

# [SNP must launch 'fake Yes' probe after Iran revelations](#)

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- SNP must launch 'fake Yes' probe after Iran revelations

23 Aug 2018



The SNP has been urged to launch a full investigation into the scale of 'fake Yes' online organisations – after Facebook removed independence-supporting pages based in Iran.

It was reported this morning that the social media giant had removed a pro-independence site called Free Scotland 2014 after it discovered it was paid for by the Iranian regime.

The page had 20,000 followers, and regularly posted made-up articles in relation to UK politics.

It follows previous claims that Russia also sought to spread incorrect information during the independence campaign in support of the SNP.

Now the Scottish Conservatives have called for the nationalists to distance themselves from erroneous social media pages and websites, and probe the scale of this within the independence movement.

## **Scottish Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser said:**

“The revelation that the Free Scotland 2014 page – which had more than 20,000 followers – was a fake account backed by the Iranian state is incredible, and deeply worrying.

“From the US election to the independence referendum drive, we are all beginning to learn that democracy is under attack from countries like Russian and Iran who want to weaken us.

“The SNP has a choice; either pander to these disgraceful regimes, as its former leader and ex-First Minister Alex Salmond does on a weekly basis.

“Or stand up to this threat and assist Facebook by investigating pro-independence online outlets with which it has a connection to verify that they are what they claim to be.

“Quite simply, fake Yes sites must be closed down immediately, and the SNP has a duty to help do that.”

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## [Scotland risks being “left behind” on puppy sales ban as UK moves towards law change](#)

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- Scotland risks being “left behind” on puppy sales ban as UK moves towards law change

23 Aug 2018



Scotland risks being “left behind” in efforts to combat third party puppy sales, an MP has argued, after Westminster moved closer to agreeing a change in the law for the rest of the UK.

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has launched a consultation in response to the ‘Lucy’s Law’ animal welfare campaign.

The UK Government department has pressed ahead after issuing a call for evidence in February on a proposed ban on third party sales of puppies and kittens, which would mean that anyone buying or adopting a dog or cat would deal directly with the breeder of an animal rehoming centre.

Ross Thomson, MP for Aberdeen South, has previously urged the SNP government in Edinburgh to follow suit.

The Scottish Conservative MP wrote to Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, earlier this year.

He argued that putting a stop to third party sales would prevent ‘puppy farm’ dealers that had not bred the animals from selling them on – often after they have been kept in cruel conditions.

In response, Ms Cunningham said the government “intends to revise” legislation around breeding and licensing, but has not yet launched a public consultation.

### **Mr Thomson said:**

“I am delighted to see the UK Government make progress on Lucy’s Law to ban third party puppy sales in England.

“The launch of this consultation by DEFRA is another step towards a change in the law.

“However, I am concerned that Scotland risks being left behind on this issue.

“I wrote to the Cabinet Secretary on this subject earlier this year. In response, she said the Scottish Government ‘intends to revise’ legislation around this.

“I hope that we will soon hear proposals from Holyrood on changes to legislation around breeding and licensing in Scotland that have been suggested.

“I want to do all I can to help eradicate this practice, and I think most people expect the government to act.”

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## [Separate Scotland's £13bn black hole revealed](#)

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- Separate Scotland's £13bn black hole revealed

22 Aug 2018



Nicola Sturgeon must drop her threat of a second independence referendum – or explain how she'd plug the £13 billion black hole which was revealed today as the starting cost for a separate country.

According to Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS) figures, which set out the annual state of the country's finances, the current net fiscal deficit is £13.4 billion.

In addition, the level of higher public spending in Scotland compared to the UK average soared to a record difference of £1576 per head.

Shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said it was time for the First Minister to set out a clear plan on how she would find the billions of pounds required to fill Scotland's economic black hole should it break away from Britain.

If she can't, he added, then the threat of a referendum re-run must be removed for good.

Today's report showed a slight improvement in Scotland's finances, with revenue increasing and the deficit falling, largely thanks to a small recovery in North Sea oil.

However, the finances of the rest of the UK are improving at a superior rate,

meaning the gap between the two is widening.

As such, Scotland now raises eight per cent of UK total revenue, while receiving 9.3 per cent of spending.

Total spending per person in Scotland for 2017/18 was £1576 per head higher than the rest of the UK, compared to £1448 per head the previous year.

**Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:**

“If Nicola Sturgeon wants to continue her threat of second referendum, she has to come out and explain where she would find £13 billion to fill this deficit.

