

'Open government' plan to banish legacy of SNP's secret Scotland

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The Scottish Conservatives are to set out a plan for open government to improve trust in and the performance of public services.

The proposals, published next week, will also consign years of SNP secrecy in government to history.

The blueprint ahead of the 2021 Holyrood elections follows on from a policy document released in the spring, and signals the beginning of a campaign for a Scottish Conservative government.

Policies which would be adopted by Ruth Davidson's Scottish Government include:

- All public services being more accountable, including the transparent and regular publishing of statistics
- Developing a culture of openness across all of Scotland's taxpayer-funded organisations, and encouraging more innovation when it comes to the use of data
- The creation of institutions which guard against government centralisation and encourage devolving of more decision-making locally
- A more transparent budget process, and the publication in one place of all civil servants across the public sector paid more than the First Minister
- Banning politicisation of the NHS logo

Policy co-ordinator Donald Cameron, the Highlands and Islands MSP, also said a Scottish Conservative government would embrace technology.

Those ideas include the ability for people to text crime reports to the police, a scheme similar to system the British Transport Police operate, and an online booking system alternative for all GP practices.

The paper also suggests focusing on regionally-driven economic growth, as is happening in parts of England, improving school autonomy and handing more taxation powers to local authorities.

'Open government – a discussion paper' exposes how the SNP has failed to be accountable and transparent in government, and sets out the ways in which that has harmed public perception and the performance of public services.

Scottish Conservative policy co-ordinator Donald Cameron said:

“The Scottish Conservatives had a successful election campaign in 2016 on the basis the people of Scotland wanted us to be a strong opposition to the SNP at Holyrood.

“Now the time has come for us to set out how we would govern.

“This blueprint is very much the start in terms of us talking to voters across the country, setting out our ideas, and listening to what they have to say in response.

“The SNP has been secretive in government, completely failing to offer any kind of transparency or accountability.

“Not only does that erode the trust and faith of taxpayers, but it limits our ability to improve the performance of agencies in charge of health, education, transport and a range of other devolved responsibilities.

“We’ve now set out plans for that to change, for people to access more data that’s in the public interest, and open government up to those who have good ideas on how to make things better.

“This will be a central plank of our campaign for government, and lays the ground for a thriving, economically successful Scotland at the heart of a strong UK.”