

Report card proves strong opposition

30 Jun 2017



An end-of-term report card published by the Scottish Conservatives shows the party has fulfilled its pledge to act as a strong opposition to the SNP this year – as promised.

It shows the SNP government has been forced to adopt no fewer than 10 key Scottish Conservative policies from GP funding to economic development.

The Scottish Conservatives have inflicted six parliamentary defeats on the SNP – and would have made it seven if Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale had registered a vote in a debate on tax.

Meanwhile, Scottish Conservative campaigning in parliament has pushed the SNP into u-turns on business rates, named persons, local taxation, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, drug driving and farming.

In addition, it was the Scottish Conservatives which stood up against Nicola Sturgeon's reckless plan for a second referendum – before taking 12 seats off the SNP in the Westminster election on June 8.

The 10 Scottish Conservative policies swiped by the SNP over the last year are:

- Increasing the proportion of NHS funding to GPs
- Introducing flexible childcare
- Reviewing NHS targets
- Introducing 24h mental health support in GP surgeries and A+E.
- Expanding Scottish Development International
- Creating South of Scotland Enterprise
- Expanding the role of Community Pharmacists
- Increasing powers for headteachers
- Creating a First Ministers' Reading Challenge
- Giving funding directly to schools to close the attainment gap

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“This parliamentary session will go down as the year the SNP's bubble burst.

“From blunders on farm payments and business rates to Nicola Sturgeon's reckless bid for a second referendum, they have blown their reputation for competence.

“The general election result this month showed that, all over Scotland, people have quite simply had enough.

“When we were elected as Scotland's main opposition party last year, we

promised to hold the SNP to account and to say no to their second referendum.

“This report card shows that our team of 31 MSPs has made a good start delivering on that – not just by standing up to the SNP, but by offering alternative ideas that this clapped-out government has been forced to adopt.

“Over the next year, we are determined to step up the pace and show ourselves as a credible alternative government for Scotland.”

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28 Jun 2017



Scottish Conservative MSP Donald Cameron has been handed a key new post as the party’s chief policy co-ordinator in a major shake-up of the Scottish Conservative team.

Announcing the move today, leader Ruth Davidson said the plan showed the party was determined to provide a credible alternative government to an SNP administration focused solely on independence.

And she added the move was an indication that Nicola Sturgeon was “being put on notice” by the Scottish Conservatives ahead of the next Holyrood election.

Mr Cameron will be given responsibility for policy development ahead of that vote.

His appointment comes as part of a wider reshuffle to the Scottish Conservative team.

Three MSPs are promoted to the shadow cabinet:

Miles Briggs will take over as the party’s shadow health secretary.

Liam Kerr has been named as shadow justice secretary.

And Rachel Hamilton becomes shadow cabinet secretary for culture and tourism.

West of Scotland MSP Maurice Golden has been named the party’s new chief whip, following John Lamont’s election to Westminster.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The SNP’s bubble has burst and people across Scotland are now looking for change.

“The Scottish Conservatives have done a strong job holding the Scottish Government to account since becoming the main opposition at Holyrood last year.

“Now we have to step it up.

“That’s why I’ve asked Donald Cameron to take on the role of co-ordinating and developing policy with the shadow cabinet team as we look towards the elections in 2021.

“I am serious about offering the voters of Scotland a choice at those elections with the Conservatives as a credible alternative government of Scotland.

“It’s not enough to simply point out where the SNP has performed badly or let Scotland down.

“This is about showing what we’d do differently and how we can move Scotland forward.

“In areas such as education, public services and the economy we are bursting with ideas and we will work with stakeholders across Scotland to bring forward a manifesto in 2021 which can command the support of the country.

“Nicola Sturgeon is being put on notice.

“It’s time Scotland had a government committed to the day job and that’s exactly the offer we will take to the country.”

Scottish Conservative MSP Donald Cameron said:

“I’m delighted to be asked by Ruth to undertake a general policy co-ordination role, with a view to the 2021 election.

“The Scottish Conservatives will produce a manifesto that draws on a wide range of expertise in all policy areas, proposing our vision for Scotland, and confirming us as a government-in-waiting.”

Prior to becoming an MSP, Donald Cameron worked at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC (1999 to 2000).

He was also Standing Junior Counsel to the Scottish Government from 2009 to 2016.

