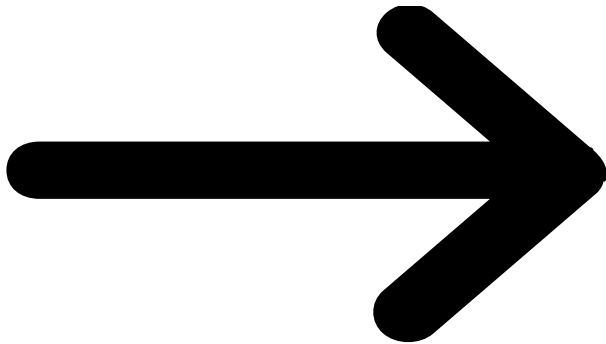


Jackson Carlaw's New Year message

31 Dec 2019



See below a New Year message from Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw.

“Firstly, may I wish everybody a very happy new year, and welcome everybody to the 2020s.

“In the next few weeks, we will finally be leaving the European Union and delivering on the referendum we held in 2016.

“The first thing to say is to speak directly to European citizens living in Scotland and the UK.

“We may be leaving the institutions of the European Union at the end of the month, but the UK and Europe remain united by our shared continent.

“This is your home and we want you to stay.

“The fall-out from the referendum result has created huge tensions across the country.

“I hope that, once we have left Brussels at the end of this month, those tensions will dissipate and we can come back together.

“It is time to move on from the decade of division we have just been through, and enter a new decade of delivery for all.

“I am optimistic that this will indeed happen.

“Under the newly elected Conservative majority government, the country now has the direction it has lacked over recent years.

“It can now focus on delivering progress on the big challenges ahead of us – spreading prosperity across the whole country, tackling climate change, and restoring our public services to their right place as the best in the world.

“More constitutional division is not what Scotland wants this year. It is in all our interests to recognise that.

"I'd like to thank all those who have been out over Christmas season caring for the sick and the needy.

"I'm looking forward to getting back to work – and getting on with making our whole country a better, more united, place."

[Ambulance turnaround times at hospitals soar](#)

31 Dec 2019



The time it takes for ambulances to drop patients off at hospital and return to the road is increasing, new research has revealed.

In 2016, 20 ambulances a day recorded turnaround times of more than one hour when dropping emergency patients off at hospital.

But by this year, that had more than doubled to 43 a day, according to the Freedom of Information request by the Scottish Conservatives.

Ambulance bosses, who have a target of 20 minutes for each turnaround, have long been concerned about the time it takes for vehicles to drop patients off and get back on the road.

In that time, paramedics are expected to hand patients over, fill in forms and then clean the vehicle in preparation for other patients.

In 2016 there were 7215 cases where a turnaround took more than an hour, which then rose to 9934 the year later, and 13,010 in 2018.

In the first nine months of 2019, there had already been 11,730, meaning this year is on course to be significantly higher again.

The crisis-hit Queen Elizabeth hospital in Glasgow had the most lengthy turnarounds, with 16,162 incidents where turnaround was longer than an hour in the past four years.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"Paramedics are among our most dedicated and hard-working public servants.

"But clearly there are more and more obstacles being placed in their way, and that's having an impact on patient safety too.

"It's clearly stated that turnaround times should be around 20 minutes, but

the hospitals they are going to just aren't set up to make that happen.

"The last thing ambulance workers want is to be hanging around a hospital when they could be out on the roads responding to emergencies.

"Performance in this has slipped on the SNP government's watch, and it's up to Nicola Sturgeon to sort this out if she's serious about improving the NHS."

Major delays in processing disclosure checks

30 Dec 2019



Major delays in processing checks for people who want to work with children and protected adults have been revealed.

The SNP government is meant to ensure anyone applying for disclosure checks like Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) applications are given the result within two weeks.

However, in September more than half of PVG submissions were dealt with late, and by October just 12.5 per cent were processed on time.

That's despite the rest of the year having a near 100 per cent rate.

The Scottish Conservatives said the delays were making it harder for organisations like nurseries and other childcare providers to plan properly for the future.

The statistics were revealed following a Freedom of Information request by the party.

It showed performance levels for all disclosure checks, including basic, standard, enhanced and PVGs are slipping.

Anyone who wants to work with children or protected adults must receive a PVG before beginning employment.

Disclosure Scotland blamed the delays on "seasonal increase in our work and the bedding in time" of a new IT system.

The Scottish Government's Disclosure (Scotland) Bill, currently progressing through parliament, intends to greatly increase the extent to which disclosure checks are handled digitally, requiring another new and improved

IT system.

Scottish Conservative early years spokeswoman Alison Harris said:

“No-one doubts the importance of these checks to ensure our children and vulnerable adults are protected.

“But clearly the major delays in processing PVG checks are having an impact on childcare providers.

“These businesses are already finding it hard to cater for demand, and this log-jam is only making matters worse.

“It means parents of young children – who frankly have enough on their plate – are being denied the kind of access to childcare the SNP government has promised them.

“This is a failure of government, and the SNP must sort it out as a matter of urgency.”

[Families affected by scandal-hit hospital need answers now](#)

29 Dec 2019



Patients and families affected by the crisis at Scotland’s £800 million flagship hospital can’t wait any longer for answers from the health secretary, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Jeane Freeman must make a statement to Holyrood at the earliest opportunity, which is Tuesday, and finally give those impacted by the scandal the explanation they need.

She had originally planned to come before MSPs on December 10, but shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said that wasn’t soon enough.

This morning, yet more revelations were reported about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Glasgow, including the allegation that health chiefs have known about contaminated water for years.

That same water is being linked to the deaths of at least two children, and families have accused Ms Freeman of covering up details of the investigation.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“The absolute priority here has to be getting answers for the families who’ve been so terribly affected by these failings.

“The cycle of damning news stories breaking and Jeane Freeman shrugging her shoulders must end now.

“We need to hear from the health secretary on Tuesday – and this time her answers need to be to the satisfaction of the families.

“The SNP has to take full responsibility for this – it planned, opened, and runs the hospital.

“We’re not talking about an old Victorian building which has historic maintenance issues – this is a brand new facility which the nationalists themselves said would be a world-class facility.

“Instead, it’s been nothing short of a disaster.

“If Jeane Freeman doesn’t appear before the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday with a thorough, sincere and convincing update of what’s happened, she shouldn’t bother coming back at all.”

[Record number of hoax calls to the coastguard](#)

23 Dec 2019



Scotland’s coastguard received a record number of hoax calls in 2019, at a rate of nearly one a week.

Statistics have revealed there were 51 prank alerts made to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency in Scotland last year.

That’s more than double the number of 2017, and significantly more than any other previous year.

Highlands and Islands MSP Donald Cameron said the punishment for those making the hoax calls should be severe, and that their actions put lives at risk.

The figures emerged following a Freedom of Information request by the Scottish Conservatives.

It means there have been 206 hoax calls to the country’s coastguard in the last five years.

Scottish Conservative Highlands and Islands MSP Donald Cameron said:

“We know hoax calls are a problem for all emergency services.

“But it takes a particularly crass and reckless individual to take the time to make a false report to the coastguard.

“Their actions are putting lives at risk.

“This is an organisation that is constantly under serious pressure, and they simply cannot afford to have their time and resources wasted on prank calls.

“Every time these brave people go out to an emergency they are putting their lives at risk.

“Anyone who thinks that is a joke should be punished severely – it’s the only way to deter others from this disgraceful practice.”