

Scottish Conservatives call for review of ambulance provision

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1 Jul 2018



Scottish Conservatives have called on new Health Secretary Jeane Freeman to undertake a review into ambulance provision across Scotland.

The call comes following concerns expressed over emergency 999 incidents being responded to by minibus Patient Transport Services and warnings that the Scottish Ambulance Service needs an estimated 600 more paramedics.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

“It is concerning that we have seen such an increase in the Scottish Patient Transport Service minibuses being sent so frequently to respond to emergency 999 incidents.

“This clearly demonstrates the failure of SNP Ministers to provide and resources needed by the patient transport service and the Scottish Ambulance Service to meet the needs of patients traveling to hospital appointments or return home or to their place of care

“Scottish Conservatives want to see a review of patient transport services across Scotland as it is increasingly clear that demand for patient transport services in Scotland is outstripping supply, and this is just another example of the SNP Government failing to deliver an NHS plan for the future.”

On the predicted 600 paramedics needed:

“It is now abundantly clear for all to see the SNP mismanagement of workforce planning for our Scottish NHS has been a total failure.

“There’s no question the Scottish Ambulance Service is under immense strain, and short of workers in key areas.

“There are also things the SNP government could be doing alongside recruiting more staff, like ensuring the unacceptably high sickness rate comes down.”

Ruth calls for root and branch review of sentencing and release

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28 Jun 2018



Ruth Davidson has today repeated her call for a root and branch review of sentencing and release in Scotland, after she raised the case of Michelle Stewart during First Minister's Questions today.

Michelle, 17, was murdered in cold blood in 2009. At the trial of her killer, John Wilson, the judge said that he should serve a minimum of 12 years behind bars.

Michelle's family were told last week – nine years on – that Wilson was now up for temporary release, which would allow him unescorted access to the community for periods of up to 8 days at a time.

The family say they feel let down by the justice system given the promises that were made at the time of sentencing.

The Scottish Conservatives are now calling on the new Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf to order a full review of sentencing, parole and home release policy.

In particular, the party wants to:

- introduce greater transparency and honesty around sentencing, so victims and their families are given clearer information at the time a trial takes place.
- reform Parole Board rules so victims can have a say, in person, on decisions as they are made.
- toughen up the rules on home release and parole, so that breach of licence conditions is deemed an automatic criminal offence

Speaking after First Minister's Questions, Ruth said:

"Michelle's family have had to experience the worst thing anyone can endure – the death of a daughter and sister.

"The least they should expect is justice for Michelle. Instead, they have been left feeling utterly betrayed by the justice system.

"When families are told by a judge that a murderer is given a life sentence with a minimum of 12 years behind bars, that's what they expect. They don't expect to receive a letter telling them the killer might be wandering the

streets in their village, unescorted, before that term has ended.

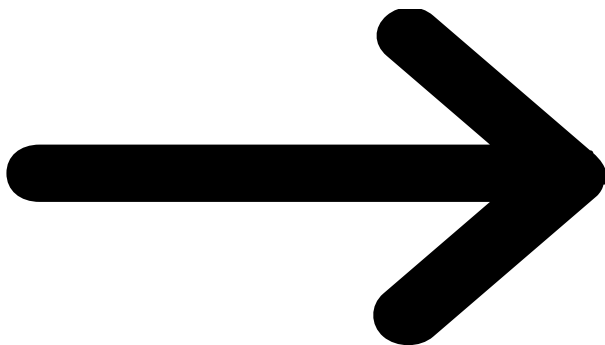
“We can’t carry on like this. The justice system needs to be overhauled with more honesty and transparency around sentencing. Victims and their families should have a louder voice in decisions on release. And criminals should know that if they breach their conditions of licence, they will be punished for that.

“The system is loaded against victims and their families. We have a new Justice Secretary in place. He must make this his first priority and act.”

[SNP end of term report: delayed, dithering, distracted](#)

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- SNP end of term report: delayed, dithering, distracted

28 Jun 2018



The Scottish Conservatives have highlighted 16 examples of dither and delay from the SNP Government over the last parliamentary year – saying it proves Nicola Sturgeon’s government has “taken its eye off the ball”.

It comes after Education Secretary John Swinney shelved his flagship Education Bill earlier this week in a humiliating u-turn.