The full Scottish Conservative shadow cabinet and ministerial team is below

Scottish Conservative shadow cabinet and spokesmen and women

Leader – Ruth Davidson MSP

Chief Whip and Business Manager, Spokesperson for the Low Carbon Economy– Maurice Golden MSP

Deputy Leader and Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Europe and External Affairs – Jackson Carlaw MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Finance – Murdo Fraser MSP

Transport and Infrastructure – Jamie Greene MSP

Taxation – Bill Bowman MSP

Financial Sustainability – Tom Mason MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work – Dean Lockhart MSP

Business, Innovation and Energy and Deputy Business Manager– Alexander Burnett MSP

Jobs, Employability and Training – Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport – Miles Briggs MSP

Mental Health, Public Health and Equalities – Annie Wells MSP

Health Education, Lifestyle and Sport – Brian Whittle MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills – Liz Smith MSP

Further Education, Higher Education and Science – Oliver Mundell MSP

Childcare and Early Years – Michelle Ballantyne MSP

2021 Policy Coordinator, Shadow Cabinet Secretary for the Climate Change, Environment, Land Reform– Donald Cameron

Biodiversity, Animal Welfare and the Digital Economy – Finlay Carson

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity– Peter Chapman MSP

Rural Affairs – Edward Mountain

Farming – John Scott

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Communities, Social Security and Equalities – Adam Tomkins MSP

Welfare Reform – Jeremy Balfour MSP

Housing and Communities – Graham Simpson MSP

Local Government – Alexander Stewart MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Justice – Liam Kerr MSP

Legal Affairs – Gordon Lindhurst MSP

Community Safety and Veterans Affairs – Maurice Corry MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Tourism – Rachael Hamilton MSP

Tourism and Small Business – Alison Harris MSP

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27 Jun 2017



Nicola Sturgeon's leadership is "leaking credibility by the hour", the Scottish Conservatives have said after the First Minister shelved her second referendum plans.

Addressing MSPs today, the SNP leader said she would "reset" the proposals tabled earlier this year, when she said she wanted to bring forward plans for another vote immediately.

Instead, she said, she would wait for the outcome of Brexit negotiations.

The climbdown follows the General Election where the SNP lost 21 MPs north of the border, and repeated polls showing Scots don't want independence, and don't want to have to go through another referendum to prove it.

Responding, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said ministers should go further, and promise there will be no separation vote for at least the duration of the Scottish parliamentary term.

Ruth said, far from being reasonable and listening to the public, Sturgeon was "in denial" about her mistakes and losing credibility in her leadership as a result.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"The issue we have had this last year has been with a First Minister who tried to use the UK's decision to leave the EU to impose another referendum on Scotland at the earliest opportunity.

"No once in a generation, no Edinburgh Agreement of respecting the result, just a single-visioned drive to the line for Nicola Sturgeon to try to secure her place in history.

"Today's statement fails to give people any assurance that the First Minister has been listening.

"Instead, she appears to be in denial about her mistakes over this last year and, as a result, is leaking credibility and confidence in her leadership by the hour.

“Her response hasn’t been to reflect.

“It’s been simply to lash out at the UK Government at every opportunity and to sing the same old songs in the same old tune.

“She now claims to be putting the referendum to one side.

“She should just give the country some certainty and take it off the table for the rest of this parliament at least.”

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23 Jun 2017



Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson has been appointed Honorary Colonel of her former Army Regiment – and today uses her new post to promote Armed Forces Day.

The MSP, formerly a member of 32 Signal Regiment, has been invited to take over the position of Honorary Colonel for the next five years.

The Regiment commands Squadrons based in Edinburgh, East Kilbride, Glasgow, Belfast and Darlington. Ruth previously served with HQ Squadron in Glasgow.

The post of Honorary Colonel is more usually filled by a retired senior military officer or member of the Royal family, but can be undertaken by public figures – with historian Dan Snow and musician Jools Holland having been appointed to other regiments in the past.

As Honorary Colonel for the next five years, Ruth will be asked to act as a figurehead for the Regiment, and to act as a counsellor and supporter for its commanding officer and leadership teams.

Ruth was asked to take on the role the regiment due to her work in the Territorial Army before she became an MSP and her consistent support for the reserve forces during her period in parliament.

She has often credited her military training, in particular the leadership instruction she received during her officer training, as standing her in great stead for leadership roles in civilian life.

