

Scottish Conservatives Lead the fightback against the SNP

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5 May 2017



Today's council election results prove the Scottish Conservatives are leading the country's fightback against the SNP, Ruth Davidson has said.

The Scottish Conservative leader hailed the party's best ever result under the current local government system, returning 276 councillors.

Gains were made in every single mainland local authority, and the Scottish Conservatives also elected their first ever councillor in the Western Isles.

It comes after the party published the most detailed council manifesto, and remain the only ones to stand up to the SNP on its threat of a second independence referendum.

Among today's achievements were...

- Gains in every mainland seat, more than doubling the vote from 2012
- The party's best local government result under the current system, beating Labour – the first time this has happened since local government boundaries were redrawn in 1974.
- Stopped the SNP gaining overall control in various local authorities including Glasgow
- Outpolling Labour in East Renfrewshire by two to one
- Returning groups of councillors in Highlands, North Lanarkshire and Midlothian where previously there was no Scottish Conservative representation at all.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"I'd like to congratulate every councillor, no matter their party allegiance, who has been elected today. Being asked to serve your local community is both a real achievement and a great responsibility.

"I'd also like to thank everybody who voted Scottish Conservative yesterday – especially those who did so for the first time. Every Scottish Conservative councillor elected today will repay your trust by delivering better local services, not more constitutional division.

"Today's result makes one thing crystal clear: all across Scotland, only the Scottish Conservatives have the strength to fight back against the SNP.

“We denied the SNP a majority at Holyrood last year.

“We have gained seats in councils all over Scotland today. We are now in a position to lead Scotland’s fight back on June 8 in the general election too.

“We will speak up for the millions of Scots who have had enough of the uncertainty and division of the last few years. We will stand up for everyone who doesn’t want a second referendum on independence.

“We will demand that politicians of all parties focus instead on the things that matter: restoring excellence to Scotland’s schools, and getting our economy back to health.

“As we turn to the election on June 8, we know Nicola Sturgeon is still refusing to listen – only last week she said independence would be at the ‘heart’ of the General Election campaign.

“If you want to send the SNP a message, then today’s result shows that, no matter where you live in Scotland, a vote for the Scottish Conservatives will ensure your voice is heard loud and clear.”□

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4 May 2017



Nicola Sturgeon is under increasing pressure to respond to revelations that the SNP appears to have ignored rules around government announcements during local and general election purdah periods.

The announcement of £8 million investment into Glasgow just two days before polling day there has prompted accusations that the SNP in government is using taxpayers’ cash to try and win votes.

Now more announcements have emerged – including £1 million to 29 crofters and the announcement of £1 million for fishing, from an EU fund run by Marine Scotland, at a time when the SNP was under pressure on its position on fishing.

It is nearly 24 hours since the first allegation was made, and the SNP has

made no response.

Scottish Conservative MSP and candidate for Aberdeen South Ross Thomson said:

“This has been a damning 24 hours of silence from Nicola Sturgeon. She needs to come out of hiding and explain the actions of her government.

“On her watch, ministers have been announcing government funding and promoting government investment in communities where her party is campaigning in vital local and UK-wide elections.

“We need a full investigation into how decisions were taken, when, and by whom – and why the impartial civil service supported these announcements during an election period and in apparent contravention of their own guidance.

“Above all, Scotland deserves a response from the First Minister.

“There are clear rules on how government should behave in the run-up to an election. It looks to many voters that the only rule the SNP has followed is how best to use taxpayers’ cash to win votes.

“It stinks to high heaven – and we need to see some clarity from the First Minister now.”□

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- **Government announcements are made under the principle of collective responsibility.** The ministerial code makes this explicit: ‘The Scottish Government operates on the basis of collective responsibility. This means that all decisions reached by the Scottish Ministers, individually or collectively, are binding on all members of the Government. Ministers are required to abide by them and defend them as necessary’ (Scottish Ministerial Code, *Scottish Government*, 2016, section 2, [link](#)).

TIMELINE OF ANNOUNCEMENTS: 9 days to polling day: Fergus Ewing announces £1m to crofters.

- The Scottish Government announcement states: ‘Over £948,000 has been awarded to help crofters in some of Scotland’s most rural and remote communities benefit from better housing. 29 crofters will share the funding which enables them to build or improve homes, helping to retain and attract people to rural communities’ (*Scottish Government press release*, 25 April 2017, [link](#)).
- **Gail Ross, SNP MSP for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross, welcomed the announcement in a constituency press release:** ‘Rural quality housing is a major issue in our constituency and this fund will be a fantastic resource for crofters’ (Gail Ross, *Campaign website*, 24 April 2017, [link](#)).

