# Police Scotland reveals costs of Operation Branchform investigation into SNP fraud allegations



Police Scotland has incurred costs totalling £2,417 on overseas flights as part of Operation Branchform, an investigation launched into allegations of fraud concerning the Scottish National Party (SNP). This figure is part of a broader expenditure, amounting to £6,655 spent on flights for the investigation across various locations within the UK. The details were disclosed through a Freedom of Information request.

Operation Branchform commenced in 2021 after concerns were raised regarding the allocation of over £600,000 in donations designated for the SNP's independence referendum campaign, Indyref2. Former SNP chief executive Peter Murrell has been charged with embezzlement related to the financial irregularities and has appeared in court; however, he did not enter a plea during the private session and has been granted bail.

The information released by Police Scotland does not clarify the necessity of the overseas flights, leaving some aspects of the investigation unexplained. As of early February 2023, the investigative team consisted of one Detective Chief Inspector, one Detective Inspector, one Detective Sergeant, and seven Detective Constables. By the end of January, overtime costs for police personnel working on the case had reached £96,835, with salary costs for the officers involved estimated at just over £2 million.

In a significant aspect of the investigation, former First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and former SNP treasurer Colin Beattie were arrested in early 2023 but were subsequently released without charge. They are now no longer under investigation, as confirmed by the police. Following this development, Sturgeon expressed her relief, stating, "For almost two years, I have had this cloud of investigation hanging over me. I think it won't surprise anybody to hear me say that has not been an easy experience. So to reach this point today is obviously something I am relieved about." She maintained her innocence throughout the process, asserting, "I have done nothing wrong, and I don't think there was ever a scrap of evidence that I had done anything wrong."

Beattie also conveyed his relief at being cleared, commenting, "I knew myself I had done nothing wrong but two years is a long time to be waiting for a result." Similarly, current First Minister John Swinney expressed support for Sturgeon and Beattie, hoping that this resolution provides them an opportunity to move on from the difficulties faced during the investigation.

The investigation continues to attract attention as it unfolds, highlighting significant implications for the SNP and its leadership amidst ongoing scrutiny.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/sturgeon-still-under-investigation-as-probe-costs-top-2m/> - This article provides information on the ongoing Operation Branchform investigation, specifically mentioning Nicola Sturgeon and Colin Beattie, although they are stated to no longer be under investigation in the provided text. It highlights the significant costs associated with the probe.
* <https://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log/disclosure-log-2024/march/24-0527-operation-branchform-costs-td/> - This page lists Police Scotland's Freedom of Information responses related to Operation Branchform, which would include details about costs and aspects of the investigation. However, specific details about overseas flights are not mentioned here.
* <https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/rulesofcourt.pdf> - This document outlines general legal procedures and does not directly relate to Operation Branchform or specific details about the SNP investigation. It is included for general procedural context.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhoXkChdLpw> - This video discusses the costs of Operation Branchform, which had reached £1.8 million by October 2024, highlighting the scope and financial implications of the investigation.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source of the original article, though specific corroboration URLs from it are not provided here. It discusses the investigation's details including the SNP's financial irregularities and personnel involved.