

Scottish Conservatives condemn Blackford tweet

18 May 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have strongly criticised Ian Blackford, SNP leader in the House of Commons after he 'liked' and endorsed an expletive laden and aggressive tweet.

The offending tweet the Ross, Skye and Lochaber MP publicly endorsed stated, "Scotland. We're shut. F**k off".

Rachael Hamilton, Scottish Conservative shadow rural economy secretary is demanding that Mr Blackford apologises for the tweet.

Ms Hamilton is also demanding that the prominent SNP MP acknowledges that tourism is one of our biggest industries and all parliamentarians need to adopt a more constructive tone and message to ensure its survival after the Covid crisis.

This comes as tourism operators have sent an open letter to the First Minister calling for "a long term, positive and nuanced message from our politicians to support the importance of tourism."

Rachael Hamilton, Scottish Conservative shadow rural economy secretary said:

"No parliamentarian should be using or endorsing a tweet like this – it is utterly inexcusable.

"Tourism is one of our biggest industries in Scotland, we must all work towards ensuring its future.

"Scotland is still in a crisis, with tempers running pretty high so this kind of irresponsible and offensive language is only likely to inflame the situation.

"Mr Blackford knows that he is in a position of influence – his words and his tone encourage others to behave as poorly.

"Mr Blackford must apologise for his disgraceful endorsement of such negative, aggressive and offensive language."

Use Scotland's capacity and test all care homes within weeks

18 May 2020



A campaign to test all care home staff and residents could be completed within weeks if the SNP properly used Scotland's capacity.

The Scottish Conservatives demanded yesterday that everyone living and working in care homes should be tested for coronavirus to halt the spread which is killing hundreds of vulnerable pensioners each week.

Analysis by the party revealed there are around 53,500 staff and 36,000 residents across the country.

And with a capacity of 12,000 Covid-19 tests a day, that means a regime to test everyone could be running within weeks.

Leader Jackson Carlaw has repeatedly called on SNP ministers to improve testing in care homes.

He said the Scottish Government must take testing to these facilities – using the army if necessary – to ensure no-one is missed.

On Friday, the Scottish Conservatives revealed that – for the first two weeks of May alone – 80,000 tests went unused.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“Testing every residents and staff member in care homes is a tall order, but with the capacity that currently exists it's certainly possible.

“We want to see these 90,000 people tested for the coronavirus as a matter of urgency, and there is currently the capacity to carry out 12,000 tests a day.

“Considering the SNP government doesn't use huge swathes of that capacity, there is clear potential for everyone who needs a test in care homes to receive one within weeks, if not days.

“Care homes are now at the forefront of this battle but, up to now, have been regarded as second-class citizens.

“The consequences of that complacency have been devastating, and the tide now needs to turn.

“In the first two weeks of May the SNP government failed to use 80,000 coronavirus tests. Those missed tests would almost cover the care home industry alone.”

[Carlaw: We need 100% testing in care homes](#)

17 May 2020



Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw has called on regular, 100% testing to be carried out in all care homes in Scotland.

Currently care workers can be tested, but care homes only qualify for tests if they have a confirmed case of the virus, or if they belong to a chain of homes with the virus.

This week the UK Government and Welsh Government announced that all care home residents in England and Wales would be tested as a matter of routine.

But the SNP have still to announce similar measures in Scotland and with over 3,000 deaths in care homes in Scotland, Carlaw said it was time to vastly increase the level of testing.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw MSP said:

“Given the crisis we’ve seen in our care homes during this outbreak, we need to ensure that all staff and residents receive regular tests.

“It’s now increasingly obvious that care homes are the front-line of this crisis – and that the SNP have been slow to respond.

“The current situation means that we’re acting too late, with care homes only able to receive tests when they’ve got a confirmed case of the virus.

