

Sturgeon should think twice before readmitting Salmond

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Nicola Sturgeon has been urged to think carefully before allowing her predecessor Alex Salmond to relaunch his political ambitions within the SNP.

The former First Minister was cleared last week of a number of sexual assault charges.

However, questions about his conduct were raised throughout the trial, and charities including Rape Crisis Scotland were critical about how the events unfolded at the High Court in Edinburgh.

And at the weekend, his top defence lawyer Gordon Jackson was caught questioning his integrity during a train journey, in which he also named two of the accusers.

That followed criticism from defence witness Alex Bell, Salmond's former advisor, who described him as a "creep" and that his defence was "nothing to smile about".

It has been rumoured that Salmond now wants to be readmitted to the SNP, and even stand again for office at the 2021 Holyrood elections.

That bid has been backed by senior SNP figures, including former health secretary Alex Neil, who remains a prominent MSP.

However, given the numerous concerns raised about his behaviour, the Scottish Conservatives have urged the SNP's leadership to block such a move.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Annie Wells said:

"Alex Salmond may have been cleared in a court of law, but concerns remain about his conduct while he held the highest office in the land.

"Even his top defence lawyer and defence witness can't seem to vouch for his character.

"It's pretty obvious, now he's brushed this off, the former First Minister wants to get himself back into politics and onto the front line.

"Nicola Sturgeon has a decision to make, and if she's as serious about concerns raised by charities like Rape Crisis Scotland, she should think twice about who she allows back into the SNP."