

Kezia Dugdale outlines best Brexit deal for Scotland

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Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale has written to Prime Minister Theresa May to outline the best Brexit deal for Scotland ahead of Article 50 being triggered.

The best Brexit deal for Scotland, as outlined by Ms Dugdale, includes:

- *Access to the single market.*
- *Retaining the benefits of freedom of movement.*
- *Guaranteed rights for EU nationals currently resident in the UK.*
- *Access to EU research funds.*
- *Access to the Erasmus programme*

The full letter is as follows:

Dear Theresa,

On Wednesday you will trigger Article 50 by giving formal notification of the UK's intention to withdraw from the European Union. This will initiate a two-year negotiation process, which will both decide the terms on which the UK leaves the EU, and set out the broad parameters for our post-Brexit relationship with the remaining 27 member states. I did not vote for Brexit, and nor did Scotland as a whole. However, I am committed to making the best of it, and that means securing a deal that safeguards Scotland's economy and labour market, and retains, as far as possible, all that is best about our relationship with the EU.

I believe a deal can be negotiated – on differential terms if necessary – which ensures that the interests of people across the UK are well-represented. In the rest of this letter, I will set out the key areas that must form a part of your negotiating stance if Scotland's interests are to be taken into account, as you have promised they will be. It is vital that your government works closely with the devolved administrations in the months ahead, and all constitutional focus must be on securing the best Brexit deal for the UK. The First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, has committed to working tirelessly in the pursuit of the best deal for the people of Wales. It is disappointing that the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, is ready to disengage from the process. As leader of Scottish Labour, I will always stand up for the people of Scotland and I believe on that basis we should engage directly on these matters.

Access to the single market and freedom of movement

I am extremely concerned that your present negotiating stance – and in particular your prioritisation of immigration controls over access to the single market – risks an unnecessarily hard Brexit that would damage the economies of the UK and Scotland. Although it is widely predicted that Brexit will have a negative impact on Scotland's economy, the extent of the damage inflicted is very much dependent on the approach that your government takes to the negotiations.

Independent estimates suggest that the impact of Scotland losing access to the single market and reverting to WTO status would be that Scottish GDP would be five per cent lower (equivalent to £8 billion in 2015-16 prices) over the next ten years than would otherwise have been the case, real wages would be reduced by seven per cent (equivalent to around £2,000 per year), and overall employment would fall by three per cent (equivalent to around 80,000 jobs).

Such an outcome is unconscionable and must be avoided. If the interests of Scotland are to be taken into account, you will pursue a deal for Scotland which allows Scottish businesses to maintain unfettered access to the single market, and EU and Scottish workers to retain the benefits of freedom of movement.

The benefits to Scotland of unfettered access to the single market are widely accepted. It generates over £12 billion a year for Scotland's economy and is vital to Scotland's manufacturing and services sectors. Meanwhile, and as the Fraser of Allander Institute has recently noted, Scotland's working age population is already projected to decline over the next few decades. Any post-Brexit deal that limits the number of people coming to Scotland could have significant consequences for Scotland's economy and public services.

A deal that serves Scotland's best interests would, therefore, retain tariff and non-tariff barrier free access to the single market for Scottish exporters, and allow Scottish firms to continue to recruit workers from elsewhere in the EU, and Scottish workers to continue living and working elsewhere in the EU.

As I have made clear in recent months, Scottish Labour believes that a more federal UK will help to fix the failures of politics that led many people to vote for Brexit in the first place. Negotiating a distinct Brexit deal for Scotland – and indeed other UK regions – would be a signal of intent on your part, symbolic of your willingness to explore alternative constitutional structures that increase democratic accountability and place the UK on a surer footing.

Guaranteed rights for EU nationals currently resident in the UK

An issue that demands immediate attention is the status of non-UK EU nationals currently living in the UK, and Scotland. There are over 180,000 non-UK EU nationals living, working, and studying in Scotland. They make an immense and invaluable contribution to Scotland's economy, culture and society.

