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23 Aug 2018



The SNP will miss their affordable housing promise by five years, according to new research by the Scottish Conservatives.

In 2016 the SNP pledged to build 50,000 new affordable homes by 2021. Since then they have completed less than 10,000, leaving approximately 40,000 to be completed by 2021.

On this current trajectory, the SNP will only achieve this target by 2026, five years later than the promise the SNP made to the Scottish public.

A year after Ruth Davidson outlined innovative proposals to revitalise the housing sector, the Scottish Conservatives have attacked the SNP's complacency and called on the Scottish Government to fulfil their promise so that more Scots have an affordable home to live in.

The proposals outlined by Ruth included a commitment to build 100,000 new homes over the course of this parliament – with half of them affordable housing, refurbish the nearly 30,000 empty properties in Scotland to bring them back into use and a new national Housing and Infrastructure Agency.

Ruth also proposed expanding simplified planning zones across the country and the creation of new towns.

Scottish Conservative housing spokesman Graham Simpson said:

“The SNP's complacency on housing is staggering, they are on track to miss their own target by 50 percent.

“This means that 25,000 Scots will have to wait even longer to be able to afford a home.

“The SNP must come clean and admit that they are woefully behind their target.

“When we talk about housing, we are not simply talking about bricks and mortar. We are talking about the homes that provide the security and opportunity for a family to grow and flourish.

“The dream of home ownership shouldn't be unobtainable. The SNP must get back

to work and deliver the promise they campaigned on.”

[SNP must launch ‘fake Yes’ probe after Iran revelations](#)

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The SNP has been urged to launch a full investigation into the scale of ‘fake Yes’ online organisations – after Facebook removed independence-supporting pages based in Iran.

It was reported this morning that the social media giant had removed a pro-independence site called Free Scotland 2014 after it discovered it was paid for by the Iranian regime.

The page had 20,000 followers, and regularly posted made-up articles in relation to UK politics.

It follows previous claims that Russia also sought to spread incorrect information during the independence campaign in support of the SNP.

Now the Scottish Conservatives have called for the nationalists to distance themselves from erroneous social media pages and websites, and probe the scale of this within the independence movement.

Scottish Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser said:

“The revelation that the Free Scotland 2014 page – which had more than 20,000 followers – was a fake account backed by the Iranian state is incredible, and deeply worrying.

“From the US election to the independence referendum drive, we are all beginning to learn that democracy is under attack from countries like Russian and Iran who want to weaken us.

“The SNP has a choice; either pander to these disgraceful regimes, as its former leader and ex-First Minister Alex Salmond does on a weekly basis.

“Or stand up to this threat and assist Facebook by investigating pro-independence online outlets with which it has a connection to verify that they are what they claim to be.

“Quite simply, fake Yes sites must be closed down immediately, and the SNP has a duty to help do that.”

[Scotland risks being “left behind” on puppy sales ban as UK moves towards law change](#)

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23 Aug 2018



Scotland risks being “left behind” in efforts to combat third party puppy sales, an MP has argued, after Westminster moved closer to agreeing a change in the law for the rest of the UK.

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has launched a consultation in response to the ‘Lucy’s Law’ animal welfare campaign.

The UK Government department has pressed ahead after issuing a call for evidence in February on a proposed ban on third party sales of puppies and kittens, which would mean that anyone buying or adopting a dog or cat would deal directly with the breeder of an animal rehoming centre.

Ross Thomson, MP for Aberdeen South, has previously urged the SNP government in Edinburgh to follow suit.

The Scottish Conservative MP wrote to Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, earlier this year.

He argued that putting a stop to third party sales would prevent ‘puppy farm’ dealers that had not bred the animals from selling them on – often after they have been kept in cruel conditions.

In response, Ms Cunningham said the government “intends to revise” legislation around breeding and licensing, but has not yet launched a public consultation.

Mr Thomson said:

“I am delighted to see the UK Government make progress on Lucy’s Law to ban

third party puppy sales in England.

“The launch of this consultation by DEFRA is another step towards a change in the law.

“However, I am concerned that Scotland risks being left behind on this issue.

