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- SNP arrogance on drug-driving putting many at risk

10 Feb 2017



The Scottish Conservatives are urging the SNP to start tackling the issue of drug-driving in Scotland after falling behind the rest of the UK on this issue.

At a Road Safety Scotland conference, it was announced that since English drug-driving laws came into effect two years ago there had been a four-fold increase in the number of drivers being charged with drug-driving.

Despite the evidence clearly highlighting that the introduction of the legislation saw improvements down south, when asked in yesterday's First Ministers Questions, the SNP continued to swerve questions on why similar provisions are yet to be introduced in Scotland.

The SNP's continued dismissal suggests that it is reluctant to utilise English law, which is impeding Scotland's ability to deal with this serious issue.

## **Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:**

"It's wrong that Scotland is so far behind the curve, compared with the rest of the United Kingdom, on this important issue

"The SNP knows that as a result of the changes in England and Wales, the number of motorists charged with drug driving rose significantly and convictions have improved.

"Those driving under the influence of drugs should not be anywhere near the wheel – they not only put their own safety at risk, but others too.

"The SNP's sheer stubbornness is preventing Scotland from finding a way to deal with drug-driving in the best possible way. "The evidence already exists that changes in England and Wales have had the desired effect and the SNP must act on this now."

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Scottish legal news article that clarifies the success of the English success of drug-driving laws and Scottish Government plans:

## Scotland 'playing catch-up' on education under the SNP

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9 Feb 2017



Scotland is “playing catch” up when it “used to lead the world” on education, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Pointing to a damning report by education experts the Sutton Trust, leader Ruth Davidson said the blame lay entirely at the door of an SNP government which has been in charge for 10 years.

The issue dominated First Minister’s Questions today, but Nicola Sturgeon was unable to offer any explanation for the dreadful findings.

In addition, new analysis has illustrated just how badly Scottish pupils are lagging their contemporaries around the world.

**Using PISA statistics released at the end of last year, the Scottish Conservatives found 15-year-old Scottish pupils are:**

- **Two years behind Singapore on science**
- **One year behind Ireland and Canada on reading**
- **One year behind Estonia and the Czech Republic on maths**

It backs up conclusions in the Sutton Trust report which states: “There is no specific area where able children in Scotland really excel.”

It also found there had been “a pronounced and sustained decline in able pupils’ performance in science, equivalent to around a year of schooling” north of the border.

Today, Ruth also challenged the First Minister on why a scheme to twin flagship schools with underperforming ones had been dropped by the Scottish Government.

And she urged the SNP to do more than simply launch poster campaigns when it came to attracting more people to the teaching profession.

## **Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:**

“Scotland used to lead the world in education, but under a decade of SNP government we are now playing catch-up.

“Pupils are not only falling behind their contemporaries south of the border, but are struggling in comparison with countries right across the world.

“That’s the legacy of this SNP government’s 10 years in power.

“It is in sole charge of education and has no-one else to blame.

“The Sutton Trust made a range of recommendations, but Nicola Sturgeon seems unwilling to commit to any of them.

“This inaction is harming the prospects of our children and, considering the First Minister wants to be judged on education, it’s clear much more needs to be done.”

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For more information on the Sutton Trust report, visit:

<http://www.suttontrust.com/newsarchive/three-year-attainment-gap-between-poor-pupils-and-their-better-off-classmates-separates-britains-brightest-teenage-girls/>

For the methodology on the comparative PISA findings, contact the Scottish Conservative press office.

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## **[SNP slammed for “unnecessary” tax grab](#)**

8 Feb 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have attacked the SNP Government today after it emerged that it will impose the highest taxes in the UK on people – despite having had £185m to spare in its kitty.

The extra cash was only revealed last week when the SNP used it to buy off the Scottish Greens.

□The £125m underspend, plus £60m in the business rates pool is far more than the £108m the Scottish Government says it will collect by setting higher thresholds on income tax than the rest of the UK.

That decision is now set to cost jobs and stymie growth, amid warnings from business leaders that it will put off investors and firms from committing to

Scotland.

**Finance spokesman Murdo Fraser said:**

“Throughout this entire budget process, Derek Mackay has tried to hide the facts from taxpayers in Scotland. Now we know why.

