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- Scottish farmers must be able to access 100% of farm payment early

14 Aug 2019



The Scottish Conservatives are calling for the Scottish Government to increase Basic Payment Scheme loan payments to eligible farmers from 95 to 100 percent due to the adverse weather conditions many have endured.

The National Basic Payment Support Scheme enables loans to be made to farmers for up to 95 percent of their eventual farm payment.

Many farmers have been hit hard by the exceptionally wet weather Scotland has endured over the last few weeks.

The Scottish Conservatives have said that for some farmers having access to the full 100 percent of their basic payment amount will make a crucial difference to their businesses.

Donald Cameron, Scottish Conservative shadow rural economy secretary said:

“While we, of course, welcome early payment of farm support Scottish agriculture continues to struggle with extremely challenging conditions this year.

“The changeable and exceptionally wet weather over the last few weeks has made these challenges particularly difficult.

“The Scottish Government must therefore ensure farmers have access to their entire basic farm payment early, and without penalty, so that they can weather this storm.

“If the government’s IT system is working as it claims, then paying 100% should not be a problem, so long as there are no knock-on effects or overpayments.

“For some farmers that extra 5 percent will make a crucial difference to their farming operations.”

Glasgow's bid to host major climate summit another 'union dividend'

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- Glasgow's bid to host major climate summit another 'union dividend'

9 Aug 2019



Glasgow's bid to host a major summit on climate change next year is "more evidence of the union dividend", the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The UK Government announced today that Glasgow would host the UN's COP 26 event if its bid for presidency of the organisation is successful.

The event at the Scottish Events Campus by the Clyde would last for two weeks at the end of 2020, and attract 30,000 delegates.

Shadow environment secretary Maurice Golden said it was an opportunity for Scotland to lead the world on climate change, and showcase Glasgow as a major global conferences location.

He added that it was more evidence of the economic opportunities presented by Scotland remaining within the UK.

Scottish Conservative shadow environment secretary Maurice Golden said:

"This announcement is excellent news for Glasgow and Scotland.

"It would underline the city's reputation for hosting world-leading summits, and showcases Scotland's potential as a world-leader on climate change.

"It's also more evidence of the union dividend – an example of the UK Government placing Scotland's biggest city right at the heart of its future plans.

"We are much stronger when we work together and we will have more impact tackling climate change as part of the UK.

"Nicola Sturgeon's relentless drive to break up Britain would make bids like this considerably more difficult as well as weaken our efforts to tackle climate change."

Revealed: SNP Lowered the bar for maths exams

7 Aug 2019



The SNP government lowered the pass threshold for maths exams across the board, it has been revealed, and performance still dipped.

Figures released yesterday showed a 2.1 per cent drop in maths passes at Higher level.

And now it has emerged that the reduction in passes occurred even though the boundaries had been reduced at Higher, Advanced Higher and National 5 level.

In 2019, pupils needed to secure 67 per cent for an A at Higher, and 44 per cent for a C. To gain a D award, students needed to reach just 32 per cent.

That compares to last year's thresholds of 73 per cent for an A, 48 per cent for a C, and 42 per cent for a D.

Maths was the only subject where the pass boundaries reduced at all three levels from Higher to National 5 and Advanced Higher.

It also saw the biggest drop of any subject in pass rates at both National 5 and Advanced Higher, and one of the biggest drops at Higher.

Shadow education secretary Liz Smith said the changes made yesterday's results even more disappointing, and was more evidence of the SNP's neglect of an education brief it's been in sole charge of for more than 12 years.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"These are damning statistics which show the extent of the current issues facing the Curriculum for Excellence.

"While grade boundaries are a vital tool within examination marking, there is a very worrying trend developing in the core subject of maths which indicates that grade boundaries have not only been lowered over recent years but that this is happening across the different levels of maths exams.

"It seems that pupils can routinely collect a pass in maths for less than 50 per cent and also acquire a D award at Higher for as low as 32 per cent.

"That trend is surely a very major concern and, once again, it raises issues about the lack of rigour within the new curriculum.

"That cannot be allowed to continue since it further undermines the previous strengths of Scottish education."

Shadow Chancellor paves way for Labour pact with SNP

7 Aug 2019



Ruth Davidson has said that Labour is ‘proposing a pact with the SNP in order to parachute Jeremy Corbyn into Number Ten’.

This follows the statement by John McDonnell, the shadow Chancellor that the Labour Party would not block Indyref2.

In an interview with Iain Dale at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival last night, Mr McDonnell said that a Labour government would not stop a divisive second referendum on independence. “We would not block something like that,” he said.

This statement represents a massive u-turn from Labour’s manifesto commitment in 2017 to oppose a second independence referendum.

Mr McDonnell is due to appear at another event in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival at lunchtime today.

Commenting on the u-turn, Ruth said:

“John McDonnell’s comments yesterday were met with complete dismay by Labour voters in Scotland.

“Today it’s becoming clear why he said it. Labour is proposing a pact with the SNP in order to parachute Jeremy Corbyn into Number Ten.

“The fact is this – Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell would happily sell Scotland down the river if they thought it could give them a sniff of power.

“That is a rank betrayal of the 2 million Scots – including thousands of Labour voters – who voted to stay part of the UK.

“I can’t imagine Scotland’s Labour MP’s were chuffed to hear Mr McDonnell describe Westminster as an ‘English parliament’. It’s not. It’s a parliament for the whole UK with representatives from every corner of the country.

“With Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell doing Nicola Sturgeon’s work for her, the First Minister must think Christmas has come early this year.

“Scottish voters can rest assured that the Scottish Conservatives will always stand up for our place in the United Kingdom and no Conservative Prime Minister would entertain doing a dodgy deal with the nationalists.”

SNP being 'dishonest' about policing figures

6 Aug 2019



The SNP government has been accused of dishonesty, after claiming it was still funding an additional 1000 officers.

Official figures released today showed there were 17,259 police men and women in Scotland, which ministers said was 1025 more than in 2007, meeting the officer-number pledge.

However, it has now emerged that 400 of those officers are in place to deal with Brexit, and not funded by the SNP government.

And a further 300 officers are directly funded by organisations like councils and airports – again not financed by central government.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr urged the Scottish Government to start being honest about the figures, and admit were it not for external support, it simply wouldn't be meeting the 1000-extra officer commitment.

He also said the SNP government should set out how it intends to spend Barnett Consequential cash from justice spending on extra officers in the rest of the UK.

The UK Government has confirmed it will hire an extra 20,000 officers, meaning Scotland should get funding for roughly an additional 2000.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“It's time the SNP stopped taking the people of Scotland – and police officers themselves – for mugs.

“It can't boast about retaining an extra 1000 officers when it patently isn't stumping up the cash.

“In fact, were it not for the UK Government, councils and other organisations, the nationalists would be miles away from keeping this pledge.

“In contrast, we have a UK Government committed to bringing in thousands of new police officers to make our streets safer and bring criminals to account.

“And when that money comes north in the form of Barnett Consequentials, it will allow the Scottish Government to secure around 2000 extra police men and women.

“That would improve our justice system and ease the strain on overworked officers.

“It’s time for the SNP to stop the spin, and commit to beefing up our police force.”