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14 May 2017



The Scottish Conservatives are to support free prescriptions in Scotland as part of a major review into the use of drugs in the NHS.

In its manifesto ahead of the General Election, the party will support the current policy of providing prescriptions free of charge – because drugs are playing an increasing role in out-of-hospital care.

At the same time, the party's new Health Advisory Board – to be set up in the coming weeks – will carry out an assessment of the role of drugs, prescriptions and pharmacy services within the NHS.

The board will also examine the current use of so-called “low value prescriptions” such as over-the-counter drugs currently available from GPs.

The latest statistics show that the NHS is currently spending £10m on paracetamol, £2.9m on aspirin, £1.6m on sun cream and £1.8m on shampoo.

It was also study whether increasing the use of generic drugs and cutting down on wastage can save more money for the NHS.

The current NHS Scotland bill for drugs is £1.5 billion.

Scottish Conservative health spokesman Donald Cameron said:

“There is no doubt at all that people in Scotland value the idea of free prescriptions. We have listened to them and changed our policy.

“This really about the future of the NHS. Medical technology is making leaps and bounds. Drugs are becoming ever more sophisticated. Pharmacy services have the potential to help reduce the pressure on GPs and hospitals.

“However, we need to assess this issue thoughtfully. It means thinking about when prescriptions are the right answer and they they're not. It can't be right that the NHS spends £10m a year on over-the-counter drugs like paracetamol.

“So we need a comprehensive review of how drugs, medicine and prescriptions fit into the future of care. Our Health Advisory Board will carry out that work and will report back will in advance of the next Holyrood elections.”

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12 May 2017



Scottish Conservative MPs elected on June 8th will stand up for Britain's military – and back a commitment to increase spending on defence, the party said today.

Douglas Ross, who is standing in the Moray constituency, highlighted this week's commitment by the Prime Minister to spend an extra £1 billion a year on defence.

He is calling on the SNP to explain their own plans – after senior SNP MPs suggested earlier this year that, if Scotland became independent, they would “start from scratch” with a new “bespoke” independent Scottish defence policy.

Such a plan could threaten the 30,000 jobs in Scotland that rely on the military, either directly or indirectly.

By contrast, the Conservatives will go into the June 8th election with a clear pledge to meet a commitment to spend 2% of GDP on defence.

Such spending will underpin existing commitments to Scottish military bases, including RAF Kinloss, RAF Lossiemouth and HMNB Clyde. Recent spending decisions have ensured that RAF Lossiemouth is to benefit from £400 million as one of the RAF's three fast jet bases. A further £1.3 billion has been earmarked for upgrades to the Naval base on the Clyde.

Scottish Conservative candidate for Moray, Douglas Ross said:

“The fact is that the Conservatives are the only party at this election who will back our military wholeheartedly and secure the thousands of jobs here in Scotland that rely on defence spending.

“We will always put Britain's national security front and centre.

“It's now clear that, if ever given the chance, the SNP would ‘start from scratch’ and put tens of thousands of jobs in danger.

“We must not allow that to happen. And the best way to ensure it cannot

happen it by saying No to a second referendum on June 8th and voting Scottish Conservative.”

SNP defence plans could destroy 30,000 jobs

New analysis of SNP defence plans shows they would destroy over 30,000 jobs across Scotland. SNP Defence spokesman Brendan O’Hara has confirmed that ‘a bespoke independent Scottish defence policy’ should ‘start from scratch’ rather than take a population share of 8 or 9 per cent of existing forces and assets – because that would mean ‘we’re pushed down a road from which it is sometimes very difficult to come back’.

Official statistics show this would mean losing over 10,000 military personnel and almost 4,000 MoD civilian jobs based in Scotland.

It would hit the 9,570 jobs directly supported by UK government spending, and over 20,000 jobs created by defence industries.

The SNP’s own figures suggest the MoD’s assets in Scotland are worth £7.8 billion.

Brendan O’Hara, the SNP’s Westminster defence spokesman, said that an independent Scotland may choose to ‘start from scratch’ rather than claim UK military assets. ‘One of the big debates is what do we do with the military assets? Do we start from scratch, do we take an eight per cent share or a nine per cent share of them? If we do take a share, what do we take? What are the maintenance contracts? There’s a whole load of things. I’m personally very much of the opinion that if we adopt a nine per cent share of the hardware, then we’re pushed down a road from which it is sometimes very difficult to come back. I don’t think you can have a bespoke independent Scottish defence policy if you are immediately saddled with taking eight or nine per cent of asset’ (*Daily Record*, 18 March 2017, [link](#)).

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11 May 2017



Labour's leaked election manifesto has exposed more confusion in the party's position on a second independence referendum.

The document commits a Labour government to establishing "a constitutional convention to examine and advise on reform of the way that Britain works at a fundamental level".

It follows Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale's call for Britain to become a federal country, with looser ties between Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Ms Dugdale said in February a federal UK should be an option on the ballot paper in the event of a second independence referendum.

The following month, Jeremy Corbyn said he was "absolutely fine" with a second referendum being held.

