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- Police Scotland changes 'must not deplete the frontline'

27 Feb 2017



Frontline policing in Scotland must be protected amid a range of changes being proposed by the single force, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Police Scotland unveiled its plan for the next decade today, including an acknowledgement that officer numbers would have to reduce.

This is despite a previous pledge by the SNP to retain 1000 extra police officers on Scotland's streets.

'2026: Serving a Changing Scotland' set out how the force will adapt over the next decade.

The report said there would be a £60 million black hole by the end of next year, a statistic that would endure "without the commencement of an effective transformation plan".

Workforce numbers would be protected in 2017/18, the report said, but no such commitment was in place for future years.

Police Scotland said "bureaucracy" was still one of the major internal challenges it faced, despite the single force being created to reduce such issues.

And the paper poured cold water on SNP claims that Scotland is safer now than it's been in 40 years, pointing out "crime figures are not an accurate measure of demand".

At the document's launch, the Scottish Police Authority warned 400 fewer officers would be in place by 2020, and that hundreds were already filling back office duties.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

"These are extremely stark warnings about the future of Police Scotland.

"It's absolutely imperative these planned changes do not deplete the frontline of policing in Scotland.

"The SNP created the single force on the basis it would save money, be more

efficient and ensure more time could be spent fighting crime.

“Instead, four years in, there’s a black hole of tens of millions of pounds, officer numbers are to be reduced and bureaucracy is as much an issue as ever.

“The Scottish Government has been in sole charge of justice for nearly a decade now, and these bleak warnings are a Result of its choices.

“We now need urgent assurances that any changes made to Police Scotland’s approach will not put public safety at risk.”

To see a copy of the report, visit:

https://consult.scotland.police.uk/consultation/2026/user_uploads/policing-2026-strategy-for-consultation.pdf

[Time for whole-life sentences to bring justice for murder victims](#)

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- Time for whole-life sentences to bring justice for murder victims

23 Feb 2017



A member’s bill on whole-life sentences will be brought before MSPs following an exchange at First Minister’s Questions today.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson highlighted the case of the killer of 15-year-old Paige Doherty, who earlier this month had his sentence reduced by four years on appeal.

She asked Nicola Sturgeon to commit to introducing whole-life sentences, so that judges could ensure killers like John Leathem were locked up for life.

The First Minister stopped short of committing to the move, meaning a member’s bill will now be brought forward in an attempt to make whole life sentences possible north of the border.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The First Minister acknowledged this was a fair issue to raise.

“The question for her SNP government is why it has spent 10 years doing nothing about it.

“It’s entirely unacceptable that, less than a year after watching her killer get locked up, Paige Doherty’s family should go through the ordeal of seeing him reduce his sentence, on the flawed basis he’s not as bad a killer as others.

“Of course it is right to point out we should uphold the independence of the judiciary.

“But it is also the case that the parliament makes law and the Scottish Government sets the framework under which our judges operate.

“That’s why there has to be change.

“A system which cuts a child murderer’s sentence because he’s deemed not as bad as others is rightly seen by most people as a disgrace.

“So if the SNP won’t act then we will, by pushing ahead with a member’s bill making the case for the introduction of whole-life sentencing in Scotland.

“Whole-life sentences are a tool that judges should have at their disposal. As it stands, in Scotland, they do not.”

The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly called for whole-life sentences in Scotland:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2012/01/life-sentences-should-mean-life/>
<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2013/05/new-life-sentences-for-police-killers-puts-more-pressure-on-snp-to-toughen-law-in-scotland/>

The killer of Paige Doherty successfully reduced his sentence by four years, arguing he wasn’t as bad as other killers:

<https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/628240/paige-doherty-campaign-no-justice-for-paige/>

Tens of thousands of businesses won’t benefit from SNP rate relief plan

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- Tens of thousands of businesses won’t benefit from SNP rate relief plan

22 Feb 2017



Nearly 100,000 businesses facing rates rises will not benefit from the relief plan announced by the SNP Government yesterday.

Following pressure from the Scottish Conservatives, finance secretary Derek Mackay announced a one-year 12.5% cap on rates rises for the hospitality industry and for office premises in the North East.

However it was condemned as a mere 'sticking plaster' by the Scottish Retail Consortium.

And a detailed breakdown of Scottish Government figures has revealed that the relief plan will benefit just 9,530 businesses, with 98,777 not receiving any help at all from the Scottish Government.

This includes 8,899 businesses in Glasgow, with just 563 being helped by yesterday's announcement.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

"For weeks the SNP ignored the issue of business rates, and now it turns out that their proposed plan will only help a fraction of businesses.

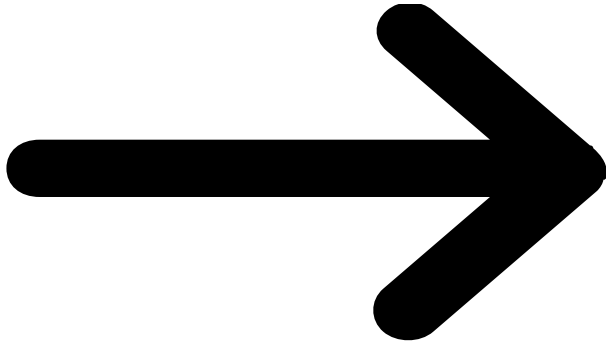
"Around Scotland businesses are facing closure if they don't receive real help from the Scottish Government, but these figures show that the vast majority will still not receive any assistance.

