hedd Emrys Vine
- Melanie Essex
- Paulene Gandhi
- Victoria Goodfellow
- Christine Lawrie
- Elaine Moloney
- Douglas Paxton
- Alison Pearson
- Wendy Poynton
- Margaret Prythergch
- Elizabeth Rantzen
- Lisa Sanderson
- Karol Sanderson
- Victoria Scott
- Helena Suffield-Thompson
- Bill Warren
- Sarah Wells
- Jeremy Weston
- Cassie Williams

The following were appointed from 1 July 2017 and until 30 June 2021.

- Sarfraz Ahmad
- Sally Allbeury
- Nicola Auguste
- Joanna Cain
- Rachel Cook
- Amy Coyte
- Angharad Davies
- Emma Davy
- Stefan Fafinski
- Paul French
- Chris Fry
- Philip Hindson
- Gill Hirst
- Lisa Lamb
- Timothy Lawrence
- Siobhan McBride
- Fran McGrath

- Lynn O'Malley
- Helen Potts
- Jayne Salt
- Alex Simmonds
- Alice Sims
- Rebecca Sims
- Robert Smith
- Kay Taylor
- Julia Thackray
- Carol Trimmer

Ministers have approved the appointment from 1 July 2017 until 30 June 2020, the following serving Parole Board members who were successful applicants in the recent open recruitment process.

- Graham Bull
- Sue Dale
- Malcolm Davidson
- Sian Flynn
- Alan Harris
- Bill Mayne
- Clare Mitchell
- Susan Smith
- Ilana Tessler

### **Judicial members**

Ministers have approved the appointment of the following judicial members from 1 December 2016 until 30 November 2019.

- HH Anthony Ansell
- HH Pamela Badley
- HH Roger Chapple
- HHJ Stephen Dawson
- HH John Dowse
- HHJ John Evans
- HH Peter Grobel
- HH Simon Hammond
- HH John Harrow

These members below have been appointed from 1 July 2017 until 30 June 2020.

- The Hon Sir David Calvert-Smith
- HH Nick Coleman
- HH Michael Lawson
- HHJ Philip Wassall

### **Psychiatrist members**

Ministers have approved the appointment of Luke Birmingham and Huw Stone from 1 December 2016 until 30 November 2020.

Ministers have appointed two serving members: Lynne Daly and Caryl Morgan

from 1 December 2016 until 30 November 2020.

Ministers have approved the appointment of Tim McInerny, Chris Jones and Sajid Muzaffar from 1 July 2017 until 30 June 2021.

### **Psychologist members**

Ministers have approved the appointment of the following members. From 1 December 2016 until 30 November 2020:

- Abby Fenton
- Jane Gilbert
- Victoria Magrath
- Mary McMurran
- Rebecca Milner
- Wendy Morgan
- Brendan O'Mahony
- Sue Vivian-Byrne

From 1 July 2017 until 30 June 2021.

- Fiona Ainsworth
- Pamela Attwell
- Elina Baker
- Claire Barker
- Linda Blud
- Vivien Le Fort
- Lindy Maslin
- Libby Payne
- Rachel Roper
- Georgina Rowse
- Alyson Smith
- Claire Smith

### **Re-appointments**

#### **Judicial members**

Ministers have approved the reappointment of four Judicial members. Details of those reappointed and the duration of each reappointment are provided below.

- HHJ Jeffrey Burke QC from 31 August 2016 until 30 August 2018
- HH Robert Brown from 1 September 2016 until 30 August 2018
- HH Michael Burr from 1 September 2016 until 31 August 2018
- HHJ Nicholas Webb from 1 October 2016 until 26 September 2020

#### **Psychiatrist members**

Ministers have approved the reappointments from 1 September 2016 until 31 August 2018 of:

- Ian Keitch

- John O'Grady
- Helen Whitworth

### **Psychologist members**

Ministers have approved the reappointment of 13 members. Details of those reappointed and the duration of each reappointment are provided below.

