

Welcome to the April 2016 Scotland Monitor – an essential briefing on one month of Scottish current affairs, and packed with additional key articles, data and reports. For more policy news see the “[latest news](#)” section on our website. If you have any queries about this document or the CSPP, please don’t hesitate to [get in touch](#).

### Polling for Holyrood 2016 – Late Swing to Labour?

Polls continue to suggest that the SNP is on course for a strong victory in the Scottish Parliamentary elections on 5 May, and likely to enjoy a second consecutive overall majority in the next parliament. However the latest Panelbase survey for the Sunday Times points to a small swing from the SNP to Labour, at 49% (-2) to 23% (+4) for the constituency vote, and 44% (-3) to 22% (+4) on the regional vote. If repeated on 5 May this may ensure Labour remain as the second party, with the Conservatives’ also campaigning for this position. For more see:

- [Late Labour Surge Likely to Save Dugdale](#) [Sunday Times] (£)
- [Professor John Curtice – Labour Profits from Polarisation?](#) [What Scotland Thinks]
- [Poll of Polls for Scottish Parliamentary Elections](#) [What Scotland Thinks]

### Party Manifestos and Final Leadership Debate

Campaigning has continued apace for the Scottish parliamentary elections. This has included manifesto launches by the [SNP](#) (20/4), [Labour](#) (27/4), the [Conservatives](#) (13/4), the [Liberal Democrats](#) (15/4) and the [Scottish Greens](#) (12/4), as well as parties not currently represented in the Holyrood parliament. Party leaders met for a final televised debate on Sunday 1 May. Topics in the debate included a future independence referendum, the economy & jobs, NHS funding, education, and the controversy over schools built under PFI contracts. For more see:

- [Holyrood Election 2016: Manifestos and Local Government](#) [LGiU Scotland] (£)
- [Guardian Politics Live Coverage of the Scottish Party Leaders’ Debate](#) [Guardian]
- [Leaders’ Debate: Indyref 2 a ‘Matter of Principle’, says Sturgeon](#) [Scotsman]
- [Leaders’ Debate: Davidson Accused of Telling ‘Porky’ over Clyde Jobs](#) [Herald]
- [Edinburgh School Closures Put PFI Deals in Spotlight](#) [Financial Times]

### Economy - Unemployment Rise in Scotland

Unemployment registered an increase of 20,000 in Scotland to 171,000 between December and February, with the unemployment rate in Scotland now 6.2% compared with 5.1% for the UK as a whole. Scotland’s economy grew by 0.2% over the same period, also behind the UK level. However a survey by Markit found that demand for permanent jobs in Scotland has been growing in recent months. Meanwhile tax receipts from North Sea oil & gas have registered their lowest level in many years, at £35m compared with £11bn four years ago. In other economic news, consumer confidence across the UK has slipped into a negative rating for the first time in 15 months, which research firm GfK claim is due to uncertainty over the Eurozone and Brexit. For more, see:

- [Scotland's Unemployment Total Rises by 20,000](#) [BBC]
- [Scotland's Economy Grows by 0.2%](#) [BBC]
- [Permanent Jobs Upswing Goes on in Scotland](#) [National]
- [North Sea Tax Receipts Slump to £35m](#) [BBC]
- [UK Households 'Depressed' At State of the Economy](#) [This is Money]

### **Future of Local Government**

A poll conducted for the Electoral Reform Society has shown that 51% of respondents feel their local council operates in the interests of those who run it, while only 26% believed it is run in the interests of local people. However when told the ratio of councillors per head of population, 78% of respondents said they would want more local councillors, and 45% would be willing to give half a day per month to aid council decision-making. Meanwhile political party leaders have debated the future of local government in Scotland on the campaign trail, with SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon stating that she would not rule out reducing the number of councils in a planned review. It has also emerged that the Scottish Government has held discussions over the possibility of creating new regional education boards, which would transfer responsibility from local authorities to a new “middle tier”.

- [Appeal for Overhaul of Local Democracy as Poll Shows over Half of Scots see Councils as Self-Serving](#) [Herald]
- [New Poll Reveals Widespread Distrust of Scots Local Authorities](#) [Common Space]
- [Holyrood Election Campaigns Focus on Local Government](#) [BBC]
- [Secret Scottish Government Plans to Shake-Up Schools System](#) [Herald]

### **EU Ref Officially Begins**

On 15 April the campaign over the UK's membership of the European Union officially began. Former Labour UK Chancellor Alistair Darling made a speech for the Britain Stronger In campaign, arguing that Brexit represents “Project Fantasy”. However former Labour MP Tom Harris, who heads the Scottish Vote Leave campaign, claimed that Brexit would lead to more powers for the Scottish Parliament, and that Holyrood election candidates who support Leave are being inhibited from speaking out against their party leaderships. For more see:

- [Alistair Darling Brands Brexit Campaign 'Project Fantasy'](#) [Herald]
- [Brexit 'Would Lead to More Scottish Powers': Leave Campaign](#) [BBC]
- [Holyrood Candidates 'Gagged' from Expressing Pro-Brexit Views](#) [STV]
- [CSPP to Host Key European Union Referendum Debates](#) [CSPP]

### **Key Publications**

In the pre-election period the Scottish Government and Parliament is not publishing official reports, however the following links may be of interest.

- [Culture, Outlook and Scottish Internationalisation](#) [Economic Development Association Scotland]
- [Destitution in the UK](#) [Joseph Rowntree Foundation]
- [100 Policy Ideas to #Holyrood2016](#) [CSPP – provides links to many manifestos and policy ideas from organisations and individuals throughout Scotland]