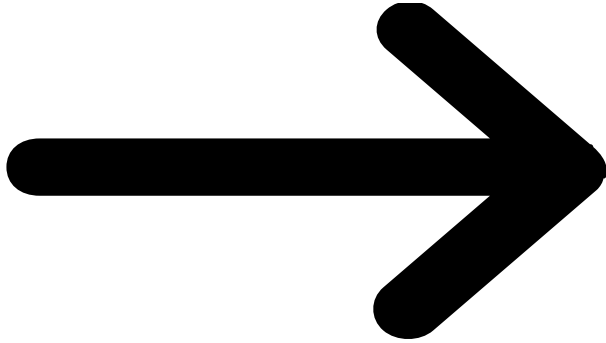


FM indyref plan “unwanted and unworkable”

31 Mar 2017



Nicola Sturgeon’s call for a second referendum has been dismissed by the Scottish Conservatives today.

Reacting to the First Minister’s proposal, deputy leader of the Scottish Conservatives Jackson Carlaw said the proposal was both “unwanted and unworkable”.

The Scottish Conservatives’ position continues to be that a referendum cannot happen until people have had the chance to see Brexit play out – and should not happen when most people in Scotland don’t want it.

The SNP has said again today it wants a referendum by March 2019 – before Scotland and the whole UK leave the EU.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“At the very moment we should be uniting as a country to get the good deal out of Brexit, Nicola Sturgeon is trying to divide us again.

“Her plans are unwanted and unworkable.

“Unwanted, because people made a decision on this just three years ago and don’t want to go back to yet more division.

“Unworkable, because under the SNP’s plans, people would have no idea what they are voting on.

“She wants a referendum campaign to start right now – despite still not having answered basic questions on the currency, on EU membership and the cost of independence.

“We have had enough of SNP stunts and First Ministerial photo-calls.

“Nicola Sturgeon should dump her referendum plans now, work to get the best deal possible Brexit deal for Scotland and the UK – and then get back to the

day job of improving our schools and hospitals, as she promised.”

[SNP perform u-turn on scrapping enterprise and skills agencies](#)

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30 Mar 2017



The SNP Government have been forced into an embarrassing u-turn on their plans to abolish the boards of several enterprise and skills agencies.

Keith Brown had announced plans to replace the boards of Scottish Enterprise, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council with an overarching statutory board controlled by ministers.

However in today's statement he announced that all boards would be remaining in place, although there are still questions over the role of the strategic board and what powers it will have.

It follows sustained pressure to reverse the decision, which culminated in the parliament voting to reverse the plans following a Scottish Conservative debate in January this year.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

“This is an embarrassing u-turn from the SNP Government and shows that they have finally caved after the sustained criticism these plans received from all sectors.

“The vote following the Scottish Conservative debate earlier this year proved that there was no political will for this move either, and it was clear it needed to be stopped.

“We need to see a step-change in the performance of the economy, but abolishing these boards would have only hindered our ability to deliver an economic strategy and to grow.

“What is totally unacceptable is the SNP's attempts to bury this news on the last day of the parliamentary term.

“Placing it amongst several other important statements is a crude way of trying to hide this from the Scottish people, and it just shows the extent

that the SNP is willing to go to in order to hide their incompetence.

“This latest u-turn from Keith Brown comes after a woeful week for the Cabinet Secretary.

“Earlier in the week he had to announce a second delay to the completion of the Queensferry Crossing, and this was followed by having to make a humiliating apology over last year’s potential investment by Chinese investors, which was dubbed a ‘Shambles’ in China.’”

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“It’s welcome that the economy secretary has finally seen sense on this issue.

“Their proposals had the potential to do a lot of harm, and experts throughout the sector had warned them against it.

“However there are still several question marks over the role of the strategic board and what powers it will have.

“Until the SNP provide more detail on this many people will still be cautious about what this means for the future autonomy of these agencies.”

[No to separation, yes to education](#)

30 Mar 2017



The number of supply teachers in Scotland’s schools has plummeted across the country under the SNP, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

During First Minister’s Questions, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson revealed that in council regions all over Scotland, the banks of supply teachers who can fill in to help schools are significantly down on the start of the decade.

