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- Sturgeon can show leadership – and take Indyref2 off the table

8 Oct 2018



The Scottish Conservatives are calling on Nicola Sturgeon to take a 2nd independence referendum off the table in her conference speech, saying it is time for her to end the chaos over the SNP's plans.

It follows a conference marked by complete confusion over the SNP's indyref2 preparations.

Nicola Sturgeon watered down her plans on a strict timetable on a referendum, fellow MPs have backed a referendum immediately, others have insisted it is better left until after 2021, while Joanna Cherry has suggested a referendum isn't required at all.

Speaking ahead of her conference speech, Scottish Conservative chief whip Maurice Golden said:

“Nicola Sturgeon led the SNP troops half way into battle, and then called halt.

“After more than a year milling around with no direction from the top, the SNP foot soldiers have used this conference for a group chat on whether and where to march next.

“When it comes to Scotland's future, everyone in the SNP has an opinion but nobody has a plan.

“All the while, Scotland's schools are going backwards, waiting times are being missed, and the economy is in the slow lane.

“Nicola Sturgeon can show leadership today by doing the right thing: and taking a second referendum off the table. The SNP army might not like it, but at least they'd know what was going on.”

Only three Scottish courts sold in five years after “short-sighted” closures

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7 Oct 2018



The SNP have been accused of “selling the silverware” of Scotland’s courts for a fraction of their value.

The Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (SCTS) began closing one in five sheriff and justice of the peace courts in 2013, despite warnings of an increased workload for those remaining, and inconvenience for victims and witnesses.

According to new information obtained by freedom of information request, it has now emerged that only three of the nine buildings declared surplus have been sold in five years – raising just over £200,000.

Ahead of the resolution of two long-anticipated community ownership bids in Arbroath and Cumbernauld this December, Angus MP Kirstene Hair has slammed the “ill thought out” decision by the SNP Government to endorse closures recommended by the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service.

She said:

“The impact of these short-sighted moves is still being felt in towns and Royal burghs across Scotland, five years later.

“The SNP agreed to sell the silverware of historic buildings but have left decaying edifices in the middle of our high streets.

“The SNP’s obsession with centralisation means that witnesses are travelling further to give evidence, sometimes sitting on buses with accused.

“And accused themselves are often being dragged through months of unnecessary adjournments in criminal cases, because there is such a backlog. Their solicitors are toiling.

“A growing number of cases are taking more than six months to conclude in sheriff courts, exceeding national targets.

“The SNP were told that this ill thought out decision was wrong for a number

of reasons, but blundered on anyway.”

Last year, more than 30 per cent of cases failed to hit the 26-week target from issuing a caution or charge to reaching a verdict.

That compares to 73 per cent for the same period the previous year, with eight courts failing to get 60 per cent of cases concluded on time.

[Scottish Conservatives to publish plan offering a brighter future for Scottish Farmers](#)

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The Agricultural Bill will begin its second reading in Parliament next week [Wednesday 10th October]. The SNP Government have still failed to produce any agricultural legislation on what post-Brexit farming policy will look like in Scotland.

The Scottish Conservatives have accused the SNP of leaving Scottish farmers in the dark for their lack of action on future farming support for Scottish agriculture and have called for the SNP Government to cast a light on their plans.

The U.K. Government offered to make provisions for the devolved administrations, creating a mirror framework to what is planned in England. Both the Welsh Government and Department for Environment in Northern Ireland have asked the U.K. Government to legislate on their behalf, but the SNP have refused despite not having their own plan for post-Brexit farming policy.

The Scottish Conservatives have decided to put forward their own plan and will publish draft amendments to the Agriculture Bill. These would allow the Agriculture Bill to have the same effect in Scotland as it does in Wales.

Commenting on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives, Luke Graham MP said:

“Scottish Conservatives are doing what the Scottish Government have failed to do, offering Scottish farmers a brighter future.

“Farmers need time and support to adapt to changes in agriculture policy. The SNP Government are providing a complete disservice to this vital sector in Scotland. They are abandoning farmers and have no policies for the future. At a time of record farm debt, our rural communities need certainty and support.

“By drafting these crucial amendments, we will set out a plan that would avoid rural Scotland being left in the dark.

“We have known since 23rd June 2016, that farming policy is going to change once we leave the European Union. The Scottish Government have had over 2 years to prepare and come up with a plan, but they have utterly failed to do so. It didn't even get a mention in their Programme for Government.

“They have continually let farmers down through playing grievance politics instead of doing their job of governing for Scotland. We are urging the Scottish Government to endorse these amendments so they can deliver for Scottish farmers.”

[SNP presiding over a legislation-free zone](#)

7 Oct 2018



The Scottish Conservatives have lambasted the SNP Government for their inability to progress any legislation since summer recess as the SNP gathers for their annual conference.

Analysis by the party shows that, for the first time in fifteen years, no legislation has been put before Holyrood for consideration in the first half-term of the parliamentary year.

Indeed, it is only the second time this has happened since the Scottish Parliament was created in 1999.

It comes with the SNP having dumped their own flagship education bill – which, last year, Ministers claimed would be the most fundamental reform of education for a generation.

The Scottish Conservatives are today calling to the SNP to focus on the priorities of the Scottish people and progress legislation on victims' rights and supporting headteachers.

Maurice Golden, Scottish Conservative chief whip said:

“Under the SNP, the Scottish Parliament has become a legislation-free zone.

“The SNP has even dropped its flagship education bill.

“The people of Scotland deserve a government that is working for them, not mired in division over IndyRef2.

“The majority of Scots want the SNP to focus on progressing legislation such as strengthening victims’ rights, giving our animals greater protection and supporting our headteachers.

“Those are the priorities of the Scottish people, not IndyRef2.”

[Sturgeon must tackle culture of fear and secrecy in schools](#)

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- Sturgeon must tackle culture of fear and secrecy in schools

4 Oct 2018



Nicola Sturgeon must tackle the “culture of fear and secrecy” which has developed under the SNP in schools across Scotland, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It follows an open letter which appeared in today’s press from a primary teacher who said she wanted to speak out about problems in the classroom, but was frightened to do so for fear of “repercussions”.

At First Minister’s Questions, Ruth Davidson asked why the teacher’s colleague had been told to pull out of a planned meeting with education secretary John Swinney after being “warned” of consequences by their manager.

In her letter, the SNP-voting teacher said: “The most concerning thing that has happened so far is that one of my colleagues arranged to meet with yourself to discuss issues that were of great concern to them. However, this person was ‘warned’ by their manager that if they went ahead with this meeting they would be disciplined.”

Ruth said the Scottish Government should work harder to encourage a culture of accountability and scrutiny, rather than “stamping on” public servants who want to improve things in their place of work.

Earlier this week, the Scottish Conservatives outlined their plans for a more open approach to government ahead of the 2021 elections.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“Under the SNP, we now appear to have a situation where public servants with experience and knowledge of their area are being strong-armed into keeping their mouths shut.

“That’s no way to run a government, and it has to change.

“This teacher makes it abundantly clear that she wanted to speak out about a range of concerns with the state of Scotland’s schools, but was afraid to do so for fear of ramifications.

“Instead of telling teachers to stay quiet, this SNP government should be opening up government to ensure a culture of transparency and scrutiny.”