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- Air travel will take “at least 5 years” to recover from lockdown

17 Jun 2020



The Scottish Government has admitted that airline travellers will have to endure ‘at least 5 years’ of disruption before services will be able to return to pre-Covid levels.

The Transport Secretary, Michael Matheson, made the admission in a parliamentary written answer to Dean Lockhart, Scottish Conservative shadow Transport and Business Secretary.

The answer stated that some slow recovery in air services was anticipated over the summer, first with domestic, then international routes in line with the SNP government’s phased exit out of lockdown.

Mr Matheson then goes on to state that “Realistically, it will take at least five years for services to recover to pre-Covid-19 levels.”

The admission has prompted calls from the Scottish Conservatives for the SNP Government to bring forward urgent economic recovery plans to mitigate the considerable impact of such disruption.

The issue is particularly urgent in the light of recent news from British Airways that they plan to restructure the business and implement a significant number of redundancies. This could result in dozens of jobs being lost from Edinburgh Airport.

Dean Lockhart, Scottish Conservative shadow business and transport secretary said:

“We are facing an urgent economic crisis of significant proportions.

“The revelation that our airline industry will be disrupted for at least five years shows that this economic crisis will have savage consequences.

“The potential loss of jobs within our airline services, as well as the wider economic impact of lack of tourism and travel will change our economy irreparably.

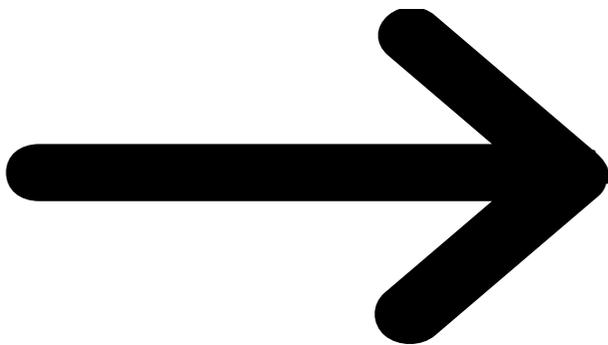
“The SNP government is clearly aware of this problem and yet we have no idea how they intend to address it.

“The SNP must consider any and all options to revitalise our economy before it’s too late.

“We have all the indications of a massive economic shock, the SNP government has all the powers it needs – it must act now to get our country moving.”

Don't put a price on children's future, SNP told

17 Jun 2020



The SNP has been urged to provide councils with all the money they need to get schools open again, or risk putting a pricetag on children’s future.

At First Minister’s Questions today, Jackson Carlaw said parents across the country were furious at the SNP’s lack of ambition in maximising face-to-face teaching time for an August return.

The Scottish Conservative leader said ministers had to show more imagination in boosting teacher numbers and capacity, and ensure local authorities had adequate funds to make necessary changes.

Both Nicola Sturgeon and education secretary John Swinney have come under intense pressure over their plans for a partial return to the classroom.

Mr Swinney even suggested pupils faced an entire academic year of only being in school a fraction of the usual time.

And today, Mr Carlaw cited the views of one parent, who said “while careers can be furloughed, childhood cannot”.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“We must not put a pricetag on our children’s future.

“But that’s exactly what the SNP is doing with this completely unsatisfactory plan for a partial return.

“Parents, teachers and pupils are demanding the SNP government shows more imagination, more creative thinking, when it comes to getting education off the ground again.

“But all we’ve seen so far is dithering and buck-passing.

“Nicola Sturgeon knew back in March that something would have to be done to get children back into the classroom, but still things are a complete mess.

“The SNP needs to sort this out now or risk failing an entire generation of young people.”

Fewer school leavers going to positive destinations

16 Jun 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have accused the SNP government of more failings on education after official figures show that fewer school leavers went on to positive destinations in 2018-19 compared with the previous year.

According to the latest figures released by the Scottish Government today 92.9% of school leavers in 2018-19 went on to positive destinations compared to 93.3% the year before, a fall of 0.4%.