- Martha Blom-Cooper from 17 April 2016 until 16 April 2018
- Joanna Homewood from 31 August 2016 until 30 August 2018
- Eleni Belevanaki from 7 November 2016 until 6 November 2021
- Jacqueline Bates-Gaston from 28 November 2016 until 13 November 2021

From 28 November 2016 until 27 November 2021;

- Eliza Harris
- Julia Higginbottom
- Claire Hunt
- Sarah Khan
- Sharon Leitch
- Lorraine Mosson-Jones
- Caroline Preston
- Kate Seward
- Anne Williams

### **Extension of appointment**

The CPA also agreed an exemption from the provisions of the Code of Practice in order that Ministers might extend the appointment of a number of serving Parole Board members so that they might support the mentoring and training of newly appointed members. These were as follows:

### **Independent members**

Ministers have approved the extension of the appointments from 1 October 2016 until 30 September 2018 of:

- Ms Kim Evans
- James Haines MBE
- Peter Haynes
- Andrew Mimmack
- Emma Pusill
- Alan Rayner
- Denise White

### **Psychiatrist members**

Ministers have approved the extension of the appointments from 1 October 2016 until 30 September 2018 of:

- Dawn Black
- Derek Chiswick
- Rosmarie Cope



- Paul Courtney
- Sukh Lally

## **Declarations of political interest**

The following Members have declared that they have political interest within the last 5 years:

- Victoria Scott has declared that she had canvassed on behalf of the Labour Party or helped at election, she also acted as a teller outside the local polling station.
- Nicola Auguste has declared that she had canvassed on behalf of the Liberal Democrats Party or helped at the previous 2 general elections by assisting with the organisation of election day activities. This included co-ordinating door to door canvassing and updating databases. She also attended polling stations to ask if voters would give their voter number.
- Sian Flynn has declared that she canvassed for the Conservative Party in the 2015 General Election.
- Chris Jones has declared that he is an active member of the Labour Party and holds an Executive Committee position in his local constituency party. In 2015, he stood as a Parliamentary candidate. In 2016, he stood as the Labour and Cooperative candidate in the Police and Crime Commissioner election.
- Peter Haynes has declared that he stood as an Independent member of Ecclestone Parish Council from 2006 to 2011.

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## **We need urgent action to tackle the understaffing which is contributing to the Tories' prisons crisis – Yasmin Qureshi**

**Yasmin**

**Qureshi MP, Labour's Shadow Prisons Minister**, commenting on today's National Offender

Management Service (NOMS) workforce statistics, said:

"It's no wonder ministers tried to sneak this out during Parliamentary recess.

"It would appear Liz Truss's flagship recruitment drive is failing and frontline officers are still leaving the service.

“We need urgent action to tackle the understaffing which is contributing to the Tories’ prisons crisis.”

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## [News story: UK’s national cyber security centre to help improve skills in Wales](#)

Opened officially by Her Majesty The Queen on Tuesday 14 February 2017, the National Cyber Security Centre’s operational nerve centre in London will manage incidents, analyse threats and offer advice for online security.

By working with businesses, educational facilities and authorities across the UK, the centre will enable generations to navigate the internet safely and be protected from the growing threat of online attack.

Minister for the Cabinet Office, Ben Gummer, toured the centre and outlined the important role UK regions will play in boosting British cyber security.

He said:

Although the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is based in London, cyber attacks can happen anywhere, at any time – and we need to be prepared.

That is why we are expanding our outreach programmes such as CyberFirst, GCHQ degrees and academic centres of excellence, so we can increase skills, build capability and fight cyber attacks wherever they occur.

Alun Cairns, Secretary of State for Wales, said:

Cyber security is of growing importance in our daily lives and I am pleased Wales is playing its part through offering GCHQ-certified degrees.

Hackers are no respecters of national boundaries and businesses and Government installations in Wales are under threat as much as anywhere else in the UK. Wales will now be able to produce the highly skilled workforce we need to combat this new frontier in crime.

The Government is fully committed to defending against cyber threats and a five year National Cyber Security Strategy (NCSS) was announced in November 2016 by the Cabinet Office, supported by £1.9 billion of transformational investment.

It has also announced the creation of Industry 100 – a pioneering initiative that will grant 100 highly competitive NCSC secondments to private sector staff who will work in the centre to bring innovation that wouldn't have been possible without collaboration.

A key objective of the NCSC is to reduce risks to the UK by working with public and private sector organisations to improve their cyber security. Industry 100 will see high quality staff embedded into the NCSC to achieve a better understanding of cyber security using wide and diverse thinking.

The NCSC will work closely with law enforcement and the wider public sector, including the National Crime Agency (NCA) to support cyber security awareness campaigns. The NCSC is tirelessly committed to enhancing the UK's reputation of being a world centre for cyber security research, innovation and skills.

The popular CyberFirst programme is inspiring, encouraging and developing a cyber-savvy cohort of students to help protect the UK's digital society.