

NEWS

'Devolve immigration to boost Scots workforce'

John Boothman

Unison, Scotland's biggest public sector trade union, is calling for immigration policy to be devolved amid warnings that the country could face a population crisis after Brexit.

The union says Scotland's population and tax base would have shrunk in recent years without the presence of European workers and claims that Holyrood should be given scope to target foreign labour to boost the economy after Britain leaves the EU.

"Scotland's population is ageing faster than the rest of the UK and this means we need a different approach to immigration," said Dave Watson, head of policy and public affairs in Scotland. He added: "That's why Unison Scotland has argued for devolved powers over immigration on the Quebec model of regional visas.

"It has been argued that this won't work because immigrants will move outwith Scotland. However, the evidence from Quebec shows that retention rates as high as 90% can be achieved.

"Scotland is not an isolated, low wage, underdeveloped nation, comparable to regions in other countries that have sustained lower retention rates. Most Scots welcome migrants and recognise the social and economic benefits they bring."

Stephen Gethins MP, a Europe spokesman for the SNP, which also favours immigration powers being devolved, argued that many of Scotland's most important sectors such as education, food and drink and energy, rely on immigration and freedom of movement.

He said: "As well as benefiting our economy it also makes Scotland a richer and more diverse place to live and work. Leaving the EU will be bad for our industries and society and take away opportunities from young people. We want to see ministers keep their promise to devolve immigration to the Scottish parliament so we have policies that best suit our needs."

A Scotland Office spokesman said devolution of immigration was considered and rejected by the Smith Commission in 2015.

On Monday, Brexit talks resume between the UK and Scottish governments.

First secretary Damian Green and Scottish secretary David Mundell will meet deputy first minister John Swinney and Scottish Brexit minister Mike Russell in London.

The talks will focus on how common framework arrangements between the UK and the devolved institutions could work on issues such as agriculture, fisheries and justice.



GETTY

Nation expands as healthy food rolls out of Scotland

Julia Horton

Scotland's multi-billion-pound larder is being exported on a vast scale while the nation eats a deadly diet back home, experts have warned.

Social justice campaigners have criticised the "disconnect between food as money, and food as health and nutrition" as Scottish exports of fresh fruit, vegetables and fish boom, while figures for obesity and food poverty rocket nationwide.

Nourish Scotland raised its concerns in Edinburgh last week at an event focused on Ambition 2030, a government-backed project developed by Scotland Food & Drink, a partnership of farming, fishing, food and drink sector organisations, which aims to increase the sector's turnover from £14bn to £30bn by 2030.

The group said that while some progress is being made on diet, ministers and industry should show equal ambition in ensuring that people across Scotland eat healthily.

The group's director, Pete Ritchie, said: "There is a policy disconnect in Scotland between food as money, food as health and

Figures for obesity and food poverty are climbing

nutrition, and food as a way to use land."

He praised progress made since the government's 2014 pledge to become a "good food nation" in both what it produces and what it eats, but warned: "To be a good food nation, we need good farming and good fishing, and we need a good food industry that delivers socially and environmentally as well as economically."

The call coincided with the publication of a Holyrood report last week that revealed "no progress" has been made towards key Scottish dietary goals since 2001, with Scots still eating too few fruits and vegetables. Increasing their consumption is central to reducing obesity and related diseases and conditions such as cancer, diabetes and strokes. About a third of Scottish adults are obese and the government has forecast this to rise to 40% by 2030.

Nourish Scotland's own ambition for 2030 is to double the amount of fruit and vegetables people grow in gardens, allotments and city farms nationwide – a goal to be debated at its Peas Please summit later this month in Edinburgh.

Alex Johnstone, an expert in health inequality and obesity at Aberdeen University who attended the industry event, said ensuring the nation produced affordable, nutritious food for Scots was one of "many complex challenges" faced by the food and drink industry.

Defending the government, which funded "a lot of research" and "clearly prioritised" healthy, safe food, she added that "more evidence" was needed to help change people's diet.

The call echoed similar concerns raised by Mike Lean, a nutritionist at Glasgow University, who has warned of

the damaging impact on the nation's diet and obesity levels of exporting "most" of Scotland's fresh fruit, vegetables and fish, and leaving behind "too much" meat than is good for people's health.