“Assuming that can’t be done, the prospect of another divisive and unwelcome vote must be removed for good so Scotland can focus on what really matters.

“Yet again, the union dividend has been made clear.

“By being part of the UK, Scotland received an extra £1576 for every man, woman and child last year above the UK average. For a family of four, that’s more than £6000 in additional public spending.

“If Scotland was to be ripped out the UK, this spending would be slashed drastically, meaning schools, hospitals and infrastructure would be hit.

“Any Scottish Government would also have to massively increase taxes and borrowing to help make up the difference, something the hardworking public simply wouldn’t accept.

“And while Scotland’s finances improved slightly on the whole last year, the rest of the UK’s have done even better, meaning the gap is now bigger.

“The SNP, which has had control of Scotland’s economy for more than a decade, has to take responsibility for that under-performance.

“It can’t blame Brexit and it can’t blame the UK Government – it is all on the shoulders of a nationalist government which has obsessed with the idea of independence above everything else.”

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## [Sturgeon risks becoming ‘Beeching of Scotland’s NHS’](#)

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- Sturgeon risks becoming ‘Beeching of Scotland’s NHS’

11 Aug 2018



Repeated cuts to health services across rural communities could lead to Nicola Sturgeon being remembered as the “Beeching of Scotland’s NHS”, it has been warned.

Speaking ahead of a visit to Orkney, shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said hospitals and other NHS facilities in non-urban areas were feeling the impact of SNP government cuts.

And he said if they continue, the impact on health services would be similar to that felt by local rail networks following reforms by infamous trains boss Dr Richard Beeching in the 1960s.

While in the Northern Isles, Mr Briggs will meet with local healthcare professionals to discuss issues affecting the system away from the Central Belt.

He pointed to cuts to services in places like West Lothian, Perthshire and the Highlands as evidence of the SNP’s centralising attitude.

Just this week, it emerged dozens of children a month are transferred by ambulance from St John’s Hospital in Livingston to the Sick Kids facility in the centre of Edinburgh following the closure last summer of the 24/7 admissions unit.

A campaign has recently launched to retain services in the Perth Royal Infirmary which the SNP wants to move to Dundee.

In Fife, patients were furious when it emerged services provided in places like Dunfermline, St Andrews and Glenrothes would be focused on Kirkcaldy.

And in the Highlands, health chiefs have already asked for a bail-out totalling nearly £20 million as it struggles to balance the books as it embarked on cutbacks like the closure of the maternity ward at Dr Gray’s in Elgin.

**Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:**

“Nicola Sturgeon has become to Scotland’s NHS in rural communities what Beeching was to railways.

“The SNP government’s shocking record in office speaks for itself.

“It has mismanaged the workforce, finances and all the while has stripped away local services and centralised them elsewhere.

“There are examples of this all over Scotland, from Dumfries and Galloway and the Lothians, to Tayside and the Highlands.

“People in these areas have had enough of the constant SNP health cuts which have caused the loss of much-loved and much-needed services.

“If we are truly going to help build healthy, happy and sustainable rural and island communities, then we need a new approach.

“We need to rural-proof Scotland’s NHS to meet the changing and challenging nature of health and social care needs.

“That requires the SNP to ditch its Central Belt obsession and start to govern for the whole of Scotland.”

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## [Suicide prevention strategy must be implemented without further delay](#)

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- Suicide prevention strategy must be implemented without further delay

9 Aug 2018



The Scottish Government has finally published its suicide prevention plan, over a month later than originally promised.

While the number of suicides in Scotland has reduced slightly last year, there was still a worrying rise in male casualties, from 517 to 522.

Scottish Conservative Mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells has previously backed calls for a new national body to be created to drive forward change, more suicide prevention training for key staff and for increased support for bereaved families.

The plan, published today, will implement a new National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG) by September 2018 and includes mental health and suicide prevention training, developing reviews of all deaths by suicide, use of digital technology and public awareness campaigns.

**Scottish Conservative mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:**

“Given the importance of this issue it is unacceptable that Scotland has been without a suicide prevention strategy for over a year-and-a-half.

“Suicide remains a main cause of avoidable death in Scotland, so this should be a priority area for any government, but clearly the SNP’s action doesn’t match its words.

“I very much welcome the emphasis on training, review and the public awareness campaign highlighted within the strategy.

"I would also like to welcome the new suicide prevention leadership group but I am sceptical that this group will be implemented by the September 2018, as promised.

"This suicide prevention strategy is already overdue. The SNP must now deliver it quickly and effectively with no further delays."