

Freedom of speech must not be destroyed by SNP

28 Jul 2020



The SNP government's controversial hate crimes legislation must be dramatically altered to protect free speech, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The call comes after both the Law Society of Scotland and the Scottish Police Federation have stated serious reservations about the bill.

The Scottish Police Federation, the voice of Scotland's police officers, published their response to the bill today, writing that parts of the bill are 'too vague to be implemented'.

The organisation is also concerned that the bill, as drafted, "would devastate the legitimacy of the police in the eyes of the public."

Just yesterday, in their response to the bill, the Law Society criticised the legislation for being an assault on democracy; "We have significant reservations regarding a number of the Bill's provisions and the lack of clarity, which could in effect lead to restrictions in freedom of expression, one of the foundations of a democratic society."

These reservations have been echoed by a number of other organisations and individuals including Roddy Dunlop QC, the Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, the National Secular Society and the Christian organisation CARE Scotland.

Liam Kerr, Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary said:

"The SNP government must amend this bill to protect freedom of speech.

"Lawyers, police officers and a wide range of civic organisations have now expressed serious reservations about the scope and effect of this legislation.

"These informed and thoughtful interventions are from experts in their field.

"The Justice Secretary's response to these serious and reasonable concerns appears to be little more than name calling.

"The SNP's hate crimes legislation is far too vague, it poses an extreme danger to freedom of speech and it will criminalise well-intentioned members of the public who pose no threat.

"Mr Yousaf must now listen to these experts and amend his deeply flawed bill."

[SNP must stop selling Covid facemasks](#)

27 Jul 2020



Annie Wells, Scottish Conservative deputy leader has written to Peter Murrell, the SNP Chief Executive, and asked that the SNP stops selling branded facemasks on its website.

In the letter Ms Wells states that thousands of people have suffered as a result of the Covid crisis and that “to profit from such an event is a tasteless venture.”

Ms Wells has also pointed out that the SNP is trying to profit from their own public health policy as earlier this month the First Minister announced that facemasks in shops and public transport were compulsory.

Ms Wells has written to Mr Murrell, as the Chief Executive of the SNP, and asked that the facemasks be removed and any profits already made should be donated to charity.

Annie Wells, Scottish Conservative deputy leader said:

“It is really disappointing that the SNP is refusing to remove this unfortunate merchandise from their website.

“It seems that in their rush to make some money the SNP has forgotten that thousands of people have died from Covid, causing extreme suffering to their friends and families.

“As a result, I have written to Mr Murrell, the Chief Executive of the SNP to ask him to remove these items from the extensive merchandise that the SNP already offers.

“Any profits that have already been made should now be donated to charity.

“Profiting from a national crisis is a pretty tasteless move from the SNP.”

[Seven times Sturgeon made Covid-19 briefings about politics](#)

27 Jul 2020



Nicola Sturgeon has repeatedly used the live Covid-19 briefings to score party political points, analysis has revealed.

Pressure is mounting on the BBC to stop providing an almost-daily platform to the First Minister in relation to coronavirus updates amid criticism they are becoming increasingly partisan in their content.

Now research by the Scottish Conservatives has shown how Ms Sturgeon regularly uses the event, which until recently took place seven days a week, to make political criticism and promote SNP policy.

The evidence includes referring to the UK Government approach on airbridges as “shambolic”, criticising Boris Johnson for remarks on the Scotland-England border, and raising questions about immigration policy.

She even blasted the UK Government’s rebranded “stay alert” guidance, only to herself adopt an almost identical message weeks later.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“It was quite right for the First Minister to embark on these daily briefings at the outset of this crisis, and for them to continue in the months that followed.

“But increasingly, as the statistics have improved and there’s inevitably less to say about them, the First Minister has turned to political point-scoring.

“This analysis shows how what starts with a daily data update soon descends into an SNP party political broadcast.

“She shouldn’t be doing that, and the BBC shouldn’t be indulging it.

“Either Nicola Sturgeon reverts to this being purely a factual event, or the corporation takes a stand and refuses to give her the airtime.”

[Over 3,500 more disabled Scots waiting for housing](#)

24 Jul 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have revealed that over 3,500 more disabled Scots are currently waiting for housing compared to last year.

The figures compiled from freedom of information requests to local authorities show that the numbers of disabled people waiting for permanent housing has shot up alarmingly to 20,764 this year.

This represents an increase of just over 3,500 from 17,206 in 2019 with many people waiting years for housing as standard.

Worse, this worrying increase follows a far larger jump from 2017 when 9608 disabled Scots were waiting for housing.

The Scottish Conservatives have expressed serious concern for those waiting such a long time to find a home, and called for the SNP government to reverse this trend.

Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative local government and communities secretary said:

“This is an absolute scandal – thousands more disabled Scots are now waiting for housing, potentially living in completely unsuitable circumstances.

“This is extremely difficult for those individuals and their families depriving them of choice, dignity and freedom to access suitable homes.

“Local authorities are facing insurmountable financial pressures and simply do not have the financial resources to provide these homes.

“This situation has become significantly worse over the last few years, with the numbers of Scots more than doubling since 2016.

“The SNP government must step in now, reverse this trend, and give disabled people some hope.”

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24 Jul 2020



The lack of leadership being shown by the education secretary is risking the repeated pledge made by Nicola Sturgeon that education is her top priority, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

John Swinney yesterday again delayed giving parents a guarantee that schools would return in full on August 11.

It means they – along with pupils and teachers – will need to wait another week before knowing for sure about when education can go back to normal.

Now shadow education secretary Jamie Greene has said a failure to deliver on the resumption pledge would jeopardise the promise made by the First Minister that she wants to be judged on her performance on education.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Jamie Greene said:

“From the moment she took office as First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon said education would be her number one priority.

“At her own request, she staked her very reputation on that claim.

“Now a lack of leadership from her deputy is jeopardising that ambition.

“John Swinney has completely left children, parents and teachers in the dark and, less than three weeks until schools are meant to return, there’s no clarity at all.

“The plan a for pupils’ return has been a shambles from the outset, and even this late in the day no-one is quite sure what’s going to happen.

“Everyone involved in the schools system deserves so much more from this incompetent SNP government.”