

SNP'S low growth Scotland has cost £1300 per household

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- SNP'S low growth Scotland has cost £1300 per household

29 Jan 2017



New analysis by the Scottish Conservatives has shown that the SNP's failure to boost growth has cost the equivalent of £1300 per household.

The data is published today ahead of the stage one budget debate at Holyrood this week – when the Scottish Conservatives will oppose the SNP's damaging plans to tax families and firms more than elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

The analysis reveals that, had Scottish growth matched UK figures since 2007, our gross domestic product would have been £3.1 billion higher over the last ten years.

It equates to £1,291 per Scottish household.

The Scottish Conservatives will this week call on the SNP to ditch its plans to use new powers to turn Scotland into the highest taxed part of the UK – saying this will only cut growth even more in Scotland, leaving us all worse off.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“This week's budget should prioritise growth, by setting competitive taxes that help support jobs and the economy.

“Instead we have an SNP Government which is going to cut growth even further, by turning Scotland into the highest taxed part of the UK.

“The consequence of the SNP's low growth Scotland is laid bare in our figures. If we had matched UK growth over the last ten years, Scotland would have earned an extra £3bn – the equivalent of £1300 per household.

“The SNP now wants make this even worse. By increasing taxes, their plans will act as a ball and chain on growth, leaving us all poorer.

“Unless the SNP signal they are re-thinking their tax plans, we will be voting against this anti-jobs Budget this week.

“If the Budget falls as a result, that will be the Nationalists' own fault. Instead of using our new powers to set a course, they have been caught in the headlights.

“Time is now running out and they need to make up their mind. Are they for jobs and growth or against them?”

“The Scottish Conservatives have a plan to grow Scotland: it is time the SNP listened.”

The SNP Government has been in charge of the Scottish economy for a decade; yet, Scotland continues to lag behind the UK on a range of economic indicators.

The Scottish Conservatives believe in creating a prosperous, growing economy that works for everyone by investing in education, skills, and creating a thriving business environment to attract investment, not just internationally but also by encouraging domestic businesses to grow.

We believe the SNP’s obsession with the constitution has led to the Government taking its eye off the ball and focusing its resources away from the real policy areas that matter. As a result, Scotland has lacked a coherent and ambitious economic strategy for a decade.

This paper sets out the loss to the Scottish economy, in terms of lost GDP, of consistent SNP inaction.

Methodology

The Scottish Government publishes estimates of GDP growth along with comparable figures for the UK. They also publish monetary values for GDP in its quarterly national accounts. We use the latest available data in both cases. For the 2016 figures, we take Scottish annual growth forecasts from the Fraser of Allander Institute and UK annual growth forecasts for the UK (*Scottish Government, GDP 2016 Q3, 17 January 2017, [link](#); Scottish Government, Quarterly National Accounts, 2016 Q2, Tab B, [link](#); Fraser of Allander Institute, Economic Commentary, Volume 40, No 3, December 2016, [link](#)*).

We take the 2007 figure for nominal GDP and apply the real growth rates for both Scotland and the UK to give a comparison of the actual path of GDP and the theoretical path, had Scottish economic performance matched UK economic performance. These two different paths are set out in the table below.

We then calculate the different between the actual level of GDP and the level if the Scottish economy had mirrored the UK, and divide this by the number of households to provide an estimate of the lost GDP per household – i.e. the extent to which each household is poorer as a result of the SNP’s failings on the economy.

Estimates for the number of households in Scotland are taken from the National Records of Scotland (*National Records of Scotland, Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland 2015, 8 June 2016, [link](#)*).

