

# [Stats reveal health board where 1 in 5 operations are cancelled](#)

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- Stats reveal health board where 1 in 5 operations are cancelled

7 Feb 2017



A Scottish health board was forced to cancel a fifth of planned operations in December, new figures have revealed.

ISD Scotland data showed, in NHS Highland, 19 per cent of elective operations were called off.

Around half of those were due to capacity issues within hospitals in the area.

Nationwide, 10.1 per cent of operations were cancelled, the highest in almost a year.

It is the latest set of statistics illustrating the difficulties being faced by the NHS around Christmas.

Health boards are continually failing to hit the four-hour waiting time for accident and emergency patients, while delayed discharge continues to be a problem.

Other reasons set out by ISD Scotland for cancellations are hospitals scrapping procedures for clinical reasons, and patients themselves deciding against going under the knife.

**Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Donald Cameron said:**

“Everyone appreciates the winter months are the toughest for health boards to deal with.

“But even so, for one in five planned operations to be cancelled is nothing short of dreadful.

“It’s a massive inconvenience for patients across the Highlands, many of whom are vulnerable and in need of care, and may well be coming a long distance.

“There will always be occasions when the patient wants to cancel the procedure, but this is clearly far too high a statistic.

“The SNP has been in sole charge of health for a decade now and this falls squarely at its door.

“NHS Highland has not had its problems to seek, and it’s essential these appalling figures are not repeated in future months.”

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To see a spreadsheet of all cancelled procedures, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2017-02-07-Cancellations.xlsx>

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## [SNP rift over business rate hikes](#)

6 Feb 2017



Pressure is mounting on the SNP after two of its politicians voiced concerns over plans to significantly increase business rates.

Mairi Evans, MSP for Angus North and Mearns, and Stuart Donaldson, MP for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine, both admitted that the SNP’s Budget could result in serious issues for many Scottish businesses in the future.

After meeting with Aberdeenshire hotel owners last week, Ms Evans told the Mearns Leader that she will be “asking both Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Government what actions will be taken to mitigate the impact of the new values”.

Mr Donaldson meanwhile, said: “We met some of the local business people to discuss their concerns over business rates.”

He added: “We both know how vital small businesses are to Aberdeenshire and how much of a driving force tourism is to the local community”.

The comments from the SNP politicians are the latest evidence of the growing internal division within its ranks over the Budget.

Last week during First Ministers Questions Ruth Davidson embarrassed the SNP after she revealed that the SNP’s Banff and Macduff branch had cancelled a reservation for room hire at a local hotel which had been forced to increase its prices due to the rise in business rates.

**Scottish Conservative MSP for North East Scotland Liam Kerr said:**

“The SNP rebellion against the rise in business rates continues.

“Last week, it was the SNP Banff branch which pulled their business from a local hotel after it was forced to pass on costs. Now two local SNP politicians have jumped on the bandwagon as well.

“I wrote to Derek Mackay last week demanding answers, but I have not had any response at all.

“When will he get it? Fresh from slapping the highest taxes in the UK on people across Scotland, he has totally failed to face up to the outrage from across Scotland over these staggering increases.

“As Ruth Davidson said last week, if even the SNP can’t support these rate rises – isn’t it time the SNP leadership did something about it?”

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Please see a copy of the Mearns Leader article here:

<http://www.mearnsleader.co.uk/news/politics/mp-and-msps-against-business-rates-hike-1-4355327>

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## [Economic think tank questions Holyrood budget process](#)

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6 Feb 2017



A leading economic think tank has queried the Holyrood budget process after it emerged the Scottish Government identified an extra £220million not included in December’s draft budget plans.

In a blog published on its website, the Fraser of Allander Institute said that the sources of the additional funds – found just weeks after the original budget was published – are “as yet unclear”.

The Scottish Conservatives have said that the findings raise questions about the SNP’s decision to strike a high tax deal with the Greens.

**Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative Finance spokesman, said:**

“This analysis from the respected Fraser of Allander Institute destroys any claim by the SNP that they have to charge people more tax than in the rest of the UK.

“Far from suffering from so-called cutbacks, it turns out the

SNP Government had tens of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money squirreled away in their accounts. Instead of returning this to working families in their pay cheques, as they could have, they instead used it to buy off the Greens.

"The SNP could have worked with us to ensure Scotland does not become the highest taxed part of the UK. Instead they chose to do a deal with a Green party which, like the SNP, wants to take Scotland back to an unwanted referendum on independence.

"The SNP did not need to tax people in Scotland more, but it did so nonetheless. This will be bad for the economy and bad for growth."

