

[New initiative launched to elect more women and BME candidates](#)

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4 Mar 2018



The Scottish Conservatives are to launch a new initiative to elect more women and BME candidates to Holyrood.

Ahead of International Women's Day this week, the party will launch a commission headed by Baroness Nosheena Mobarik to ensure the greater gender and ethnic diversity in the party's ranks at the next Holyrood election.

It will be build on successful campaigns such as Women2Win Scotland – launched last year by party leader Ruth Davidson.

Speaking today, Ruth said that the party needs to demonstrate greater diversity in order to become “a government for Scotland.”

She said that the revelations in recent weeks about sexual harassment and racism had been “catastrophic for politics and public life in general” – and that all political parties now needed to show they were prepared to act.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson MSP said:

“We want to restore trust in our public realm – to show that Scottish politics can meet anger with answers.

“To be a Scottish government that truly represents people in every town, city and village in the country.

“That looks and sounds like the people we serve.

“And we need to act.

“Let's confront this head on.

“The last few months have been catastrophic for politics and public life in general.

“The appalling treatment of women in public life has been exposed for all to see.

“And here in Scotland, I applaud Anas Sarwar for bravely exposing how we are still afflicted by casual racism.

“Political parties must uphold the highest standards.

“But the truth is that no party can stand up right now and say, hand on heart, they are not tainted.

“Every party needs to act. And that includes us.

“And by the time of the next Holyrood election, the Scottish Conservatives need to show we’ve got it.

“That we understand the need to change.

“So I can announce today that, under Nosheena Mobarik, we are setting up a new Commission with a specific remit.

“We will ensure that our BME community is represented in person on our benches in the next Parliament.

“And, complementing the work of Women2Win Scotland, we will ensure that more women are selected in winnable seats and regions too.

“Let the message be clear: Scottish Conservatives value, need and want the contribution of everyone in Scotland.

“Let’s show we understand – that if we don’t sort this out, we won’t become a government for Scotland.

“We won’t be the truly national party we aspire to become.

“And that we won’t deserve to either.”

[SNP has spent a decade chasing headlines rather than export markets](#)

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1 Mar 2018



Nicola Sturgeon has spent a decade chasing headlines rather than export markets, Ruth Davidson said today – as figures show how the SNP is missing its own targets to sell Scotland’s products abroad.

It comes after the SNP Government this week unveiled the latest version of

its National Investment Bank, nine years after first proposing the idea in 2009.

Analysis by the Scottish Conservatives shows how:

- The SNP first proposed an investment bank were in 2009;
- Changed the plan to set up a Business Development bank in 2013;
- Dumped the plan in 2016;
- Then announced a new half-billion pound Scottish Growth Fund – which has so far delivered barely a penny;
- Before finally unveiling a new Scottish National Investment Bank in 2017.

At First Minister's Questions, Ruth Davidson said that as a consequence of a "decade of dither and delay" under the SNP, the Scottish Government was due to fall £27 billion short of its target to increase exports by 50%.

The Scottish Conservatives also published a Freedom of Information request which asked for details of the National Investment Bank.

Highlighting the confusion over the SNP's plans for the economy, the First Minister's office asked in response: "Grateful for confirmation as to whether your enquiry refers to the Scottish National Investment Bank or the Scottish Investment Bank."

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson MSP said:

"The challenge of securing economic growth for Scotland is the most important issue facing the Scottish Government. Instead we have had a decade of dither and delay.

"Nicola Sturgeon's plan for a Scottish National Investment Bank was first proposed in 2009. Now, nearly ten years on, not even the First Minister's office seems to know exactly what plans are in place.

"The SNP told us in 2010 that they would increase exports by 50%. Their own figures show they are running short by the small matter of £27 billion.

"That's the price of an SNP that's keen to get the headlines for launches and relaunches but forgets to build the actual bank until 9 years later.

"This SNP Government isn't working for Scotland. We need a Scottish Conservative government to deliver for Scotland and secure the economic growth we need."

SNP must deliver flexible childcare



The Scottish Conservatives will use their debating time today to call for considerable improvements in the current and future provision of childcare and to call for progress on the childcare account.

The Scottish Conservatives will highlight that some of the most important ways of improving the delivery of high quality childcare are related to improving accessibility and flexibility for parents.