However, that embarrassment was only the tip of the iceberg for a government which has delayed welfare devolution, delayed their misconceived plan to merge British Transport Police and Police Scotland, and missed a host of key economic targets.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“The SNP’s end of term report mark is pretty dismal, a D – they have done little but dither, delay and duck.

“Whether it is their dumped flagship Education Bill, dithering over welfare devolution, or ducking the hard choices on the economy, Nicola Sturgeon has consistently demonstrated that the SNP has taken its eye off the ball.

“Nicola Sturgeon has shown once again that she is determined to break her biggest promise of all: to respect the result of the independence referendum and get on with the day job.

“She has stridently made it plain over the last 12 months that her government’s first priority is independence and independence only; it really does ‘transcend everything’.

“Sacking a handful of underperforming ministers won’t change the losing hand that Scotland is being dealt by this SNP Government. Increasingly, more and more people are concluding that it is only Ruth Davidson and the Scottish Conservatives who have a plan to get on and fix schools, the NHS and the economy.”

[The SNP – Delayed, dithering and distracted from the day-job](#)

28 Jun 2018



Delayed, dithering and distracted from the day-job – what the SNP have got up to this year

1. It is now 500 days since the last Suicide Prevention Strategy expired. The previous Suicide Prevention Strategy covered the period 2013-16 and set out a range of commitments under 5 broad themes: Responding to people in distress; Talking about suicide; Improving the NHS response to suicide; Developing the evidence base; and Supporting change and improvement. They are currently seeking views on themes and draft actions for possible inclusion in the new Action Plan aimed at continuing the downward trend in suicides in Scotland, however (*Scottish Government*, 6 March 2018, [Link](#)).

2. The Safe Staffing Bill was introduced 2 years after being promised. The Bill was pledged in the SNP’s 2016 manifesto, but was only published last month. “A row erupted over claims an NHS staffing law has been delayed due to Holyrood being bogged down in EU wrangles” (The Sun, 13 March 2018, [Link](#)).

3. The SNP were forced to delay their ill-conceived BTP Merger. After insisting they could merge the British Transport Police into Police Scotland by April 2019, the SNP were forced to delay the project indefinitely following multiple safety warnings from police and railway experts. They now

say they'll press ahead on a revised timetable, despite the fact 8 in 10 BTP officers and staff oppose integration. (*BBC News*, 20 February 2018, [link](#); *STV News*, 21 February 2018, [link](#)).

4. The SNP has been forced to delay Welfare devolution. After demanding powers over welfare, the SNP Government had to ask the UK Government earlier this year to keep control of disability benefits for an extra year. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/snp-ask-tories-keep-control-12280713>

5. The SNP are delaying on a new offence of drug driving. The SNP promised a new offence of drug driving to come into force in 2019, but the necessary legislation has not yet been brought forward. (Scottish Government, *Programme for Government 2017-18*, p 15, [link](#)).

6. The SNP have completely failed to deliver their much-vaunted £500 million Scottish Growth Scheme. Scottish Conservative FOIs found that the 2017-18 and 2018-19 Budgets only allocate £25 million to the Scottish Growth Scheme. It was supposed to be a £500 million, three-year plan. After two years, the most the SNP can deliver to businesses is only £25 million. They have also failed to deliver a single penny of loans and guarantees, which it was originally established to provide (FOI response, 17 April 2018; *The Times*, 11 March 2018, [link](#)).

7. The £36 million Digital Growth Fund was delayed a year and only £2 million delivered. At the SNP conference in March 2017, Sturgeon the £36 million Digital Growth Fund. The SNP only started releasing this money in late June 2018, more than 15 months after it was announced. They have only announced £2 million of the £36 million promised (SNP.org, 18 March 2017, [link](#); Scottish Parliament, Written Answers, 7 June 2018, [link](#)).

8. Scottish Enterprise went into 2018 without a business plan. When the plan was finally delivered, it was only a temporary one-year plan, and it was only 16 pages compared to 36 the year previously (*Scottish Sun*, 7 April 2018, [link](#)).

9. The Pledge to double SDI staff was delayed. Sturgeon recently repeated that: 'SDI is doubling its representatives in Europe'. That pledge was made almost two years ago at the 2016 SNP conference. In November, we found that the pledge to double SDI staff had resulted in just one new appointment. The SNP have refused to disclose the latest numbers in separate FOI and PQs (Scottish Conservatives, [link](#); SNP.org, [link](#); SNP.org, [link](#)).

