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- Call for 'complete transparency' over baby box safety fears

3 May 2018



The SNP should publish all documents relating to the safety and certification of baby boxes following fears over a fire risk with the products.

It was revealed yesterday that experts had raised significant concerns in relation to the SNP's flagship giveaway.

Tens of thousands of boxes have already been given out across the country, even though no officially recognised safety standards had been drawn up.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs has demanded "complete transparency" from ministers over advice received about the safety of baby boxes.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"The information that has emerged over the last 24 hours is deeply concerning.

"The SNP used photocall after photocall to tell parents these boxes were safe.

"Only now we are learning of the safety concerns raised in private by their own advisers.

"The SNP has used every opportunity to talk up the baby box policy and attack anyone who asked questions about their use.

"We now must see complete transparency from Nicola Sturgeon and her ministers.

"All official documentation relating to the safety and the certification of baby boxes must be published immediately.

"Only that way can parents have faith in this SNP government's plans.

"This is not a public relations exercise – it is about child safety."

[Campaign to save ATMs is launched in the Scottish Parliament](#)

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2 May 2018



Dean Lockhart MSP will today lead a debate in the Scottish Parliament on changes to the LINK network which threaten to cut off free access to cash across Scotland.

Hundreds of free to use cashpoints are at risk of removal due to plans announced by the UK's largest cashpoint network.

LINK runs a network of 70,000 cashpoints and has announced that it is cutting its interchange fee from 1st July 2018. This fee is paid by card issuers to ATM operators and its reduction will significantly impact the funding of cash points and has the potential to put many at risk.

With many rural and deprived communities across the region relying on easy access to their cash, Dean will call on the Payment Services Regulator to step in immediately to stop these plans.

The campaign was launched by consumer organisation Which? and the Federation of Small Businesses who's petition has so far attracted over 75,000 signatures from across the UK.

Dean Lockhart, Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary said:

''I am pleased to be given the opportunity to highlight this important issue for consumers across Scotland in the Scottish Parliament this week.

''At a time when bank closures increase across Scotland, so too does the reliance on free-to-use ATMs.

''Demand for cash remains high, especially in rural and deprived communities and these facilities often act as a crucial replacement for the lack of banking services.

''These proposals from LINK will undoubtedly also hit our high-street and small businesses, many of whom rely upon a customer's ability to access cash.

''Access to cash is absolutely vital to local growth in communities across Scotland and I urge the regulator to take action to guarantee that consumers can access their money if access to cash is threatened.

‘‘I have therefore written to the Chairman of the Link Scheme to call for the proposed changes to be reconsidered – and for the Link Network and member banks to take another look at the impact of these proposals on consumers, small businesses and communities.’’

Energy efficiency targets ten years too late

2 May 2018



The Scottish Conservatives have derided the new Scottish Government target on energy efficiency as ten years too late.

In the 2016 manifesto, the Scottish Conservatives set out a clear target to “achieve transformative change in energy efficiency across Scotland – with all properties achieving an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C rating or above by the end of the next decade at the latest.”

In contrast, the First Minister today launched the Route Map to an Energy Efficient Scotland, which includes a target that “by 2040, all homes are improved so they achieve an EPC rating of at least Band C.”

The Scottish Conservatives have also criticised the route map for having energy efficiency targets which lack serious ambition on tackling emissions from domestic heating.

Alexander Burnett, Scottish Conservative energy spokesman said:

“The Scottish Conservatives recognise how vital it is that everyone in Scotland has a warm home as soon as possible.

‘We have repeatedly called on the SNP to adopt the bold and ambitious target of EPC C rating by 2030 as set out in our 2016 manifesto and, once again, it has failed to do so.

‘Their target of ensuring all homes being at EPC ‘C’ rating by 2040 is a decade too late.

‘There has long been support for this target across the chamber so it is ridiculous that the SNP has taken such a long time to come up with targets that are much less ambitious than our own.

