

The SNP – Delayed, dithering and distracted from the day-job

28 Jun 2018



Delayed, dithering and distracted from the day-job – what the SNP have got up to this year

1. It is now 500 days since the last Suicide Prevention Strategy expired. The previous Suicide Prevention Strategy covered the period 2013-16 and set out a range of commitments under 5 broad themes: Responding to people in distress; Talking about suicide; Improving the NHS response to suicide; Developing the evidence base; and Supporting change and improvement. They are currently seeking views on themes and draft actions for possible inclusion in the new Action Plan aimed at continuing the downward trend in suicides in Scotland, however (*Scottish Government*, 6 March 2018, [Link](#)).

2. The Safe Staffing Bill was introduced 2 years after being promised. The Bill was pledged in the SNP's 2016 manifesto, but was only published last month. "A row erupted over claims an NHS staffing law has been delayed due to Holyrood being bogged down in EU wrangles" (*The Sun*, 13 March 2018, [Link](#)).

3. The SNP were forced to delay their ill-conceived BTP Merger. After insisting they could merge the British Transport Police into Police Scotland by April 2019, the SNP were forced to delay the project indefinitely following multiple safety warnings from police and railway experts. They now say they'll press ahead on a revised timetable, despite the fact 8 in 10 BTP officers and staff oppose integration. (*BBC News*, 20 February 2018, [link](#); *STV News*, 21 February 2018, [link](#)).

4. The SNP has been forced to delay Welfare devolution. After demanding powers over welfare, the SNP Government had to ask the UK Government earlier this year to keep control of disability benefits for an extra year. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/snp-ask-tories-keep-control-12280713>

5. The SNP are delaying on a new offence of drug driving. The SNP promised a new offence of drug driving to come into force in 2019, but the necessary legislation has not yet been brought forward. (*Scottish Government, Programme for Government 2017-18*, p 15, [link](#)).

6. The SNP have completely failed to deliver their much-vaunted £500 million Scottish Growth Scheme. Scottish Conservative FOIs found that the 2017-18 and 2018-19 Budgets only allocate £25 million to the Scottish Growth Scheme. It was supposed to be a £500 million, three-year plan. After two years, the most the SNP can deliver to businesses is only £25 million. They have also failed to deliver a single penny of loans and guarantees, which it was originally established to provide (FOI response, 17 April 2018; *The Times*, 11 March

2018, [link](#)).

7. The £36 million Digital Growth Fund was delayed a year and only £2 million delivered. At the SNP conference in March 2017, Sturgeon the £36 million Digital Growth Fund. The SNP only started releasing this money in late June 2018, more than 15 months after it was announced. They have only announced £2 million of the £36 million promised (SNP.org, 18 March 2017, [link](#); Scottish Parliament, Written Answers, 7 June 2018, [link](#)).

8. Scottish Enterprise went into 2018 without a business plan. When the plan was finally delivered, it was only a temporary one-year plan, and it was only 16 pages compared to 36 the year previously (*Scottish Sun*, 7 April 2018, [link](#)).

9. The Pledge to double SDI staff was delayed. Sturgeon recently repeated that: 'SDI is doubling its representatives in Europe'. That pledge was made almost two years ago at the 2016 SNP conference. In November, we found that the pledge to double SDI staff had resulted in just one new appointment. The SNP have refused to disclose the latest numbers in separate FOI and PQs (Scottish Conservatives, [link](#); SNP.org, [link](#); SNP.org, [link](#)).

10. The pledge to open Brussels hub by Autumn 2017 missed by at least six months. They delayed opening by six months from autumn 2017 to spring 2018 – then Keith Brown said it may be summer before it opens (*The Times*, 27 December 2017, [link](#); Scottish Parliament, [link](#)).

11. The pledge to open Berlin hub by 2017 missed by at least three months. It was supposed to open in 2017 but didn't open until February 2018. At which point, it temporarily opened within the British Embassy in Berlin (Scottish Government, *Programme for Government*, p.51, September 2017, [link](#)).

12. It took more than a year for trade envoys to be appointed. The trade envoys were originally announced in October 2016 but were not appointed until November 2017 (*Sunday Post*, 16 July 2017, [link](#); Scottish Government, 30 November 2017, [link](#)).

13. The SNP Government have missed five of their main economic targets by a total of £80 billion. The SNP have failed to meet five of their main economic targets: to match UK GDP growth rates; to match GDP growth rates of small EU nations; to reach the first OECD quartile for productivity; to increase exports by 50 per cent; and to increase R&D spending to the EU average (*The Scotsman*, 8 May 2018, [link](#)).