10. The pledge to open Brussels hub by Autumn 2017 missed by at least six months. They delayed opening by six months from autumn 2017 to spring 2018 – then Keith Brown said it may be summer before it opens (*The Times*, 27 December 2017, [link](#); Scottish Parliament, [link](#)).

11. The pledge to open Berlin hub by 2017 missed by at least three months. It was supposed to open in 2017 but didn't open until February 2018. At which point, it temporarily opened within the British Embassy in Berlin (Scottish Government, *Programme for Government*, p.51, September 2017, [link](#)).

12. It took more than a year for trade envoys to be appointed. The trade envoys were originally announced in October 2016 but were not appointed until November 2017 (*Sunday Post*, 16 July 2017, [link](#); Scottish Government, 30 November 2017, [link](#)).

13. The SNP Government have missed five of their main economic targets by a total of £80 billion. The SNP have failed to meet five of their main economic targets: to match UK GDP growth rates; to match GDP growth rates of small EU nations; to reach the first OECD quartile for productivity; to increase exports by 50 per cent; and to increase R&D spending to the EU average (*The Scotsman*, 8 May 2018, [link](#)).

14. Named Persons has been subject to repeated delays. After the Supreme Court decision, in September 2016 Swinney announced that named persons would be implemented by August 2017 (*The Guardian*, 8 September 2016, [link](#)). In March 2017, the scheme was further delayed with an aim for the bill to go before the chamber by the end of 2017, and rolled out in 2018 (*BBC News*, 7 March 2017, [link](#)). In December 2017, the Education and Skills Committee refused to move the bill forward, with Swinney saying that a draft code of practice could not be produced until September 2018 at the earliest (*BBC News*, 6 December 2017, [link](#)). MSPs then voted unanimously to annul the 22 December deadline for the legislation's passage. There are no plans to reintroduce the bill as it stands (*The Scotsman*, 13 December 2017, [link](#)).

15. The Warm Homes Bill had two consultations – the First Consultation completed 1 February 2018 second consultation began on 2 May 2018 ([link](#)).

16. The SNP announced in its Programme for Government that it would invest £1 million in each of the next five years in the Edinburgh Festival – but has yet to spend it. 'And, as announced in August, we are establishing a fund to provide £1 million in each of the next five years for Edinburgh's Festivals to maintain its status as the world's foremost festival city' (Scottish Government, *Programme For Government 2017-18*, p119, [link](#)). As of 25 June, just one month before the start of the festival, this fund has not paid out any money as the Scottish Government, Edinburgh Council and Festivals Edinburgh are still 'developing application criteria for the fund'. The fund now titled the Funding for 'Creative Excellence' has still not even had its application criteria worked out meaning that applications have not yet been received and that it is unlikely that it will pay out any money for this years' festival.

[New justice secretary must review and rethink BTP merger](#)

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- New justice secretary must review and rethink BTP merger

27 Jun 2018



The Scottish Conservatives have today asked the new Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf, to review and reconsider the planned British Transport Police (BTP) merger.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr will say that now is the ideal time to cast off the dogma of the previous justice secretary and rethink the beleaguered merger with Police Scotland.

The forced SNP merger of the two forces has been highly contentious with the British Transport Police Federation (BTPF) themselves expressing serious concerns for public safety and staff morale.

In addition, significant problems involved with merging the different IT systems have also been identified as well as spiralling costs, including a potential £100 million pension cost.

The Scottish Conservatives are therefore asking Humza Yousaf to abandon the dogma of his predecessor, review the merger and consider the other models for devolution that have been set out by the BTPF.

Liam Kerr, Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary said:

“As it currently stands the proposed merger of the British Transport Police and Police Scotland will not work, will cost more, and will leave us with a worse service than we have now.

“The Scottish Conservatives have been trying to be constructive from the start. It is time for the new justice secretary to show he is his own man, take a step back to review and speak to us about other models of devolution.

“The BTPF themselves have said it is ‘reckless’ not to study other options for devolution, in addition to the proposal set out by the SNP government.

“Given the cost escalations and the concerns over public safety and police morale, it is absolutely clear that the only justification for this merger is dogma.

“This is the perfect time for the SNP to rethink their approach and adopt one where we respect the decision to devolve BTP, but do so in a way that protects the service.

“The Commissioned Service model being put forward by the BTP Federation does just that.

“The SNP must abandon this ill-judged merger for the sake of public safety.”