However, since the Brexit vote your government has ignored the calls of business, public sector employers, and universities, by refusing to guarantee the rights of European nationals living and working in the UK. Instead, you have chosen to use them as bargaining chips. I would urge you to put an end to this and make guaranteeing the future status of EU nationals living in the UK – and UK nationals living elsewhere in the EU – an absolute priority in the early stages of the Article 50 negotiations.

Scotland's higher education sector

Every effort must be made to ensure that Brexit does not damage the international standing of Scotland's universities, or detract from the quality of teaching they provide, the research they produce, and the opportunities they afford our young people. This requires action in three areas: research funding; freedom of movement; and the Erasmus programme.

1) Research funding

Scottish universities have benefited enormously from EU research funding, securing 11.4 per cent of the total allocation to the UK as of July 2016. Maintaining this level of funding is integral to ensuring Scottish universities can continue to uphold their international reputations as centres of academic excellence.

Regrettably, it is currently very unclear how, and to what extent, Brexit will affect the ability of Scottish universities to secure EU funding. We don't know whether Scottish universities will be able to continue accessing EU research programmes such as Horizon 2020, and ministers have repeatedly declined to give assurances that the government will maintain current levels of funding post-Brexit if access to EU programmes is impaired or lost altogether.

Ensuring that Scottish universities can continue to access EU research funds after Brexit should be a key plank of your negotiating platform. Concurrently, the UK government should provide assurances that, whatever the outcome of negotiations, current levels of research funding will be maintained post-Brexit.

2) Freedom of movement

Freedom of movement is of great importance to the higher education sector. In 2014-15, 11.1 per cent of staff in Scottish Higher Education institutions were EU nationals. Among academic staff, the figure was 14.8 per cent. High quality research depends in large part on international collaboration, which is facilitated by the free movement of people across the EU. Any perception that EU nationals are no longer welcome in the UK could impede the ability of Scotland's higher education institutions to attract the most gifted staff and students. This would have pronounced and unwelcome consequences: it could damage the international reputation of Scottish universities and lead to a reduction in standards of teaching and research. It is vital that any such perception is avoided, so that Scottish universities can continue to attract the brightest and best staff and students, both now and in the future.

3) Erasmus

Since 2008, over 10,000 young Scots have studied or worked in another European country, courtesy of the Erasmus programme. The benefits of Erasmus are well established: it broadens participants' educational, cultural and social horizons and equips them with the transferable skills they need to be successful in a globalised marketplace. Consequently, any limit imposed on Scottish participation in Erasmus is tantamount to a limit imposed on the aspirations of our young people. This we cannot afford, and will not accept. I would urge you to do everything in your power to ensure that Scottish students and young people can continue to access Erasmus following the UK's exit from the EU

Conclusion

As the Prime Minister, you are negotiating on behalf of people throughout the whole of the UK, something I trust will be at the forefront of your mind throughout the Brexit negotiations. As I stated at the start of this letter, I want to secure a positive and progressive outcome from the Brexit negotiations; one that limits the damage of leaving the EU, maximises the opportunities, and lays firm foundations for the future of this country, whose best interests we each seek to achieve. That means negotiating to secure the best possible deal for Scotland: one that allows us to retain what is best about our relationship with the EU while remaining an integral part of the UK.

Yours sincerely

Kezia Dugdale
Leader of the Scottish Labour Party

[Labour sets out its vision for Glasgow](#)

25 March 2017

Labour today launches its vision for Glasgow with a pledge to build on the successes of the last five years.

Ahead of the council election in May, the party's Deputy Leader Tom Watson MP and Glasgow City Council leader Frank McAveety promised to continue to invest in the city, despite £1.5 billion of SNP cuts to local services across Scotland since 2010/11.

Nationalist ministers have slashed £377 million from Glasgow's budget over the last decade.

