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30 Jul 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have slammed the SNP after their Westminster leader revealed plans to reboot the campaign for independence.

Ian Blackford denied that independence had been put on the back burner, saying “We’ve clearly got a manifesto commitment from the 2016 election that says if there is a change in circumstances there’s the question of a second referendum.”

It comes after Nicola Sturgeon promised that there would be a “forward-looking and ambitious” relaunch of the campaign, despite having said she would delay her plans after the General Election.

Scottish Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser said these comments completely destroyed any claims that the SNP would be focussing on the day job.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser MSP said:

“These latest comments from the SNP prove once and for all that they will always put independence first.

“Despite voters sending them a clear message this year that they are fed up with them obsessing over independence, the SNP just aren’t listening.

“It destroys claims from Nicola Sturgeon that her priority is anything but separation, or that she would be getting back to the day job.

“People are crying out for the Scottish Government to start concentrating on improving our hospitals, schools and the economy.

“But instead we have a narrow minded administration that will stop at nothing until they have torn Scotland out of the UK.”

[Report confirms deepening workforce crisis in NHS](#)

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27 Jul 2017



A new report has revealed the urgent workforce challenges facing Scotland's NHS, saying that the SNP Government has failed to plan for the long term.

Audit Scotland's report into workforce planning in the NHS revealed that there has been a 107 per cent increase in spending on agency staff since 2011/12, with the cost now standing at £171 million.

It also showed that over a third of nurses and midwives are now aged over 50, while the number of newly qualified nurses available to replace them fell by 15 per cent in 2014-15 and then a further seven per cent in 2015-16.

The number of vacancies across NHS Scotland has also increased, with the percentage vacancy rate for consultants rising from 3.6 per cent in 2011/12 to 7.4 per cent in 2016/17.

There was a rise from 1.8 per cent to 4.5 per cent for nursing and midwifery vacancies over the same period.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

"This is another deeply concerning report into the workforce crisis in our NHS.

"Time and again we have seen warnings about long term workforce planning, and these figures show the situation is only getting worse.

"Agency costs are soaring, and the percentage of vacancies in consultancy and nursing posts have more than doubled.

"More worryingly, we are not seeing enough new nurses being trained to keep up with an increasingly elderly workforce.

"The growing strain within NHS departments is clear, and it is the SNP's totally shambolic approach to work-force planning over the last decade that is to blame.

"Instead of standing idly by, it's time the SNP started listening to the growing chorus of voices saying that we need an effective, long-term workforce strategy put in place."

[Sharp increase in number of personal insolvencies](#)

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26 Jul 2017



New figures released by the Scottish Government have shown a drastic increase in the number of personal insolvencies and bankruptcies between April and June this year.

The Accountant in Bankruptcy (AiB) confirmed that there were 2,839 personal insolvencies in the first quarter of 2017-18, compared to 2,420 in the same quarter last year – an increase of 17%.

Of those 1,289 were bankruptcies, an increase of 11% on the year before.

The figures show just how much some are struggling, and the Scottish Conservatives have called on the SNP Government to do more to help Scots deal with personal debt.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser MSP said:

“It’s incredibly worrying to see such a sharp increase in the number of Scots going bankrupt.

“Given the lacklustre growth in the Scottish economy over the last year, we are starting to see the consequences of it as more and more people are struggling in a sea of debt.

“These individuals will be going through an incredibly tough time and it is incumbent upon the Scottish Government to do all they can to support them.

“One step the SNP could take immediately would be to boost long-term economic growth and job creation by reversing their tax hikes that have made Scotland the highest taxed part of the UK.

Cancer detection rates still worse in poorer areas

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25 Jul 2017



Statistics published today by ISD Scotland have shown that cancer detection rates are markedly worse in poorer areas of Scotland.

The highest proportion of patients with breast, colorectal and lung cancer in the most deprived areas of Scotland were diagnosed at stage 4.

Meanwhile for those living in the least deprived areas, the highest proportion were diagnosed at stage 2.

The Scottish Conservatives have called on the Scottish Government to do more to tackle the discrepancy, especially when early diagnosis can have a huge impact on survival rates.

Scottish Conservative public health spokesman Annie Wells MSP said:

“These statistics show that there is still a huge discrepancy between those living in the most and least deprived areas of Scotland when it comes to detecting cancer.

“It shouldn’t be the case that just because you live in a poorer area you should receive a later diagnosis.

“When having an earlier diagnosis can have a huge impact on your chances of survival, we can’t let this postcode lottery continue.

“We need to see improvements across the board so that all Scots receive the best care from the earliest stage possible.”

For patients diagnosed with breast, colorectal and lung cancer in the most deprived areas of Scotland, the highest proportion were diagnosed at the most advanced stage of disease; stage 4 (29.4%) while for those living in the least deprived areas, the highest proportion were diagnosed at stage 2 (28.6%).

You can read the statistics here:

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Cancer/Publications/2017-07-25/2017-07-25-DetectCancerEarly-Report.pdf>

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25 Jul 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have said that there is still work to be done to improve Scottish rail services following the publication of the National Rail Passenger Satisfaction (NRPS) figures.

While the survey found that 90% of passengers were satisfied overall with ScotRail services, only 61% of passengers believed they were getting value for money.

There were significant drops in those satisfied in the facilities at the stations they were using as well, with car parking provision and ticket purchasing facilities seen to be getting worse.

Worryingly there was also a nine per cent drop in those who were satisfied with their personal security on trains.

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Jamie Green MSP said:

“It’s welcome to see that overall satisfaction is increasing, and it’s important to acknowledge the efforts of ScotRail staff in achieving this.

“However these results still show that there are still several areas of concern, with passengers still not feeling like they are getting value for money from their train service.

“It’s deeply concerning to see that there are many more passengers who do not feel safe on board trains, and with many also criticising the car parking and ticket buying facilities at stations, it shows that there is still a lot of work to be done.

“We need to see continued efforts from ScotRail and the SNP Government if we are to see Scottish passengers given the train service they deserve.”