In addition, since the announcement by former minister Mark McDonald last year, the SNP has made no progress on the childcare account, which the Scottish Conservatives have advocated for several years.

The debate follows the recent critical report by the Accounts Commission which stated that there were “significant risks” that local authorities would not be in a position to deliver the Scottish Government’s target of 1,140 hours by 2020.

The motion also calls for the SNP to engage constructively with all groups and local authorities to agree a comprehensive strategy that will deliver quality childcare provision across Scotland.

Scottish Conservative childcare and early years spokesman, Michelle Ballantyne commented:

“The Scottish Conservatives believe that the delivery of high quality childcare will not happen unless there are considerable improvements in its accessibility and flexibility for parents.

“Increasing the number of hours on a targeted basis is important but it can only bring limited benefit if these additional hours cannot be used effectively.

“The recent Audit Scotland/Accounts Commission report slated the SNP for underestimating the costs of the intended 1140 hours provision. It also criticised the SNP for failing to undertake any analysis to determine what makes qualitative improvements in the provision of childcare and how it will be made easier for parents to access.

“This is a completely unsatisfactory situation which is creating a great deal of anger amongst parents and hampering the incentive of providers to make childcare more flexible.

“The Scottish Conservatives have long argued for a flexible childcare voucher system.

“Last year, the Scottish Government said it was looking to introduce exactly this to be known as a childcare account but nothing has happened. It is time to change all that and give parents what they want.”

Treatment waiting times worst on record under SNP

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27 Feb 2018



Performance on treating patients within 18 weeks of referral sank to its worst on record towards the end of last year, it has emerged.

Figures released by ISD Scotland have revealed fewer than 81 per cent of people were seen to in the target timeframe, despite the target being 90 per cent.

The rate has dropped considerably over the years, with today's report detailing statistics as far back as October 2011, when just one in 10 missed the target.

It's the latest set of figures revealing the SNP's poor management of the NHS.

And while performance in November and December improved marginally, it is considerably poorer than it should be, the Scottish Conservatives said.

It means nine of Scotland's 14 regional health board are missing the 18-week referral-to-treatment target.

Geographical performance varied hugely, with a third of patients in NHS Grampian waiting too long for treatment to begin.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"We know the quicker a patient can begin treatment, the better chance they have of recovery.

"Despite that, performance under this SNP government is getting worse and worse, with October being the poorest month on record.

"It's more proof that, under a nationalist government in Scotland, the NHS is on its knees.

"The impact of this disastrous performance puts patients' lives at risk – it really is as simple as that.

“The SNP cannot point the finger at anyone else. This performance began to nosedive in 2012, five years after the party came to power, and it has worsened ever since on its watch.”

[SNP merger of Police Scotland and BTP delayed](#)

21 Feb 2018



The controversial move to bring the British Transport Police under the control of Scotland's single force has been delayed.

The SNP wants Police Scotland to take control of transport policing north of the border, despite BTP officers and other experts warning against the move.

The merger was initially planned to take place in April 2019, but the Scottish Government today announced that will now be put back.

It is understood concerns over IT systems may be among the reasons for the delay, which justice secretary Michael Matheson admitted was “disappointing”.

In a statement, he said the timetable for the move would be extended, allowing a “re-planning” exercise.

Numerous issues have been raised since the SNP government announced the plans last year, including pensions, funding, IT and officers choosing not to switch over.

Critics have also questioned whether or not crisis-hit Police Scotland is in a position to take on more responsibilities.

And the Scottish Conservatives said if an IT failing was the reason for the delay, it would be yet another example of incompetence in that area following problems processing farming payments and running systems for NHS 24.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“While this SNP merger may have hit the buffers, it's time it was derailed altogether.

“The Scottish Conservatives have campaigned to stop this flawed plan for some time, and we're glad there's at least been a delay which might allow the SNP to do some proper planning and strategising.

“It's an unpopular move that virtually nobody is in favour of, with ideology

and dogma seemingly the motive.

“There have been numerous concerns about this proposal, all of which should be enough to force the SNP into a rethink.

“The nationalists have already messed up one Police Scotland IT project, as well as failed systems impacting farming payments and NHS 24.

“It calls into question their ability to govern competently.”