

# SNP's £1 million-a-year splurge on ministerial cars

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22 Feb 2017



The Scottish Government spends more than £1 million a year on ministers travelling in luxury taxpayer-funded cars.

New figures have revealed the scale of the expense as the country prepares to mark Scottish Environment Week.

In 2011/12 ministers spent £1.07 million on the Government Car Service.

By last year that had risen to £1.15 million, despite claims from the SNP that it runs an environmentally-friendly administration.

In 2015/16 alone the Scottish Government spent £243,000 hiring vehicles, a new high, and £765,000 staffing them.

A further £11,000 was forked out on "travel and subsistence" while fuel costs dropped to £79,000.

In addition, nearly £50,000 was spent on repairs.

The statistics were obtained by the Scottish Conservatives through Freedom of Information.

**Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Liam Kerr said:**

"The SNP likes to pretend it runs a green-friendly government, but the reality is quite the reverse.

"Despite repeated claims to be a different kind of administration, it seems the nationalists are quite happy for ministers to be cutting around in luxurious cars funded by the taxpayer.

"Everyone appreciates the need for ministers to get from A to B, but many will question the sheer scale of these costs.

"It's particularly ironic that this should emerge during Scotland's Environment Week.

"The SNP is very happy to persuade other people to get out of their cars and find alternative modes of transport.

“Maybe it should be telling its ministers to be doing the same thing.”

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## [Another budget u-turn after SNP ‘falls asleep at wheel’ on business rates](#)

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21 Feb 2017



Finance secretary Derek Mackay has performed another budget u-turn as he seeks to address Scotland’s business rates crisis.

Addressing Holyrood today, he said up to £40 million had been discovered within a budget that had previously been “maxed out”.

It means some sectors in certain areas of the country will have their increases capped at 12.5 per cent, although many others will still have to endure the crippling increases.

Mr Mackay eventually conceded to MSPs that the cap would only be in place for one year, a move described as a “sticking plaster approach” by the Scottish Conservatives.

It’s another surprise discovery of cash by the finance secretary, after he found more than £180 million to appease the Greens in budget negotiations earlier this month.

### **Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:**

“For weeks the SNP has been ignoring this issue, claiming it had no control over this process.

“In the typical style of this SNP government, it fell asleep at the wheel and only woke up when it crashed into the wall.

“We’ve heard on more than one occasion that this budget has been maxed out, yet once again Mr Mackay has been able to find a bit more money down the back of the couch.

“It’s a desperate eleventh-hour move which will do very little to ease concerns within Scotland’s business community, given that it is for one year only.”

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Finance secretary Derek Mackay only made the statement to the Scottish Parliament after demands by the Scottish Conservatives:  
<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/02/mackay-to-face-holyrood-on-business-rates-crisis/>

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## Percentage of CP0s completed drops again

21 Feb 2017



The percentage of community payback orders (CP0s) being completed has dropped once again according to Scottish Government statistics.

Only 67.6% of orders were completed in 2015/16, down from 68% the year before, and 70.3% in 2013/14.

It indicates a worrying trend of orders not being completed.

The Scottish Conservatives have called on an urgent review of the orders to ensure that criminals don't start treating them with contempt.

It also follows reports last year that CP0s were being issued for more serious crimes such as rape and child sex offences.

### **Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:**

"These figures show that a third of those being issued with Community Payback Orders aren't even completing them.

"Victims and communities are rapidly losing faith in this system and you have to question what sort of punishment these orders are providing if there is such a high chance that those on CP0s will be allowed off the hook.

"There is a real chance that criminals start treating them with contempt, and we need to ensure that CP0s once again act as a proper punishment.

"When we've seen them being handed out for crimes as serious as rape, it is even more galling that so many are not being completed.

"Although there is a place in our justice system for community payback orders, we need to ensure that they are being properly administered, and are being issued for appropriate crimes."

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The Scottish Government figures are available here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00514220.pdf>

The figures regarding completion of orders are available in Table 2.

The Scottish Conservatives brought up the issue of CP0s being handed out for serious crimes in FMQs last September:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2016/09/demand-for-urgent-review-after-rapists-handed-community-punishments/>

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## SNP must “mind the gap” on tax

21 Feb 2017



The Scottish Conservatives are warning the SNP that they must “mind the gap” with the rest of the UK ahead of today’s key vote on tax rates.

The warning comes as the Scottish Parliament prepares to vote for the first time to set new rates of income tax, following the successful implementation of the new Scotland Act.

The SNP Government – under pressure from the Greens – has decided to reject a plan to lift middle earners out of the higher rate of tax, as proposed elsewhere in the UK.

It will instead freeze the rate – dragging police officers, senior teachers and nurses into paying it.

The Scottish Conservatives will today step up their call for the SNP Government to prioritise economic growth by setting competitive tax rates no higher than the rest of the UK.

**Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:**

“Over the last 18 months, Scotland’s growth rate has been around a third of that for the UK – with the result that employment is now falling in Scotland.

□ “The SNP’s plans to set tax rates higher than the rest of the UK will only worsen this growing divide we are seeing, deterring investment and reducing new jobs.

“Our message to the SNP today is clear: it needs to mind the gap. Higher taxes in Scotland means lower growth, which will deliver less cash for government to spend on our vital public services.”

“Derek Mackay’s handling of the business rates crisis has shown that this Scottish Government simply does not understand business and the economy.

“It is must start to listen to job creators who need a Government which goes for growth, not one which punishes aspiration.”

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## Scotland’s exercise blackspots revealed

20 Feb 2017



Scotland’s most and least active areas have been revealed in an official Holyrood survey.

The report, which will be presented to the Scottish Parliament’s health committee tomorrow, will show a huge disparity in how active residents.

As a result, the Scottish Conservatives have urged the SNP to provide the necessary action to make Scotland an active nation.

The study of more than 3000 people highlighted the percentage of non-participants in regular sport or physical activity based on postcode.

Aberdeen proved to be the least active area in Scotland with statistics revealing that 35 per cent of respondents from the Granite City don’t participate in regular activity – 23 per cent behind leaders Falkirk.

Kilmarnock also collated worrying results, 25 per cent of its respondents putting their name under the non-participation brackets.

**Scottish Conservative sport spokesman Brian Whittle said:**

“This report reveals the SNP’s inability to promote the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle.

“It’s hugely important to participate in regular activity, and it’s known to come hand in hand with living a healthy and happy life.

“It’s sad that the SNP has failed to make the most of Glasgow’s Commonwealth Games’ potential to make Scotland a healthy and active nation for years to come.

“There are of course various barriers preventing participation in regular activity – lack of time, money and self-confidence to name but a few.

"The SNP seems to only talk about making so many improvements. Now people are realising it has no idea how to address these issues.

"That's why we urge the SNP to read over the Scottish Conservatives' long-term consultation, a document that we believe will go a long way in tackling the obvious inequality of access across Scotland.

"The Scottish Government claims it wants to shed Scotland's unhealthy image.

"However, the only way to start making Scotland a healthier and more active nation is to start knocking these barriers down."

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**Click here to read a copy of the report:**

[www.parliament.scot/S5\\_HealthandSportCommittee/Meeting%20Papers/Public\\_Papers\\_21\\_Feb\\_2017.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S5_HealthandSportCommittee/Meeting%20Papers/Public_Papers_21_Feb_2017.pdf)

**A copy of the Scottish Conservative healthy lifestyle strategy:**

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Scottish-Conservative-Healthy-Lifestyle-Strategy.pdf>