

Labour's animal welfare plan

17 April 2017

Here is our animal welfare plan:

Pets are our closest companions and, for some, all the family they have. We want to make sure that they can rely on the respect and treatment they deserve for the huge role they play in our lives.

We will do this by:

- Working to bring an end to the cruelty of puppy farming.
- Working to end the painful practice of aversive training aids for dogs like shock collars.
- Listening to the concerns of advocates for working dogs who are under threat of tail docking after the Scottish Government lifted the total ban.
- Ensuring that the sale of exotic animals is properly regulated.
- Pushing the Scottish Government for a comprehensive review of pet legislation in the Scottish Parliament.

We share Scotland with a huge variety of animals. As a Parliament, it is vital we take steps to ensure their home is safe and free from cruelty and abuse, just as much as it is for us. We must do this, not in fits and starts, or when it suits us to make political statements to win votes, but as a measured, comprehensive, and well thought out plan to improve their lives.

To do that for wildlife, we will:

- Consider how to strengthen the fox hunting legislation as a result of the findings from the Lord Bonomy Report.
- Work with charities to bring illegal culls of wild animals to an end.
- Take action to ensure perpetrators of wildlife crime are prosecuted fully under the law.
- Work towards bringing into effect game bird licencing in line with the principles of the petition currently before the Scottish Parliament.
- Consider our stance on rewilding, on a species by species basis.

Like our plan? [Then join today](#) and help make Scotland a safer place for animals.

SNP is letting down young women in sport



The SNP Government has failed to name any project or organisation which has benefitted from a £300,000 fund launched last year aimed at increasing the number of women involved in sport.

This simply is not good enough.

If you're a young girl at school, you are 15 per cent less likely to be active in sport. We cannot stand by and let this continue.

The Sporting Equality Fund, announced by Nicola Sturgeon last July, was supposed to boost the participation, engagement, and promotion of women in sport.

At the Ladies Scottish Open Forum: Leadership in Business and Sport conference in Ayrshire, she said: "We look forward to working with sportscotland and others over the summer to take this forward and will be announcing more details later in the year."

But in answer to parliamentary questions tabled by Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale, the Scottish Government admitted that no organisations or projects have benefitted from it.

This comes just a week after we heard that Scotland's record on child health is one of the poorest in Western Europe. We must lose no more time in tackling childhood obesity and encouraging more young people to live a more active lifestyle, especially young women.

This, alongside the Scottish Government's proposals to cut the sports budget by more than 8 per cent in real terms, shows the SNP is failing to deliver for our young people and to deliver the 2014 Commonwealth Games legacy we were all promised.

Women of all ages deserve better.

THE FUTURE OF LOCAL SERVICES IS AT STAKE – ROWLEY

14 April 2017

Scottish Labour campaign manager Alex Rowley today urged Scots to use their vote in the forthcoming council election, warning 'the future of our local services is at stake'.

Postal ballots started landing on doorsteps across Scotland this morning, with tens of thousands of Scots expected to cast their vote by post. To apply to vote by post, click [here](#).

Mr Rowley said voters face a choice between electing a local champion with Labour or an SNP councillor who will only care about another divisive independence referendum.

The SNP has cut £1.5 billion from local services since 2011, including £170 million this year alone.

Speaking after a photo-call to mark the start of postal voting, Scottish Labour deputy leader and local election campaign manager Alex Rowley said:

"As postal votes begin to land on doorsteps, people must start to seriously think about what these elections are about.

"This is a vital election and it is crucial that people get out and vote. The future of our local services is at stake.

"Voters can send Nicola Sturgeon a message that they want her to focus on the things that really matter – like getting people into work, investing in local schools, and growing the economy.

"Instead of trying to impose another divisive referendum that the people of Scotland don't want, the SNP should focus on the job of government.

"Every Labour councillor elected will be a local champion for more investment in local services like schools and care of the elderly. Every SNP councillor will put another divisive independence referendum first.

"That's the choice voters face. Only Labour can stop the SNP. If people want more investment in local services and councillors who will put their community first, then they have to vote Labour."

[Kez writes to Ruth to urge her to oppose 'rape clause'](#)

13 April 2017

The Tories have been responsible for many cruel welfare policies. The bedroom tax is an example of this.

But the recently introduced 'rape clause' is possibly the cruellest of them all.

Under Tory plans, tax credits will be limited to just two children. That means that if a woman conceives a child as a result of rape, she will have to fill in an eight-page form to claim an exemption from the two child tax credit limit.

Think about that. After suffering a horrific violent attack, a woman would then be put through the ordeal of having to apply to the government for the support that she is entitled to.

