

# Brock questions Mundell's 'fortune' spent on social media advertising

*The Scotland Office spent £686,166.29 on its communications team in the last financial year, a jump of just over £250,000 on the previous year, and also incurred expenses of £16,880.82 on social media advertising.*

Deidre Brock MP for Edinburgh North and Leith tabled what at first appeared to be a rather surprising question at Westminster this month. She asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much his Department had spent on social media advertising since January 2016.

✘ We wondered why she had posed that specific question, and asked her about it.

It appears from the written answer penned by Damian Hinds Minister for Work and Pensions that his department alone spent an average of £21,000 per month on advertising through Twitter and Facebook in the last 18 months. This sum could be viewed as a considerable spend in times of apparent austerity.

But that is not all. Ms Brock has now asked a few other UK government departments how much they spent on such advertising.

She asked the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy for their figures and the minister answered with spending which ranged from £9383 in July 2016 to £136,318 for the month of April 2017.

A similar request revealed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer spent nothing at all between January and August 2016 and under £800 in September 2016.

The Department for Exiting the European Union said it has not spent anything at all on social media advertising since January 2016 but the Department for Health has not divulged any details saying instead : *“Detailed information for spend on advertising by each individual category such as ‘social media’ is not available within the Department’s Business Management System centrally and to provide an answer by specific categories would require a review of each individual contract and invoice payment, and would result in disproportionate cost.”*

This is the full range of social media advertising spend which Ms Brock discovered from her various questions, with the Ministry of Defence topping the poll at over £4 million :

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Brock then investigated how much the Secretary of State for Scotland had spent on such advertising, and says that she found the results surprising.

Deidre explained : *“While everyone else in Scotland is suffering the cuts of the Tory Government David Mundell seems to be building himself a little empire. The DUP wrung one and a half billion pounds out of Theresa May and the Scottish Secretary got nothing for Scotland, but he seems to be spending a fortune on spin doctors to tell us that it doesn’t matter.*



David Mundell at the  
Edinburgh International  
Book Festival in 2016 ©  
John Preece

*“He’s spending half a million pounds more on spin doctors than was being spent when the Tories came to power, and I’ve no doubt that he’ll be spending more next year. As if that*

wasn't bad enough, he's also spending a fortune on social media advertising – and there was a strange and sudden increase the month before that snap election was called, from under a thousand pounds a month to nearly twelve thousand pounds.

“There was a big increase just before last year's Scottish Parliamentary election, too. It looks very much like the Tories have been using our money to campaign in elections through Twitter and Facebook – there isn't really another way to explain it. [The Wales Office](#) has only spent £71 on social media advertising in the last year and a half – that's less than the Scotland Office was spending in an average week even before the sudden massive increase.

“Who were these adverts aimed at and what was in them? When was it planned? Did the Tories decide to ramp up the spending when they knew there was an election coming but before any of the rest of us were told?

“David Mundell has got some serious questions to answer about what is going on here. Instead of doing his job and delivering for Scotland he's busy hiring a whole lot of people and spending a whole lot of money on advertising to tell us that everything is fine on his watch when things very clearly are not. If the Tories have been election campaigning at public expense, using our money, then it's time for a serious investigation. Scotland deserves better than this shabby nonsense.”

The Scotland Office provided the following answer to Deidre's written parliamentary question (1974):

**Question:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much his Department has spent on social media advertising in each month since January 2016. (1974)

Tabled on: 29 June 2017

**Answer:**

**David Mundell:**

Scotland Office social media advertising spend for the given period is shown below:

<b>January 2016</b>	£0.00
<b>February 2016</b>	£0.00
<b>March 2016</b>	£370.56
<b>April 2016</b>	£126.01
<b>May 2016</b>	£1,070.61
<b>June 2016</b>	£529.84
<b>July 2016</b>	£403.46
<b>August 2016</b>	£0.00
<b>September 2016</b>	£449.77
<b>October 2016</b>	£0.00
<b>November 2016</b>	£0.00
<b>December 2016</b>	£235.41
<b>January 2017</b>	£469.62
<b>February 2017</b>	£925.81
<b>March 2017</b>	£11,745.11
<b>April 2017</b>	£86.24
<b>May 2017</b>	£0.00
<b>Jun3 2017</b>	£468.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>£16,880.82</b>

The answer was submitted on 06 Jul 2017 at 11:49.

## ***COMMUNICATIONS TEAM COSTS***

Deidre also asked how much the Secretary of State for Scotland spent on his communications team. Given that during the bulk of the 18 month period Mr Mundell was the only Conservative MP

in Scotland, the team could only have been working for him.

The costs for the most recent financial year are stated to be £686,166.29 which is an increase over the previous year when £426,223 was spent on running the communications team.

The Scotland Office provided the following answer to Ms Brock's written parliamentary question (1976):

**Question:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what the cost to the public purse was of his Department's communications team in the most recent financial year for which figures are available. (1976)

Tabled on: 29 June 2017

**Answer:**

**David Mundell:**

The cost of the communications team at the Scotland Office was £686,166.29 in 2016-17.

The answer was submitted on 06 Jul 2017 at 11:50.

**Question:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what the cost was of his Department's communications team in each year since 2007; and what the projected costs are for 2016. (41719)

Tabled on: 04 July 2016

**Answer:**

**David Mundell:**

The communications team in the Scotland Office has been resourced during this period to enable effective engagement and communication with the public on the constitutional arrangements for Scotland. This includes the Scotland Act 2012, the UK Government's position on the Scottish

independence referendum and the Scotland Act 2016.

The cost of the communications team at the Scotland Office since 2007 are shown below.

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Total salary bill</b>
<b>2007-08</b>	£113,236
<b>2008-09</b>	£115,356
<b>2009-10</b>	£144,084
<b>2010-11</b>	£108,439
<b>2011-12</b>	£169,373
<b>2012-13</b>	£180,954
<b>2013-14</b>	£241,636
<b>2014-15</b>	£348,895
<b>2015-16</b>	£426,223

The answer was submitted on 11 Jul 2016 at 13:22.