Following a Freedom of Information request, it emerged that:

- The number of supply teachers in Glasgow has fallen from 2396 in 2011-12 to 1391 in the current year.
- In Edinburgh, reserves have halved – from 305 to just 165.
- In the Scottish Borders the numbers have gone down from 346 to 217.

It comes as teaching leaders warn that the short supply of teachers across Scotland is now reaching critical levels – and Education Scotland said this week that the recruitment crisis is damaging the quality of education.

The lack of supply teachers means that many schools are struggling to maintain staffing numbers when permanent teachers are unavailable.

Earlier this month, it emerged that Blairgowrie High School put out a call to parents to see if any were able to help teach maths.

Following First minister's Questions today, Ruth Davidson said:

"We know the lack of teachers in schools is damaging the quality of education on offer to children. That's the view of school inspectors and teacher leaders.

"Now we learn today that the number of supply teachers giving crucial back up to schools is nose-diving right across Scotland too.

"For parents who just want their children to get a decent standard of education, it is deeply worrying.

"This failure to properly staff our classrooms is the result of ten years of neglect by this incompetent SNP Government.

"We face a crisis in classrooms across Scotland and Nicola Sturgeon must sort out her priorities. She said education would come first.

"Instead, her government has delayed its education reforms and failed to propose a single debate on education since October last year.

"Today Nicola Sturgeon claimed she 'delivers'. Yet this is the First Minister whose government hasn't passed a substantive bill in over a year in office and – since last summer – has spent a staggering 43 hours debating the constitution.

"The First Minister must think again. No to separation – yes to education."

Please see the figures on supply teachers here:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Supply-Teachers-UPDATE.xlsx>

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29 Mar 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have heavily criticised the SNP after the economy secretary announced that the new Queensferry Crossing will now not be completed until late summer at the earliest.

It represents another delay in the Scottish Government's timetable, that originally estimated that the bridge would be open last December.

The SNP had repeatedly pledged that the bridge would be completed on time, but this is already the second delay to the completion date that has been announced.

It also comes after the Forth Road Bridge was shut twice over the past few months, causing huge delays to the thousands of commuters who use it every day.

Questions are now being asked about when Keith Brown knew of the delay, with many of those involved in the project having predicted further delays in recent weeks.

Scottish Conservative transport & infrastructure spokesman Liam Kerr said:

"This delay will come as a huge blow to the many commuters who travel across the Forth every single day.

"They have already had to deal with massive disruption over the past two months due to closures on the current Forth Road Bridge, and now we learn that the Queensferry Crossing is months behind schedule.

"The SNP assured us that this project would be delivered on time, but these promises have proven to be worthless as, once again, we see the completion date slipping.

"It is simply unacceptable, and the economy secretary needs to explain why this delay has occurred and what the Scottish Government are going to do to ensure the new timescale is kept to.

"There are also underlying questions about how long Keith Brown has known about this issues. Many contractors had been hinting at delays in the previous few weeks, so if they knew it was going to be delayed, why didn't the minister?

"It points to someone who is either hopelessly out of touch with this project, or someone who was waiting for a busy news day in order to bury bad news."

Cancer timescale targets missed for fourth consecutive year

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28 Mar 2017



The SNP has been accused of “brushing aside” shocking health targets.

The criticism has been sparked following the announcement that for the fourth year in a row Scotland’s NHS has missed the cancer waiting timescale target.

The current target is for 95 per cent of urgently referred cancer patients to begin treatment within 62 days.

However, in the last quarter only 87.5 per cent were seen within the target timescale.

The worst performing health board was NHS Western Isles, in which only 66.7 per cent of patients were seen within the 62 days.

With only five of the 14 regional health boards across Scotland hitting the target, the Scottish Conservatives are calling for the SNP to take urgent action to ensure cancer patients are being seen within the target time.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Donald Cameron said:

“People are quite right to question why targets have been missed for the fourth consecutive year.

“The SNP should be doing everything it can to ensure more patients are being seen within the target timescale.

“Instead they’ve let standards slide and as a result thousands of patients across Scotland are not receiving the treatment that they need when they need it.

“It’s inexcusable for the SNP to just continually brush these missed targets aside, especially when it’s well known that receiving swift treatment for cancer can often make all the difference in improving outcomes for these patients.

“The SNP has badly let down patients and it is time they got back to the day job.”

Cancer waiting times NHS Scotland:

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-03-28/2017-03-28-CWT-Summary.pdf>