

SNP roll-out of low emissions zones 'unrealistic'

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- SNP roll-out of low emissions zones 'unrealistic'

7 Dec 2017



The timescale for the SNP's drive to create low emissions zones in Scotland's cities is unrealistic and causes concern to thousands of motorists, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Transport minister Humza Yousaf confirmed today that trial zones will be in place by 2018, with Glasgow likely to be the first city to introduce restricted access.

Scotland's four biggest cities will have low emissions areas by 2020.

It means drivers will face potentially hefty fines, while bus companies may be forced to upgrade entire fleets while maintaining current service levels.

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Jamie Greene said while the party was broadly supportive of the Low Emission Zones, and the objective they seek to achieve, much detail was still lacking and many people are justifiably concerned about the unrealistic timescales for roll-out.

Earlier this year, the SNP confirmed it wanted to phase out diesel and petrol cars several years ahead of the rest of the UK and other European countries.

This is despite transport experts saying that the infrastructure is not in place to manage the zones, and that motorists are clearly not ready for being banned from their own cities.

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Jamie Greene said:

"The SNP confirmed today that low emissions zones will be in place by 2018.

"Well that's just 24 days away, which is why so many are concerned about this unrealistic timeframe.

"There are many serious and substantial questions which the transport minister was unable to answer today.

"We support the potential positive outcomes that the zones could create, but are very concerned about the timescale and lack of detail.

"Many thousands of law-abiding everyday drivers will be affected by these

restrictions, as will city residents and local businesses.

“Why should they be penalised for car purchase decisions they took before the zones were introduced or announced?”

“People in Scotland’s cities will be justifiably concerned about possibly being banned from driving to and from their own doorsteps.

“Those concerns must be listened to by the Scottish Government if it pushes ahead with these plans.”

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7 Dec 2017



Nicola Sturgeon will plough ahead with her hated named person plans, despite the policy being “in tatters”.

The First Minister was challenged on the issue today by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson, who said the parliament had now joined parents across the country in losing patience with the scheme.

Yesterday, Holyrood’s Education Committee said it wasn’t able to scrutinise the legislation because of a lack of detail from the Scottish Government.

It means the plans could be delayed until late next year, having already been deemed unlawful by the Supreme Court.

Despite that, at First Minister’s Questions, Ms Sturgeon said she would “proceed with the plans because they are in the best interests of children”.

She even defended her government’s approach of seeking out witnesses who were due to appear at the Education Committee in advance of them giving evidence on named person.

Despite concerns that the Scottish Government was trying to influence these groups, she said it was “the sensible way” to do business.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The SNP’s named person plans are in tatters.

“Everyone wants protection for vulnerable children but this is not the way to do it.

“It’s now clear that parliament has joined the public in no longer having confidence in these plans.

“We should focus resource on those who actually need it, rather than having blanket interference for every family in Scotland.

“The Scottish Conservatives are willing to get round the table and find a fresh solution to help and protect vulnerable youngsters.

“But first the SNP needs to ditch this broken plan, which has been ruled unlawful, and is hated by parents the length and breadth of the country.”

It was revealed yesterday that the named person plan has been delayed again after Education Committee involvement:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/12/more-delays-for-snps-named-person-scheme/>

It’s been reported that the Scottish Government met organisations due to give evidence on named person ahead of their committee appearance:

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-government-undermined-expert-evidence-over-named-person-1-4617207>

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7 Dec 2017



The Scottish Conservative leaders of four councils have joined forces with the Scottish Conservative Shadow Cabinet Secretary on Finance to urge the Scottish Government not to impose further cuts on local authority budgets.

The letter to Derek McKay makes clear that since its own budget is not being cut next year there is no justification for it to cut the local authority budget either.

In advance of the Budget announcement for 2018-19, the letter highlights that the cuts local authorities have already endured are affecting front-line services.

In addition, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has increased the Scottish Block Grant in real terms and therefore, any cuts to Council budgets are solely a political choice by the SNP Government.