"It's no wonder that Derek Mackay's statement has done little to ease concerns in the business community, especially as even those who do benefit from this plan will only see their rates capped for a year.

"We need to see meaningful action from the SNP if we are to avoid seeing these businesses going to the wall, and it's becoming clear that the SNP need to go back to the drawing board on this plan."

[BBC announces major investment in Scotland](#)

22 Feb 2017



Significant investment in news and programming in Scotland by the BBC has been welcomed by the Scottish Conservatives.

Shadow culture secretary Jackson Carlaw said the additional £20 million injection would provide viewers north of the border with exactly what they wanted, while not jeopardising access to UK-wide programming.

The corporation's director general, Tony Hall, announced today there would be a new BBC channel for Scotland.

Broadcast every evening, it will have an initial budget of £30 million and carry news and entertainment programmes.

It will also provide the opportunity for journalists and programme-makers in Glasgow to work on wider BBC projects, creating 80 new jobs.

Despite the benefits set out today, SNP MP John Nicolson still found fault with the news, saying the Beeb had "missed an opportunity to deliver for the people of Scotland".

Scottish Conservative shadow culture secretary Jackson Carlaw said:

"This is an extremely welcome announcement.

"It's good for jobs, journalism, scrutiny and programming.

"It also ensures those who still prefer the UK-wide BBC news at 6pm, and other programming on BBC1, get to keep that too.

"It's no surprise, despite this fantastic investment, to see SNP MPs complain about it.

"Only they, with their inherent and serial grievance agenda, could find fault with this.

"The fact Scottish-based journalists will now have a chance to showcase their work elsewhere across the network is also a development which should be applauded."

Scottish Conservatives launch major policy paper on the environment

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- Scottish Conservatives launch major policy paper on the environment

22 Feb 2017



A series of new initiatives designed to protect Scotland's environment and tackle climate change have been published today by the Scottish Conservatives in a major new policy paper.

Timed to mark Scottish Environment Week, the country's main opposition party is setting out a range of new ideas in a bid to lead the debate on how we best reduce carbon emissions, protect Scotland's natural resources and encourage sustainable growth.

Writing in the paper's foreword, shadow environment secretary Maurice Golden warns that our natural resources cannot be consumed at the current "unsustainable" rate – and more work must be done by the Scottish Government to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

The paper also sets out new ways to ensure Scotland's rich biodiversity and natural landscape is protected to the highest environmental standards – and to work with urban and rural communities to grow Scotland's economy.

The new paper today includes policies which support:

- A step change in support for electric cars including incentives for electric car ownership – such as free town centre parking and allowing use of bus and taxi lanes. The document also proposes a new fund to expand electric vehicle charging across Scotland and urges public bodies to consider electric vehicle ownership.
- A target to ensure 50 per cent of Scotland's energy comes from renewables by 2030, with individual targets for heat, transport and electricity sectors.
- The establishment of new national parks where there is public support.
- The creation of a new Centre for Circular Economy Excellence – a world-leading facility to examine how best to maximise our use of natural resources.
- Support for nuclear as part of a low carbon economy – with new plants at Torness and Hunterston.
- Backing for 10 per cent of all the Scottish Government's capital budget should be spent on energy efficiency measures – with the aim of ensuring all homes are energy efficiency by 2030.
- A new target to ensure 75 per cent of all waste is recycled by 2035

through the creation of an easy-to-use collection system.

- The creation of 15,000 hectares of new quality woodland per year – up from 7600 a year.
- New developments to maximise solar energy capture and install heat pumps in design considerations.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“How we protect our environment and tackle climate change says a lot about us.

“It says what kind of nation we want to live in. It says how we want to engage with the world and each other. It says what sort of future we want to build for our children.

“The Scottish Conservatives believe in protecting and enhancing our natural heritage.

“We must do more than just repair damage, we must also improve our environment. We believe it is our duty to the next generation to leave Scotland a better place than we found it.

“Our approach will provide Scots with a greener and more pleasant land to call home.

“We set ourselves this task because it is one of the greatest challenge of our times.

“It is for this generation to tackle the issue and ensure that the next will live in a better, more productive and more sustainable world. I ask you to join us as we meet that challenge head on.”

Scottish Conservative shadow environment secretary Maurice Golden said:

“We must decrease our reliance on products manufactured abroad in order to reduce our carbon emissions but also increase jobs here in Scotland.

“To successfully transition to a circular economy, we need to refocus current Scottish Government intervention.

“Leadership on technological advancement, education and behaviour change, and the creation of a Centre for Circular Economy Excellence will together help to achieve an estimated £3 billion economic boost.

“The bottom line is that a circular economy will be a win for businesses, a win for consumers and a win for the environment.”

To access the paper, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Global-Challenge-Local-Leadership.pdf>