

First Minister must “come clean” over private email use

14 Oct 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have written to the First Minister demanding that she “comes clean” over her use of her private email address, and publish the emails from this account.

The move comes after an article in the media alleged that the First Minister has been using her private email address for the last four years.

In a memo issued in 2015, staff were informed that the First Minister would be using her personal, SNP email address for “work” and were directed to use this address particularly for urgent weekend queries.

When previously asked about this at Holyrood, the First Minister failed to deny it, and her spokesman stated that she did not use her private email address for ‘substantive government business’.

The rules state that SNP ministers should use government email addresses in order to comply with Freedom of Information legislation.

Donald Cameron, the Scottish Conservative MSP who first raised this with Nicola Sturgeon in September, said:

“The First Minister must come clean over her private email use and publish the emails from this account.

“It would appear that the First Minister and her team have not been entirely forthcoming and we have not been given the whole truth.

“I have written to the First Minister asking her to answer this simple question, does she use her private email account?

“The only way to clear this mess up is for her to publish the emails from this account.

“Anything less will be seen by Scots as highly suspicious – what does the First Minister have to hide?”

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SNP finance secretary Derek Mackay claims he's won the economic argument on independence – despite having no answers on currency, a black hole worth billions and additional problems created by a hard border between Scotland and England.

Speaking at the nationalists' conference today, he said Scotland could no longer afford the union, but “it can more than afford to be independent”.

This is despite Nicola Sturgeon's admission that her bid for separation could lead to a barrier between Scotland and a market worth billions of pounds each year in trade.

And despite debating the economic case for independence, the SNP conference has still failed to come up with a solution for what currency a separate country would use, and how to address a gap in finances of more than £12 billion.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“The SNP's economic case for independence has never been weaker.

“Not only have the nationalists repeatedly failed to address the issues surrounding currency and how to plug a black hole worth billions of pounds.

“Now we have Nicola Sturgeon admitting a hard border could be put up if her plans to break Scotland away from the rest of the UK come to fruition.

“All of this would make Scotland poorer, our businesses less competitive and put hardworking Scots right up against it.

“Instead, the Scottish Government should be focusing on working with its Westminster counterparts to make a success of Brexit, and ensure Scotland has a prosperous future at the heart of the UK.”

Sturgeon must intervene in mesh 'conspiracy'

10 Oct 2019



Nicola Sturgeon has been urged to intervene in a row which has led to the world's foremost mesh removal surgeon cancelling his visit to Scotland.

Dr Dionysios Veronikis was supposed to travel here to remove mesh implants from Scottish women whose lives have been ruined by the procedure, and train other surgeons in the practice.

But that arrangement has now been scrapped, and one leading Scottish surgeon has said there is a "professional conspiracy against his visit".

At First Minister's Questions today, Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw challenged Ms Sturgeon to reassure patients that there was no cover-up in relation to mesh implants in Scotland.

Dr Agur, who was previously on the Scottish Government's review group on mesh, told Mr Carlaw: "I can confirm that surgeons here felt deeply threatened by Dr Veronikis' offer to visit Scotland. No doubt there is a professional conspiracy against his visit."

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"If there is a professional conspiracy against Dr Veronikis and his proposed work in Scotland, that is an outrage.

"It's something in which the First Minister must intervene.

"There's clear suspicion that there is a professional and institutional campaign to frustrate his involvement, and a view among many that establishment figures in the NHS are trying to protect their own backs.

"During this decade-long scandal many of the affected women feel that they have been unable to meet and discuss their experience directly with the First Minister.

"They feel that the urgency of their situation needs the direct support and engagement of the head of their government.

"That's why this needs the attention of Nicola Sturgeon to help get their lives sorted."

Drop car park tax and we'll support transport bill, SNP told

8 Oct 2019



The Scottish Conservatives will support the SNP government's Transport Bill, but only if the hated car park tax is dropped.

MSPs will debate the legislation tomorrow (Wednesday) which includes the controversial proposals to impose a £500-a-year levy on commuters and businesses.

However, ministers have been told that the Scottish Conservatives will back other proposals in the bill – such as measures on low-emission zones, changes to bus franchising and tackling pavement parking – as long as car park tax is removed.

Since announcing the plans, which were not in the original bill introduced by the SNP government but later added by the Greens, the nationalists have been severely criticised over this policy by workers, businesses, unions and motoring groups.

Even the police have warned that such measures may compromise the safety of officers.

The Stage Three vote itself will take place on Thursday.

Scottish Conservative shadow transport minister Jamie Greene said:

“This regressive tax will harm the most vulnerable in society and punish hardworking people right across the country, which is why we tried to exempt hard working emergency services, teachers, those on low incomes, the disabled and night shift workers.

“If the SNP wants our support with its Transport Bill, it can get it – but the car park tax must be scrapped now.

“This isn't about localism or tackling climate change, if this tax was so important to the SNP why wasn't it in the original bill presented to parliament?

“This has the potential to be one of the most hated policies brought in since the SNP came to power and has been roundly criticised from all quarters.

“It's time for the SNP to swallow its pride and ditch this proposal so we can pass a decent Transport Bill which sticks to its original objectives.”

Declining breast cancer screening must be addressed

8 Oct 2019



Only 7 out of 10 of eligible women in Scotland are currently being screened for breast cancer according to the latest statistics published today.

The Scottish Breast Screening Programme Statistics published by ISD Scotland shows that this is the lowest level since 2008/09 – 2010/11 when it was almost 3 out of 4, or 75 per cent.

In addition, between 2015/16 and 2017/18, four NHS Health Boards did not meet even the minimum standards of 70 per cent screening.

These were NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde (65.8%), NHS Lanarkshire (68.0%), NHS Lothian (69.2%) and NHS Fife (69.7%).

Most worryingly, women from the more deprived areas are even less likely to go for breast cancer screening than their more affluent counterparts, with under 6 in 10 women from deprived areas going for screening compared with almost 8 in 10 women living in least deprived areas.

Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary said:

“This declining breast cancer screening rate is particularly concerning given that the earlier cancer is caught, the better the outcome.

“There cannot be any excuse for health boards not to meet this important screening target.

“The SNP government must ensure that all women have access to early breast cancer screening, regardless of where they live.

“We have seen repeated incidents of Health Boards getting into difficulties in a number of areas while the SNP has sat back and watched.

“The SNP must not wait until more women’s lives are at risk, they must take steps to work with NHS boards and ensure screening programmes are working effectively now.”