

Sturgeon must come clean as 'cash for votes' questions continue

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Nicola Sturgeon is under increasing pressure to respond to revelations that the SNP appears to have ignored rules around government announcements during local and general election purdah periods.

The announcement of £8 million investment into Glasgow just two days before polling day there has prompted accusations that the SNP in government is using taxpayers' cash to try and win votes.

Now more announcements have emerged – including £1 million to 29 crofters and the announcement of £1 million for fishing, from an EU fund run by Marine Scotland, at a time when the SNP was under pressure on its position on fishing.

It is nearly 24 hours since the first allegation was made, and the SNP has made no response.

Scottish Conservative MSP and candidate for Aberdeen South Ross Thomson said:

“This has been a damning 24 hours of silence from Nicola Sturgeon. She needs to come out of hiding and explain the actions of her government.

“On her watch, ministers have been announcing government funding and promoting government investment in communities where her party is campaigning in vital local and UK-wide elections.

“We need a full investigation into how decisions were taken, when, and by whom – and why the impartial civil service supported these announcements during an election period and in apparent contravention of their own guidance.

“Above all, Scotland deserves a response from the First Minister.

“There are clear rules on how government should behave in the run-up to an election. It looks to many voters that the only rule the SNP has followed is how best to use taxpayers' cash to win votes.

“It stinks to high heaven – and we need to see some clarity from the First Minister now.” □

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- **Government announcements are made under the principle of collective responsibility.** The ministerial code makes this explicit: ‘The Scottish Government operates on the basis of collective responsibility. This means that all decisions reached by the Scottish Ministers, individually or collectively, are binding on all members of the Government. Ministers are required to abide by them and defend them as necessary’ (Scottish Ministerial Code, *Scottish Government*, 2016, section 2, [link](#)).

TIMELINE OF ANNOUNCEMENTS: 9 days to polling day: Fergus Ewing announces £1m to crofters.

- The Scottish Government announcement states: ‘Over £948,000 has been awarded to help crofters in some of Scotland’s most rural and remote communities benefit from better housing. 29 crofters will share the funding which enables them to build or improve homes, helping to retain and attract people to rural communities’ (*Scottish Government press release*, 25 April 2017, [link](#)).
- **Gail Ross, SNP MSP for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross, welcomed the announcement in a constituency press release:** ‘Rural quality housing is a major issue in our constituency and this fund will be a fantastic resource for crofters’ (Gail Ross, *Campaign website*, 24 April 2017, [link](#)).

8 days to polling day: Michael Russell announces £1m EU funding for Seafood Scotland

- The Scottish Government announcement includes a quote from Mike Russell: ‘Raising the awareness and enhancing the global profile of the Scottish seafood industry will assist the sector as a whole...This is just one example of why EU funding is so important as it is helping showcase our fisheries sector, improve the quality of its products and develop more environmentally friendly practices. Our fishing industry is a vital part of the rural economy’ (*Scottish Government press release*, 26 April 2017, [link](#)).
- **Marine Scotland run the EMFF in Scotland.** It is a Directorate of the Scottish Government and is responsible for the integrated management of Scotland’s seas. (*gov.uk*, [link](#)).
- **This was the day after a row broke out about fishing.** This follows an attack on the SNP over their position on fishing, after two SNP MPs contradicted SNP policy to take fishermen back into the CFP by signing a pledge committing to keep them out (*Courier*, 25 April, [link](#)).
- **Maree Todd, Highlands and Islands SNP MSP, promoted the news:** ‘Great news that Seafood Scotland is getting £1m to promote Scottish seafood abroad and revitalise the industry.’ (Maree Todd, 26 April 2017, [link](#)).

8 days to polling day: Keith Brown publishes a ‘progress report’ on the Scottish Government’s infrastructure plan

- The Scottish Government announcement includes Keith Brown commenting: ‘Significant progress continues to be made in delivering our infrastructure investment plan, which is good for jobs, good for the economy, and good for Scotland’ (Scottish Government press release, 26 April 2017, [link](#)).
- The report provides updates on projects across Scotland: 9 specific major road infrastructure projects, 5 specific ferry projects, 4 specific rail projects, 5 specific completed NHS projects, 4 specific ongoing NHS projects, and 18 specific completed schools (Progress Report, Scottish Government, 26 April 2017, [link](#)).
- Nicola Sturgeon’s chief of staff, Elizabeth Lloyd, retweeted the announcement to increase coverage – focusing particularly on the North East, and tweeting directly to the SNP political party.

2 days to polling day: £8.35m investment in Glasgow

- In the Scottish Government announcement, Kevin Stewart states: ‘Glasgow has a shortage of high quality office space and this latest investment will increase the city’s stock, making it an even more appealing proposition to locate and do business in. The fact that it will support 196 new jobs in construction plus training and apprenticeship places in the city is very welcome news’ (Scottish Government press release, 2 May 2017, [link](#)).
- **Kenny McLean, an SNP candidate for Glasgow City Council elections, shared news of the funding announcement.** McLean is standing for the SNP in the Partick East/Kelvindale ward in the Glasgow City Council elections. He stated: ‘Scottish Government invest £8.35 million to support urban regeneration in the heart of Glasgow’ (Kenny McLean Twitter, 2 May 2017, [link](#)).
- **Eva Bolander, an SNP candidate for Glasgow City Council elections, boasted of the funding in her ward.** Bolander is standing for the SNP in Anderston/City/Yorkhill ward in the Glasgow City Council elections. She stated: ‘Great news for investment in quality office space in my ward’ (Eva Bolander Facebook, 2 May 2017, [link](#)).
- **Glasgow is a key target seat for the SNP.** Nicola Sturgeon has said: ‘In the council elections next May, let’s work as hard as we ever have to bring the SNP to power...Glasgow is a vivid illustration of the success of our party’ (Speech to SNP Conference, 15 October 2016, [link](#)).
- **SNP in Glasgow aim to take control of the council at these elections.** Susan Aitken, the SNP Group Leader in Glasgow, has also said: ‘We think we are on track to achieve our target of at the least being the biggest party [in Glasgow] and I think we may well have an overall majority within our grasp. Winning in Glasgow would definitely help us ahead of the general election’ (Scotsman, 30 April 2017, [link](#)).