

Scottish exports to rest of UK increase

29 Jan 2020



Scottish exports to the rest of the UK have increased further with 60 percent of all Scottish trade now being with the rest of the UK, according to the latest official statistics.

The Scottish Conservatives have welcomed these figures as further evidence of the vital importance of the UK market to Scotland's economy.

The figures show that the value of Scotland's exports to the rest of the UK in 2018 was £51.2 billion, many times greater than the £16.1 billion, or 19 percent, of Scottish trade with the EU.

Scotland's international trade to markets outside the EU continued to increase and now represents 21 percent of total trade.

The USA continues to be Scotland's single largest international export destination, with £5.5 billion of exports in 2018.

The export statistics published today coincide with the release of the GDP Quarterly National Accounts which show that Scotland's economy continues to lag far behind the UK's.

Not only did UK GDP grow faster than that of Scotland in the third quarter of 2019, the Scottish economy grew 0.6 percent over the year to September 2019 – less than half the UK rate of 1.3 percent over the same period.

Dean Lockhart, Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary said;

“The rest of the UK continues to be by far the most important market for Scotland's trade, far outstripping the EU.

“It should be obvious to anyone looking at these figures that independence would irreparably damage this trade and Scotland's economy.

“And yet the SNP's only focus is for Scotland to leave behind the UK market and rejoin the EU single market, regardless of the economic damage this would involve.

“The SNP cannot be trusted on the economy as shown by its appalling track record, as the GDP figures published today show.

“Scottish businesses large and small have been completely abandoned while the SNP focuses only on separation and flags.”

Sturgeon caves and agrees to education probe

16 Jan 2020



Nicola Sturgeon has caved to Scottish Conservative demands for a full inquiry into the state of Scotland's education system under the SNP.

Opposition MSPs yesterday voted for a formal probe into numerous failings which have occurred in Scotland's schools during the nationalists' time in power.

And today, at First Minister's Questions, Ms Sturgeon conceded that her government would have to abide by the decision taken during Scottish Conservative business at Holyrood.

Now the Scottish Conservatives have sought reassurances that the inquiry will be independent, and not result in a "whitewash verdict".

Earlier this week, the party sought a "reset" to the Curriculum for Excellence which would put a focus on traditional subject areas and knowledge.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"After almost 13 years of failure, Nicola Sturgeon has finally agreed to investigate her own government's abject performance on education.

"The SNP has no-one to blame here but itself – it has been in sole charge of the brief for more than a decade.

"And in that time schools have had to limit their subject choice, children of different ages and levels are being taught in the same class by the same teacher, and standards in literacy and numeracy have been called into question.

"Teachers, pupils and parents – all of whom work tremendously hard – deserve far better than this.

"It's essential this full inquiry is impartial, independent and provides the solutions we so desperately need."

[MSP attempts to introduce greater protection for candidates during prison hustings](#)

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16 Jan 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have attempted to give political candidates greater protection during hustings in prisons.

The Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill makes provisions for criminals to vote in prison and is currently being amended at stage 2 by the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

The bill would enable prisoners with sentences under one year to vote, opening up the prospect of candidates canvassing votes from prisoners.

At this morning's committee meeting, Jamie Halcro Johnston introduced an amendment to protect political candidates from this potentially hazardous ordeal and ensure that prison guards and other staff have their safety put first.

The amendment was voted down by the SNP, Labour and Liberal Democrats.

Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP, member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee said:

"It's bad enough that the SNP have consistently undermined our justice system with their soft touch justice, now we face the prospect of giving votes to individuals who have terrorised others.

"The idea that criminals could end up with political hustings in prison just demonstrates how ludicrous this policy is.

"Beyond the obvious concerns, some candidates may have been victims of crime and they, along with the campaign staff, should be protected.

"My amendment would have guaranteed that hustings and election events will not take place in prison without all candidates agreeing – and with a proper risk assessment conducted by prison governors to ensure the safety of prison staff, candidates, campaign staff and prisoners.

“All the other parties are seeking to extend prisoner voting even further, only the Scottish Conservatives are unequivocally against prisoners voting.”

Schools ‘must focus on core subjects’ to improve CfE

15 Jan 2020



Scotland’s curriculum must be reset to once again focus on core and traditional subjects, the Scottish Conservatives will say tomorrow (Wednesday).

As part of a drive to stop the decline in the country’s education system, the party will argue that knowledge-based learning should be seen as equally important as a skills-based approach.

That means that as well as focusing on English and Maths, young people should be able to have good quality choices across science, the social sciences and the arts not only to boost their own prospects, but to meet the needs of Scotland’s economy.

Shadow education secretary Liz Smith will say the focus should not only be on traditional subjects themselves, but also the core knowledge which defines them.

The issue will be raised as part of Scottish Conservative business in Holyrood.

The party’s motion will welcome the Scottish Government’s decision to review of the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence, but also adds that a “full review of broad general education and how it articulates with the senior phase” should be launched.

The call comes following revelations that education secretary John Swinney ordered officials to investigate Scotland’s falling exam performance, despite saying publicly there were no real issues.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“There is a significant mismatch between the SNP’s current rhetoric about education standards and what is actually happening in our schools.

“John Swinney knows fine well, and so do his officials and education experts across the country, that all is not well in the education system.

“In our view, and in the view of most parents and employers, there has to be a strong attachment to core subjects in our schools if things are to improve.

“That means not just maths and English, but the arts, the sciences and social sciences too.

“This has become an issue about knowledge content and the ability of all pupils to have meaningful choices in key faculty areas, and a breadth across those disciplines which was always the main strength of Scottish education.

“It’s not so much a case of returning to an older curriculum as resetting this one.

“The SNP must realise that there is a very long way to go before Scotland can once again lead the world in education.”

[Indyref2 refusal means Scotland can move on](#)

14 Jan 2020



The Prime Minister’s rejection of a second independence referendum will mean Scotland can finally move on and focus on more important things, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Boris Johnson wrote to First Minister Nicola Sturgeon today confirming there would be no re-run of the 2014 vote.

And the move has been welcomed by shadow constitution secretary Adam Tomkins, who said the SNP’s refusal to accept the decision would continue to hold Scotland back.

Scottish Conservative shadow constitution secretary Adam Tomkins said:

“This should draw a line under the matter – Scotland will not be dragged back to the divisive and uncertain days of 2014.

“That’s what people and businesses want to hear, and now we can move on and focus on what really matters.

“Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP government should have the grace and class to accept that the decision was made in 2014 and should be respected.

“By refusing, this irresponsible nationalist government has ignored schools, hospitals, the economy and justice, all to their severe detriment.

“It shouldn’t take a Prime Minister in Westminster to remind the Scottish Government what its priorities and responsibilities ought to be.”