Lean has also criticised the failure to meet national diet targets, which he helped to set, though he praised recent Scottish government support for weight-loss programmes that encouraged dieters to drink nutritious liquid meals before gradually switching to healthy food while learning how to ditch bad eating habits.

The Scottish government said tackling obesity is a "top priority". It pointed out that it is about to consult on its new diet and obesity strategy, with measures including limiting marketing of high fat, sugar and salt products. It said it will continue to work with the industry on healthier choices to help everyone eat better and move more, and repeated its call for the UK government to ban junk food advertising before the 9pm watershed to reduce children's exposure to unhealthy promotions.

James Withers, chief executive at Scotland Food & Drink, admitted there is "some way to go" to correct the imbalance. "Scotland should not choose between supporting food and drink exports or improving our health at home," he said. "Both need maximum effort, yet Scotland has had more success with one than the other in recent years."

Defending economic growth, Withers said providing jobs was the "best health intervention" possible, but agreed that Scotland's health was not good enough and the industry was working on ways to boost fruit and vegetable consumption nationwide.

Portrait in Angus house could be by Old Master

Mark Macaskill

One of Britain's top art historians believes that a portrait on display at a Scottish country house could have been painted by the Dutch artist Anthonis Mor almost 500 years ago.

Bendor Grosvenor stumbled across the artwork – depicting an unnamed, bearded man clutching a sheaf of papers – at Hospitalfield House, an arts centre and historic house, in Arbroath, Angus, two years ago.

Careful restoration and close inspection of the oil painting has led Grosvenor to suspect that the artist was Mor, one of the most in demand portrait painters of his day, whose subjects included prominent figures at many European courts.

Grosvenor's attempt to unmask the artist behind the mysterious portrait is featured in an episode of the BBC programme, Britain's Lost Masterpieces, which airs on Wednesday at 9pm.

"Finding such a potentially extraordinary painting in a place as magical as Hospitalfield would be an immense privilege," said Grosvenor.

"As a portraitist, Mor rivalled the likes of Titian and I think it's no exaggeration to say that, if this work proves to be by Mor, this would be one

of the finest 16th century portraits on display in Scotland."

Lucy Byatt, director of art at Hospitalfield, said: "For Bendor Grosvenor's team of sleuths to have visited Hospitalfield and to be researching the background of one of the paintings within the collection that we know least about... this is so exciting."

Mor, also known as Anthonis Mor van Dashorst and Antonio Moro, was born in the Netherlands between 1510 and 1520 and lived primarily in Utrecht. He travelled widely until settling in Antwerp before his death in the mid 1570s. His subjects

