

# [***Husband of former Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon charged with embezzlement in party finance probe***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BTX-7NT1-DYMD-60BF-00000-00&context=1516831)

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LONDON — The husband of [*former Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon*](https://apnews.com/article/politics-united-kingdom-government-nicola-sturgeon-scotland-bce30aa06447e1638c5d165b1e9ebe31) was charged Thursday with embezzlement in a probe into the finances of Scotland’s pro-independence governing party, a shocking setback for the country's most powerful political couple.

Police in Scotland said a 59-year-old man was charged Thursday evening after being arrested and taken into custody earlier in the day for questioning by “detectives investigating the funding and finances of the party.”

He was released after being charged, the force said. While police did not name the suspect, the details provided matched up with Peter Murrell, the party’s former chief executive who was [*arrested just over a year ago*](https://apnews.com/article/scotland-nicola-sturgeon-husband-arrested-0e620a7d44dd9d0999f28702074c7042).

Scottish police have been investigating how 600,000 pounds ($750,000) earmarked for a Scottish independence campaign were spent. Murrell, Sturgeon and Colin Beattie, the Scottish National Party's former treasurer, were [*arrested and questioned last year*](https://apnews.com/article/scotland-nicola-sturgeon-arrested-party-5bc263b37c06ac7e46f8bfb89a9e5454) in the probe but released without being charged with a crime.

Murrell's first arrest came shortly after Sturgeon's surprise announcement in February 2023 that she was resigning her post after eight years as party leader and first minister of Scotland’s semi-autonomous government.

Murrell stepped down the following month amid controversy about the party’s declining membership and a bitter fight to replace Sturgeon. He held the position for more than 20 years.

At the time of Murrell's first arrest, police searched the couple's Glasgow home over two days.

It is highly unusual for a leader or former leader of a U.K. political party to be arrested. Sturgeon said after being released from custody in June that her arrest had been “both a shock and deeply distressing.” She insisted she had done nothing wrong.

“I do wish to say this, and to do so in the strongest possible terms,” she said in a statement on social media at the time. ”Innocence is not just a presumption I am entitled to in law. I know beyond doubt that I am in fact innocent of any wrongdoing.”

In announcing her [*resignation, Sturgeon said she knew*](https://apnews.com/article/nicola-sturgeon-northern-ireland-edinburgh-scotland-7facdaedd9561554c5b390027c63177c) “in my head and in my heart” that it was the right time for her, her party and her country to make way for someone else.

Sturgeon and Murrell have been married since 2010 and helped steer the SNP to a dominant position in Scottish ***politics***. It heads the semi-autonomous Scottish government in Edinburgh and holds a large majority of Scotland's seats in the U.K. Parliament in London.

But Sturgeon resigned with her biggest political goal — taking Scotland out of the United Kingdom to become an independent country — unrealized.

She had led the party and led Scotland since 2014, when Scots rejected independence in a referendum. While the referendum was billed as a once-in-a-generation decision on independence, Sturgeon and her party had pushed for a new vote, arguing that Britain’s departure from the European Union had changed the ground rules.

Those efforts reached a stalemate when the U.K. government [*refused to authorize a new referendum*](https://apnews.com/article/europe-london-united-kingdom-referendums-scotland-fcc2858c12e307610391c75194c5ab4a).

Sturgeon’s departure unleashed a tussle for the future of the SNP amid recriminations over the party’s declining membership and divisions over the best path towards independence. Opinion polls suggest support for the party has sagged.

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