

Scottish Conservatives launch election pledge

1 Jun 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have today launched five key pledges for the General Election – setting out their promises to people in Scotland who vote for them a week today.

Scottish Conservatives MPs elected on June 8 will stand on a clear pledge to respect the democratic decisions taken in the last few years, and make Scotland and the UK stronger.

The five-point pledge commits every Scottish Conservative MP to:

- Respect Scotland's decision to stay in the UK.
- Oppose the SNP's second referendum.
- Deliver for Scotland – so we lead the UK, not leave it.
- Strengthen bonds between Westminster and Holyrood.
- Work for the best Brexit deal in Scotland and the UK.

Launching the pledge in South Queensferry today, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"We want to send a strong team of Scottish Conservative MPs to Westminster not to divide but to deliver for Scotland.

"Every Scottish Conservative MP will stand by our decision to say no to independence.

"Instead of spending their time on yet more constitutional division, every Scottish Conservative MP will instead focus on ensuring Scotland's voice is heard where it counts.

"We will seek to strengthen the ties between Holyrood and Westminster, so our country works better for all.

"And we will work hard to ensure we get the best Brexit deal for everyone, right across the UK.

"Too many SNP MPs in the last two years have failed to meet the standards we expect of them, and have failed to deliver.

"Scottish Conservative MPs will work constructively and positively in Westminster to get real results for Scotland and the UK."

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Nicola Sturgeon today refused to take responsibility for Scotland's falling education standards – 24 hours after her education secretary admitted SNP cuts “probably” went too far.

At First Minister's Questions, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson highlighted how the SNP's “boom and bust” approach to teacher training meant schools across the country were struggling to recruit staff.

John Swinney conceded this was the fault of the SNP's workforce planning, which previously saw too many teachers being trained in relation to demand.

However, the First Minister instead tried to shift the blame to the UK Government, even though education is entirely devolved to Holyrood.

Ms Sturgeon also failed to condemn a series of tweets by SNP MSP John Mason, suggesting Scotland had “moved on” from the need for high standards of literacy and numeracy.

He also claimed surgeons don't need to spell, IT workers shouldn't bother with grammar, and that there was too much emphasis on “the academic” in the past.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The education secretary admitted the SNP was to blame for a shortage of teachers – but today Nicola Sturgeon wanted to put that blame on everyone else.

“If the First Minister is serious about sorting out education, she has to address what's gone wrong on the SNP's watch.

“Instead, she wants people to forget about a decade of failure, forget about the mess the Scottish Government has made of education, and forget about the children who've been failed by the SNP.

“And instead of facing up to the consequences of SNP failings, Nicola Sturgeon wants to lay the blame at everyone else's door.

“That’s not competent government and, if John Mason’s views on education are anything to go by, it explains exactly why Scottish education under the SNP is in such a mess right now.”

John Swinney admitted yesterday the SNP “probably” went too far in cutting teacher training numbers:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/scotland/cutbacks-in-scottish-teacher-training-went-too-far-swinney-admits-sl60sz63m>

Student leaders previously called for an end to “boom and bust” training numbers:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/education/teacher-training-places-are-cut-by-40-1-789809>

[Thornberry won’t rule out SNP deal](#)

1 Jun 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have attacked Labour after its shadow defence secretary Emily Thornberry refused to rule out a deal with the SNP after next week’s election.

On Newsnight last night, Ms Thornberry was asked whether or not Labour would have a coalition agreement with the SNP. She replied: “I’m not dealing in hypotheticals with you”

It comes after Jeremy Corbyn confirmed earlier this week that he would open to discussions with Nicola Sturgeon about a second referendum on independence.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“Emily Thornberry wouldn’t answer the question about a deal with the SNP because the truth is Labour would jump into bed with the SNP in a heartbeat.

“Jeremy Corbyn has already said he is happy to speak to Nicola Sturgeon about a second referendum. And both parties are also preparing to raid the magic money tree, borrowing billions more.

“Her performance only goes to show that if you want to bring a halt to the SNP’s second referendum, you have to vote Scottish Conservative at this election.

“A vote for Labour is a vote to let Nicola Sturgeon roll out her referendum.

Only we can stop the SNP in their tracks.”

The Newsnight clip can be seen here:

<https://twitter.com/BBCNewsnight/status/870220413116321797>

[Independence-supporting Lib Dem candidate ‘saddened’ by party’s No campaign involvement](#)

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31 May 2017



A Liberal Democrat candidate said she was “saddened” by the party opposing separation in 2014, and has even written pro-independence poetry, it has emerged.

Jenny Blain, who is standing in Dundee West, said in 2014 that she couldn’t “begin to tell you how much I have been saddened by the Scottish Lib Dems’ support of No”.

Urging former leader Nick Clegg to “break the outdated union”, the former lecturer also described Willie Rennie’s support for the Smith Commission as “laughable”.

The candidate wrote on a blog that Scotland had been “betrayed” by the 1707 Act of Union.

Ms Blain, a “pagan with an interest in shamanic rituals”, also penned pro-separation poetry, including the line: “I know that you know, when I vote for independence, that this is not about you, or your hopes or aspirations.”

The revelations come as the party in Scotland launches its manifesto, claiming to oppose a second referendum on independence.

However, as with Labour, the party and candidates on the ground are split on the constitutional question.

