

Motorists snub SNP's green vehicle loan scheme

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11 Apr 2018



A finance scheme to persuade motorists to buy electric cars in Scotland has only been used 500 times since its launch in 2011.

Despite SNP efforts to push Transport Scotland's Electric Vehicle Loan initiative, only 214 loan applications have been made in the last year.

It means Scotland is well off course to encourage more electric cars in time for the SNP's petrol and diesel ban in 2032.

The country's four largest cities will have low emission trial zones by 2020, with the trials to start later this year in Glasgow.

But since the launch of the loan scheme – which hands out interest-free loans of up to £35,000 – there has only been limited interest from Scotland's motorists.

And a drive to get black cab drivers on board has also failed, with just 166 Hackney applications in the past seven years.

The figures were obtained by the Scottish Conservatives through Freedom of Information.

Scottish Conservative shadow environment secretary Donald Cameron said:

“The SNP is completely out of step with its own policy here.

“It is miles away from being able to declare Scotland diesel and petrol free by 2032, which will in turn render low emission zone trials in Scotland's main cities utterly worthless.

“The SNP has been completely irresponsible when it comes to this policy.

“Instead of working with the UK Government, the rest of Europe, and even the industry itself, it's brought in its own fancy target just to be different.

“That may play well to the extreme green elements of the Yes movement, but it will infuriate ordinary drivers up and down the country.”

Push for free finance textbooks in schools

8 Apr 2018



A scheme to provide free textbooks to schools on personal finance would boost education and help the economy further down the line, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart wants to mirror a scheme in England which will see half a million books handed to schools there by September this year.

He said the initiative could be done in collaboration with business, and for limited Scottish Government funding would have a positive impact on youngsters.

It would also go some way to reversing the SNP administration's reputation as an anti-business government, he added.

South of the border, money-saving expert Martin Lewis – in partnership with education charities – has pledged £200,000 to help children learn about savings, insurance and debt.

And while personal finance does feature in the Curriculum for Excellence, it is hoped such a resource could help youngsters prepare for the real world, and also consider a career in business from an early stage.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

“The nuts and bolts of education will always be the traditional subjects.

“But preparation for the real world is also essential, and that’s where this scheme could come into play.

“The wheels are already in motion south of the border, and we don’t want our youngsters to be left behind.

“It would not have to be overly expensive to provide these books, and could be done either in partnership with the business community or from Scottish Government funds.

“With more and more youngsters accessing information online, the cost of actually printing these books could be kept low too.

“It’s essential our young people learn about all aspects of personal finance.

“It will improve their own education, and might even help the wider economy further down the line with a generation of young people more knowledgeable about money and how to use it.”

[14 kids a week excluded for using weapons in school](#)

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7 Apr 2018



Children are excluded from schools in Scotland more than 14 times a week for assaults involving weapons, a five-year high.

New figures have shown there were 428 instances of a pupil being excluded for a physical assault using weapons like knives last year, and a further 311 incidents involving improvised weapons.

That total of 739 is higher than the 661 incidents two years previously, and the 710 reports in 2013.

The statistics, published recently by the Scottish Government, are only gathered every two years.

They show a further 336 children were excluded for threats of using a weapon, as well as 1734 for fighting and 361 for substance misuse.

Theft (89), fire raising (190) and even indecent exposure (14) also featured on the list.

Overall, the number of exclusions has declined in recent years.

The 18,377 cases last year – the overwhelming majority of which were temporary – is half the rate of a decade ago.

Scottish Conservative early years spokeswoman Michelle Ballantyne said:

“While it’s generally welcome to see a reduction in the number of exclusions in recent years, the individual reasons are alarming.

“Parents will be horrified that two pupils a day are excluded for violent incidents involving a weapon – either conventional or improvised.

“That shows a problem with discipline remains within our schools, and that teachers need more support in dealing with it for the sake of their own safety and that of other pupils.

“If children aren’t shown now that the use of weapons, and other examples of violence, won’t be tolerated, the chances are they’ll continue doing it into adulthood.

“These figures are a cause of concern not just for schools, but for society more generally.”

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6 Apr 2018



An urgent statement on the NHS Tayside scandal must be the first priority of the Scottish Parliament when it returns after the Easter recess, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The health board has been mired in financial difficulties, culminating in reports that charity cash was used for the day-to-day running of hospitals.

Today, chairman John Connell stood down amid “special measures” being implemented by the Scottish Government.

Now shadow health secretary Miles Briggs has demanded urgent action from his counterpart in the SNP government, Shona Robison.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“The actions from Shona Robison and the SNP which we have witnessed over the last 24 hours demonstrate a government which has lost control of our NHS and which has lost what remaining respect it had from NHS staff.

“NHS Tayside is not the only health board facing serious financial management issues.

“SNP ministers have presided over a situation where financial scrutiny of NHS Boards and the Integrated Joint Boards has been at best insufficient and at worse incompetent.

“After 11 years of Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP centralisation and mismanagement it will clearly now suit incompetent ministers to blame NHS senior management for the failings and financial difficulties which we have seen across the board.

“Perhaps it’s time they started to look closer to home.”

9 out of 10 bike thieves get away with it

5 Apr 2018



The overwhelming majority of bicycle thefts in Scotland go unsolved, new figures have shown.

Nearly 90 per cent of reports of a stolen pedal bike went without a culprit being found in the last year.

The figures obtained by the Scottish Conservatives revealed there were 5394 recorded crimes for bike thefts in the 10 months to January 31, the equivalent of 17 a day.

However, just 548 of these were recorded as “detected”, according to the Police Scotland data.

The number of thefts is on course to be significantly higher than 2016/17, when 5424 incidents were reported for the entire year.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said a new focus was required from the single force to improve clear-up rates of bicycle thefts.

There was also huge disparity in the solving rate across the country.

In Edinburgh, just one in every 23 cycle thefts were solved, compared to nearly 50 per cent in Fife.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“The stealing of pedal bikes may not be the most serious crime to come across the desk of police each day.

“But it’s serious none-the-less, and to see the overwhelming majority go undetected is extremely worrying.

“It sends out a terrible message that, if you decide to nick someone else’s

bike, the chances are you'll get away with it.

"In places like Edinburgh, there's almost a cast-iron guarantee the police won't catch you.

"Bicycle owners deserve better. We're supposed to be encouraging healthy living and getting more people on two wheels is a key way of doing that.

"But if hundreds of pounds of worth of equipment is so easily stolen, with so little chance of it being recovered, that will harm that initiative."