Ruth was pictured today with serving soldiers in the regiment at Edinburgh Castle, on the eve of Armed Forces Day, when the country comes together to recognise service personnel, regular and reserve, from all three services.

On the day itself, parades, picnics and receptions are held in honour of the Armed Forces, hosted by individuals, employers and local authorities.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“Reservists make up over a quarter of the British Army and the UK’s defences rely upon them.

“As well as the specialist skills required for the type of regiment you join, the training you receive as a reservist develops leadership, decision making, teamwork, confidence and moral courage.

“I loved my time in uniform and am so grateful for everything it taught me.

“I am delighted to have been asked back to my former regiment to act as its Honorary Colonel for the next five years.

“I will work hard to support and encourage the officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers of 32 Signal Regiment during their training and service, as well as seek to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of the Army Reserve as a whole.

“This Armed Forces Day, people across the country will come together to recognise the debt we owe to those who serve to keep us safe.

“We have the most professional fighting force in the world and – regular or reserve – it’s only right we say thank you for all they do.”

32 Signal Regiment is a specialist Army Reserve Regiment that provides vital communications support and information management to the Armed Forces, Emergency Services, and Local Government Agencies in times of crisis such as:

- Terrorist Attacks
- Natural Disasters
- Flooding
- Enhanced Security for Political Summits

Regimental Headquarters is based in Glasgow with Signal Squadrons in Edinburgh, Dundee, Northern Ireland, Darlington and Glasgow. The job roles within the Regiment include Communications Systems Operators, Drivers, Chefs, Clerks, and Medics.

In recent years, the Regimental remit has expanded to include Op Herrick

(Afghanistan), Op Telic (Iraq) as well as supporting UN Operations in Germany and Cyprus.

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23 Jun 2017



Scotland's farming communities are owed an apology from the First Minister and her rural affairs secretary over the latest CAP fiasco, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It was confirmed last night that the Scottish Government has asked Europe for an extension in processing crucial Common Agricultural Policy payments, even though both Nicola Sturgeon and Fergus Ewing denied this as recently as yesterday afternoon.

Now they've been accused of treating Holyrood with "utter contempt" and not being up front with the farmers impacted by the failures.

At First Minister's Questions, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson piled the pressure on the SNP over another delay in CAP payments.

Even though the deadline for processing all payments is a week today, there are still thousands of farmers waiting for much-needed cash.

As such, Scottish Government officials have asked the European Commission for that deadline to be extended to mid-October, or they face fines of up to £60 million.

Scottish Conservative MSP for Galloway and West Dumfries Finlay Carson said:

"Nicola Sturgeon and Fergus Ewing have some very serious questions to answer.

"We now know that earlier this week, they went cap in hand to the European Commission to plea for the payment deadline to be extended.

"But, when confronted in parliament over whether they had done, they ducked

and dived and avoided the question.

“In addition, we also learn today that Mr Ewing failed to let farming leaders know what he was doing – again in order to avoid scrutiny.

“By failing to make their position clear when they had the chance, the First Minister and the rural affairs secretary treated parliament with utter contempt and they should apologise immediately.

“And by failing to be clear with farming leaders, it’s clear that Fergus Ewing has lost the confidence of many people in rural Scotland – and he should be considering his position.

“This episode has been a disgrace and has exposed the SNP for what it is: secretive, out of touch, and all at sea. Scotland deserves better.”

The Scottish Conservatives raised the matter at First Minister’s Questions yesterday:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/sturgeon-must-come-clean-on-second-cap-crisis/>

Last night, NFUS said:

“We’ve asked for Scottish Government to have a clear and open dialogue with the industry on payments. Farmers and crofters should have been the first to know that once again there is to be a delay in payments. This does nothing to restore trust or build confidence.

“We have had many apologies about the system. We don’t want to hear sorry again; we want action that will ensure payments arrive in a timely manner.

“Failure to deliver farm support puts the whole of Scotland’s rural economy in jeopardy. Those farmers and crofters attending Day One of Scotland’s premier agricultural event at the Highland Show, are keen to do business, but are having to hold back on making business decisions and investment because of outstanding payments. They deserve transparency and clarity.

“If the extension saves the Scottish taxpayer £60 million in fines, that is good news but it takes the thousands of Scottish farmers and crofters who are still waiting on part or all of their payments no further forward and with no clear timetable provided. Some of those payments have been outstanding for 18 months. That is wholly unacceptable.”