In addition, while the attainment gap has narrowed slightly, this is only because fewer students from both most and least deprived backgrounds are now going to positive destinations.

Lastly, the percentage of pupils going on to higher education or employment also fell over the same timescale.

Jamie Greene, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary said:

“The SNP government has indeed managed to narrow the attainment gap only by reducing the attainment of students from both the most and least deprived backgrounds.

“The SNP government’s failures on education across the board are now glaringly obvious with fewer students going to positive destinations, fewer students going on to higher education or employment and parents rightly are angry with them.

“The government was warned, long before the Covid crisis emerged, that attainment was slipping in our schools yet the government buried its head in

the sand, refused to listen and delayed vital reviews into the curriculum.

“The SNP has already failed a generation of Scottish children and if it doesn’t get children back to school properly in August, it will fail many more to its utter shame.”

[Time for Sturgeon to prove education is her top priority](#)

16 Jun 2020



Nicola Sturgeon has been urged to finally coming good on her pledge that education is her top priority – by sorting out the crisis facing Scottish schools.

Since taking over in 2014, the First Minister has repeatedly said the education of youngsters would be her number one aim.

Now the Scottish Conservatives have demanded she delivers on that pledge when children, parents and teachers need it most.

Leader Jackson Carlaw said the shambolic handling of children’s return to school in August had exposed SNP failings.

He added that local authorities should be given all the resources they need to ensure face-to-face learning gets back up-and-running as quickly as possible.

Yesterday, Ms Sturgeon attempted to seize control of the education brief from her deputy and education secretary John Swinney, and spent much of the daily briefing contradicting what he had spent the weekend outlining.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“For several years Nicola Sturgeon has claimed that education is her number one priority, and to this point we haven’t seen any evidence of this actually being the case.

“Now she and her SNP government need to step up.

“Children have to get back to school in August – we simply cannot afford for their education to slip further behind.

“The rest of the UK is doing it, other countries in Europe are doing it – there is no reason why the Scottish Government has to be dragging its feet

here.

“Billions have arrived in support from the UK Government, and of course the Scottish Government has its own budget which it can use.

“Councils need to be assured they can have the money to allow them to get the school gates open and the children back behind a desk.”

[Sturgeon's 'desperate' schools intervention causes more confusion](#)

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15 Jun 2020



Nicola Sturgeon's "desperate" attempt to wrestle back control of how schools respond to coronavirus has caused even more confusion for parents and teachers, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The First Minister used her daily briefing to contradict much of what her education secretary, John Swinney, has spent the last three days saying.

She denied his suggestion that "blended" learning could be in place for a year and rolled back on his warnings on next year's exams.

She also claimed her SNP government may look at a "minimum" level of provision for councils, contradicting the current policy of a maximum of face-to-face contact.

Ms Sturgeon also appeared to distance herself from suggestions made by her deputy that it was the responsibility of councils to sort out education provision while maintaining the Scottish Government's two-metre social distancing stipulation.

That's led to calls that councils are being "left in the dark and left in the lurch" to deliver central government diktats with no resource or support.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Jamie Greene said:

“We are now several months into this crisis and that's more than enough time for the SNP to have come up with a nationwide plan to maximise in-class schooling.

“Instead, all we’re seeing is more confusion, mixed messaging, and a chronic lack of leadership.

“Parents and teachers won’t know who to listen to – the First Minister or the education secretary – as their stories are increasingly different.

“Councils are being left in the dark and left in the lurch.

“This was a desperate attempt by Nicola Sturgeon to wrestle back control of this issue from John Swinney, who she clearly thinks has made a mess of things in recent days.

“As a result of this shambolic incompetence, right across Scotland children will miss out on huge swathes of education, and parents will simply be unable to return to work under current SNP plans.

“This is much than attainment, this is going to hamper Scotland’s economic recovery in the short, medium and long-term.”