But despite austerity cuts by the SNP, Scottish Labour councillors in Glasgow

have:

- Invested more than £250 million in schools, revolutionising our school estate
- Built nearly twice as many homes as originally forecast
- Created 8000 jobs as part of the Glasgow Guarantee
- Delivered the Commonwealth Games for Glasgow

Scottish Labour councillors have pledged to build on this record with a relentless focus on creating jobs in the city, investing in education and banishing fuel poverty.

Labour Deputy Leader Tom Watson MP said:

"The SNP is a party that willingly continues to impose cuts on the people of Glasgow.

"Nicola Sturgeon has passed on Tory cuts to her own city and all of Scotland.

"The SNP joined with the Tories four times to vote against asking the richest to pay their fair share to invest in local services

"Despite SNP austerity, it is Labour councillors who are fighting day in, day out for Glasgow.

"It is Labour councillors who have invested in the city's schools and services, created jobs and built houses.

"Voters in Glasgow and across the country can send the SNP a message in May – stop dividing our country and get on with the job of investing in local services."

Frank McAveety, Leader of Glasgow City Council, said:

"Five years ago we said we would unashamedly stand up for Glasgow above all else.

"We said we would invest in schools, build new homes and create more jobs. And we said we would deliver the best ever Commonwealth Games.

"Glasgow Labour has not just delivered on our promises, we have exceeded them.

"Glasgow Labour's manifesto is a plan for the next 5 years. It is a plan to move Glasgow forward, not backwards with another divisive referendum.

"It is a plan that will guarantee a job for every 18-24 year old, it is a plan to deliver 30 hours free childcare for every 3 and 4 year old and it is a plan that will see us build 25,000 new houses.

"When voters go to the polls they have a choice. They can choose to invest in

childcare, in schools and in jobs.

"It's a choice to provide 21st century housing in a 21st century city, to support families and tackle inequality.

"It's a choice to move Glasgow forward and put Glasgow first."

[You can download and read our manifesto here.](#)

"THE UNION DELIVERS FOR THE PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND" – KEZIA DUGDALE

21 March 2017

Scottish Labour MSPs will vote against the SNP's plan for another divisive referendum.

That was the message from Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale today. She said that the clear will of the Scottish people was expressed in 2014, when more than 2million voted to remain in the UK.

Scotland is already divided enough – we don't need to be divided any further. That's why Labour is so opposed to yet another divisive referendum.

Below is the full text of Kezia Dugdale's speech in the Scottish Parliament today:

"Presiding Officer I wish this was the start of a two day debate on education in Scotland.

"We could focus on the need to close the attainment gap.

"We could put forward proposals for giving young people the best chance in life.

"We could come up with innovative ways to lift 260,000 Scottish children out of poverty.

"But instead we are back talking about the only thing that has ever really mattered to the SNP.

"Nicola Sturgeon wakes up every single day thinking of ways to engineer another referendum.

"Because leaving the UK is the only thing that matters to her.

“It isn’t improving education in Scotland.

“It isn’t lifting children out of poverty.

“It’s independence. That will always come first and the truth is it always has.

“When the first majority Labour Government established the NHS and the welfare state, the SNP wanted Scotland to leave the UK.

“When the last Labour Government introduced ground breaking anti-discrimination laws, maternity and paternity leave, the national minimum wage, tax credits, rights at work and civil partnerships, the SNP was arguing for Scotland to leave the UK.

“When the UK Labour Government delivered a Scottish Parliament – the expressed will of the people following a referendum – the SNP still campaigned for Scotland to leave the UK.

“Brexit isn’t the motivation for another referendum – it’s just the latest excuse.

“Now we have heard a lot from the First Minister about mandates. But people have noticed the shift in the SNP’s language.

“They used to demand that the will of the Scottish people be respected but the will of the Scottish people was very clearly expressed in 2014.

“Eighty five per cent of our fellow citizens voted in the first referendum.

“And they voted by a very clear majority to remain in the United Kingdom.

“More than two million Scots, in the biggest mandate ever given to any political leaders in Scotland’s history, voted to remain in the UK.

“That’s the will of the Scottish people and that is what should be respected.

“We have already heard from the First Minister about the need to respect the will of this Parliament.

