

Sharp increase in number of personal insolvencies

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26 Jul 2017



New figures released by the Scottish Government have shown a drastic increase in the number of personal insolvencies and bankruptcies between April and June this year.

The Accountant in Bankruptcy (AiB) confirmed that there were 2,839 personal insolvencies in the first quarter of 2017-18, compared to 2,420 in the same quarter last year – an increase of 17%.

Of those 1,289 were bankruptcies, an increase of 11% on the year before.

The figures show just how much some are struggling, and the Scottish Conservatives have called on the SNP Government to do more to help Scots deal with personal debt.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser MSP said:

“It’s incredibly worrying to see such a sharp increase in the number of Scots going bankrupt.

“Given the lacklustre growth in the Scottish economy over the last year, we are starting to see the consequences of it as more and more people are struggling in a sea of debt.

“These individuals will be going through an incredibly tough time and it is incumbent upon the Scottish Government to do all they can to support them.

“One step the SNP could take immediately would be to boost long-term economic growth and job creation by reversing their tax hikes that have made Scotland the highest taxed part of the UK.

Cancer detection rates still worse in

poorer areas

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Statistics published today by ISD Scotland have shown that cancer detection rates are markedly worse in poorer areas of Scotland.

The highest proportion of patients with breast, colorectal and lung cancer in the most deprived areas of Scotland were diagnosed at stage 4.

Meanwhile for those living in the least deprived areas, the highest proportion were diagnosed at stage 2.

The Scottish Conservatives have called on the Scottish Government to do more to tackle the discrepancy, especially when early diagnosis can have a huge impact on survival rates.

Scottish Conservative public health spokesman Annie Wells MSP said:

“These statistics show that there is still a huge discrepancy between those living in the most and least deprived areas of Scotland when it comes to detecting cancer.

“It shouldn’t be the case that just because you live in a poorer area you should receive a later diagnosis.

“When having an earlier diagnosis can have a huge impact on your chances of survival, we can’t let this postcode lottery continue.

“We need to see improvements across the board so that all Scots receive the best care from the earliest stage possible.”

For patients diagnosed with breast, colorectal and lung cancer in the most deprived areas of Scotland, the highest proportion were diagnosed at the most advanced stage of disease; stage 4 (29.4%) while for those living in the least deprived areas, the highest proportion were diagnosed at stage 2 (28.6%).

You can read the statistics here:

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Cancer/Publications/2017-07-25/2017-07-25-DetectCancerEarly-Report.pdf>

ScotRail survey results shows work still to be done

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The Scottish Conservatives have said that there is still work to be done to improve Scottish rail services following the publication of the National Rail Passenger Satisfaction (NRPS) figures.

While the survey found that 90% of passengers were satisfied overall with ScotRail services, only 61% of passengers believed they were getting value for money.

There were significant drops in those satisfied in the facilities at the stations they were using as well, with car parking provision and ticket purchasing facilities seen to be getting worse.

Worryingly there was also a nine per cent drop in those who were satisfied with their personal security on trains.

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Jamie Green MSP said:

“It’s welcome to see that overall satisfaction is increasing, and it’s important to acknowledge the efforts of ScotRail staff in achieving this.

“However these results still show that there are still several areas of concern, with passengers still not feeling like they are getting value for money from their train service.

“It’s deeply concerning to see that there are many more passengers who do not feel safe on board trains, and with many also criticising the car parking and ticket buying facilities at stations, it shows that there is still a lot of work to be done.

“We need to see continued efforts from ScotRail and the SNP Government if we are to see Scottish passengers given the train service they deserve.”

Sturgeon to continue independence push

25 Jul 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have criticised the SNP's determination to "wrench Scotland" out of the United Kingdom.

The criticism comes after it has emerged SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon has decided to meet the Scottish Independence Convention (SIC) in the coming weeks to "move forward the case for independence in the current political landscape."

The meeting, confirmed to the National by SIC, has been suggested by sources as a way to allow the SNP to engage with the "wide independence movement."

After Sturgeon suggested the SNP's regression in June's General Election would see the party wait until the terms of Brexit were clear before considering a Section 30 order – the legislation needed to hold a legally valid referendum – the Scottish Conservatives are urging the SNP to drop its push for a divisive second independence referendum.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

"So much for the First Minister's claims that her Government would get back to the day job. Nicola Sturgeon is showing where her true priority lies, and it's not Scotland's economy, health service or education.

"The First Minister spending her time meeting independence campaigners will simply confirm the Scottish public's view that independence always has and always will be the only thing the SNP cares about.

"People are growing hugely frustrated at the SNP's neglect over a vast range of issues to instead focus on its blinkered obsession to wrench Scotland out of the United Kingdom."

A copy of the National article:

http://www.thenational.scot/news/15431319.Nicola_Sturgeon_to_meet_with_Scottish_Independence_Convention_to_discuss_ho

SNP CAP slowdown sees 1300 farmers

still waiting for payments

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19 Jul 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have accused the SNP of letting progress on CAP payments stall, following reports that the Scottish Government may escape fines due to UK-wide progress.

1300 farmers are still to receive CAP payments. Just 126 payments were made last week, which represents a significant drop from the previous rate of 1745 in the week before the deadline of 30th June.

Last week £1m of payments were made – compared to £59 million in the week before the deadline.

Under European rules 95 per cent of payments should have been made by 30 June, but the Scottish Government fell short, only reaching 90.4 per cent.

The Scottish Government was forced to request an extension from the European Commission for the second year running.

In contrast, Defra made 99.2 per cent of payments in England by the end of June deadline.

Media reports suggest that this UK-wide progress could spare Scotland heavier fines.

Audit Scotland recently warned that European fines of up to £60 million are possible if the troubled CAP IT system does not work.

Scottish Conservative shadow rural affairs secretary Peter Chapman said:

“The SNP has clearly taken their foot off the accelerator when it comes to delivering CAP payments.

“It is the ultimate irony that no sooner had it emerged the UK situation could spare the SNP’s blushes, progress in Scotland has now stalled.

“These payments can’t get into the rural economy quickly enough, but for a second year running many farmers are still being made to wait.

“It was humiliating for the Scottish Government to have to beg the European Commission for a deadline extension due to their shambolic handling of these important payments.

“Audit Scotland warned that even next year the IT system may not be working as it should and many farmers will now be wondering if it will ever be fit for purpose.”

The Scottish Government provides weekly reports on CAP payments showing that in the week ending 14 July 126 payments had been processed. There are 17980 eligible applicants for payments and 16686 have been processed to date. The report can be accessed [here](#).

Audit Scotland’s June 2017 report on the CAP IT system can be accessed [here](#).

The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly called on the Scottish Government to fix the CAP payment system (see press releases below)

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/sturgeon-must-come-clean-on-second-cap-crisis/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/now-snp-must-publish-its-own-damning-cap-report/> #

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/sturgeon-owes-holyrood-an-explanation-over-cap-cover-up/>
