

[Named person policy has 'run aground and should be scrapped'](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Named person policy has 'run aground and should be scrapped'

7 Mar 2017



The SNP's hated named person policy "has run aground and should be scrapped", the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Education secretary John Swinney told Holyrood today that he would bring forward a new bill for state guardians in the summer, and aimed to have it up and running by 2018.

Following the policy being ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court, he added some changes would be made to the data-sharing provisions.

However, shadow education secretary Liz Smith said the policy should be scrapped and, as it stands, will only be heading straight back to the courtroom.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"This is a scheme that has run aground and the fact the delay is now at two years shows exactly that.

"If the SNP had been listening properly it would have recognised months ago that it is completely unworkable and unwanted.

"Every opinion poll on the policy has made clear that the vast majority of parents do not want it, and it's clear many professionals tasked with delivering it are extremely concerned.

"Rather than muddy the waters even further, John Swinney should scrap this policy once and for all.

"As it stands, the named person policy is heading straight back to court."

The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly opposed the named person scheme: <http://www.scottishconservatives.com/named-person/>

[The latest NHS staff survey demonstrates again the enormous pressures facing people working in our health service – Justin Madders](#)

Justin

Madders MP, Labour's Shadow Health Minister, responding to the NHS Staff Survey 2016, said:

“The latest NHS staff survey demonstrates again the enormous pressures facing the people working in our health service in the face of Theresa May's neglect and lack of interest. The Government's endless underfunding of the NHS and demands on staff to do more and more with less is taking its toll and stretching workers to breaking point.

“The Government urgently need a plan to give our brilliant NHS staff the support they need at work. It should be a badge of shame for Theresa May that morale in the NHS is so low. The Prime Minister ought to be using her first Budget to help NHS workers so that they feel valued in their work and are able to care for patients to the best of their abilities without the fear of illness or harassment. The winter crisis would have been so much worse without the dedication of NHS staff but this survey is a clear warning that they cannot go on endlessly without more support.”

[News story: The chicken and the egg: GLD Lawyers work on the bird flu outbreak](#)

The end of last year saw the biggest outbreak of bird flu (avian influenza) in Europe, which was eventually spread to the UK's shores, wetlands and poultry premises in December by migrating wildfowl. Since then, about 250,000 poultry have died or been culled at 10 infected premises across the UK from Lincolnshire to Lancashire.

GLD lawyers played a central role in providing legal advice to Defra to deal

with operational issues. This included dealing with issues arising whenever there was an outbreak detected or poultry culled, creating a 3km protection zone and a wider 10km surveillance zone around the premises. In these zones all movement of poultry and poultry products is banned and the area is effectively quarantined and a "lock down" imposed until the risk of disease spreading disappears.

On 6 December 2016, as the threat of bird flu increased, the Secretary of State for Defra, Andrea Leadsom MP, used her power in specific disease control legislation to declare an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone. This was the first time, since its creation in 2006 that this power has been used. The Prevention Zone Declaration required all poultry in England to be kept separate from wild birds by netting or being housed. Scotland and Wales followed suit as did Northern Ireland 2 weeks later. Around 51% of egg laying hens in England are raised entirely indoors in barns or enriched colony cages so the prevention zone did not affect that part of the poultry sector. However England's higher welfare free-range sector was affected as poultry were not allowed to range free.

When under such restrictions EU law permits eggs and poultry meat from free-range systems to still be sold as 'free-range', for a fixed 12-week grace period which expired on the 28 February. During this period GLD lawyers advised on how the period operated, having regard to poultry husbandry practices, and what should be done once the 12-week grace period came to an end as the status of free-range eggs would be immediately affected. Free-range poultry meat would be affected later.

Richard Vidal who led GLD's Disease Outbreak team said:

This was a very legally challenging situation as it was the first time a Prevention Zone had been introduced.

We've been responsible for explaining how the grace period operated and the imminent need, if the initial prevention zone was extended in time, to ensure labelling of any poultry produce was correct when the grace period expired.

To achieve this it was essential that we were involved with Defra industry meetings, calling on the views of the British Egg Industry Council, British Retail Consortium and the National Farmers' Union.

The prevention zone has recently been adjusted and extended until 30 April. It has been now adjusted to create two different disease risk areas: all poultry in higher risk areas have to be housed or fully netted to prevent wild birds from having access, whilst those in remaining areas (currently around 75% of England) can be allowed to range free but strict biosecurity measures will need to be put in place by the keepers. This includes such things as the disinfection of vehicle wheels and footwear, restricted access to poultry sheds and pens, and records needing to be kept of anyone having contact with their poultry.

This means that until the latest prevention zone is lifted the labelling of 'free-range' from those that still house their birds must not mislead consumers.