	Scottish GDP Growth	UK GDP Growth	Scottish GDP – actual, billion	Scottish GDP – if mirror UK, billion
2007	0.6%	2.6%	£145.0	£145.0
2008	-0.3%	-0.6%	£144.5	£144.1
2009	-2.3%	-4.4%	£141.2	£137.8
2010	0.3%	1.9%	£141.6	£140.4
2011	1.1%	1.6%	£143.1	£142.7
2012	0.0%	1.2%	£143.1	£144.4
2013	2.3%	1.9%	£146.3	£147.2
2014	2.7%	3.1%	£150.2	£151.8
2015	2.1%	2.1%	£153.4	£155.0
2016	1.0%	2.0%	£155.0	£158.1
Difference	□	□	□	£3.1 billion
Number of households	□	□	□	2.4 million
Lost GDP per household	□	□	□	£1,291.93

[SNP tell those waiting on air weapons licences to store guns at a friend's](#)

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- SNP tell those waiting on air weapons licences to store guns at a friend's

27 Jan 2017



The SNP has told people awaiting a new Scottish Government licence for air weapons to store their guns at a friend's house.

Justice secretary Michael Matheson confirmed 5436 people had applied for a licence under the SNP scheme since November 1.

And he said while police were now processing these “as quickly as possible”, those awaiting a decision “must make arrangements to have their air weapons stored in a safe and appropriate place – either with someone who has an air weapon, firearm or shot gun certificate, or a registered firearm dealer”.

He goes on to warn they must do this “to avoid committing an offence”.

The Air Weapons and Licencing Act made it an offence for anyone to own an airgun without an official licence as of January 1.

The SNP's bid to do this has been consistently criticised, particularly in rural communities where they are necessary for work.

The answer came following a question in parliament by Scottish Conservative MSP Adam Tomkins.

Shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross also posed questions in Holyrood yesterday on the issue, including on why 500,000 air guns were still unaccounted for.

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation warned the moves would do nothing to cut crime, and instead place an extra burden on police firearms licencing teams.

It added the six-month timeframe for getting all airguns licenced was too short.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

"This unnecessary process has been a mess from the start.

"Now those who complied with the rules are being told to get rid of their weapon and keep it at a friend's house.

"This is a chaotic approach from the SNP, and hardly provides any confidence that it's on top of this issue.

"It's already a major inconvenience for law-abiding people who need air weapons for work to go through this process, and having to call on the help of a gun-owning neighbour makes it worse still.

"It shows again that the SNP doesn't know rural Scotland, and doesn't stand up for its interests."

Below is a copy of the parliamentary answer from justice secretary Michael Matheson:

Index Heading: Learning and Justice

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the air weapons licensing scheme.

S50-00575

Michael Matheson:

Air weapons continue to account for almost half of all firearms offences recorded in Scotland – 158 offences in 2015-16. The new licensing regime came

into effect on 31 December 2016 and will allow the police to better protect Scottish communities by removing air weapons from those who would misuse them.

Ahead of the new law taking effect, Police Scotland received 6,948 applications for an air weapon certificate by 31 October. Certificates, or refusals, have been issued in all but a limited number of cases, for example where further investigation is required or where payment has not yet been received from the applicant.

A further 5,436 applications were received between 1 November and 31 December 2016. Police Scotland are processing these as quickly as possible, but those who are awaiting a decision must make arrangements to have their air weapons stored in a safe and appropriate place – either with someone who has an air weapon, firearm or shot gun certificate, or a registered firearms dealer – to avoid committing an offence.

In addition, by 31 December, 18,935 unwanted air weapons had been surrendered to Police Scotland for secure destruction since the summer.

The new legislation come into effect on December 31:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-38469556>

The BASC has been critical of the move:

<https://basc.org.uk/blog/press-releases/latest-news/airgun-licensing-plans-in-scotland-fail-to-secure-all-party-support/>

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26 Jan 2017



Following today's exchanges at First Minister's Questions, the Scottish Conservatives have demanded a full explanation about the circumstances which led to discussions taking place between the Scottish Funding Council and individual universities about how £50 million could be spent on campus projects.

These discussions occurred despite the fact the Scottish Government had already informed the board of the Scottish Funding Council that they wanted

the money back.