Scottish Conservative Angus candidate Kirstene Hair said:

“Willie Rennie is today appealing to pro-Union voters by insisting he will oppose a second referendum.

“At the same time, he is fielding candidates who supported independence in the 2014 referendum and who have described the union as ‘outdated’.

“It is typical two-faced Lib Dem hypocrisy.

“If Willie Rennie wants to re-brand himself as the defender of the Union, he should explain why he’s backing independence-supporting candidates.

“The truth is that only the Scottish Conservatives can be trusted to stand four-square behind our decision to stay in the UK.

“You can’t trust the two-faced Lib Dems.”

Posting in the group ‘Lib Dems for independence’, Jenny Blain said she ‘cannot tell you how saddened’ she was by the Lib Dems supporting No in 2014 (Liberal Democrats voters for Independence, 9 September 2014, [link](#))

She described herself as ‘a Yes in the referendum’ – and gave a number of biographical details confirming she is the same Jenny Blain as the Lib Dem candidate (Lib Dem voters for independence, 9 August 2014, [link](#))

She suggested that Nick Clegg should do a ‘break and start – break the outdated union (Lib Dems for independence, 20 September 2014, [link](#)). **She said that she was a ‘yes voting liberal’** (Lib Dem voters for independence, 21 September 2014, [link](#))

Jenny Blain runs a blog – where she wrote poetry about supporting independence.

In her poem, ‘To my good English friends and kin’, she notes in a preface ‘Most of my English friends have shown quite a bit of support for the Scottish ‘Yes’ campaign. I would like to thank them – and to make a wee statement about this.’ The poem starts: ‘I know that you know, when I vote for Independence, that this is not about you, or your hopes or aspirations’ (Jenny Blain blog, [link](#)).

In her poem ‘It’s not the economy (stupid)’, she says the economy doesn’t matter and the union ‘betrayed’ Scotland: ‘It cannot be about ‘Economy’...Three hundred years ago, it was not so/Scotland, bankrupt, betrayed by ‘allies’,/one outcome only, union. The economy ruled./But that is past, three hundred years ago.’ (Jenny Blain blog, [link](#))

And she wrote that Willie Rennie’s support for the Smith Commission was ‘laughable’: “I mean that. Ridiculous. Laughable. The comments are laughable for people with no knowledge of the Liberal long-standing commitment to federalism, who’ll see Rennie’s claim that ‘we argued for these Home Rule

powers' as irrelevant – and also laughable, in a very sad way, for people who do know of that long-standing commitment and see this claim and 'welcome' as a serious backsliding, and as a serious inability to take any kind of critical view of what's going on here (Jenny Blain blog, 27 November 2014, [link](#)).

The Sunday Herald also described her as a 'pagan with an interest in shamanic rituals' 'Jenny Blain, a heathen with an interest in Shamanic rituals, will be marking Mother's Night, a heathen tradition on the eve of the solstice, celebrating "the maternal". Guests will bring offerings for their maternal ancestors and she will leave candles burning overnight in their honour.

"The sun is always considered female, so this is an appropriate time to think about our mothers," she said.

"I will also be celebrating Christmas in a secular way. Really, it is an adaptation of the heathen festival of Yule."

(Sunday Herald, 18 December 2016, p.20)

[Sturgeon urged to abandon damaging plan for separate Scottish Brexit deal](#)

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31 May 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have called on Nicola Sturgeon to abandon her damaging plan for a separate Scottish Brexit deal.

Murdo Fraser, the Scottish Conservatives finance spokesman, said SNP proposals to keep Scotland in the Single Market when the UK leaves the EU would create costly barriers to trade within the UK.

He spoke out after the Institute for Fiscal Studies think tank published a damning analysis of the SNP's election manifesto.

In it, the IFS concluded the cost of creating barriers to trade within the UK could outweigh any advantages of Single Market membership.

Scotland's trade with the rest of the UK is worth four times as much as our

exports to the EU.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“The Scottish and UK governments spent weeks discussing Nicola Sturgeon’s proposals for a separate Scottish Brexit deal.

“The Nationalists failed to produce evidence that it was either desirable or workable – and they pre-empted the conclusion of the discussions by demanding a second independence referendum.

“Since then they have produced no fresh evidence to support their plan yet they are now threatening to put it back on the table after the election.

“As the IFS report shows, their proposals could prove very costly for Scottish businesses and that would be hugely damaging for the economy and jobs.

“The SNP need to work with Theresa May to secure a Brexit deal that works for Scotland and the whole of the UK.

“The United Kingdom should present a united front in Brexit talks.

“Nicola Sturgeon’s demands are just about picking a fight with Westminster and can only undermine efforts to get the right Brexit deal for Scotland.”

The IFS analysis is here: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/9273>

The SNP manifesto (p30) says: “If the SNP wins the election, it will give us a mandate to demand a place for Scotland at the Brexit negotiating table and the inclusion of the case for our place in the Single Market in the UK’s negotiating remit.”

In March, Brexit Secretary David Davis warned the Scottish Government’s proposals would create barriers to trade and cause “significant disruption” to the UK internal market.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-39744871>

The Scottish Government’s own figures show trade with rest of the UK is worth four times as much to Scotland as exports to the EU. Statics here: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Economy/Exports/ESSPublica tion>