

Jack: Strengthening Scotland's place in the United Kingdom

Alister

Jack, Secretary of State for Scotland, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference at The Manchester Central Convention Complex, Manchester, said:

(Check against delivery)

"I'm delighted to have the opportunity to talk today about the action this government is taking to strengthen the Union.

An enduring partnership that binds the nations of the UK.

Allowing us to achieve so much more together than we could apart.

I belong to the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party.

We will always fight for our Union, and fight to strengthen Scotland's place in the United Kingdom, and we will do that with everything we've got.

Because we know that Nicola Sturgeon is once again demanding the right to hold another independence referendum.

It does not matter that the 2014 result was decisive or that she promised that it would settle the issue for a generation.

Or that people in Scotland don't want more division and uncertainty, and just want to move on.

She is preparing to ask again because it is her obsession.

The SNP will never give up. And so we will never stop making the case for keeping our Union together.

Because only we can.

We now know that the
surrender-ists in the Labour Party will sell out the Union to get Jeremy
Corbyn
into No 10.

And the Liberal
Democrats don't have the strength to stand up to the SNP across Scotland.

We know the UK is Scotland's
most important partnership.

Our trade with the rest
of the UK is worth more than three times as much as our trade with the EU.

The Union dividend is
worth nearly £2000 for every man, woman and child in Scotland in higher
public
spending.

But for me the case for
keeping our Union together goes deeper.

Our 300 year old ties of
history, family and friendship.

So, I will never stop
fighting for the United Kingdom.

Part of keeping our
Union strong is delivering Brexit.

We must honour the
result of the Brexit referendum so that we can take advantage of the
opportunities life outside the EU will bring.

Recently, I visited the
bustling fish market at Peterhead and sat down with fishing industry leaders.

They relish the
opportunities leaving the Common Fisheries Policy will afford them.

I've also talked to
farmers and to representatives of key sectors of the Scottish economy.

This Conservative and
Unionist Government and our Scottish Conservative MPs will keep delivering
for
Scotland. And I'm going to shout from the rooftops about our achievements.

Today I can announce £25
million for a new Growth Deal for Argyll and Bute. To date we have already
invested £1.4 billion
in our city and growth deal programme in Scotland, transforming local

economies
and creating high skill jobs.

And we are going to
complete the programme – with deals for Falkirk and the Islands to be
announced
in the near future.

We have announced a
£1.25 billion contract to build the Royal Navy's new Type 31 frigates in
Fife. They couldn't go to the Clyde
because it has no capacity left – another success story.

We are bringing the
international COP26 Climate Conference to Glasgow.

We are introducing
post-study work visas which will bring the brightest and the best to
Scotland's
world renowned universities.

And, as the Prime
Minister announced in Aberdeenshire, we are providing an extra £211 million
for
Scottish farmers, resolving the long-running dispute over CAP allocations.

It's an issue I raised
as a newly-elected backbencher – and now as Secretary of State for Scotland
I'm
extremely proud to have seen it resolved by this Conservative Government.

Since Scotland elected a
strong group of 13 Conservative MPs to Westminster in 2017, they have
consistently delivered for Scotland.

The last two Budgets
have frozen duty on spirits, backing our biggest exporter, the whisky
industry,
and on fuel, giving motorists, especially in rural areas, a helping hand.

We have saved for the
Scottish police and fire services £40 million every year by lifting their
requirement to pay VAT.

Clearing up a mess of
the SNP's making.

We've also ended the
unfairness of serving military personnel having to pay higher income tax
simply
for being stationed in Nicola Sturgeon's high tax Scotland.

The Scottish

Government's budget has also been increased by billions of pounds.

That is money the SNP should be using to improve our public services.

Instead, the SNP have made Scotland the highest taxed part of the UK.

And on education, supposedly Nicola Sturgeon's number one priority, they have cut 3,100 teachers and allowed Scottish education, once the best in the world, to be viewed internationally as just "average".

Under their management, a quarter of Scottish patients are waiting too long for treatment in our hospitals.

The delays and extra costs at the new Sick Kids hospital in Edinburgh is just the latest scandal to hit the Scottish NHS.

At a time when satisfaction with Scotland's schools, healthcare and public transport has fallen to an all-time low, we must challenge them to do better.

Our fantastic MSPs are doing just that.

Recently they forced the SNP Government to finally abandon its intrusive Named Persons scheme.

Let me take a moment to thank Ruth Davidson.

Ruth has done so much to transform our party into a strong opposition to the SNP and their efforts to break up Britain and we should all pay tribute to her, and I know Jackson Carlaw will continue that great work in holding the SNP to account.

Our hard-working Conservative MPs and MSPs are a far cry from the noisy and ineffective Nationalists.

For them, Holyrood is a vehicle for their drive for separation and Westminster is about stunts and grievances.

We are there to get things done. And we have got things done.

I'm confident we have

the right approach.

We have a record of
delivery to be proud of.

And we have a Prime
Minister who is totally committed to the Union.

Scotland – at the heart
of the United Kingdom – has a very bright future.”

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