# Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse by-election seen as crucial test of SNP’s record on economy and public services



Voters in Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse are being urged to reconsider their longstanding support for the Scottish National Party (SNP) as they approach an important by-election. Jackie Baillie, deputy leader of Scottish Labour, insists that nearly two decades of SNP rule have paved the way for discontent, particularly concerning public services and economic performance in Scotland. This by-election is presented not merely as a procedural vote but as an essential moment for constituents to “call time” on the persistent failures of the Nationalist government.

Baillie's criticisms highlight serious issues within Scotland’s public services. NHS waiting times remain alarmingly high compared to those in England, which has shown signs of improvement. Economic performance is another significant concern; Scotland's GDP grew a meagre 0.4 percent in early 2025, lagging behind the UK average of 0.7 percent. Furthermore, wages in Scotland are increasing at a slower pace than the UK average, amplifying anxieties about living standards during a time of economic uncertainty.

The SNP has not only faced criticism from Labour but also from within its ranks, notably from deputy leader Keith Brown. In his defence of the party's track record, Brown attempts to highlight commendable initiatives aimed at reducing energy costs and enhancing NHS funding. However, it’s crucial to scrutinise these claims within the broader context of sustained economic challenges that have long persisted under SNP governance. While he implies an effort to cater to community needs, the reality is that the SNP has failed to deliver improvements that address the pressing issues faced by communities in Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse.

Anas Sarwar, the Scottish Labour leader, asserts that winning this by-election could be a pivotal step in challenging the SNP’s stranglehold on power. His ambitions to build trust with local voters underscore the growing sentiment that a change in leadership is essential to revitalise a stagnant economy and ailing public services. This sentiment aligns with ongoing calls for a fresh approach to governance that prioritises the real needs of the population.

Recent economic reports further contextualise the current political narrative. The Scottish Economic Bulletin notes fluctuations in economic growth and points to uncertainties, including geopolitical turmoil and ineffective domestic policies, which could jeopardise future progress. Forecasts for moderate GDP increases in 2025 paint a picture of a fragile recovery, underscoring the urgency for change in leadership.

As the public grapples with Labour's portrayal of decay in SNP governance, questions about long-term sentiment toward the party arise. Voters in Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse are now faced with strong arguments for a shift away from the status quo towards a more accountable administration. The backdrop of a slow recovery only heightens the importance of this by-election as both a referendum on local leadership and a barometer for broader grievances across Scotland about economic mismanagement and neglect in vital public services.

In this evolving political landscape, the outcome in Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse could take on profound significance, transcending immediate electoral implications to signal a broader demand for change in governance and local administration accountability.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/hamilton-larkhall-voters-urged-call-35319295> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/anas-sarwar-scottish-labour-hamilton-larkhall-and-stonehouse-by-election-5099963> - Anas Sarwar, leader of Scottish Labour, views the upcoming Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse by-election as a pivotal opportunity to form the Scottish Government in the next election. He emphasises the importance of winning this by-election to challenge the SNP's dominance and earn the trust of the constituents for a broader electoral victory.
3. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-economic-bulletin-march-2025/> - The Scottish Economic Bulletin for March 2025 reports that Scotland's GDP grew by 1.1% over 2024, with a flat growth of 0.0% in the fourth quarter. The services sector experienced positive growth, while the production sector saw a decline. Business surveys indicate subdued demand and weaker private sector activity in early 2025.
4. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-economic-bulletin-march-2025/pages/8/> - The Economic Outlook section of the Scottish Economic Bulletin forecasts that Scotland's GDP growth will strengthen in 2025, with projections of 1.5% growth in 2025 and 1.6% in 2026. However, it acknowledges elevated uncertainty at the start of the year, influenced by factors such as geopolitical events and domestic economic policies.
5. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-economic-bulletin-3/pages/8/> - The Economic Outlook in the Scottish Economic Bulletin for February 2025 anticipates stronger GDP growth and more stable inflation in 2025 compared to 2024. The Scottish Fiscal Commission forecasts a 1.5% growth in 2025, up from 1.0% in 2024, with growth expected to be supported by a more expansionary fiscal policy stance.
6. <https://www.scottish-enterprise.com/learning-zone/research-evaluation-and-insight/2025/economic-commentary-february-2025> - Scottish Enterprise's Economic Commentary for February 2025 highlights that business activity rose across major economies in January, but only marginally in the UK and eurozone. The IMF forecasts 3.3% global growth in 2025, with emerging economies expected to grow faster than advanced ones. The UK economy returned to modest growth in the last quarter of 2024, and Scotland's economy contracted in November by 0.5%.
7. <https://www.scottishfinancialnews.com/articles/scotlands-anaemic-growth-is-lagging-behind-uk-towns-and-cities-could-be-the-saviour-4740492> - An article from The Scotsman discusses Scotland's economic growth lagging behind the UK, describing it as 'anaemic'. It suggests that towns and cities could be the saviour, with forecasts indicating that Scotland's economy is expected to grow by 0.9% in 2024, up from a 0.4% forecast in the previous quarter, but remain behind the UK with an anticipated annual growth rate of 1.1%.