Labour is completely opposed to this policy, and we will continue to make the case against it.

But Scottish Tory leader Ruth Davidson isn't against it. Yesterday she used social media to reveal that she supported it. You can read that tweet [here](#).

It's a shameful position to adopt. But it should also act as an eye-opening moment for those who think that Ruth Davidson is a different kind of Tory.

Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale has today written to Ms Davidson, challenging her to stand up to the Prime Minister and oppose this cruel policy.

Here's the text of Kez's letter:

Dear Ruth,

Across Scotland and the UK there is growing anger at the inhumane rape clause – a morally bankrupt piece of legislation your party has introduced in its continued campaign to dismantle our valuable welfare state.

Your government is cutting vital social security to the disabled, the poor, the low paid and to children across the UK.

And now you are asking women who have been raped to fill in an eight-page form to claim the money they need to help feed and clothe their child – just because he or she is their third baby.

You are asking traumatised women who have in all likelihood never reported the rape – especially if the perpetrator was their husband – to state that their child was the result of a criminal act or that child gets no tax credit support.

This is, without doubt, one of the cruellest policies a Tory government has ever implemented.

People in Scotland – and in the rest of the UK – have been led to believe that you are a different kind of Tory; that you are not cut from uncaring Thatcherite cloth. They believe this because of your defence of Britain's place in Europe and because you have in the past criticised your own party's policies and its leaders.

You took Theresa May to task over her plans to scrap the ECHR, you are one of the few pro-immigrant politicians in your party, you spoke out about massive cuts to tax credits planned by David Cameron and George Osborne. So why the silence now?

It has been two days since I publicly asked you to give your personal view on this issue, yet you continue to hide behind your spokesperson.

The rape clause should shame every single Tory MSP.

Surely it is time to once again tell your colleagues in Westminster that you do not agree with them.

There is cross-party support against this policy in Westminster and Holyrood. Why don't you join with us and condemn this appalling act?

Yours sincerely,

*Kezia Dugdale
Scottish Labour leader*

We'll update this blog post whenever Kez receives a response from Ruth Davidson.

KEZ CALLS ON RUTH DAVIDSON TO END 'RAPE CLAUSE' SILENCE

11 April 2017

Below is Kezia Dugdale's [Daily Record column](#) calling on Ruth Davidson to end her shameful silence on the Tories' disgusting 'rape clause':

"SHE is different to other Tories".

It's a familiar refrain when people talk about Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson.

But if that really is the case, why hasn't Ruth spoken out against the disgusting 'rape clause' her Westminster colleagues have introduced to the tax credit system?

In a barbaric move that should shame and anger the Scottish Tory leader and every single Conservative MSP, victims of rape now must fill out an eight page form if they have a child conceived through such a sexual assault.

It's a policy that would have caused anger and astonishment if Margaret Thatcher had introduced it in the 1980s. But here in 2017, in an era when the

fight for women's rights has made real strides, we have a female Prime Minister content to press ahead with a horrifically cruel and uncaring policy.

Months have passed since SNP MP Alison Thewliss first stunned us all by uncovering the details of the 'rape clause'.

As part of plans to restrict tax credits to families of just two children, the UK Government decided to force women to provide evidence of exceptional circumstances, such as rape, to claim the social security payment for a third child.

So now women who have been raped – possibly by their husbands – but who have perhaps not reported it to the police will have to sign a document saying their child is the product of rape.

Alison has led a powerful campaign against the heartless Tory government on this crucial issue, and has secured cross-party support. I have nothing but praise for her tireless campaigning, and she has and will continue to receive the support of Labour MSPs and MPs in the hope of forcing the Tories into a U-turn.

For Ruth Davidson has been silent on this issue. So today I make a direct plea to her: stand up for rape victims and tell Theresa May she is wrong.

You normally have the sharpest elbows when it comes to getting noticed, so don't remain silent when it comes to standing up to your own party.

Readers of this newspaper know just how keen the Tories are to attack our cherished welfare state.

The Daily Record has exposed time and again just how distressing the Conservative government's social security cuts can be.

The way to ensure that people's reliance on social security reduces is not to penalise the poorest but to ensure that work pays and living standards rise.

Labour is committed to rebalancing the UK's economy so that no one and no community is left behind, which is why Jeremy Corbyn has announced plans for a £10-an-hour minimum wage, which would benefit 430,000 workers in Scotland alone.

And we must also ensure that everyone claims the social security payments they are entitled to – with over £2 billion presently going unclaimed in Scotland.

The Vow delivered huge new powers for the Scottish Parliament, and an opportunity to radically reshape our country to be a fairer nation, and it's time to see real action on this.