[Hidden groundwater resource under pressure in southern England](#)

The UK has had less rainfall than usual over the winter, and the south and south-east have been particularly dry meaning that the risk of a drought is increased. New maps published by the BGS illustrate that people in the south and south-east of England are especially reliant on groundwater for their water supply and this provides some resilience to drought.

[Emergency intervention needed to steer Britain from the brink](#)



7 March 2017

The Green Party is calling for 'an emergency intervention' to steer Britain away from the brink of the crisis in the NHS and social care, and to clampdown on air pollution which is estimate to end 40,000 lives prematurely every year.

The Greens are also calling for the Government to protect small firms from the business rate hike, raise tax for the richest, stop corporation tax cuts and reverse a planned tax hike on solar panels.

The five demands [1] from the Green Party are:

- 1) An emergency aid package to protect health and social care services
- 2) Toughest ever action on air pollution
- 3) Protection of small firms from Business Rate hikes
- 4) Ensuring the richest people and biggest corporations pay more tax
- 5) Reversing the [solar tax hike](#)

Jonathan Bartley said:

"This budget must be an emergency intervention to steer Britain away from the brink of multiple crises.

"After years of privatisation and underinvestment the future of the health service now hangs in the balance, and social care services are at risk of collapsing. If the Government is serious about working on behalf of the majority of people in this country then they will unveil an emergency aid package to protect health and social care services. We know that funding a world class healthcare service will cost more, which is why the Government should reverse their planned cuts to corporation tax and their tax giveaway to high earners. Failing to properly fund health and social care would be a dereliction of duty from this Government – and would leave any claim they had to be standing up for working people in tatters."

Caroline Lucas MP said:

"There is an air pollution emergency happening in Britain – and the Government has to act now to tackle it. The Chancellor should immediately raise vehicle excise duty on new diesel cars, to send a signal to the market that this fuel must be phased out. The freeze on the fuel duty escalator should also end – thus freeing up billions of pounds which the Government should plough into public transport, walking and cycling. In recent years the cost of motoring has dropped considerably while the price of catching the bus or train has skyrocketed – if we're serious about reducing the amount of toxic fumes in our air we've got to shift people out of cars and onto affordable public alternatives.

"The Chancellor must also use this budget to get a proper grip on Britain's climate policy. At a very bare minimum that must mean reversing the solar tax hike that's set to hit community groups and schools – and it must mean more support for onshore wind too."

ENDS

[1] A Green Budget would include:

1) An emergency aid package to protect health and social care services.

This means an additional £30bn per year on the NHS by 2020 (as estimated by [NHS England](#)) + at least £2.6bn to cover the social care [shortfall](#).

2) The toughest ever action on air pollution.

VED of £800 on new diesel (would raise 500m per year)

Unfreeze the fuel duty escalator (£9bn per year by 2020)

3) Protect small firms from the unfair business rate hike.

We are calling for an extension of Small Business Rate Relief for small businesses, including increasing the threshold for 100% relief to £15,000, tapering to at least £18,000.

4) Ensuring the richest people and biggest corporations pay more tax

New taxes:

Top rate 60% income tax would raise 2.3bn

Robin Hood Tax could raise up to £2bn

Wealth tax could raise up to £25bn

+

Reverse the Corporation tax cut for larger firms – and raise level to 30% for big companies (G7 average is 32.3%): Would raise £12.5bn by 2020

Reverse the high rate tax change thus raising £600m by 2020.

Reverse the reduction in capital gains thus raising £670m by 2020.

5) Reverse the solar tax hike

The changes to Business Rates from 1 April (see above) may lead to a six to eightfold increase in the Rateable Value on solar photovoltaics (PV) installed for self-generation. According to the Solar Trade Association, this may make installing and running solar PV economically unfeasible for thousands of businesses and organisations across the UK – indeed, some businesses with panels already installed may be forced to remove them.

Given the urgent need to decarbonise our economy and the important role that solar must play in that, this would be a worrying and deeply regressive development. It would further undermine the confidence of the business and investor community. At a time when the Government is considering its new Emissions Reduction Plan and a new industrial strategy, this move would send all the wrong signals.

As well as affecting businesses, the tax increase will also affect schools and community groups. It seems particularly unfair that the increase will affect state schools who have installed solar panels but not private schools, who are exempt due to their charitable status.

This indiscriminate and disproportionate tax increase comes at a time when solar continues to outperform all expectations. This year, the UK saw an estimated 6,964 gigawatt hours (GWh) generated by solar over the summer period: 5.4% of the UK's electricity demand. Indeed, solar power generated more electricity than coal in the six months running up to the end of September. On top of this success, a recent report by Aurora Energy Research found that the cost of integrating solar – set to be the cheapest form of electricity generation by the mid-2020s – into the national grid is “negligible”.

To reverse this solar tax hike, the Green Party calls on the chancellor to extend the exemption on small-scale (less than 50KW) solar installations.

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