“It turns out Mr Mackay had more than enough money to pay for his budget and pass on a tax break to working families. Yet he opted instead to keep the cash in his back pocket in order to buy off the Greens.

“The SNP could easily have turned to us for support in giving taxpayers a break. But Nicola Sturgeon is a First Minister who would rather stitch up a deal with her independence supporters in the Green party than give taxpayers a break.

“We are about to become the highest taxed part of the UK. Now we know: it is not just bad government, and bad policy – but it is utterly unnecessary as well.”

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## [Fraser: Jobs boom would net SNP Government £800m](#)

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- Fraser: Jobs boom would net SNP Government £800m

7 Feb 2017



The Scottish Government would gain a near £800m budget bonus if Scotland’s jobs market delivered for all working people, finance spokesman Murdo Fraser will say in a key note speech this evening.

Delivering his response to last week’s SNP budget in a Reform Scotland lecture, Mr Fraser will call on the Nationalist government to focus on economic growth – saying it will deliver extra cash to the SNP Government’s coffers.

Figures compiled by the party show that if all part-time workers who want a full-time job could get one, tax revenues to the Scottish Government would increase by £337m.

Similarly, if inactive people who want a job also found one, the Scottish Government would stand to gain by £435m in extra income tax.

Mr Fraser will say that this combined £772m windfall provides an illustration of the kind of budget boost the SNP would gain if it only prioritised jobs over tax rises.

The Scottish Conservatives have already shown that simply by increasing the proportion of higher and additional rate taxpayers to the UK average, the SNP Government would stand to gain £600m in extra revenue.

Instead, as part of a deal with the Scottish Greens last week, the SNP decided to set the highest income tax rates in the UK for Scotland – and failed to set out a plan to deliver economic growth.

**In his speech, hosted by Shepherd and Wedderburn , Mr Fraser will say:**

*“As the Fraser of Allander institute point out: ‘Scotland’s economic performance – or more accurately, Scotland’s relative performance – will have a greater bearing on the spending plans of Holyrood than ever before’”*

“To see what the potential benefit could be, we did some basic modelling, trying to understand what the impact would be if Scotland’s economy motored up a gear.

“If Scotland matched the UK proportions of higher and additional rate taxpayers, tax revenues would increase by around £600 million.

“If every person in Scotland currently on a part-time contract who wants to go full-time could do so – revenues would increase by about £337 million.

“And if everyone in Scotland who is currently economic inactive and wants to find a job – but can’t – if they found work, revenues would increase by £435 million.

“These figures give you a sense of potential if we grew faster, and reached UK-wide norms.

“And of course – it’s not just me saying it. Alex Salmond, remember, estimated that matching UK growth would be worth £4 billion.

“I wonder what Alex Salmond would make of Derek Mackay’s budget.

“And I miss that old SNP.

“We might have had our differences, but at least we agreed on this guiding principle of government: if you want more money for services, start with growth.

“Bairns not tax bombs, you could say.”

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# [Time for SNP and Labour to become 'born-again democrats'](#)

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- Time for SNP and Labour to become 'born-again democrats'

7 Feb 2017



The SNP and Labour should become “born-again democrats” and accept the result of the EU referendum, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Speaking at a Scottish Parliament debate today – dubbed by Nicola Sturgeon as the most historic in Holyrood history – chief whip John Lamont criticised political opponents for seeking to reject the Article 50 process.

And turning on its head a nationalist accusation that the Scottish Conservatives were “born-again Brexiteers”, he said it was “time for the SNP to accept the result of the EU referendum”.

Today’s debate brings the total number of hours Brexit has been debated to 37, compared with just eight hours on education, something the SNP claims to be a priority.

## **Scottish Conservative chief whip John Lamont said:**

“The SNP is keen to call the Scottish Conservatives ‘born-again Brexiteers’, but perhaps it’s time for the nationalists to become born-again democrats.

“They’ve been on the losing side of two recent referendums, and seem unable to accept the result of either.

“And with today’s performance, it seems Scottish Labour aren’t much better at accepting the will of the people.

“The Scottish Government should be focusing on getting the best deal for both Scotland and the UK.

“It should be looking for the right solution for Scotland’s needs, especially on matters like farming, fisheries, trade and research support.

“We are entering a challenging time, with pitfalls to be avoided and opportunities to be seized.

“The next two years must not be about game-playing, grandstanding or political posturing.”