

Scottish Government must cut the waste not raise taxes

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- Scottish Government must cut the waste not raise taxes

10 Dec 2017



More than £100 million of taxpayers' money has been "chucked in the bin" under the SNP Government, the Scottish Conservatives can reveal today.

It comes as the party begins a new campaign today to "cut the waste" ahead of this week's Scottish Budget.

Nicola Sturgeon is preparing to use that budget to increase taxes on hard working Scots, claiming she needs the money to pay for the SNP's spending plans.

The Scottish Conservatives will instead argue this week that Ministers should avoid tax increases by promoting greater efficiency in the public sector and getting better value for money.

Analysis of the Scottish Government's accounts over the last decade reveals evidence of endemic waste and inefficiency.

Losses totalling £112m were found in the Scottish Government Consolidated Accounts for each of the last ten years as well as Freedom of Information Requests. Individual losses over £250,000 have to be detailed individually.

Some individual examples of these losses include:

- £32,000 lost over the last 3 years by civil servants losing mobile phones and computers
- £2.4m lost after the Scottish Government gave a grant to a firm that promptly went bust
- £440,000 lost in the Prison Service after an IT system was dumped due to 'technical difficulties'

Scottish Conservative shadow cabinet secretary for finance Murdo Fraser said:

"Instead of raising our taxes, the SNP needs to get its own house in order.

"These figures show that, under the SNP, more than £100 million of taxpayers' money has been simply been chucked in the bin.

"The Nationalists have the money to keep taxes down, but thanks to mismanagement and waste, they now want taxpayers to cough up.

“Ultimately, driving up taxes will damage Scotland’s economy, cutting the funds that pay for schools and hospitals.

“There is still time for Derek MacKay to see sense. The SNP promised not to increase the basic rate of income tax. He must honour that pledge this week, or risk losing all credibility.

“Scotland should not be the highest taxed part of the UK. Instead, the SNP should cut the waste and deliver better value for taxpayers.”

[Police chief had £53k tax bill settled from public purse](#)

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- Police chief had £53k tax bill settled from public purse

8 Dec 2017



A senior police officer had their personal tax bill worth £53,000 settled by the tax payer, an Audit Scotland report has revealed.

The same deputy chief constable – who isn’t named – also received £49,000 in relocation expenses.

Neither payment was properly disclosed by the Scottish Police Authority, which has been severely criticised in today’s report.

The SPA was also criticised for appointing three temporary senior members of staff at a cost of £344,000.

The report stated that, even if the SPA does eventually achieve financial balance in 2020/21 as it predicts, it “may then move back into a position of annual deficits due to unaddressed recurring cost pressures”.

It’s the latest crisis to beset policing in Scotland, after a raft of suspensions and resignations of senior staff over the past year.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“This report could lead some to think the SPA has been behaving like some kind of dodgy offshore tax haven.

“People will be astonished that senior police officers are having their tax liabilities settled by the tax payer.

“And they’ll be incredulous that none of this was properly declared.

“One of the driving forces behind setting up a single force was to improve transparency and accountability.

“Instead, things seem murkier than ever.

“At a time when the public’s trust in the management of Police Scotland has been so severely tested, this will only make things significantly worse.

“In a debate just this week I demanded that the SNP government gets a handle on this situation but the call was rejected.

“It must act before the relationship is damaged beyond repair.”

[Ruth welcomes Brexit deal progress](#)

8 Dec 2017



Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson has welcomed a breakthrough in negotiations between Britain and the EU on the Brexit deal.

She said the announcement was “a real step forward”, and that the agreement “ensures the integrity of the UK”.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“This morning’s announcement is a real step forward.

“It confirms the rights of EU citizens living here will be protected, as well as those of Brits living abroad.

“It guarantees there will be no hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. These are both hugely welcome steps and I congratulate the Prime Minister on securing them.

“Throughout this process, my overriding priority has been to ensure we act as one United Kingdom and no home nation is left behind.