The Financial Report to the Scottish Funding Council Board dated 20th February 2014 confirms that the Scottish Government advised the Scottish Funding Council not to apply any of the £50 million funds.

Yet beyond that point, until 2nd October 2014 when the Scottish Government issued further confirmation that it wanted the money back, the Scottish Funding Council was in discussions with universities about the appropriate allocation of these funds to their capital developments.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary, Liz Smith MSP said:

“This is an extraordinary situation, and the SNP must explain why it was allowed to happen and who was responsible for the gross mismanagement.

“The Scottish Funding Council is handling large amounts of taxpayers’ money and it clearly has an obligation as a public body to account for how it is spent.

“£50 million is not an inconsiderable sum, especially at a time when this SNP Government has made real term cuts to the higher education budget.

“As such, it was obviously a matter of very considerable concern to those institutions who thought they would benefit from these funds only to find out later that they had been clawed back.

“There is a complete lack of transparency about this and that is why the Scottish Government should publish full details of why the mistake was made and who was responsible.”

The confusion regarding the £50 million was raised in a confidential report prepared by Edinburgh accountants Scott-Moncrieff that was published this week.

The Scott-Moncrieff report states: *“As a result, additional funding was awarded in the 2011 spending review which was not fully spent in the 2012/13 financial year. In February 2014 the Scottish Government advised the SFC not to take action to apply these funds.”*

For more information, visit:

http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/education/15040440.Internal_inquiry_highlight_errors_and_confusion_at_heart_of_Scottish_Funding_Council/

When asked during FMQs on this issue, Nicola Sturgeon replied:

“It was only recouped on the basis of explicit assurances from SFC that all financial commitments to colleges and universities had been met.”

Sturgeon putting independence before public services

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26 Jan 2017



Nicola Sturgeon has been told to take responsibility for the nurse staffing crisis which has led to cancelled operations and empty theatres – instead of agitating for another referendum.

As health secretary, she cut student nursing numbers in two successive years, a decision she today said she stood by.

However, this week it has emerged hospitals have had to cancel procedures because of a lack of workers, and desperate health boards are forking out up to £1500 for agency nurse shifts.

And even after announcing a modest increase in student numbers for next year, the Royal College of Nursing said yesterday this still wouldn't meet demand, adding: "It is not enough to say that there are more nurses or that today's intake figures are the highest in years."

At First Minister's Questions, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said Ms Sturgeon should "confront the failings of 10 years" rather than obsessing about independence.

Ruth asked, were the First Minister to have her time again, would she still have cut those nursing numbers in 2010 and 2011.

Instead of admitting that error, she said: "We took decisions on the data available at the time."

This is despite both nursing bodies and opposition parties warning the cuts would come back to haunt the NHS.

Ruth also raised the example of north east patient Hugh Falconer, who was put on an urgent referral for treatment and told he would receive surgery within 12 weeks.

However, he's since been informed that the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary can't perform the surgery, and patients are no longer being referred to the waiting times back-up facility in Glasgow.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said: "We have a Scottish Government which puts its failing independence obsession before an NHS crisis

of its own making.

“The First Minister asks what sort of country we want to be: I want a country run by a government that does the job we pay it to do – to look after Scotland’s public services.

“Instead, we have one obsessed with a narrow nationalist project that has had its day.

“Six years ago, as health secretary, Nicola Sturgeon embarked on catastrophic cuts to student nursing places.

“She was warned by nursing leaders and opposition parties of the short-sightedness of this approach, and the impact it would have on patient care.

“Now, as predicted, patients are paying the price as routine operations are cancelled and treatment waiting times grow – all because of staff shortages.

“People want a country run by a Scottish Government that spends its every waking hour sorting out public services like the NHS – not obsessing about another referendum, or stoking up Brexit divisions.

“It’s time for her to confront the failings of the last decade of this SNP government, and set out clear plans on how she intends to tackle them.”

