

# [Justice secretary facing more questions on Scottish Police Authority intervention](#)

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- Justice secretary facing more questions on Scottish Police Authority intervention

15 Jan 2018



Emails released by a Scottish Parliamentary Committee have raised further questions over the intervention of the justice secretary in the management of the Scottish Police Authority.

Michael Matheson stated to the Scottish Parliament that he intervened in the reinstatement of the Chief Constable because “there did not appear to be a robust plan in place to protect the wellbeing of officers and staff who had raised complaints or who had been asked to play a role in the investigation”.

But now emails released by Holyrood’s Public Audit Committee show the agreed press release actually stated: “The Authority has also taken the necessary steps with Police Scotland to ensure suitable arrangements are put in place to support the welfare of all involved parties until the alleged conduct issues are concluded.”

Mr Matheson was responding to criticism that he blocked the return of Chief Constable Phil Gormley despite the unanimous vote of the Scottish Police Authority.

**Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said;**

“Once again Michael Matheson’s version of events has raised more questions than it answers.

“As soon as we appear to be close to a conclusion on this episode, further detail emerges that casts doubt over the role of the justice secretary.

“We now have evidence that undermines the account the justice secretary gave to the Scottish Parliament in his statement last week.

“These questions arise entirely from the account of the justice secretary and the longer the ambiguity and inaccuracies continue, the more people will ask questions around his performance.

“We would all like to see an end to this affair so that our diligent police officers have confidence in their leadership.”

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# [Scaremongering SNP should focus on making Brexit work](#)

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- Scaremongering SNP should focus on making Brexit work

15 Jan 2018



The SNP government has been told to focus on making a success of Brexit, instead of willing it to fail and using it to agitate for independence.

The nationalists released a paper today claiming a so-called hard Brexit would cost every Scot £2300 a year.

The findings in the re-hashed 'Scotland's Place in Europe' document have been criticised by the Scottish Conservatives, who said Scotland could make a success of the UK's decision to leave the European Union provided ministers in both governments work together.

Constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said Brexit provided both challenges and opportunities, but there was a clear will from people in Scotland for the SNP to make the process work.

Last week, an acclaimed social attitudes survey revealed no real difference in what people north and south of the border wanted to achieve from leaving the EU.

And despite the warnings in today's paper, no mention is made of the benefits of Scotland staying in the UK single market, something the SNP wants to end.

The report also fails to mention that EU migration to Scotland has increased since Brexit, and ignores the fact most Scots want a UK-wide position on immigration.

**Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said:**

"The SNP government has gone completely over-the-top in its scaremongering here.

"As the nationalists proved with their independence White Paper, their financial forecasts simply cannot be trusted.

"No-one's doubting that Brexit will pose challenges, but it will bring opportunities too.

“That’s why it’s vital the SNP works with the UK Government to achieve the best Brexit deal, and not will the process to fail in the hope of furthering its own constitutional obsessions.

“Only last week public opinion in Scotland was shown to be much the same as the rest of the UK.

“People are sick of the wrangling, and want this process concluded efficiently and successfully.”

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## [Another day in court for SNP as fracking challenge launched](#)

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- Another day in court for SNP as fracking challenge launched

9 Jan 2018



The SNP faces another court battle over one of its policies, after energy firm Ineos launched legal action against the ban on fracking.

The company, which owns the Grangemouth refinery, today lodged a petition for judicial review into the recent decision to outlaw shale extraction north of the border.

The SNP pushed ahead with the ban, with the backing of Labour and the Greens, even though Scottish Government experts said shale could be produced safely.

Shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser backed the move by Ineos, saying a ban on fracking not only damaged the economy, but missed a chance to lower energy bills too.

It’s the third time the SNP government has found itself defending one of its decisions in court.

In 2016, the Supreme Court ruled elements of its named person policy were unlawful.

And last year, a lengthy battle to impose alcohol minimum pricing eventually reached a conclusion following a challenge by the Scotch Whisky Association.

**Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:**

“The SNP’s decision to ban fracking is rooted in dogma, and ignores the

economic benefits it could bring to Scotland.

“Further exploration of shale extraction could also reduce the need for gas imports, and even help relieve fuel poverty.

“The Scottish Government’s own advisers know this, yet still ministers are sticking to this needless and potentially damaging ban.

“This is another day in court for an SNP government which doesn’t think its policies through.