“I am therefore glad that this morning’s agreement ensures the integrity of the UK.

“The work on a comprehensive trade agreement with the EU27 can now begin.

“This will require more hard work and patience. But I am optimistic that Britain and Europe can together build a new relationship, underpinned by the ties of trade, shared values and mutual interest.

“It is in all our interests.”

[SNP roll-out of low emissions zones ‘unrealistic’](#)

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- SNP roll-out of low emissions zones ‘unrealistic’

7 Dec 2017



The timescale for the SNP’s drive to create low emissions zones in Scotland’s cities is unrealistic and causes concern to thousands of motorists, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Transport minister Humza Yousaf confirmed today that trial zones will be in place by 2018, with Glasgow likely to be the first city to introduce restricted access.

Scotland’s four biggest cities will have low emissions areas by 2020.

It means drivers will face potentially hefty fines, while bus companies may be forced to upgrade entire fleets while maintaining current service levels.

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Jamie Greene said while the party was broadly supportive of the Low Emission Zones, and the objective they seek to achieve, much detail was still lacking and many people are justifiably concerned about the unrealistic timescales for roll-out.

Earlier this year, the SNP confirmed it wanted to phase out diesel and petrol cars several years ahead of the rest of the UK and other European countries.

This is despite transport experts saying that the infrastructure is not in place to manage the zones, and that motorists are clearly not ready for being banned from their own cities.

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Jamie Greene said:

“The SNP confirmed today that low emissions zones will be in place by 2018.

“Well that’s just 24 days away, which is why so many are concerned about this unrealistic timeframe.

“There are many serious and substantial questions which the transport minister was unable to answer today.

"We support the potential positive outcomes that the zones could create, but are very concerned about the timescale and lack of detail.

"Many thousands of law-abiding everyday drivers will be affected by these restrictions, as will city residents and local businesses.

"Why should they be penalised for car purchase decisions they took before the zones were introduced or announced?

"People in Scotland's cities will be justifiably concerned about possibly being banned from driving to and from their own doorsteps.

"Those concerns must be listened to by the Scottish Government if it pushes ahead with these plans."

[Sturgeon pledges to stick with 'broken' named person plans](#)

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- Sturgeon pledges to stick with 'broken' named person plans

7 Dec 2017



Nicola Sturgeon will plough ahead with her hated named person plans, despite the policy being "in tatters".

The First Minister was challenged on the issue today by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson, who said the parliament had now joined parents across the country in losing patience with the scheme.

Yesterday, Holyrood's Education Committee said it wasn't able to scrutinise the legislation because of a lack of detail from the Scottish Government.

It means the plans could be delayed until late next year, having already been deemed unlawful by the Supreme Court.

Despite that, at First Minister's Questions, Ms Sturgeon said she would "proceed with the plans because they are in the best interests of children".

She even defended her government's approach of seeking out witnesses who were due to appear at the Education Committee in advance of them giving evidence on named person.

Despite concerns that the Scottish Government was trying to influence these

groups, she said it was “the sensible way” to do business.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The SNP’s named person plans are in tatters.

“Everyone wants protection for vulnerable children but this is not the way to do it.

“It’s now clear that parliament has joined the public in no longer having confidence in these plans.

“We should focus resource on those who actually need it, rather than having blanket interference for every family in Scotland.

“The Scottish Conservatives are willing to get round the table and find a fresh solution to help and protect vulnerable youngsters.

“But first the SNP needs to ditch this broken plan, which has been ruled unlawful, and is hated by parents the length and breadth of the country.”

It was revealed yesterday that the named person plan has been delayed again after Education Committee involvement:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/12/more-delays-for-snps-named-person-scheme/>

It’s been reported that the Scottish Government met organisations due to give evidence on named person ahead of their committee appearance:

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-government-undermined-expert-evidence-over-named-person-1-4617207>