8 days to polling day: Michael Russell announces £1m EU funding for Seafood Scotland

- The Scottish Government announcement includes a quote from Mike Russell: 'Raising the awareness and enhancing the global profile of the Scottish seafood industry will assist the sector as a whole...This is just one example of why EU funding is so important as it is helping showcase our fisheries sector, improve the quality of its products and develop more environmentally friendly practices. Our fishing industry is a vital part of the rural economy' (*Scottish Government press release*, 26 April 2017, [link](#)).
- **Marine Scotland run the EMFF in Scotland.** It is a Directorate of the Scottish Government and is responsible for the integrated management of Scotland's seas. (*gov.uk*, [link](#)).
- **This was the day after a row broke out about fishing.** This follows an attack on the SNP over their position on fishing, after two SNP MPs contradicted SNP policy to take fishermen back into the CFP by signing a pledge committing to keep them out (*Courier*, 25 April, [link](#)).
- **Maree Todd, Highlands and Islands SNP MSP, promoted the news:** 'Great news that Seafood Scotland is getting £1m to promote Scottish seafood abroad and revitalise the industry.' (Maree Todd, 26 April 2017, [link](#)).

8 days to polling day: Keith Brown publishes a 'progress report' on the Scottish Government's infrastructure plan

- The Scottish Government announcement includes Keith Brown commenting: 'Significant progress continues to be made in delivering our infrastructure investment plan, which is good for jobs, good for the economy, and good for Scotland'' (*Scottish Government press release*, 26 April 2017, [link](#)).
- The report provides updates on projects across Scotland: 9 specific major road infrastructure projects, 5 specific ferry projects, 4 specific rail projects, 5 specific completed NHS projects, 4 specific ongoing NHS projects, and 18 specific completed schools (*Progress Report*, Scottish Government, 26 April 2017, [link](#)).
- Nicola Sturgeon's chief of staff, Elizabeth Lloyd, retweeted the announcement to increase coverage – focusing particularly on the North East, and tweeting directly to the SNP political party.

2 days to polling day: £8.35m investment in Glasgow

- In the Scottish Government announcement, Kevin Stewart states: 'Glasgow has a shortage of high quality office space and this latest investment will increase the city's stock, making it an even more appealing proposition to locate and do business in. The fact that it will support 196 new jobs in construction plus training and apprenticeship places in the city is very welcome news' (*Scottish Government press release*, 2 May 2017, [link](#)).
- **Kenny McLean, an SNP candidate for Glasgow City Council elections, shared news of the funding announcement.** McLean is standing for the SNP in the Partick East/Kelvindale ward in the Glasgow City Council

elections. He stated: 'Scottish Government invest £8.35 million to support urban regeneration in the heart of Glasgow' (*Kenny McLean Twitter*, 2 May 2017, [link](#)).

- **Eva Bolander, an SNP candidate for Glasgow City Council elections, boasted of the funding in her ward.** Bolander is standing for the SNP in Anderston/City/Yorkhill ward in the Glasgow City Council elections. She stated: 'Great news for investment in quality office space in my ward' (*Eva Bolander Facebook*, 2 May 2017, [link](#)).
- **Glasgow is a key target seat for the SNP.** Nicola Sturgeon has said: 'In the council elections next May, let's work as hard as we ever have to bring the SNP to power...Glasgow is a vivid illustration of the success of our party' (*Speech to SNP Conference*, 15 October 2016, [link](#)).
- **SNP in Glasgow aim to take control of the council at these elections.** Susan Aitken, the SNP Group Leader in Glasgow, has also said: 'We think we are on track to achieve our target of at the least being the biggest party [in Glasgow] and I think we may well have an overall majority within our grasp. Winning in Glasgow would definitely help us ahead of the general election' (*Scotsman*, 30 April 2017, [link](#)).

[Sturgeon fails to explain 10 years of failure on education](#)

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4 May 2017



First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has been attacked for a decade of failure on education – days after predecessor Alex Salmond dismissed problems as “just one statistic”.

A number of figures were highlighted by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson, including that one in five youngsters leave school functionally illiterate and Scotland's schools slipping down global league tables.

She added that these failings have taken place on the SNP's watch – having been in power since 2007 – and that thousands of lives had been impacted.

However, at First Minister's Questions today, Ms Sturgeon stood by her record on education, again promising – despite being in charge for a decade – things would improve.

Thousands of teachers have been lost in Scotland over the last 10 years, Ruth said, while 16 per cent of training places in certain key subjects remain unfilled.

And she added that, as people vote in local government elections tomorrow, the SNP should remember that it promised education would be a priority ahead of everything else.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The SNP has been in sole charge of education for a decade, and these failings are inexcusable.

“One in five children leave school functionally illiterate, the proportion of youngsters performing well in numeracy is falling, and pupils’ ability in science is in ‘pronounced and sustained’ decline according to experts.

“These are problems of the SNP’s making – thanks to the nationalists, our schools can no longer be classed as world-leading.

“And it’s not just one statistic, as Alex Salmond claimed – it’s a 10-year record of failure.

“The SNP may say its priority is education, but the last decade tells a different story entirely.”

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3 May 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have called on the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government to investigate a Scottish Government announcement of an £8 million investment for Glasgow just two days before the local council election.