‘What we have today is an SNP Government proposing unambitious targets for those in fuel poverty, as well as failing to tackle the wider picture of reducing emissions.’’

Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative housing spokesman said:

“The so-called plan put out by the SNP is a woolly wish-list with no detail.

“They have not said a word about how they will help home-owners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and by giving a date of 2040 to achieve targets they are effectively kicking the issue into the long grass.”

[Campaign to protect police dogs is launched in Scotland](#)

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23 Apr 2018



Liam Kerr MSP has launched a campaign, today, calling for a new criminal offence of causing injury to police dogs. He made the announcement after visiting the police dog unit in Baluniefield, Dundee.

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.

The Scottish Conservatives have pledged to introduce a new criminal offence of harming or killing a service animal. This would adequately punish those who harm trained animals like dogs and horses who serve the police, fire service, military or other public services. It could also cover assistance animals like guide dogs.

The campaign continues the work undertaken by PC Dave Wardell requesting a similar change to the law in England. PC Wardell started his campaign after his police dog Finn was repeatedly stabbed during an attempted arrest.

During the visit Liam spoke to Chief Inspector Neil Anderson and his team regarding the work the dogs undertake on behalf of Police Scotland, the danger they are put in and the importance of their role. The visit to the Unit was facilitated by Police Scotland at the request of Liam Kerr MSP.

Commenting on the campaign, Liam Kerr said:

“Service animals are highly trained members of Police Scotland and are repeatedly put in dangerous situations.

“Police dogs and horses undergo extensive training. We ask them to work for us and risk their lives to keep us safe and yet the law does not fully protect them when they are hurt.

“Introducing a criminal offence of causing injury to police animals will ensure criminals who attack police animals are dealt with effectively, raise awareness of the severity of the crime and deter further attacks.

“Ultimately this gives service animals the legal protection they deserve and goes some, small way, to saying thank you for their dedicated service.”

PC Dave Wardell, who began the campaign for Finn’s law, said:

“Service animals are vital to all of us. Police and prison animals are vital to our safety. A variety of other highly trained service animals offer services that positively change people’s lives and help society.

“Isn’t it about time that these amazing animals are recognised for the incredibly important role they play in helping and protecting us? Isn’t it about time these animals were protected in law by having their own specific offence of assaulting them? It’s time for Finn’s Law!”

Chief Inspector Neil Anderson said:

“Police Scotland is not, and cannot, actively support any campaign to have laws created or amended, however this does not prevent us from welcoming any potential legislation which can provide further support to our officers, dogs, horses, or other specialist units in the future, particularly in areas beneficial to their welfare.”

[Children’s hospital admissions at an all-time high](#)

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22 Apr 2018



Children’s admissions to hospitals are at an all-time high, according to a written answer received by Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary.

The answer reveals that the number of children admitted to hospitals across

Scotland has risen from 268,670 in 2010 to 310,496 in 2017.

This shows that 40,000 more children were admitted to hospital in 2017 than 2010, an increase of 16 per cent.

Recent reports have highlighted that there is no evidence of an increase in child ill-health and therefore this could be a result of a lack of GP availability.

The Scottish Conservative campaign 'Save our surgeries campaign' has called on the Scottish Government to support primary care and halt the decline in GP surgeries.

Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary said:

"No parent wants to take a child to A&E except under the most urgent of circumstances.

"We know that children are not becoming more ill so this substantial increase in admissions could be explained by the dwindling number of alternatives thanks to the SNP.

"This considerable increase in children's admissions will be causing parents and children significant distress and contribute to increased pressure on A&E departments.

"The SNP has presided over a relentless decline in primary care and is, as a result, forcing sick children to be treated in unsuitable healthcare settings.

"Our campaign 'Save our Surgeries' calls for increased funding for primary care to boost recruitment and retention of GPs and, as a result, give more support to parents and children who need these services."