14. Named Persons has been subject to repeated delays. After the Supreme Court decision, in September 2016 Swinney announced that named persons would be implemented by August 2017 (*The Guardian*, 8 September 2016, [link](#)). In March 2017, the scheme was further delayed with an aim for the bill to go before the chamber by the end of 2017, and rolled out in 2018 (*BBC News*, 7 March 2017, [link](#)). In December 2017, the Education and Skills Committee refused to move the bill forward, with Swinney saying that a draft code of practice could not be produced until September 2018 at the earliest (*BBC News*, 6 December 2017, [link](#)). MSPs then voted unanimously to annul the 22 December

deadline for the legislation's passage. There are no plans to reintroduce the bill as it stands (*The Scotsman*, 13 December 2017, [link](#)).

15. The Warm Homes Bill had two consultations – the First Consultation completed 1 February 2018 second consultation began on 2 May 2018 ([link](#)).

16. The SNP announced in its Programme for Government that it would invest £1 million in each of the next five years in the Edinburgh Festival – but has yet to spend it. 'And, as announced in August, we are establishing a fund to provide £1 million in each of the next five years for Edinburgh's Festivals to maintain its status as the world's foremost festival city' (Scottish Government, *Programme For Government 2017-18*, p119, [link](#)). As of 25 June, just one month before the start of the festival, this fund has not paid out any money as the Scottish Government, Edinburgh Council and Festivals Edinburgh are still 'developing application criteria for the fund'. The fund now titled the Funding for 'Creative Excellence' has still not even had its application criteria worked out meaning that applications have not yet been received and that it is unlikely that it will pay out any money for this years' festival.

[New justice secretary must review and rethink BTP merger](#)

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- New justice secretary must review and rethink BTP merger

27 Jun 2018



The Scottish Conservatives have today asked the new Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf, to review and reconsider the planned British Transport Police (BTP) merger.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr will say that now is the ideal time to cast off the dogma of the previous justice secretary and rethink the beleaguered merger with Police Scotland.

The forced SNP merger of the two forces has been highly contentious with the British Transport Police Federation (BTPF) themselves expressing serious concerns for public safety and staff morale.

In addition, significant problems involved with merging the different IT systems have also been identified as well as spiralling costs, including a potential £100 million pension cost.

The Scottish Conservatives are therefore asking Humza Yousaf to abandon the dogma of his predecessor, review the merger and consider the other models for devolution that have been set out by the BTPF.

Liam Kerr, Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary said:

“As it currently stands the proposed merger of the British Transport Police and Police Scotland will not work, will cost more, and will leave us with a worse service than we have now.

“The Scottish Conservatives have been trying to be constructive from the start. It is time for the new justice secretary to show he is his own man, take a step back to review and speak to us about other models of devolution.

“The BTPF themselves have said it is ‘reckless’ not to study other options for devolution, in addition to the proposal set out by the SNP government.

“Given the cost escalations and the concerns over public safety and police morale, it is absolutely clear that the only justification for this merger is dogma.

“This is the perfect time for the SNP to rethink their approach and adopt one where we respect the decision to devolve BTP, but do so in a way that protects the service.

“The Commissioned Service model being put forward by the BTP Federation does just that.

“The SNP must abandon this ill-judged merger for the sake of public safety.”

[Poll shows Scots think NHS has deteriorated under SNP](#)

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- Poll shows Scots think NHS has deteriorated under SNP

24 Jun 2018



A poll conducted by the Sunday Times Scotland has shown that 46% of Scots believe that the NHS has deteriorated under the stewardship of SNP.

The Panelbase poll showed that a fifth believe that it has stayed the same since the SNP took power in 2007, while only a quarter believe it has improved.

The Scottish Conservatives have said that the poll is yet further evidence of the SNP's dismal management of the NHS, and that Scots are looking for change and for new ideas and fresh leadership for the NHS in Scotland.

They also highlighted that many of the current problems stemmed from Nicola Sturgeon's decision as health secretary, such as to cut the number of student nurses has led to the quadrupling of the number of unfilled Scottish nursing posts.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

"This polling is a real insight into the dismal view many Scots have of the SNP's stewardship of our NHS.

"The SNP have presided over a workforce crisis in our NHS, a crisis in social care services and increasingly seem to have no vision on how to build a sustainable and preventative focused NHS for the future.