Scottish Conservative candidate in Edinburgh South West Miles Briggs said:

"Labour's leaked manifesto claims the party is opposed to a second referendum – yet we know Jeremy Corbyn has said he is "absolutely fine" with a referendum.

"Just as Labour can't seem to publish a manifesto properly, nor can we trust a word they say on the Union.

"The SNP's obsession with independence is costing Scotland dear, as this week's shameful statistics on the state of our education system shows.

"Years and years of Labour navel gazing over the constitution would be just as damaging and who knows where it would end?"

Announcing her support for federalism last December, Kezia Dugdale said details should be thrashed out in a constitutional convention that "would follow the model" of the Scottish Constitutional Convention – raising the prospect of years of constitutional wrangling.

The body dominated political debate in Scotland for six years, from 1989 to 1995, before the creation of the Scottish Parliament.

Scottish Labour's plan for federalism is vague but potentially could leave only defence, foreign affairs and the currency as UK-wide issues – similar to the SNP's discredited proposal for 'full fiscal autonomy'.

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11 May 2017



The Scottish Government has spent more time debating the constitution than key devolved issues like education, health and justice combined, it has been revealed.

At First Minister's Questions today, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson attacked the SNP's record on education after it emerged this week more than 16 per cent of S2 pupils can't write properly.

She also pointed to evidence at this week's education committee showing trainee teachers receive just one week of tuition on teaching literacy.

And it's the SNP's obsession with independence which is contributing to a drop in standards across Scotland's classrooms, Ruth said, despite claims from Nicola Sturgeon that it's her "priority".

Since the summer, the Scottish Government has spent more than 45 hours debating the constitution at Holyrood.

That's four times more than education, and compares to around six hours on health, eight hours on justice, and just three hours on transport.

Ruth also criticised the SNP for presiding over a fall in inspections, adding those tasked with checking standards in the class-room had been instead focusing on delivering the controversial Curriculum for Excellence.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"We liked to pride ourselves in Scotland that our education system was one of the best in the world.

"But after 10 years of an SNP government, we can do so no longer.

"Too many of our children can't read or write properly and the situation is only getting worse.

"In addition, we don't have enough people entering teacher training.

"Those trainee teachers who are in place are now telling us they aren't equipped to educate pupils to a reasonable standard.

"That is a shameful record, and it's one of an SNP government which has spent

more time debating the constitution than anything else.

“I was glad to hear Nicola Sturgeon pours over Scottish Conservative press releases.

“Perhaps if she wants us to stop mentioning independence, she could send one of her own taking the threat of another referendum off the table.”

Below is a range of topics initiated by the Scottish Government since June, broken down by hours. For a more comprehensive breakdown, contact the Scottish Conservative press office.

Constitution – 45.25 hours

Education – 10.25 hours

Health – 6.25 hours

Justice – 7.75 hours

Transport – 3.5 hours

On Tuesday, damning figures revealed the state of Scottish education:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/05/figures-show-snps-shameful-performance-on-education/>

And yesterday, trainee teachers revealed the lack of training on literacy and numeracy they receive:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/05/trainees-expose-the-gaps-in-scotland-teacher-training-programme-2/>

[New figures reveal thousands of beds lost in Scotland's NHS](#)

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11 May 2017



Hospitals across Scotland have lost more than 8000 beds since 2003, official statistics have revealed.

According to the Scottish Government, there are now 21,028 non-intensive care beds across the country.

That compares to 29,445 beds 13 years ago, a reduction of almost 30 per cent.

The Scottish Conservatives said while there was a shift in the way people are treated, with many being cared for in non-hospital settings, the drop was still "hugely significant".

The figures were released following a parliamentary question by Scottish Conservative MSP Miles Briggs.

They also revealed the number of intensive care beds have increased, from 700 in 2003 to more than 900 now.

The decrease in non-intensive care beds has hit health boards across the country.

In NHS Lothian there were reductions at St John's Hospital in Livingston (503 to 432), while Ninewells Hospital in Dundee (854 to 800) and Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (870 to 682) also experienced bed cuts.

Since the SNP came to power and assumed full control of the health brief in 2007, the number of overall non-intensive beds have gone from 26,367 to 21,028, a drop of a fifth.

Scottish Conservative public health spokesman Miles Briggs said:

"We know the way people are being treated is changing, with more receiving the care they need outwith hospital settings.

"However, the SNP cannot just hide behind that argument when bed numbers have dropped by nearly a third since 2003. That's hugely significant.

"The population is increasing and ageing, and the pressure on the NHS is like never before.

"That's why the Scottish Government has to get the balance right, and simply slashing the number of beds without thinking of the consequences is not the way to do it.

"This is more evidence of an SNP distracted by its obsession with breaking up Britain, neglecting our precious NHS in the process."

Below is the number of non-intensive care beds by year in Scotland:

2003 – 29,445
2004 – 28,481
2005 – 27,741
2006 – 27,018
2007 – 26,367
2008 – 25,804
2009 – 25,083
2010 – 24,116

2011 – 23,290
2012 – 22,786
2013 – 22,521
2014 – 22,220
2015 – 21,560
2016 – 21,028

To see a full breakdown of the number of beds lost since 2003, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Hospital-Beds.xlsx>