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Link to Fraser of Allander report:

<https://fraserofallander.org/2017/02/03/boosting-the-scottish-governments-budget/>

The story is carried in the Sunday Times today:

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/scotland/scots-think-tank-queries-holyrood-budget-boost-t082k3lph>

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## [Holyrood report highlights the importance of Scotland's trade with rest of UK](#)

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3 Feb 2017



A prominent Holyrood Committee has today published a report highlighting the importance of Scotland's domestic trade with the rest of the UK.

The Scottish Parliament's Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee, which has cross party representation, has today issued its report entitled: 'The Economic Impact of Leaving the European Union'.

The committee has taken evidence on many issues including possible impacts

and opportunities for Scotland's exporters arising from the UK's vote to leave the European Union.

Expert evidence given to the Committee has stressed the importance of Scotland maintaining unfettered access to the rest of the UK market, and also more needs to be done to support and encourage Scottish businesses to export to the EU and beyond'.

This comes only a week after Scottish Government export statistics confirmed that trade with the rest of the UK is four times more important to Scotland than trade with the rest of the EU.

**Scottish Conservative shadow secretary for the economy, Dean Lockhart said:**

'This report is a welcome addition to the debate on the EU and Scotland's trading relationships.

"The committee heard from several expert witnesses who stressed the importance of Scotland retaining a free trading relationship with the rest of the UK, as it is over four times more important than our trade with the rest of the EU.

'This report also highlights the need to better equip our companies to deal in foreign markets, especially with significant opportunities to expand our trade in China and India.

'As the report itself concludes: it is clear from evidence received that more needs to be done to support and encourage Scottish businesses to export to the EU and beyond.

'It is now up to this SNP Government to work together with the UK Government in the upcoming negotiations to make sure that we get the best possible deal for Scotland and the UK."

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The report can be accessed here:

[http://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_EconomyJobsFairWork/Reports/EJFWS052017R02.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S5_EconomyJobsFairWork/Reports/EJFWS052017R02.pdf)

**Professor R. Bradley MacKay, Chair in Strategic Management, University of St Andrews Management School provided evidence that:**

"For the foreseeable future, the UK will be Scotland's most important trading relationship and trading partner. Anything that comes between that will have a challenging impact on the Scottish economy. If we combine that with potentially being out of the EU, too, it is not a scenario worth thinking about—to be frank with you.

"Scotland's number 1 priority must always be to keep that trade relationship with the rest of the UK open and fluid".

**Neil Francis, International Operations Director, Scottish Development International commented:**

“Why would we try to make it more difficult to trade with our largest trading partner or reduce the amount of trade that we do with the rest of the UK? Whatever circumstances play out, it will be paramount that we protect free trade or the open market with the rest of the UK.”

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## [Hundreds of thousands of Scots now paying more tax](#)

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2 Feb 2017



Hundreds of thousands of Scots face paying more income tax after the SNP and the Greens conspired to vote through a high-tax budget.

Under the plans announced by the Scottish Government, 374,000 people will pay more than they would if they lived south of the border.

They include train drivers, nurse consultants and some teachers.

It is confirmation that finance secretary Derek Mackay’s budget will make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK.

The blow comes on top of additional rates being charged to businesses, another measure that will damage the economy and punish hardworkers.

Shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser pointed out that the SNP used to believe low taxes would encourage growth and therefore provide more money for public services.

He added in today’s Holyrood stage one debate that the SNP had been persuaded of a left-wing agenda by the Greens, who will provide the support necessary to get the budget through.

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

“Derek Mackay could drop his plans to make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK and work with us to deliver an ambitious budget focused on growing the economy.

“Instead, he’s turned hard left and embraced the anti-growth, anti-business agenda of the Greens.

“The SNP was well-warned by the business community as to the consequences of going further on tax than he originally intended. The Chambers of Commerce described it as ‘highly dangerous’.

“But the nationalists have shown contempt for the views of Scottish business, and have demonstrated they have zero interest in trying to help grow our under-performing economy.

“This is a weak, hesitant and dismal set of measures.

“The budget will see local services slashed while council taxes are being hiked, and cut funding to enterprise networks and reinforce reductions in college places when we should be doing the opposite.

“It sends out the message that the risk-taker, the wealth-creator, the entrepreneur, and the successful are not welcome here.

“Only the Scottish Conservatives champion the Scottish economy, are on the sides of businesses, taxpayers and hard-working families.”

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In Scotland, there are 2,560,000 taxpayers in total, of which:

2,150,000 pay the basic rate (84.0 per cent);

356,000 pay the higher rate (13.9 per cent) and

18,000 pay the additional rate (0.7 per cent)

(HMRC, *Table 2.2 Number of income taxpayers, by country*, 18 May 2016, [link](#)).