“If only she’d respected the mandate given to government by this chamber before now.

“If she had, several local NHS services would be free from the threat of closure hanging above their head.

“The First Minister would have banned fracking.

“And she would have scrapped the Football Act too.

“This Parliament has had its say on Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Scottish Funding Council. Will the First Minister respect that?

“And this Parliament voted to demand a change of course from the Nationalists

on education. Given that's apparently her defining priority, surely the First Minister will respect that?

"So when this Parliament votes for another referendum – as it inevitably will thanks to the perpetual crutch the Greens provide – let's not pretend it reflects the will of the Scottish people.

"Because it doesn't.

"The people of Scotland do not want another divisive referendum.

"Last week the First Minister said the 2014 referendum wasn't divisive. She obviously didn't speak to many people beyond her own party faithful.

"Because my experience, and the experience of the very many Scots who have taken the time to tell me on the doorstep, in the street and by email is that this country – their country – felt more divided than at any time in their lived memory.

"Families argued.

"Colleagues fell out.

"And communities were split down the middle.

"No bus, no train, no pub, no community centre, no work place, no living room escaped that fall out.

"And last Monday, the first day of this campaign, felt just as hostile and polarised as the 847th and final day of the last. Where does it end?

"Some of those who voted to leave the UK and the majority who voted to remain in the UK don't want to go back to the divisions of the past.

"But if there is to be another referendum...

"If the First Minister must drag the people of Scotland back there...

"The Labour Party will campaign with everything we have to remain in the UK.

"And let me tell you why:

"I believe in the United Kingdom not as a symbol of past glories or purest ideology – but as a living, breathing union of nations that delivers for the people of Scotland.

"The pensioners, whose income is secured through a UK state pension and benefits system.

"The shipyard workers, who are in jobs because of UK defence contracts.

"The staff in East Kilbride, who deliver aid to some of the poorest countries in the world on behalf of us all.

"The schools that are built because of the extra money we receive by being in the UK.

"The NHS that we built together that is sustained because we pool and share our resources across the whole of Britain.

"The businesses, large and small, that are able to thrive because of the access they have to our UK single market.

"The scientists who carry out life-saving medical research because of funding from UK research councils.

"These are the things that I value most.

"These are the things that being part of the UK has delivered for families in Scotland.

"So much prosperity and security.

"At a time when so much of the world is ravaged by division.

"When the trend in too many places is separation...

"...I value the fact that our four nations come together to share sovereignty and resources.

"That we recognise that together we're stronger, more so than we ever could be apart.

"And I say to the members opposite:

"It is not this union of nations which is intrinsically unjust or unfair, it's the actions of the powerful within it.

"Now I hate what the Tories are doing to Britain. I've never felt anger like it.

"Their austerity programme is destroying public services that we all value and the poorest rely on.

"But the SNP cannot escape from the facts.

"Leaving the UK would make things much worse for the poorest people in Scotland.

"And in the 6 years I've sat in this chamber I've never once heard a convincing argument to the contrary.

"Because separation would mean £15 billion worth of cuts.

"£15,000 million worth of cuts to schools and hospitals. The government's own figures tell us that.

"It means cuts to pensions. John Swinney told us that.

“It means an end to the UK defence contracts that keep thousands in work.

“Those are the facts.

“The Nationalists don’t want to hear them.

“They will howl and they will rage.

“They will question the patriotism of those who back unity over division.

“But they cannot escape the reality.

“We are a stronger, richer, fairer and better nation by remaining in the UK.

“Tomorrow evening, Scottish Labour MSPs will vote against a divisive second independence referendum.

“That was our manifesto commitment to the people of Scotland.

“And we will honour it.”

If you believe that together we’re stronger as part of the UK then sign out pledge at www.togetherstronger.scot

5 ways we would use Scotland’s social security powers

The Scottish Parliament has major new powers over tax and social security. Labour doesn’t want these powers to gather dust on the shelf. But that is exactly what is happening while the SNP obsesses about another divisive independence referendum.

