

The Queen's speech is a 'weak, vague and mean-spirited programme from a government in meltdown'

Shadow Scottish Secretary Lesley Laird said the proposals from the Tories fail to reflect the message that voters sent Theresa May in this month's General Election.

The Prime Minister has no mandate for her pro-austerity policies or her plan for a Brexit that will leave people worse off.

Some Tory manifesto pledges have been abandoned as a result of the General Election, while Theresa May struggles to stitch together a deal with the DUP to stay in office.

Speaking about today's Queen's speech, Shadow Scottish Secretary Lesley Laird said "This was a weak, vague and mean-spirited programme from a Tory government in meltdown.

"Theresa May has no political authority, and while she struggles to stitch together a deal with the DUP to stay in office, she has been forced to ditch policies from her wildly unpopular manifesto.

"But it is deeply disappointing that this government appears determined to press ahead with deep cuts to public services and a failed austerity programme that has lost public support.

"The Queen's Speech offers very little for Scotland, with nothing for our vital oil and gas industry, no measures to protect the 250,000 WASPI women in Scotland affected by the botched acceleration of the state pension age, and no attempt to apply a VAT exemption to our stretched fire and police services.

"While Brexit will undoubtedly dominate parliamentary proceedings, Theresa May must revisit her reckless plan for a Brexit that will leave people worse off.

"Labour is ready to take up the reins when this chaotic Tory administration implodes."

Five things that need to be in the Queen's Speech

20 June 2017

This week Theresa May will attempt to produce a Queen's Speech. Here are five things that need to be in it.

Reverse planned cuts to social security

Tories plans to slash social security will see low income workers, families and the most vulnerable lose out over £1 billion by 2020/21.

Make austerity history

Day to day spending in Scotland is set to fall by a further £1 billion in the next three years. The General Election was a wake-up call to the Tories – austerity needs to end.

Protect the WASPI women

Over 250,000 women in Scotland have had their state pension age changed without fair notice. That just isn't fair, so the Tories should commit to transactional protections for the WASPI women.

Scrap VAT on Scotland's Police and Fire Services

The way the SNP government centralised Police and Fire Services left them with a £35 million a year VAT bill. This is a mess of the SNP's making, but the UK Tories need to drop the point scoring and give our emergency services a tax cut.

More support for Oil and Gas

In the last UK Budget, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) downgraded its forecast for offshore receipts by 37 per cent. The North Sea needs real support, not just warm words.

We need to see investment in the North Sea oil and gas industry to protect jobs in the short and long term, and plan properly for decommissioning. We also need to look at taking vital pieces of infrastructure into temporary public ownership to stop them being decommissioned prematurely.

Agree with our plans for the Queen's Speech? [Then help spread our message.](#)

We deserve to hear the truth behind Theresa May's Brexit talks

This time last year I was campaigning hard for Britain to remain in the EU. Twelve months on, and not only have we been through a referendum when voters chose to leave the EU, we have a different Prime Minister who is now hanging on to her job by a thread.

It has been an extraordinary period of upheaval in British politics.

This week, the Brexit talks got under way but we still have no idea what the final outcome will be.

Theresa May was intent on a hard Brexit, yet her authority has been crushed after a general election which saw her lose her majority. Her vision of an extreme Brexit has been rejected.

Jeremy Corbyn is assembling a government in waiting at Westminster, and the formidable Keir Starmer is leading our constructive approach to Brexit.

He has made clear to the Prime Minister that she must take a different tone and approach, and be much clearer about the benefits of the single market and the customs union. And she has to be clear about how she's going to allow Parliament to have a much greater role in scrutiny as we go through the process of leaving the EU.

Alternatively, she could step aside and let Labour guide us through the process instead.

We want to scrap the Conservatives' Brexit White Paper and replace it with fresh negotiating priorities that have a strong emphasis on retaining the benefits of the single market and the customs union – which are essential for maintaining industries, jobs and businesses in Britain.

Labour will always put jobs and the economy first.