"And it is now clear that many of the challenges and problems which have built up in the Scottish NHS in recent years have been down to the poor decisions taken by Nicola Sturgeon whilst she was health secretary.

"After 11 years of SNP mismanagement it is clear that Scots are looking for change and for new ideas and fresh leadership for our Scottish NHS.

"Building a sustainable NHS needs to be the priority for everyone. The Scottish Conservatives are determined to provide the resources and future vision to meet Scotland's future health and social care needs."

[Councils forced to dig even deeper into their reserves](#)

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- Councils forced to dig even deeper into their reserves

22 Jun 2018



Local authorities have been forced to dig even deeper into their cash reserves in the last year, just to fund day-to-day services.

A Scottish Government report has revealed that, in 2017/18, councils spent £126 million from their respective rainy day funds.

That's a significant increase from the previous year, when £79 million worth

of reserves were used.

The number of local authorities resorting to these measures has also increased over that 12-month period, from 19 to 24.

This week's official paper predicted councils would need to call on an additional £113 million worth of reserves during this current year to stay on an even keel.

The Scottish Conservatives said local authorities were being forced to this "last resort" measure by SNP government funding cuts.

It also means council reserves are dwindling, with auditors saying by the end of the year the total amount will have dropped to under £1 billion among 32 councils.

Across the country, some councils are dipping into their savings far more than others.

Last year, Aberdeenshire spent 60 per cent of their reserves, with Midlothian using 52 per cent.

Others didn't use any at all.

If the general trend continues, reserves across all 32 of Scotland's local authorities will be wiped out within 14 years.

Scottish Conservative local government spokesman Alexander Stewart said:

"Councils are increasingly dipping into their rainy day fund, and that's a direct consequence of SNP budget cuts.

"It's not like these reserves are being used for landmark projects, it's a last resort to keep day-to-day services going.

"It's not something that can continue – mathematically this option will disappear in little more than a decade if current trends continue.

"Under an SNP government, the financial wellbeing of Scotland's 32 local authorities has deteriorated alarmingly.

"What's worse is that, while these reserves are being used, services only appear to be getting worse."

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protection for police dogs

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- SNP must follow UK and increase legal protection for police dogs

21 Jun 2018



Following the UK Government's decision to increase legal protection for police dogs and service animals, Police Dog Finn and his handler PC Dave Wardell have, today, visited the Scottish Parliament.

PC Wardell has been campaigning for 'Finn's Law' which calls for a new offence of harming or killing a service animal since Finn suffered life threatening injuries during an arrest in 2016.

The UK Government, last week, announced its support for Finn's law and has published the Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Bill which will remove a section of the current law of self-defence, and increase maximum sentences for animal cruelty offences to five years in prison.

Liam Kerr is calling for the Scottish Government to follow suit and adequately punish those who harm trained animals like dogs and horses working with the police, fire service, military or other public services. It could also cover assistance animals like guide dogs.

Liam Kerr's petition to change the law to protect police dogs and other service animals now has 32,250 signatures.

Currently it is not a specific crime to injure or kill a police dog in Scotland. Offenders who harm service animals such as dogs or horses can only be charged under a patchwork of laws unfit for this purpose.

Scottish Conservative MSP Liam Kerr said;

"It is my great pleasure to welcome PD Finn and PC Dave Wardell to the Scottish Parliament and celebrate the publication of the UK Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Bill.

"Since Finn was viciously attacked, PC Wardell has campaigned tirelessly to secure a change in the law that will protect and support all of our service animals.

"It is a great step forward that this law has been published in England and Wales, but Scotland must now catch up and act with similar speed to increase legal protection for police dogs and service animals.

"In Scotland, hundreds of service animals work with Police Scotland to keep us safe.

“They all work with the same dedication to duty as the men and women in our Police force, but our laws don’t protect them the same way and currently, the law views a Police animal as little more than property.

“There is tremendous public support for this campaign and the petition to change the law to protect police dogs now has over 32,000 signatures.

“The SNP must follow the lead of the UK Government, listen to the thousands of voices calling for greater protection and status for service animals and change the law now.”

PC Dave Wardell said:

“It is amazing to see the depth of support and commitment to change in Scotland.

“All service animals deserve the utmost respect for the invaluable service they provide every day. Finally recognising this and providing them with protection in law will be a fitting legacy for Finn and all those brave animals who, like Finn have served their community so loyally, and those who still do.

“I thank Liam Kerr MSP for taking Finns Law to Scotland and it is my pleasure that we have been able to visit today to cement the two campaigns for a shared goal.”