

## [News story: Scottish quarterly GDP figures show continued growth](#)

Commenting on the Scottish GDP figures published Wednesday 4 April 2018, Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

It is good news that today's GDP figures show that Scotland's economy continues to grow. I note a modest improvement in Scotland's important services sector, and encouraging growth in production industries.

However, it is increasingly concerning that a significant gap persists between Scotland's economy and the rest of the UK. The Scottish Government has the powers to boost productivity and strengthen the economy, and must use them to close this gap. By making Scotland the highest taxed part of the UK, the Scottish Government risks damaging, rather than growing, our economy.

Scotland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 0.3% in real terms during the fourth quarter of 2017, following growth of 0.2% in the third quarter of 2017. The equivalent growth rate for the UK as whole during the third quarter was 0.4%.

In the latest quarter, output in the Scottish Services sector grew by 0.5%, output in the Production sector grew by 0.9%, and output in the Construction sector fell by 2.6%.

Compared to the same quarter last year, Scottish GDP has grown by 1.1%. Equivalent UK growth over the year was 1.4%.

In 2017, annual GDP increased by 0.8% compared to 2016, following growth of 0.2% between 2015 and 2016. The equivalent UK growth rate for 2017 was 1.8%.

The full Scottish Government [statistical bulletin](#) is available for download.

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## [Press release: New building performance standards to save MOD up to 20%](#)

Infrastructure is a vital defence capability delivering accommodation, training facilities and critical assets such as runways and workshops to

enable our armed forces to live, work, train and deploy. Recent DIO projects include building a jetty at Portsmouth Naval Base so the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth can dock, and resurfacing runways at RAF Akrotiri, RAF Gibraltar, and RAF Valley.

The defence estate is large, diverse and widely dispersed across the UK and overseas. In the UK, it covers around 230,000 hectares comprising military training areas, naval bases, barracks, airfields, supply depots, and offices. Construction on these sites is sometimes subject to specific defence requirements but the majority is similar to other sectors, so the new standards have been developed in accordance with comparators from industry and other government departments. They are designed to be used by MOD staff and industry partners responsible for the planning, costing and delivery of the infrastructure assets and projects funded by MOD.

The new standards, Joint Services Publication (JSP) 315, are expected to save up to 20% on construction costs by creating efficient standards, enabling faster and more cost-effective project development and delivery. They also recognise the success and cost savings DIO has achieved in recent years from increasing the use of modular construction and standardisation of designs, as well as utilising 3D digital and interactive technology.

Graham Dalton, DIO's Chief Executive, said:

The new standards mark a step forward in how DIO enables our military to provide the most effective and efficient solutions and how we work better with the construction industry. The revised standards make it absolutely clear what our requirements are and will contribute to a significant cost and time saving on our infrastructure projects.

The new standards and supporting guidance set a series of reference designs for specific defence infrastructure requirements and benchmark capital and operational costs for the planning and delivery of MOD infrastructure.

The revised JSP 315 can be found [here](#)

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## **[Press release: Images offer glimpse of A45 Chowns Mill upgrade](#)**

As part of the government's £15.2bn road investment strategy, Highways England is developing a scheme to improve the A45/A6 Chowns Mill junction, leading to more reliable and safer journeys for people and businesses by reducing congestion and increasing capacity on the road.

Work will include widening the A45 and A6 approaches to provide additional traffic lanes, creating an additional roundabout section on the south side of the existing roundabout and introducing traffic signals to manage traffic safely and effectively.

The work will:

- improve journey times by providing additional lanes
- improve safety by changing the junction layout and introducing traffic signals – managing the flow of traffic through the junction more effectively and reducing the chance of collisions
- support economic growth by encouraging continued investment in the regional economy and support new business and residential opportunities
- improve access for cyclists and pedestrians thanks to new signalled crossings which will make it safer to cross the junction – all crossing points will be designed for users with disabilities

The A45 is a key link between the A14 and M1, serving the growing Northampton, Wellingborough and Rushden areas.

As part of the scheme the junction will be redesigned as a half hamburger layout with a new link road connecting the A6 North and A5028 with the existing roundabout. This will improve the existing junction to allow better flow of traffic reducing congestion through the junction. All approaches will be widened to provide extra lanes and increase capacity.

Highways England project manager, Rachael Langfield, said:

Chowns Mill roundabout currently suffers from severe congestion at peak travel times, leading to long queues on all approaches. This congestion will increase as traffic levels grow.

The scheme we have developed will improve journey times and safety along the A45 and A6 corridors as well as boost capacity to support planned growth in the local area, which is great news for the local and regional economy.

There will be no need to purchase any additional land with improvements to the junction carried out within the existing roundabout boundary.

Construction is due to begin in late 2019 and is expected to be completed within two years.

Public information exhibitions take place tomorrow and Saturday where people can find out more.