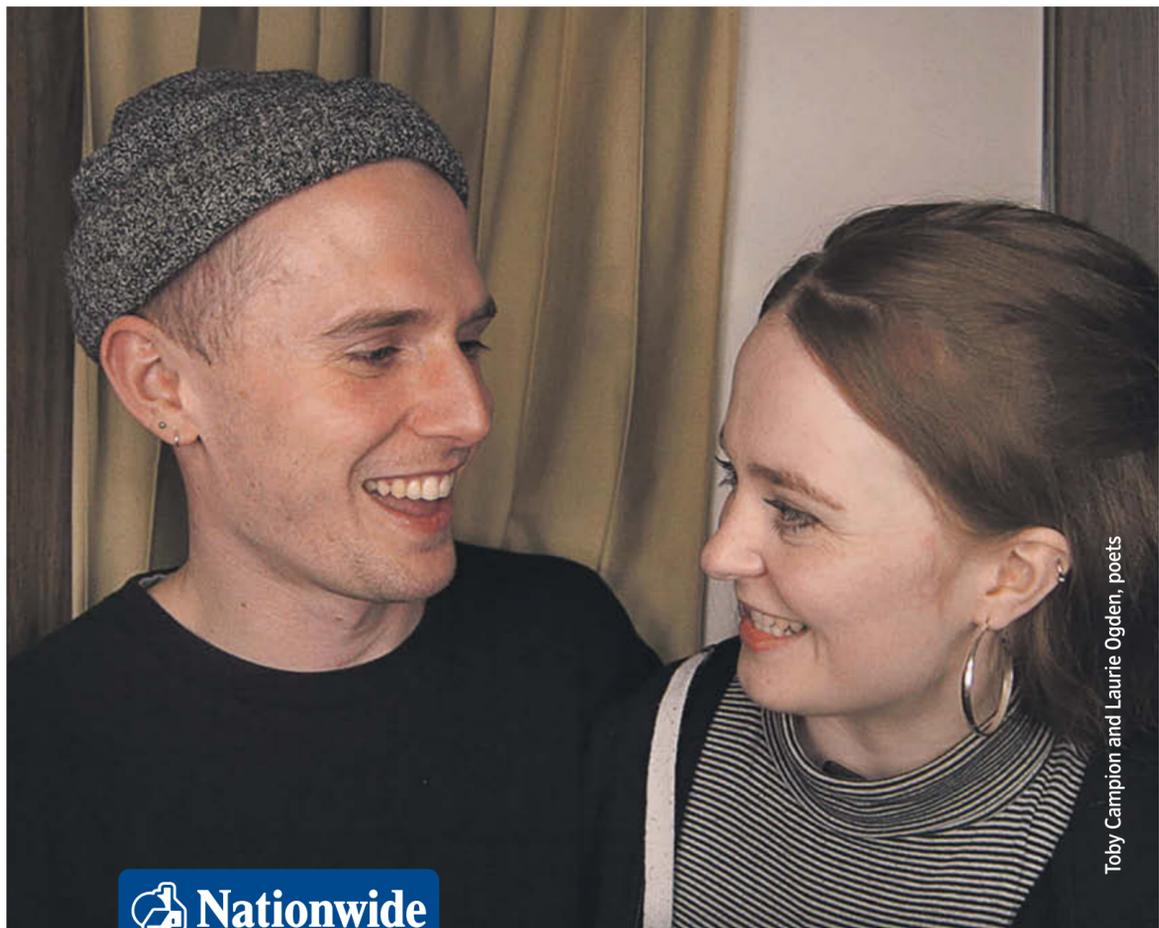
included Mary Tudor, Queen Mary I of England, whom he painted at the time of her marriage to Philip II of Spain.

Hospitalfield was left in trust as an art school by Patrick Allan-Fraser, an artist and philanthropist, in 1890.

Sir Mark Jones, chair of Hospitalfield governors, said: "What a tribute to Allan-Fraser that a portrait he acquired for his collection could now, thanks to Bendor Grosvenor, be identified as a work by Anthonis Mor. A very exciting discovery which highlights the quality of Hospitalfield's wonderful collection and, indeed, the insightful legacy that Allan-Fraser left."



Grosvenor, right, beside the artwork he stumbled across



Toby Campion and Laurie Ogden, poets

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MARINA D'LOUGHLIN IS THE NEW SUNDAY TIMES RESTAURANT CRITIC MAGAZINE, PAGES 58-59

MSPs face probe over ministerial car trip

John Boothman

Scotland's public life standards watchdog has been called in after eight Scottish government ministers were accused of breaking the ministerial code and the code of conduct for MSPs by using ministerial cars to travel from a party political event.

Stephen Kerr, the Conservative MP for Stirling, has written to the commissioner for ethical standards in public life, alleging that the eight brought Holyrood into disrepute by using official government transport to return from the SNP's general election manifesto launch in Perth in May.

He names the alleged offenders as John Swinney, Derek Mackay, Shona Robison, Fiona Hyslop, Alasdair Allan, Maureen Watt, Paul Wheelhouse and Fergus Ewing.

According to the Scottish parliament code of conduct for MSPs "ministers must not

use public resources for party political purposes", and "official transport should not normally be used for travel arrangements arising from party or private business".

A Scottish government spokesman said: "The government car service is available for the use of ministers and cabinet secretaries in travel to and from government business. On this occasion, ministers and cabinet secretaries were picked up and travelled to a variety of ministerial engagements."

Last week it emerged that Watt, a junior health minister, took a £4.68 taxi ride to give a speech promoting physical activity in May. Watt claimed the fare for the 0.9-mile journey from Holyrood to the Meadowbank sports centre on ministerial expenses.

The Scottish government has set a target of walking or running a mile as a daily goal for Scots to achieve to boost our "physical and mental health".