

SNP's review of curriculum 'overdue'

26 Feb 2020



The Scottish Government has published the remit of the independent review into the Curriculum for Excellence – which the Scottish Conservatives have labelled 'necessary but overdue'.

Earlier this year, John Swinney announced the Scottish Government's review of the Scottish curriculum in what was seen as a massive u-turn following political pressure from the Scottish Conservatives at Holyrood, who forced the government's hand on the matter.

The review of the curriculum was demanded by the Scottish Conservatives in response to the many warnings from teachers, parents and academic experts pointing to a decline in school subject choice, increased multi-level teaching and a worrying pattern of declining attainment.

The remit for the review will now be expanded after opposition parties demanded the scope also include a review of curriculum design, depth and breadth of learning in the senior phase including the qualification system following reports that exam pass rates fell last year by as much as 10% in some subjects.

Jamie Greene, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary said:

"Despite the very best efforts of teachers and education staff, parents across Scotland know that Scottish education sadly is no longer the gold standard it once was.

"This review is long overdue – the Scottish Conservatives have been calling for a full, independent and transparent review of the Curriculum for Excellence for three years, it is clear to everyone that there are fundamental problems which simply must be addressed.

"Whilst the scope and nature of the review is welcome, we are concerned that we will have to wait yet another year to get to the bottom of these problems which will provide little comfort to pupils who are already studying for exams.

"Let's not forget, the SNP did not want this review in the first place – the Scottish Conservatives forced John Swinney into a u-turn, yet he still claims that everything is fine across the education system.

"The simple fact is that after 13 years of SNP government, education is far from their number one priority."

Local government financial blackhole increased to over £50m

25 Feb 2020



The financial deficits of local authorities increased to more than £50m according to the Local Government Finance Statistics, published today.

Repeated SNP cuts to council budgets have meant that local authorities across Scotland faced a deficit of £53m in 2018-19 which was funded through council reserve funding.

This is a significant increase of over £15m from £38.9m the previous year.

In addition, the publication reveals that council funding reserves are decreasing year on year so that the total reserve funding available to local authorities has fallen by £27m overall.

Despite promising to abolish council tax, the SNP have left councils no choice but to hike bills to fill the hole left by savage cuts from central government.

The latest figures show that in 2018-19 the average cost of a council tax bill was £1,106 before reductions and £973 after reductions. In 2017-18 the costs were £1,069 before reductions and £936 after reductions.

Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative shadow local government secretary said

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“The SNP government has consistently underfunded local government.

“Councils have been left with no option but to increase council tax on local residents in order to pay for essential services.

“Thanks to SNP budget cuts, the holes in council budgets continue to grow.

“The SNP government must now provide an extra £95m for local government in this year’s budget.

“That is completely reasonable and achievable given the massive funding boost due to arrive from the UK government.

“The SNP has no excuse, they must fund local services properly.”

SNP MSP: Brexit voters are 'little Englanders'

31 Jan 2020



An SNP MSP has been criticised after he referred to Brexit voters as “little Englanders”.

Richard Lochhead, until recently a senior Scottish Government cabinet secretary, used the “inflammatory” phrase in a statement about the UK formally leaving the EU.

Mr Lochhead represents Moray, an area in which nearly 50 per cent of residents voted to leave.

And even Mr Lochhead’s SNP parliamentary colleague, Alex Neil, voted for Brexit.

The former rural affairs secretary said today: *“The Little Englanders and their opportunist bedfellows in the Conservative Party are inflicting the biggest economic dislocation on Scotland for generations.”*

Scottish Conservative Moray MP Douglas Ross said:

“This is an incredible attack from someone in a position of responsibility.

“He seems to forget one million Scots – including many SNP supporters – voted for Brexit, including nearly 50 per cent of people in Moray.

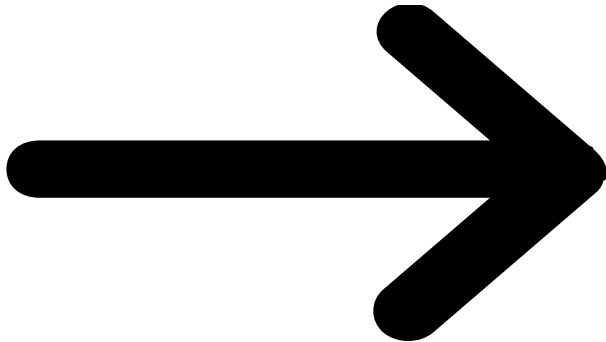
“His use of the term ‘little Englanders’ is inflammatory and dangerous and – if political opponents used that kind of language – the SNP would be up in arms.

“But like so many statements by nationalist politicians, it is aimed at stoking up feelings among extremists in the hope of creating a gulf between Scotland and England.

“It’s hugely irresponsible, and will never work.”

Sturgeon's indyref2 pursuit 'entirely wrongheaded'

31 Jan 2020



Nicola Sturgeon's vow to keep fighting for another independence referendum is "utterly predictable and entirely wrongheaded", the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The First Minister took to the stage today to tell supporters she would embark on a number of plans to keep the divisive debate going in Scotland.

But she disappointed supporters, including senior politicians in her own party, but pouring cold water on the prospect of a "wildcat" referendum.

Instead, she will look to set up a "convention" on the issue, and double campaign spending on promoting the break-up of the UK.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"This was a downbeat statement from First Minister faced with the reality that will be no referendum anytime soon.

"However, Nicola Sturgeon's determination to plough on with preparations for another vote on independence is predictable, depressing and entirely wrong-headed.

"People across Scotland are sick and tired of her relentless pursuit of a referendum they simply don't want.

"What people do want is action now to improve education, health, policing and all the other services they rely upon.

"On the day we leave the EU they want a government which focuses on Scotland's economy and jobs.

"And they want Nicola Sturgeon to put her referendum plans where they belong – firmly on the backburner.

"We've wasted more than a decade endlessly debating independence. Now we need

to put divisive constitutional politics to one side and deal with the real and immediate issues facing Scotland in the 2020s.

“Ms Sturgeon is more than welcome to campaign for independence in her own time.

“But when it comes to being First Minister, it’s surely time for Scotland to demand that she focus on the things that are actually important.”

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30 Jan 2020



The SNP’s record on education is “one of unmitigated and continuing failure” after more problems were revealed with school performance, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

At First Minister’s Questions today, Jackson Carlaw challenged Nicola Sturgeon on why standards were falling despite education supposedly being an SNP government priority.

It was reported this morning that the pass rate in 32 of 46 Higher subjects has dropped since the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence in 2015.

And the Scottish Government’s performance on closing the attainment gap has also come under fire this week, after it emerged ministers were way off course on their own targets for helping poorer pupils.

Despite that, the First Minister claimed education standards were “heading in the right direction” and critics of SNP performance were merely “talking down education”.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“Nicola Sturgeon expects pupils, parents and teachers to keep listening to her same lines about how education is her government’s top priority.

“But the evidence shows that record is one of unmitigated and continuing failure.

“It’s clear that the First Minister has many priorities, but not one of them is raising the standard of education in our schools.

“There’s been next to no progress in closing the attainment gap in primary and secondary school when it comes to the key issues of numeracy and literacy.

“And now we learn, thanks to the botched introduction of the SNP’s Curriculum for Excellence, pass rates in the majority of Higher subjects are on the slide.

“That’s the very definition of failure – it’s as simple as that.”