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- Further Queensferry Crossing delay a 'huge blow'

29 Mar 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have heavily criticised the SNP after the economy secretary announced that the new Queensferry Crossing will now not be completed until late summer at the earliest.

It represents another delay in the Scottish Government's timetable, that originally estimated that the bridge would be open last December.

The SNP had repeatedly pledged that the bridge would be completed on time, but this is already the second delay to the completion date that has been announced.

It also comes after the Forth Road Bridge was shut twice over the past few months, causing huge delays to the thousands of commuters who use it every day.

Questions are now being asked about when Keith Brown knew of the delay, with many of those involved in the project having predicted further delays in recent weeks.

Scottish Conservative transport & infrastructure spokesman Liam Kerr said:

"This delay will come as a huge blow to the many commuters who travel across the Forth every single day.

"They have already had to deal with massive disruption over the past two months due to closures on the current Forth Road Bridge, and now we learn that the Queensferry Crossing is months behind schedule.

"The SNP assured us that this project would be delivered on time, but these promises have proven to be worthless as, once again, we see the completion date slipping.

"It is simply unacceptable, and the economy secretary needs to explain why this delay has occurred and what the Scottish Government are going to do to ensure the new timescale is kept to.

"There are also underlying questions about how long Keith Brown has known about this issues. Many contractors had been hinting at delays in the previous few weeks, so if they knew it was going to be delayed, why didn't

the minister?

“It points to someone who is either hopelessly out of touch with this project, or someone who was waiting for a busy news day in order to bury bad news.”

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28 Mar 2017



The SNP has been accused of “brushing aside” shocking health targets.

The criticism has been sparked following the announcement that for the fourth year in a row Scotland’s NHS has missed the cancer waiting timescale target.

The current target is for 95 per cent of urgently referred cancer patients to begin treatment within 62 days.

However, in the last quarter only 87.5 per cent were seen within the target timescale.

The worst performing health board was NHS Western Isles, in which only 66.7 per cent of patients were seen within the 62 days.

With only five of the 14 regional health boards across Scotland hitting the target, the Scottish Conservatives are calling for the SNP to take urgent action to ensure cancer patients are being seen within the target time.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Donald Cameron said:

“People are quite right to question why targets have been missed for the fourth consecutive year.

“The SNP should be doing everything it can to ensure more patients are being seen within the target timescale.

“Instead they’ve let standards slide and as a result thousands of patients across Scotland are not receiving the treatment that they need when they need it.

“It’s inexcusable for the SNP to just continually brush these missed targets aside, especially when it’s well known that receiving swift treatment for cancer can often make all the difference in improving outcomes for these patients.

“The SNP has badly let down patients and it is time they got back to the day job.”

Cancer waiting times NHS Scotland:

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-03-28/2017-03-28-CWT-Summary.pdf>

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- SNP letting down hundreds of youngsters with mental health problems each year

27 Mar 2017



Research has revealed that hundreds of children every year are receiving mental health treatment in unsuitable wards.

The release of the worrying statistics come ahead of the publication of the Scottish Government’s Mental Health Strategy this week.

It has previously been advised that all youngsters in need of acute mental health support should be treated in one of the specialist children’s mental health wards across the country.

However, between 2007 – the year the SNP came into power – and 2015, a massive 1,840 children and adolescents were admitted to non-specialist beds. The total of 248 recorded between 2014/15 shows that the number of youngsters unable to receive treatment in these specialist units remains frighteningly high.

The Scottish Conservatives are calling for the SNP to start treating the

issue of mental health with greater seriousness, and ensure that there are enough inpatient beds for children and young people across Scotland.

Scottish Conservative mental health spokesman Miles Briggs said:

“This is yet further evidence of the SNP government’s lack of attention in regard to mental health.

“It’s worrying to see so many children with acute mental health problems not being given treatment in the most appropriate environment.

“Mental health issues are now more apparent than ever and it’s only right these youngsters receive the specialist care that will give them the best possible chance of a speedy recovery.

“The SNP has to provide more support for these vulnerable people in its upcoming mental health strategy, and this means investing in children and adolescent mental health services.”

Miles Briggs PQ and table of number of children and adolescents being admitted to non-specialist beds between 1999 and 2015:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Number-of-children-and-adolescents-non-specialist-beds.pdf>

Scottish Conservative mental health policy:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Scottish-Conservative-Mental-Health-Policy.pdf>

Police staff confidence hits new low

22 Mar 2017



Police officer confidence throughout Scotland has hit a new low, an internal survey conducted by Police Scotland has revealed.

The shocking statistics show that just one in 10 police officers believe that Police Scotland has a “positive future.”

It was reported this morning that the questionnaire asked all staff their thoughts on the statement: “I feel positive about the future within Police Scotland.”

Results revealed that only 10 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement – while 71 per cent suggested they either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The severe confidence crisis looks set to continue over the next few years with the force facing huge budget pressures on the SNP's watch.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

“This survey puts a spotlight on just how little confidence there is within the police for the single force.

“Officers and staff need to have full confidence in Police Scotland if they are to work to the best of their abilities and keep Scotland's communities safe.

“It's extremely worrying that almost four years on from the SNP centralising our police forces, morale within the organisation remains at rock bottom.”

For a copy of The Sun's exclusive article regarding the survey click here:
<https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/756737/shock-stats-reveal-police-morale-has-hit-new-low-as-just-one-in-10-cops-back-the-forces-future/>

[MacAskill describes SNP's currency plans as 'not just lamentable, but laughable'](#)

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22 Mar 2017



A former SNP frontbencher has described his party's plans for the currency of a separate Scotland as “not just lamentable, but laughable”.

Writing in today's *Herald*, ex justice secretary Kenny MacAskill said that criticism of the nationalists will “turn to scorn” unless they can come up with a proper plan for the finances under independence.

The remarks come as Nicola Sturgeon gears up for the second of a two-day Holyrood debate on whether or not there should be another independence referendum.

But as the First Minister prepares a new break-up bid, she has repeatedly failed to address questions such as which currency an independent Scotland would use and how it would cope with huge debts, deficits and a massive shortfall in North Sea oil revenues.

Mr MacAskill said: *"The fundamental issues that lost the first referendum and undermine the case for a second – the currency and the economy – remain.*

"Failure to address the currency issue is becoming not just lamentable, but laughable. Action needs taken before criticism turns to scorn."

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

"This is a cutting intervention from someone who, not that long ago, was at the heart of the SNP's separation campaign.

"If even Kenny MacAskill feels the nationalists' currency plans are laughable, you can imagine what the voters think.

"The SNP is rushing into this second campaign, and in the process is making all the same mistakes which lost the vote last time.

"The First Minister has recently changed the SNP's position from flirting with adopting the Euro to possibly using the pound, while other senior SNP ministers want to use a new currency altogether.

"With so much SNP confusion over a fundamental issue, how can voters be asked to make an informed decision in an independence referendum?"

To see the original remarks, visit:

http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/15173328.MacAskill__SNP_failure_over_currency_issue_becoming__quot_laughable_quot_/