

Citizens' Assembly plans 'nothing but a talking shop for independence'

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The SNP's plans for a Citizens' Assembly are "nothing but a talking shop for independence", the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Constitutional relations secretary Mike Russell today told MSPs of his proposal to set up the body as part of "Scotland's constitutional future".

He said the body would become "an established way for mature democracies to engage with complex and contested issues on an inclusive, informed and respectful basis".

However, he spent the majority of today's statement talking of how the assembly was needed to address the current questions on Brexit and independence.

And he even stated: "Let me assure the chamber that we will continue to consider whether the Referendums Bill should be accelerated and if required, we will return to that issue after the recess."

In response, Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said while the party was generally in favour of such an assembly, the SNP's version of it was only designed to talk up separation.

As such, he said, all Scots who want to remain part of the UK should avoid it.

Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said:

"There's no question that a citizens' assembly could have a role to play in Scotland.

"There are many areas that parliament struggles to govern over, and that's something such a body may be able to help with.

"However, that kind of productive and useful citizens' assembly is not what the SNP is proposing.

"This plan is nothing but a talking shop for independence.

“It’s another excuse to try and get people talking about the break-up of Britain – it’s a vanity project in the extreme from the SNP.

“That’s why the Scottish Conservatives will be having nothing to do with it, and anyone in Scotland who believes in the union should give it a wide berth.”