The exhibition times and locations are as follows:

- Friday 6 April 2018 – 2pm to 8pm Park Road Baptist Church, Park Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 0RG
- Saturday 7 April 2018 – 10am to 4pm Park Road Baptist Church, Park Road,

Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 0RG

People can also ask questions about the scheme by:

### **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

### **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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## **[News story: UK Government backs iconic Scottish food and drink industry](#)**

The roundtable with representatives from the food, drink and retail sector provided an opportunity to discuss Brexit, framework agreements, and sector priorities over the coming months.

The Secretary of State, David Mundell, has hosted representatives from the Scottish Salmon Producer's Organisation, Scottish Retail Consortium and the Scotch Whisky Association and others at a roundtable to discuss the opportunities and challenges that Scotland's world famous food and drink industry faces as the UK leaves the EU.

Discussions focused on frameworks in regards to food labelling, and the need to provide a common UK approach in order to allow seamless trade between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

Protecting and promoting iconic Scottish food and drink businesses is absolutely vital to the UK Government, and it is important that we do nothing that creates any new barriers to the UK's internal market – which is worth four times that of Scotland's trade with the EU.

Without Scotland's two governments agreeing on common frameworks we could end up with different labelling requirements across the UK. This could mean a jam producer in Dundee would be unable to sell their products to cafes in Doncaster without complying with two separate sets of requirements, increasing production costs, which

is clearly detrimental to businesses. That's why common frameworks in areas such as food labelling are the sensible approach.

Scotland's food and drink is famous across the world, as well as enjoyed all over the UK, so I am looking forward to meeting some of the men and women behind prestigious brands like Aberlour whisky and Walkers Shortbread, and hearing about their experiences in international markets.

Earlier this month the UK Government published a [provisional analysis](#) of the returning EU powers. It lays out clearly that the Scottish Parliament, as well as other devolved administrations, will receive extensive new powers. Of the 153 areas in the analysis, there are only 24 that will require more detailed discussions to see whether legislative common frameworks might be needed, in whole or in part.

As well as visiting the Aberlour Distillery and Walkers Shortbread, Mr Mundell is also holding a variety of meetings in Inverness, Elgin, and Aberdeen.

These will include discussions on growth deals with Elgin Council, updates on the Northcoast 500 route, an event to discuss exporting with Inverness businesses, as well as meeting with individuals from the oil and gas industry.

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## [News story: Soft Drinks Industry Levy comes into effect](#)

From Friday (6 April 2018), millions of children across the UK will benefit from the government's key milestone in tackling childhood obesity, as the Soft Drinks Industry Levy comes into effect.

The tax on soft drinks, commonly referred to as the 'Sugar Tax', has already resulted in over 50% of manufacturers reducing the sugar content of drinks since it was announced in March 2016 – the equivalent of 45 million kg of sugar every year.

Soft drinks manufacturers who don't reformulate will pay the levy, which is expected to raise £240 million each year. This money will go towards doubling the Primary Sports Premium, the creation of a Healthy Pupils Capital Fund to help schools upgrade their sports facilities, and give children access to top quality PE equipment.

The levy will also give a funding boost for healthy school breakfast clubs.

Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Robert Jenrick MP visited the Lucozade Ribena Suntory factory today (5 April 2018), which has led the way in reformulating its drinks alongside the likes of Tesco and Irn Bru.

He commented:

The Soft Drinks Levy is one part of our plan to tackle childhood obesity. From Friday, soft drinks which contain too much added sugar will need to pay a fee.

All revenues raised through the levy will directly fund new sports facilities in schools as well as healthy breakfast clubs, ensuring children lead healthier lives.

We want to persuade manufacturers to reformulate their drinks and lower the sugar content. In the time between announcing this policy and it taking effect today, more than half of all soft drinks have been reformulated to lower the sugar content, including many of the best known soft drinks. We hope that will continue in the months and years to come.

In England alone, a third of children are obese or overweight when they leave primary school, and evidence shows that 80% of kids who are obese in their early teens will go on to be obese adults.

Public Health Minister, Steve Brine MP remarked:

Our teenagers consume nearly a bathtub of sugary drinks each year on average, fuelling a worrying obesity trend in this country. The Soft Drinks Industry Levy is ground-breaking policy that will help to reduce sugar intake, whilst funding sports programmes and nutritious breakfast clubs for children.

The progress made so far on our obesity plan is promising—but with one in three children still leaving primary school overweight or obese, we have not ruled out doing more in future.

## Notes to Editor

- The aim of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy is to encourage companies to reformulate their soft drinks. Since the levy was announced two years ago, the expected amount of revenue has gone down from £520m in Year 1 to £240m. Even before coming into effect, the levy is already working – over 50% of manufacturers have reformulated their drinks
- Even if revenue from the levy declines, funding for schools and children will stay the same
- The rates companies will need to pay are as follows:
  - 24p per litre of drink if it contains 8 grams of sugar per 100 millilitres

- 18p per litre of drink if it contains between 5 – 8 grams of sugar per 100 millilitres