The letter is signed by Murdo Fraser MSP, Scottish Conservative Shadow Cabinet Secretary on Finance, Cllr Ian Campbell Leader of Perth and Kinross Council, Cllr Shona Haslam Leader of Scottish Borders Council, Cllr Jim Gifford Leader of Aberdeenshire Council and Cllr Douglas Lumsden Co-Leader of Aberdeen City Council.

Scottish Conservative Shadow Cabinet Secretary on Finance, Murdo Fraser said:

“We have written to Derek McKay, outlining our position that local authorities must not suffer any further budget cuts.

“According to COSLA, councils have seen a real terms cut in funding allocation of 8% since 2010.

“These cuts are already affecting front-line services and further cuts would mean an even greater impact.

“The Finance Secretary has just received a real terms increase in the Block Grant and so there can be no justification for any further cuts in Council budgets at this time.

“Any plan to further cut these budgets will be solely down to political choice by the SNP Government

[More delays for SNP's named person scheme](#)

6 Dec 2017



The SNP's controversial plans to assign a named person to every young person in Scotland face further delays following an Education Committee vote today.

A majority of MSPs said scrutiny of elements of the policy would have to wait

until certain details are sorted out.

It means the committee cannot produce a report on the information sharing elements until the Scottish Government improves the bill, which delays its overall progress through parliament.

Last year, the Supreme Court deemed those particular elements unlawful, and ordered ministers to change the legislation before it could be implemented.

Since then, critics have said the SNP has only succeeded in making the named person proposals even more confusing.

Experts said those expected to implement the policy have no idea what their legal responsibilities would be, and don't have sufficient guidance.

While five SNP MSPs voted against the move today, the six opposition politicians on the committee backed it.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"The majority of the committee were very clear that it would be inappropriate to proceed to stage 1 because it was not possible to determine whether the evidence taken supported the general principles of the bill.

"This is a very unusual step for any committee to take but it is the right one.

"If we had progressed to stage 1 we would have undermined the effective scrutiny of the committee system.

"The Information Commissioner was very clear that the illustrative code of practice was not fit for purpose and was unlikely to bear much resemblance to the final code of practice.

"The practitioners told us time and time again that their support for the bill was contingent upon them knowing exactly where they stood in relation to their responsibilities.

"The illustrative code did not give them that clarity and that is why committee members, irrespective of their views on named persons, came to the conclusion that they did.

"Frankly, this whole parliamentary process is a mess and the responsibility for that lies solely with the Scottish Government.

"It is little wonder that so many members of the public are telling John Swinney to cut his losses, ditch the bill and start again with a different policy which supports our most vulnerable children."

To see a copy of the minutes from today's Education Committee, visit:

[Half a million bed days lost to delayed discharge](#)

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5 Dec 2017



More than half a million bed days were occupied by patients who were fit to leave hospital last year, new figures have revealed.

ISD Scotland said there were 532,423 bed blocking patients in 2016/17, the vast majority of whom were elderly.

And while that's a slight decrease from the previous year, it still means one in 12 hospital beds are taken up by a delayed discharge patient at any one time.

In the Western Isles, nearly 30 per cent of hospital beds are used in this way.

Delayed discharge costs the NHS £132 million a year, and places immense strain on other areas of the health service.

Today's report cited patients awaiting care packages and care home places as by far the most common reason for a delay.

The SNP has repeatedly pledged to sort the issue of bed-blocking out, for the sake of both patients and hospitals.

However, despite repeated initiatives, little improvement has been made in recent years.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"Delayed discharge has caused huge problems in hospitals for several years now, yet the SNP government has made next to no improvement in this area.

"On a human level, it creates sheer misery for thousands upon thousands of patients who are fit to leave but have nowhere to go.

"It's time for ministers to come up with a meaningful plan to address this.

“We keep hearing of funding announcements and system overhauls, but nothing seems to change.

“More than half a million bed days were lost to this issue last year – that’s not something our NHS or vulnerable patients can afford.

“Increasingly our acute hospitals are not able to function properly as vital acute beds are being used by delayed discharge patients.

“In some cases patients are being delayed by hundreds of days.”