

# 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.”

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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

## Clarity needed on Scottish Funding Council discussions

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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."

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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\\_highlights\\_errors\\_and\\_confusion\\_at\\_heart\\_of\\_Scottish\\_Funding\\_Council/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/education/15040440.Internal_inquiry_highlights_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."*

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## **[Scottish prisons admit they don't test](#)**

# for legal highs

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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.”

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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.

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**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](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/>

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## Scottish exports to UK four times higher than to rest of EU

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25 Jan 2017



Official Scottish Government figures have today revealed that Scotland's trade to the UK is four times the sum exported to the European internal market.

The figures show that, in 2015, Scotland's trade with England, Wales and Northern Ireland amounted to £49.8 billion. This compared to £12.3 billion for the EU internal market.

The figures show that the USA is Scotland's top international trading partner, with £4.6 billion exports.

**Responding to the figures, Scottish Conservative Finance spokesman Murdo Fraser said:**

"Once again, the facts are making it clear that our own Union of nations is Scotland's essential union on which our prosperity depends.

"Europe is a vital market place for us too – which is why we want to see a comprehensive free trade deal with the EU following Brexit.

"But these figures show that to prioritise the EU market before our own Union – as the SNP wants – is absurd.

"Quite simply, thousands of jobs depend on our ability to trade within the UK without any barriers in our way.

"These are the Scottish Government's own figures – which makes it all the more astonishing that the SNP is determined to ignore them by continuing its

ideological pursuit of separation.

“The Nationalists would put jobs and trade at risk simply because they don’t like the United Kingdom.

“We have had it confirmed again: the UK is four times as important to Scotland as the EU in trade, and the SNP must recognise this immediately by ditching its unwanted and divisive plan for a second referendum on independence.”

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The figures are available here:

<http://news.gov.scot/news/scotlands-exports-increase>

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## Ruth reacts to Article 50 decision

24 Jan 2017



Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson has given her reaction to the Supreme Court decision that parliament must vote to trigger the UK’s departure from the EU.

She said the SNP has been using the case “to hold the UK to ransom”, and the party must now state if it wants Britain’s negotiations to succeed or fail.

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

“The SNP tried to use this hearing to hold the rest of the UK to ransom. It has comprehensively failed to do so.

“All parties should now respect the ruling that the court has given.

“Yet typically, Nicola Sturgeon has decided to ignore it by stating – even before the verdict was in – that she would still seek a separate vote at Holyrood.

“The Scottish Conservatives will have no truck with yet more SNP stunts on Brexit.

“Whatever side people were on last year, Scotland wants to get on with the negotiations so we can start to leave the uncertainty of the last few years behind us.

“We have all had enough of the nationalists using every diversionary tactic they can to try to use Brexit to manufacture a case for separation.



"The SNP needs to decide: does it want Britain's renegotiation to succeed or fail?

"If it is the former, it needs to end the attempts to sow division and add to the uncertainty we face, and instead get behind the UK attempt to get the right deal for the whole UK."