

[Sturgeon's leadership 'leaking credibility by the hour'](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Sturgeon's leadership 'leaking credibility by the hour'

27 Jun 2017



Nicola Sturgeon's leadership is "leaking credibility by the hour", the Scottish Conservatives have said after the First Minister shelved her second referendum plans.

Addressing MSPs today, the SNP leader said she would "reset" the proposals tabled earlier this year, when she said she wanted to bring forward plans for another vote immediately.

Instead, she said, she would wait for the outcome of Brexit negotiations.

The climbdown follows the General Election where the SNP lost 21 MPs north of the border, and repeated polls showing Scots don't want independence, and don't want to have to go through another referendum to prove it.

Responding, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said ministers should go further, and promise there will be no separation vote for at least the duration of the Scottish parliamentary term.

Ruth said, far from being reasonable and listening to the public, Sturgeon was "in denial" about her mistakes and losing credibility in her leadership as a result.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"The issue we have had this last year has been with a First Minister who tried to use the UK's decision to leave the EU to impose another referendum on Scotland at the earliest opportunity.

"No once in a generation, no Edinburgh Agreement of respecting the result, just a single-visioned drive to the line for Nicola Sturgeon to try to secure her place in history.

"Today's statement fails to give people any assurance that the First Minister has been listening.

"Instead, she appears to be in denial about her mistakes over this last year and, as a result, is leaking credibility and confidence in her leadership by the hour.

“Her response hasn’t been to reflect.

“It’s been simply to lash out at the UK Government at every opportunity and to sing the same old songs in the same old tune.

“She now claims to be putting the referendum to one side.

“She should just give the country some certainty and take it off the table for the rest of this parliament at least.”

[Ruth supports Armed Forces Day by becoming the Honorary Colonel of Army Reserve Unit](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
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23 Jun 2017



Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson has been appointed Honorary Colonel of her former Army Regiment – and today uses her new post to promote Armed Forces Day.

The MSP, formerly a member of 32 Signal Regiment, has been invited to take over the position of Honorary Colonel for the next five years.

The Regiment commands Squadrons based in Edinburgh, East Kilbride, Glasgow, Belfast and Darlington. Ruth previously served with HQ Squadron in Glasgow.

The post of Honorary Colonel is more usually filled by a retired senior military officer or member of the Royal family, but can be undertaken by public figures – with historian Dan Snow and musician Jools Holland having been appointed to other regiments in the past.

As Honorary Colonel for the next five years, Ruth will be asked to act as a figurehead for the Regiment, and to act as a counsellor and supporter for its commanding officer and leadership teams.

Ruth was asked to take on the role the regiment due to her work in the Territorial Army before she became an MSP and her consistent support for the reserve forces during her period in parliament.

She has often credited her military training, in particular the leadership instruction she received during her officer training, as standing her in great stead for leadership roles in civilian life.

Ruth was pictured today with serving soldiers in the regiment at Edinburgh Castle, on the eve of Armed Forces Day, when the country comes together to recognise service personnel, regular and reserve, from all three services.

On the day itself, parades, picnics and receptions are held in honour of the Armed Forces, hosted by individuals, employers and local authorities.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“Reservists make up over a quarter of the British Army and the UK’s defences rely upon them.

“As well as the specialist skills required for the type of regiment you join, the training you receive as a reservist develops leadership, decision making, teamwork, confidence and moral courage.

“I loved my time in uniform and am so grateful for everything it taught me.

“I am delighted to have been asked back to my former regiment to act as its Honorary Colonel for the next five years.

“I will work hard to support and encourage the officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers of 32 Signal Regiment during their training and service, as well as seek to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of the Army Reserve as a whole.

“This Armed Forces Day, people across the country will come together to recognise the debt we owe to those who serve to keep us safe.

“We have the most professional fighting force in the world and – regular or reserve – it’s only right we say thank you for all they do.”

32 Signal Regiment is a specialist Army Reserve Regiment that provides vital communications support and information management to the Armed Forces, Emergency Services, and Local Government Agencies in times of crisis such as:

- Terrorist Attacks
- Natural Disasters
- Flooding
- Enhanced Security for Political Summits

Regimental Headquarters is based in Glasgow with Signal Squadrons in Edinburgh, Dundee, Northern Ireland, Darlington and Glasgow. The job roles within the Regiment include Communications Systems Operators, Drivers, Chefs, Clerks, and Medics.

In recent years, the Regimental remit has expanded to include Op Herrick

(Afghanistan), Op Telic (Iraq) as well as supporting UN Operations in Germany and Cyprus.

[Sturgeon and Ewing treated parliament with 'utter contempt' over latest CAP fiasco](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
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23 Jun 2017



Scotland's farming communities are owed an apology from the First Minister and her rural affairs secretary over the latest CAP fiasco, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It was confirmed last night that the Scottish Government has asked Europe for an extension in processing crucial Common Agricultural Policy payments, even though both Nicola Sturgeon and Fergus Ewing denied this as recently as yesterday afternoon.