We want to use Holyrood’s powers to make Scotland a fairer place to live.

So here are 5 ways we would use the new powers over social security to boost incomes and build a fairer nation.

1. Boot the private sector out of Scotland’s social security system:

The private sector has profited from delivering cruel and inhumane disability benefit assessments. Labour wants to use our powers to see them booted out of the Scottish social security system. That’s why we will amend the forthcoming Social Security Bill to ensure, in law, that the private contractors are removed from the system.

2. Boost Child Benefit by £240 per year by the end of the decade:

The best way to make Scotland fairer is to stay in the UK and use the powers of the Scottish Parliament. That's why last month Kezia Dugdale set out our plan to use the new powers of our Parliament to boost Child Benefit by an extra £240 per year by 2021. This move will lift tens of thousands of children out of poverty, and put money back into the pockets of families who have seen incomes flat-line under the SNP.

3. Set a legal duty to ensure everyone gets what they are entitled to:

Rather than the system working against Scots, we want to see it work for people. That's why we want a legal duty on the government which ensures that everyone gets the benefits they are entitled to. Scots miss out on £2 billion worth of social security payments a year. Getting that cash to families could make a huge difference to thousands.

4. Protect WASPI women from State Pension changes:

At both Holyrood and Westminster, it is only Labour that has a real plan to reverse the Tories' punitive pension reform which has left thousands of women worse off each simply because of their age. We'd use the new top-up powers to reverse the £6 a week cut women born between April 1951 and 1953 face compared to men, and UK Labour would extend Pension Credit to WASPI women affected by George Osborne's pension cuts.

5. Give carers the support they deserve:

Every party at Holyrood has backed plans to boost Carer's Allowance by £600 a year. More than 6 months after SNP Ministers got the power to just that, all they have done is commission a feasibility study. While carers are left in the dark, the Nationalists can't and won't say when it will be paid. Not a single MSP would stand in the way of this increase. Labour wants thousands of carers who have been promised the increase to get more than just warm words.

Like our plans? Then [join today](#) and let's fight for a fairer Scotland in the UK.

THE SNP'S DECADE OF DIVISION

17 March 2017

With the SNP holding its Conference in Aberdeen, Labour has published a new dossier exposing the impact of a decade of division.

As this week has shown, the Nationalists always only have one thing on their mind – dragging Scotland out of the UK. That lack of focus on the day job has resulted in a failure to manage Scotland's schools and hospitals, invest in our police, and deliver for working families across the country.

You can read *A Decade of Division* by clicking on the image below.



Scottish Labour will vote against the SNP's plan for another divisive referendum on leaving the UK. We believe that together we're stronger.

Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale said:

"The SNP has overseen a decade of division.

"Where Nicola Sturgeon should have been governing, she has instead divided.

"Where she should have been fixing the mess her party has made of our schools, she has instead stoked grievance.

"In ten years of SNP rule, our valued public services have been ignored and neglected in the Nationalists' pursuit of independence at any cost.

"Nicola Sturgeon's only tangible achievement in government has been passing on Tory austerity to Scotland.

"There is a better way. Scottish Labour believes together we're stronger.

"Instead of spending the coming years continuing to stoke division, the SNP need to do the job it was elected to – govern the country."

Aberdeen City Council leader Jenny Laing said:

"In Aberdeen and the north-east we have felt the brunt of SNP austerity and division.

"Our council is the lowest funded in the country, while NHS Grampian has been persistently starved of cash.

"The SNP's business rates bombshell will send many local firms to the wall.

"For years, Nationalist ministers have let down Aberdeen. Our life-saving major trauma centre – promised in 2014 – has now been delayed for years.

"While the SNP was happy to tout our oil and gas industry during its doomed separation drive, action has been lacklustre at best since the oil price drop.

"Labour in Aberdeen will fight against the unwanted SNP plans for a second independence referendum that would be even more damaging for jobs and businesses."

If you agree that together we're stronger as part of the UK, sign our pledge at www.togetherstronger.scot