“That’s embarrassing for Scotland’s reputation, and exposes the amateurish attitude of the SNP on a range of issues.

“Fracking could be explored safely if properly regulated – and the whole country could benefit as a consequence.”

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## [Another new low for A&E waiting times performance](#)

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- Another new low for A&E waiting times performance

9 Jan 2018



Waiting times performance in Scotland’s casualty departments sank to a new low between Christmas and New Year, latest figures have revealed.

The 21.6 per cent forced to wait beyond the target four hours is significantly worse than the previous poorest performance of 18.9 per cent a few weeks ago.

And in NHS Forth Valley in the final week of the year, just 57.3 per cent of accident and emergency patients were seen to on time.

The figures also revealed, in that single week, 272 people had to wait longer than 12 hours in A&E.

That compares to just two patients for the same period last year.

NHS Lothian was singled out for criticism after discrepancies were found with data previously published by the health board.

As a result, ISD Scotland published a separate set of national figures which

didn't include the data of Scotland's second largest health board.

**Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:**

"It's widely accepted that winter is the toughest time for the NHS in terms of getting people seen to on time.

"But these figures are nothing short of a disgrace.

"Just when you think the SNP's performance on this cannot get any worse, new statistics come out showing further regressions.

"The situation is so bad now that, in some health boards, barely half of A&E patients were seen on time.

"It would also appear NHS Lothian has some serious questions to answer.

"Years after the health board's waiting times scandal, ISD Scotland doesn't seem to have full confidence in the organisation when it comes to providing accurate and trustworthy records.

"If Scotland's official statistician can't trust NHS Lothian, what are patients supposed to think?"

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## [Curriculum for Excellence needs to be 'reset'](#)

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- Curriculum for Excellence needs to be 'reset'

9 Jan 2018



The Scottish Conservatives are today calling for a 'reset' of the SNP's Curriculum for Excellence programme.

In a paper published today, the party makes five key recommendations to improve the delivery of CfE – following growing criticism of the SNP's education plans.

A poll of teachers by Ipsos Mori at the start of the year found that schools are facing a rise in disruption because pupils are switching off from the new curriculum, and see the National 4 qualification as not worth their while.

Another survey found that staff at Education Scotland – the government agency

charged with improving the roll out of CfE – do not believe the organisation has been capable of delivering reforms successfully.

Today, the Scottish Conservatives are calling on the SNP to get a grip of Scotland's education system before another generation of Scottish schoolchildren is let down.

The paper follows extensive consultation with teachers, education experts and parents across Scotland.

**In her conclusion, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith MSP declares:**

“Throughout all the interviews and consultations we undertook, there was general agreement that the principles which underpin Curriculum for Excellence – and which were agreed unanimously by Scotland's political parties – are sound.

“This is because there is widespread agreement that pupils should understand why they are learning something just as much as what they are learning.”

She adds: “There was also general agreement however, that the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence has been fraught with problems which, in turn, have undermined its effective delivery in the classroom. There is no time to lose to get Curriculum for Excellence back on track and ensure that Scotland is, once again, leading the field in education.”

The party is proposing five recommendations to improve the delivery of the curriculum.

- Improve clarity, accountability and measurement – so parents, teachers and young people know exactly what CfE is expected to deliver.
- Address the teacher shortage crisis by opening up new routes into the classroom and reform teacher training to boost standards.
- Slash the excessive guidance and paperwork issued to teachers to ensure that CfE has the appropriate balance between learning core knowledge and new skills.
- Reform Scotland's Education Agencies – Education Scotland should not be responsible for curriculum development, and for inspecting it.
- Extend school autonomy so head-teachers are free to make decisions to help drive up standards in their own school community.

Ms Smith adds today: “Simply put, Curriculum for Excellence needs to be re-set. Under the SNP, its implementation has been muddled at best and chaotic at worst.

“There is no point having a new curriculum if pupils are not getting the basics in literacy and numeracy and teachers are left confused by what they're supposed to be doing. As the evidence shows, this will only lead to disruption in the classroom as pupils switch off.

“The SNP must get a grip. Nicola Sturgeon said education was her top priority after she became First Minister – only to spend most of her time obsessing

over independence. In 2018, it is time she honoured her promise.”

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You can read a copy of the paper, ‘A new blueprint for the Curriculum for Excellence’, here:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Blueprint-for-Curriculum-for-Excellence.pdf>