The outcome of the Brexit talks will have major ramifications for Scotland. Nicola Sturgeon is quietly hoping it is a disaster – anything to build up a fresh grievance for her campaign for independence. She doesn't care much about getting a good deal.

The UK Government should be transparent and open as talks get under way, and that includes involving opposition politicians and devolved administrations.

The Welsh Labour Government are committed to making the process work for the entire UK, unlike Sturgeon. That's why she must first publicly remove a second independence referendum from the table.

The outcome of Brexit should not be used by the SNP to demand a second vote. Even Sturgeon must see that it makes no sense to ask to join the UK

negotiating team at the same time as calling for a vote to leave the UK.

As there are demands for a cross-party Brexit team, similarly the First Minister should meet with opposition parties prior to each negotiation meeting to ensure she presents the broad view of the Scottish Parliament, not just of the SNP.

And she should report back to other parties and to Parliament about how she's got on. What she claims other people said can no longer be trusted, so the negotiations must be open, transparent and properly recorded so we can see the whole picture.

We are embarking on a pivotal moment in our country's history. My fear is that May and Sturgeon are not up to the job.

This article first appeared in Kezia Dugdale's Daily Record column on Tuesday 20 June 2017

[Supporting Scotland's carers](#)

16 June 2017

This week is Carers Week. They are the unsung heroes of our country.

There are at least 759,000 carers aged 16 and over in Scotland and 49,000 young carers. The value of care provided by carers in Scotland is more than £10 billion every year.

At some point of our life, three-out-of-five of us will become carers. Here's how Labour would change Scotland to support carers.

Increase Carer's Allowance

Carer's Allowance is the payment made to carers to help them with additional expenses.

Holyrood has the powers to increase Carer's Allowance and Labour would increase it by £11 a week – or nearly £600 a year.

Get more carers claiming Carer's Allowance

The last official figures showed that more than 50,000 carers who were entitled to Carer's Allowance weren't claiming it.

That's £170 million that could be going to carers, but isn't. Maybe they don't know they are entitled to it, or are put off by the process of

applying.

Labour will push for a legal duty on Scotland's new social security agency to ensure everyone gets what they are entitled to.

Labour MSPs got the Scottish Parliament to agree to this plan last year – and we'll push the SNP government every step of the way towards creating the new agency.

Stop the cuts to public services

The SNP government has taken Tory austerity and passed it on to Scotland's communities.

Local council budgets have been slashed – with more than £1.5 billion slashed from local government budgets since 2011.

That means increased pressure on services like respite care and support at school for young carers.

Only Labour is making the case to use Holyrood's new tax powers to stop the cuts to public services and invest instead.

Like our plan? Then help [spread our message](#).

Remembering Srebrenica



Next month marks 12 years since the Bosnian town of Srebrenica was seized by General Ratko Mladić. What followed was the worst atrocity on European soil since World War Two – almost 9,000 Muslim men and boys were murdered because of their religion and between 20,000 and 50,000 women were raped.

Last year, along with the other main party leaders, I launched the education resources for the charity Remembering Srebrenica Scotland. They were setup to commemorate the Srebrenica genocide and to help teach us lessons of tolerance by remembering the past. By sharing the stories of the Mothers of Srebrenica and other survivors of genocide I believe we can inspire people in Scotland to tackle hatred when they see it and therefore make our communities safer and more cohesive.

This week I've been in Srebrenica with Remembering Srebrenica Scotland hearing those harrowing stories first hand. From meeting survivors to seeing bullet holes in almost every building you don't have to look hard to see the marks of the horrors.

Next month, Remembering Srebrenica's National Commemoration in Scotland will take place in Glasgow at the Mitchell Library. On Friday the 14th July, you can go along and hear the powerful testimony of the founder of the Association of Women Victims of War, Bakira Hasečić. But no matter where you are next month, I hope you will join me in reflecting on this horrific genocide, and how we can work to prevent anything like this ever happening again.



(This article originally appeared in Kez's Daily Record Column on 13 June 2017)

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