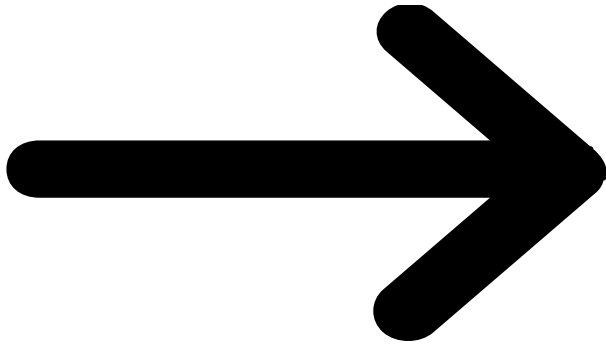
“And as we move towards the test, trace, isolate phase of our response to COVID-19, testing needs to become more routine.

“That’s why it’s time to hugely extend testing in Scotland to every care home and every care worker.

“Care homes elsewhere in the UK are receiving 100% testing, anything short of that in Scotland would be unacceptable.”

Lockdown plan needed for 1 in 3 Scots who live in flats

17 May 2020



Nicola Sturgeon must come up with a lockdown plan for people without gardens, after it emerged a third of Scots live in flats or similar accommodation.

The First Minister is expected to provide an update on coronavirus restrictions in coming days as Scots face up to more weeks of lockdown.

Now the Scottish Conservatives have called for more help for people who don't have their own outdoor space to spend time and exercise.

Figures obtained by the party show that, in 2018 – the latest year for which figures are available – 33.4 per cent of people in Scotland lived in a “flat, maisonette or apartment”.

Leader Jackson Carlaw said thought also had to be given to those living alone, after the same survey – *Scotland's People Annual Report* – revealed 36 per of households contained only one adult.

He said that while exiting lockdown as quickly and safely as possible was key to economic recovery, the issue of the population's physical and mental health was of increasing concern.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“We know this is a public health emergency first and foremost, and that there have been and will be severe economic consequences too.

“But there will come a point where lockdown does more harm than good when it comes to the physical and mental health of Scotland's population.

“For those people lucky enough to have a garden, this period – especially with the favourable weather – will have been all the more bearable.

“But these statistics show a third of Scots live in flats, most of which won't have private garden space.

“For these people especially, further weeks of lockdown will be a very grim prospect indeed, and we need to see a detailed plan to help them.

“It’s no longer a case of telling people to sit on the couch and watch television for a few weeks and it’ll all pass.

“There are now very serious concerns about individuals’ health and welfare being caused directly by these restrictions.

“When the First Minister next addresses this, we need to hear something from her that takes these specific difficulties into account.”

[£100m black hole in council funding to fight Covid-19 revealed](#)

15 May 2020



Local councils are facing a £100m black hole in their fight against coronavirus according to the latest analysis provided by Cosla.

The document, entitled ‘Additional costs faced by local government during Covid-19’ details that, from March to the end of June 2020, local councils will be out of pocket to the tune of just over £250 million.

In another startling u-turn the SNP has now accepted calls from Cosla and the Scottish Conservatives and agreed to let councils themselves disseminate the £155m already promised, leaving councils with an eye-watering £100m to finance right now.

At the Local Government Committee meeting this morning, Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative shadow local government secretary asked Aileen Campbell, the Communities Secretary, if she would plug this funding gap – she failed to commit to any increased funding for local government.

This figure could actually be significantly larger as the costs provided do not cover any health and social care costs which are delegated to the Health and Social Care Partnership.

Nor do they cover the significant cost pressures likely to face local councils as lockdown continues, or restrictions are lifted resulting in services such as education having to be reconfigured.

The Scottish Conservatives have once again called on the Scottish Government to fund local councils properly through the significant Barnett consequential they have received from the UK government.

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

“Local government finances are facing costs of £250m due to the Covid crisis, £100m of which they simply do not have.

“The SNP has been extremely quick in placing significant burdens on our local administrations.

“Despite this, the Communities Secretary completely failed to give any commitment to giving our local councils the money that they need.

“Thankfully the SNP has performed yet another u-turn and has now agreed that councils will divvy up the previous funding themselves.

“If the SNP doesn’t want another ‘storm in a teacup’ they must now finance this £100m black hole and prepare to support local councils further.

“Local councils are at the front lines battling this virus on behalf of all of us, they shouldn’t have to fight so hard for essential funding.”