# Scottish Government faces unprecedented housing crisis and spiralling public service failures



The Scottish Government is stumbling through a torrent of criticism, underscored by an incessant chorus of “crisis” reverberating through Holyrood. Recently, opposition leaders, including Anas Sarwar and Russell Findlay, have vehemently exposed the SNP's incompetence in handling issues such as housing shortages and legal aid failures.

Scotland is now facing its highest homelessness figures in over a decade, with more than 33,600 households classified as homeless or on the brink of homelessness by March 2024, marking a staggering 3% rise from the previous year. This alarming statistic highlights the undeniable strife of a housing crisis spiraling out of control. The turmoil is not contained within Scottish borders; it echoes a disconcerting national trend in England, where temporary homelessness has soared by 12%, impacting over 117,000 households. Detractors point to government budget cuts, claiming they are crippling efforts to provide affordable housing, revealing an urgent failure in leadership.

The government's latest stance on rent control further complicates matters, with recent caps on rent increases set at inflation plus 1%. While this move is purportedly designed to protect tenants, it raises grave concerns among investors who warn it could deter crucial investments necessary for new housing developments. This paradox is glaringly evident as rental rates in Scotland continue to rise sharply, even amidst stringent regulations, exposing the futility of their current approach to tenant protection.

In the middle of this crisis, Finance Secretary John Swinney has opted for the tired excuse of escalating construction costs linked to the Ukraine conflict, asserting that these increases are behind the ballooning expenses of essential projects, particularly a new prison for HMP Barlinnie. Originally budgeted at £100 million, estimates have shockingly surged past £1 billion. Such an outrageous escalation calls into question the government's financial stewardship and capability.

The First Minister’s rebuttals in the face of mounting criticism have frequently ignited scorn and ridicule from the opposition benches, particularly when he invokes geopolitical circumstances as a shield against accountability. Far too many observers have deemed his attempts to pin rising utility and construction costs on Vladimir Putin as a desperate distraction rather than a sound rationale.

Beyond these pressing challenges, the SNP's overarching political strategy has been met with skepticism. Swinney's pivot to the political centre, abandoning progressive initiatives, seems more an act of survival than a genuine commitment to improve public service. While recent polls suggest this pragmatic tactic may stave off immediate threats, it utterly fails to address everyday concerns for Scots grappling with surging living costs and insufficient services.

As Storm Babet wreaks havoc across Scotland and northern Europe, leading to severe flooding and widespread disruption, including ferry cancellations, the SNP’s past promises will face rigorous scrutiny. The chaos in ferry services, made worse by environmental challenges, adds yet another dimension to the ongoing crises under this administration's watch.

In this increasingly precarious environment, characterized by entrenched and escalating issues, the critical question looms: will the SNP manage to reclaim its authority and meaningfully confront the multitude of crises besieging Scotland, or will these failures define their legacy? Voter disillusionment grows as their governance falters, leaving ample space for alternative voices advocating for real solutions.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14717269/STEPHEN-DAISLEY-Ive-heard-Putin-blamed-things-never-Bar-Ls-leccy-bill.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/687a68d5-c9ff-4137-9a8e-85d20f861aae> - This article reports that the number of homeless households in Scotland reached a 12-year high, with over 33,600 households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in the year ending March 2024. This represents a 3% increase from the previous year. The national housing crisis is mirrored in England, where over 117,000 households were in temporary accommodation in the first quarter of 2024, marking a 12% rise from the previous year. The article also highlights criticism of the Scottish Government's handling of the crisis and the impact of budget cuts on affordable housing.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/1ede67c4-3d48-4394-8908-3e325500f48a> - The article discusses the Scottish government's modification of rent control proposals amid a housing crisis. The new housing bill suggests capping rent increases at inflation plus 1%, aiming to balance tenant protection with housing development. Previous measures included a rent freeze, which lapsed in April 2023. Investors argue that such controls deter capital investment and cause landlords to withdraw properties, worsening supply issues. The government is also establishing a housing planning hub to expedite new home deliveries. Despite Scotland's strict rent controls, rental rates have surged, indicating a complex housing affordability issue.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/dfd6ec56-cbc2-4920-ae79-4ea4d50936a5> - This article examines how John Swinney revitalized the Scottish National Party (SNP) by steering it toward the political center. Swinney distanced his administration from the Scottish Greens and scaled back progressive initiatives to focus on core issues like economic growth, healthcare, and climate action. His Programme for Government reinstated policies such as abolishing peak rail fares and emphasized NHS improvements. Despite criticism over housing shortfalls and diluted green policies, Swinney's pragmatic approach has restored SNP's electoral strength, with recent polls suggesting a comfortable win in the 2026 Holyrood elections.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/16136991b14e14758167b158be9a9b8b> - The article reports on evacuations in Scotland and severe weather warnings across northern Europe due to Storm Babet. The Met Office issued a rare red alert for Scotland due to expected 'exceptional rainfall' leading to extensive flooding. Parts of Ireland have already been flooded, with towns like Midleton experiencing significant impacts. Denmark and southern Sweden brace for severe flooding, while Germany warns of high water levels in Schleswig-Holstein. The Danish Meteorological Institute predicts waves up to 13 feet and authorities urge residents to prepare. In southern Europe, Spain faces heavy rain, causing ferry cancellations and park closures.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/english-house-prices-grew-more-unaffordable-2023-ons-data-shows-2024-12-09/> - This article reports that in 2023, English house prices became increasingly unaffordable, with an average price requiring 8.6 years of household income (£298,000), up from 8.4 years in 2022. London saw the worst affordability, with average homes out of reach for all income deciles. In contrast, Northern Ireland remained affordable for average households. Prime Minister Keir Starmer calls for 'brave' measures to build 1.5 million new houses in England within five years. Analysts predict house prices in Britain will rise faster than inflation but expect affordability to improve for first-time buyers due to falling interest rates.
7. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24105143.poll-80-voters-say-scotland-faces-housing-crisis/> - A YouGov poll commissioned by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) found that 80% of Scots believe the country is experiencing a housing crisis. Housing was ranked as the third most important issue facing the country, behind the economy and the NHS. The poll also revealed that 79% of respondents think there is not enough affordable housing. The SFHA urged the Scottish Government to reverse its £196 million cut to the affordable housing budget, emphasizing the urgent need for more affordable homes in Scotland.