RCN Scotland said the SNP was “failing to futureproof” Scotland’s nursing workforce:

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/student-nurse-intake-numbers-25-jan-2017>

Student nursing numbers have fallen under the SNP:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2014/12/student-nursing-numbers-hit-new-low/>

Earlier this week, the Scottish Conservatives revealed desperate health boards are paying up to £1500 per shift to agencies to cover staff shortages:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/01/agency-nurses-paid-more-than-1500-a-shift/>

It has been reported that operations are being cancelled as a result of staff shortages:

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/operations-cancelled-over-staff-shortage-2qtbvv8lw>

Scottish prisons admit they don't test for legal highs

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- Scottish prisons admit they don't test for legal highs

25 Jan 2017



Scottish jails haven't introduced equipment to test prisoners suspected of taking legal highs, even though technology is being rolled out across other parts of the UK.

In England, hundreds of sniffer dogs have been trained to detect new psychoactive substances along with testing in jails.

And in a white paper, the UK Government said testing was being carried out in "all prisons".

But in a parliamentary answer to the Scottish Conservatives, chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service Colin McConnell said no such progress had been made north of the border.

He said: "The SPS does not test for New Psychoactive Substances. There are significant challenges around the detection and identification of NPS compounds and the availability of up-to-date testing kits due to the variants of such substances constantly changing."

He added the organisation had "adopted a therapeutic approach" to the issue.

So-called legal highs are becoming increasingly prevalent across the country, with deaths and hospital admissions increasing each year.

It also emerged earlier this month that the number of prisoners caught with illegal substances had hit a seven-year high.

Shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross, who asked the Parliamentary Question, said the chances of inmates being properly rehabilitated would be hampered unless the number of new psychoactive substances finding their way into prison was dealt with.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

"New psychoactive substances are a major problem in prison, and society as a whole.

"It's therefore quite remarkable to learn there is no testing in place for these in Scottish prisons.

"This is despite the fact jails south of the border are moving ahead with this.

"People expect prisons to be absolutely secure, and are understandably angry that so many illegal items – as well as legal high substances – find their way in with such ease.

"The Scottish Government should be following England's lead and making sure we can force these dangerous substances out of prisons altogether."

Below is the parliamentary response from the Scottish Government:

24 January 2017 (Holding Reply Issued 24 January 2017)

Index Heading: Learning and Justice

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government which new psychoactive substances the Scottish Prison Service tests for when prisoners are subject to a drugs test. S5W-05991

Michael Matheson:

I have asked Colin McConnell, Chief Executive of the Scottish Prison Service, to respond. His response is as follows:

The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) does not test for New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). There are significant challenges around the detection and identification of NPS compounds and the availability of up-to-date testing kits due to the variants of such substances constantly changing. SPS has adopted a therapeutic approach, alongside professional case management and the utilisation of existing drug testing powers to manage this evolving issue.

—
However, only yesterday, UK justice secretary Elizabeth Truss said in answer to a question at Westminster:

"My hon. Friend is absolutely right that psychoactive substances have had a serious effect in our prisons: the prisons and probation ombudsman described them as a "game changer", which is why we have now rolled out testing to deal with those substances. We have extra sniffer dogs to deal with them as well, and we are making progress."

Source:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-24/debates/EB38F55E-717E-46D3-A0F4-B0D9B484F234/OralAnswersToQuestions>

And in a UK Government White Paper published in November on prison safety and reform, it was confirmed that hundreds of drug detection dogs had been trained to sniff-out legal highs, adding: "In September, following a successful pilot in 34 prisons over the summer, we introduced nationwide mandatory testing for specified psychoactive substances in all prisons."

Source:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/565014/cm-9350-prison-safety-and-reform-_web_.pdf

The Scottish Conservatives revealed the number of prisoners caught with illegal substances hit a seven-year high in 2016:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/01/drug-use-in-jail-hits-7-year-high/>