Now they've been accused of treating Holyrood with "utter contempt" and not being up front with the farmers impacted by the failures.

At First Minister's Questions, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson piled the pressure on the SNP over another delay in CAP payments.

Even though the deadline for processing all payments is a week today, there are still thousands of famers waiting for much-needed cash.

As such, Scottish Government officials have asked the European Commission for that deadline to be extended to mid-October, or they face fines of up to £60 million.

Scottish Conservative MSP for Galloway and West Dumfries Finlay Carson said:

"Nicola Sturgeon and Fergus Ewing have some very serious questions to answer.

"We now know that earlier this week, they went cap in hand to the European Commission to plea for the payment deadline to be extended.

"But, when confronted in parliament over whether they had done, they ducked

and dived and avoided the question.

“In addition, we also learn today that Mr Ewing failed to let farming leaders know what he was doing – again in order to avoid scrutiny.

“By failing to make their position clear when they had the chance, the First Minister and the rural affairs secretary treated parliament with utter contempt and they should apologise immediately.

“And by failing to be clear with farming leaders, it’s clear that Fergus Ewing has lost the confidence of many people in rural Scotland – and he should be considering his position.

“This episode has been a disgrace and has exposed the SNP for what it is: secretive, out of touch, and all at sea. Scotland deserves better.”

The Scottish Conservatives raised the matter at First Minister’s Questions yesterday:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/sturgeon-must-come-clean-on-second-cap-crisis/>

Last night, NFUS said:

“We’ve asked for Scottish Government to have a clear and open dialogue with the industry on payments. Farmers and crofters should have been the first to know that once again there is to be a delay in payments. This does nothing to restore trust or build confidence.

“We have had many apologies about the system. We don’t want to hear sorry again; we want action that will ensure payments arrive in a timely manner.

“Failure to deliver farm support puts the whole of Scotland’s rural economy in jeopardy. Those farmers and crofters attending Day One of Scotland’s premier agricultural event at the Highland Show, are keen to do business, but are having to hold back on making business decisions and investment because of outstanding payments. They deserve transparency and clarity.

“If the extension saves the Scottish taxpayer £60 million in fines, that is good news but it takes the thousands of Scottish farmers and crofters who are still waiting on part or all of their payments no further forward and with no clear timetable provided. Some of those payments have been outstanding for 18 months. That is wholly unacceptable.”

[Scottish Government should be stripped of right to appoint SPA chair](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)

- Scottish Government should be stripped of right to appoint SPA chair

22 Jun 2017



The next chair of the Scottish Police Authority should be publicly appointed, and not chosen by Scottish Government ministers, it has been argued.

Scottish Conservative MSP Margaret Mitchell said, after current chair Andrew Flanagan announced his departure, it was time for the style of appointment to be changed.

She wants to see the SPA chair chosen in the same way positions like the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman are selected, through a panel chaired by Holyrood's presiding officer involving MSPs from all parties.

She made the comments at today's Scottish Parliament policing sub-committee.

It follows weeks of criticism of the SPA and its senior staff members over a lack of accountability and transparency.

Scottish Conservative MSP Margaret Mitchell, convener of Holyrood's justice committee, said:

"We are now on to our third SPA chair in just over four years.

"It's self-evident that the previous chairs have lacked the necessary skills and experience, on issues like handling the media, to justify their appointment.

"Coupled with this, there has always been a concern about their independence, given they owe their appointment to the Scottish ministers of the day.

"It's now time to review the appointment by ministers and consider appointing the SPA chair in an open and transparent manner."

[Poverty and Inequality Commission to be created despite SNP opposition](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Poverty and Inequality Commission to be created despite SNP opposition

22 Jun 2017



A new Poverty and Inequality Commission is to be created in Scots law – despite SNP attempts to block it.

The proposal by Scottish Conservative social security spokesman Adam Tomkins was voted through in the Scottish Parliament earlier today.

He was backed by other opposition parties to set up the Commission as part of the Child Poverty Bill.

The work of the Commission will be to monitor the Scottish Government's progress on child poverty, and ensure scrutiny on the targets being set for ministers.

However, the SNP voted against the idea, saying it wasn't "value for money" and would have too much "downtime".

Despite nationalist opposition, the amendment went through by five votes to four at the Social Security Committee earlier, meaning the legislation will now be strengthened.

Scottish Conservative social security spokesman Adam Tomkins said:

"It's vital the Scottish Government is held to account on its work to reduce child poverty in Scotland.

"Establishing this Commission in Scots law will do exactly that.

"It's disappointing the SNP oppose this but, fortunately, all other parties agreed it was a necessary step to take.

"This will hold the Scottish Government to account on its poverty pledges, and make sure the targets being set are hit.

"It strengthens the legislation and allows scrutiny of Scottish Ministers to be as robust as possible."

The amendment was voted through 5-4 at this morning's social security committee.

For more on the Child Poverty Bill, visit:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/103404.aspx>