“I wrote to the Cabinet Secretary on this subject earlier this year. In response, she said the Scottish Government ‘intends to revise’ legislation around this.

“I hope that we will soon hear proposals from Holyrood on changes to legislation around breeding and licensing in Scotland that have been suggested.

“I want to do all I can to help eradicate this practice, and I think most people expect the government to act.”

[Separate Scotland's £13bn black hole revealed](#)

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22 Aug 2018



Nicola Sturgeon must drop her threat of a second independence referendum – or explain how she'd plug the £13 billion black hole which was revealed today as the starting cost for a separate country.

According to Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS) figures, which set out the annual state of the country's finances, the current net fiscal deficit is £13.4 billion.

In addition, the level of higher public spending in Scotland compared to the UK average soared to a record difference of £1576 per head.

Shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said it was time for the First Minister to set out a clear plan on how she would find the billions of pounds required to fill Scotland's economic black hole should it break away from Britain.

If she can't, he added, then the threat of a referendum re-run must be removed for good.

Today's report showed a slight improvement in Scotland's finances, with revenue increasing and the deficit falling, largely thanks to a small recovery in North Sea oil.

However, the finances of the rest of the UK are improving at a superior rate, meaning the gap between the two is widening.

As such, Scotland now raises eight per cent of UK total revenue, while receiving 9.3 per cent of spending.

Total spending per person in Scotland for 2017/18 was £1576 per head higher than the rest of the UK, compared to £1448 per head the previous year.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

"If Nicola Sturgeon wants to continue her threat of second referendum, she has to come out and explain where she would find £13 billion to fill this deficit.

"Assuming that can't be done, the prospect of another divisive and unwelcome vote must be removed for good so Scotland can focus on what really matters.

"Yet again, the union dividend has been made clear.

"By being part of the UK, Scotland received an extra £1576 for every man, woman and child last year above the UK average. For a family of four, that's more than £6000 in additional public spending.

"If Scotland was to be ripped out the UK, this spending would be slashed drastically, meaning schools, hospitals and infrastructure would be hit.

"Any Scottish Government would also have to massively increase taxes and borrowing to help make up the difference, something the hardworking public simply wouldn't accept.

"And while Scotland's finances improved slightly on the whole last year, the rest of the UK's have done even better, meaning the gap is now bigger.

"The SNP, which has had control of Scotland's economy for more than a decade, has to take responsibility for that under-performance.

"It can't blame Brexit and it can't blame the UK Government – it is all on the shoulders of a nationalist government which has obsessed with the idea of independence above everything else."

[Labour risks turning back on](#)

Scotland's Jewish community 'for good'

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20 Aug 2018



Labour risks turning its back on Scotland's Jewish community for good unless leader Jeremy Corbyn uses his trip north to address the "clear" anti-Semitism in the party, it has been warned.

Mr Corbyn began his four-day tour in central Scotland today, days after former MP Jim Sheridan made an astonishing outburst on Twitter, in which he said he no longer sympathised with Jewish historical suffering, claiming it was all part of a "plot" to undermine Labour.

Now Mr Corbyn has been urged to finally put claims of anti-Semitism to bed, after months of "lack of leadership" on the issue.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said he could begin this process by accepting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism.

Labour has yet to do this, despite both the UK and Scottish governments agreeing with the wording.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"Instead of looking to themselves and their own actions, Labour figures around Jeremy Corbyn are now suggesting that criticism of him is all part of a plot to weaken his position.

"It's not a plot. Instead, Mr Corbyn's appalling lack of leadership on this matter, in the face of clear anti-Semitism within Labour's ranks, is being called out.

"While he is in Scotland, Mr Corbyn should make it clear he is prepared to do what the UK Government and the Scottish Government has done – accept the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism now.

"A failure to do so will only confirm – as former Labour leader Jim Murphy has said – that Labour is turning its back on the Jewish community for good."

Notes to editors:

Both the UK and Scottish governments have agreed the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism:

<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>

Labour has so far refused to do so:

<https://www.thejc.com/comment/analysis/what-is-the-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism-and-why-has-labour-outraged-jews-by-rejecting-it-1.467511>