Official guidance states that Civil Servants in the Scottish Government should take ‘particular care’ over ‘official support, and the use of public resources, including publicity, for Ministerial or official announcements which could have a bearing on matters relevant to the local elections. In

some cases, it might be better to defer an announcement until after the elections’.

It says “particular care” should be taken in the three week period before the elections.

The Scottish Government announced £8.35million of funding for redevelopment in Glasgow – a key SNP target area in the local authority elections – late on Tuesday.

Ross Thomson, the party’s General Election candidate in Aberdeen South, questioned the motives behind the announcement.

He has written to Leslie Evans, Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government, requesting an investigation into the propriety of the timing.

Scottish Conservative candidate for Aberdeen South, Ross Thomson said:

“This looks like a blatant attempt to sway voters in an area that is being targeted by the SNP.

“I have written to the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government asking for an explanation as to how this could be announced just 48 hours before voters go to the polls.

“People need to have absolute confidence that public money is not being used for party political ends.”

The letter from Ross to the Permanent Secretary can be found [here](#).

Guidance found [here](#).

Nicola Sturgeon has said: *‘In the council elections next May, let’s work as hard as we ever have to bring the SNP to power...Glasgow is a vivid illustration of the success of our party’* (Speech to SNP Conference, 15 October 2016, [link](#)).

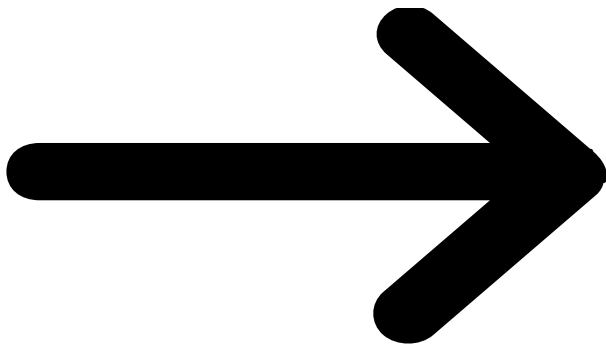
Susan Aitken, the SNP Group Leader in Glasgow, has also said: *‘We think we are on track to achieve our target of at the least being the biggest party [in Glasgow] and I think we may well have an overall majority within our grasp. Winning in Glasgow would definitely help us ahead of the general election’* (The Scotsman, 30 April 2017, [link](#)).

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growing ranks of pro-independence rebels

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3 May 2017



Kezia Dugdale has been told to act on her independence-supporting election candidates, after it emerged another aspiring MP is sympathetic to the break-up of Britain.

Labour's position on the union has already come under fire this week with candidates in pro-UK seats in the south of Scotland being revealed as separation sympathisers.

Now details have come out about Moray candidate Jo Kirby, who also appears to back independence.

She has shared a number of pro-SNP items on social media, including an article describing the SNP as "the most credible political force in the UK" and a speech by Angus Robertson – who she'll stand against in Moray – endorsing holding a second independence referendum.

Yesterday, Labour's candidate for the Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire by-election at Holyrood, Sally Prentice, claimed she was the person to stand up to the SNP on a "divisive" referendum re-run.

But just the week before, she said: "SNP voters – the only way you're going to get to ask the question again is if Jeremy Corbyn is in number 10."

In addition, it was reported yesterday that Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale candidate Douglas Beattie was "gutted" following the 2014 referendum result.

Now, the Scottish Conservatives have urged Ms Dugdale to either remove the candidates from the upcoming election, or face accusations of not being in control of her own party.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“Kezia Dugdale can’t reasonably say she’s serious about Scotland’s place in the UK while she stands by these independence-supporting candidates.

“She must either sack them, or admit she has next to no control over her own party.

“This goes beyond just a bit of embarrassment for Labour.

“The candidate for the Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire by-election is actually lying to voters by claiming to be the one to stand up to the SNP, while on social media she’s telling all her friends the precise opposite.

“These revelations go to show once again that it’s only the Scottish Conservatives who can be trusted on keeping Scotland a key part of the UK.”

Yesterday, two Labour General Election candidates were unmasked as independence supporters:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/05/labour-candidate-to-snp-voters-back-us-and-well-deliver-indyref2/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/05/revealed-the-labour-general-election-candidate-who-backs-separation/>

And today, a third has been revealed as an SNP sympathiser:

- **Jo Kirby shared a graphic promoting SNP policy on EU membership** (*Jo Kirby Facebook*, 24 June 2016, [link](#)).
- **Kirby promoted an article describing the SNP as the ‘most credible political force in the UK’** (*Jo Kirby Facebook*, 26 June 2016, [link](#)).
- **Kirby shared propaganda from a campaign for independence.** The post lauded Scots for ‘basing their nationality on civic rather than ethnic identity’ (*Jo Kirby Facebook*, 30 June 2016, [link](#)).
- **Jo Kirby shared a speech by Angus Robertson which endorsed holding a second independence referendum.** Kirby shared the speech, in which Robertson said: ‘We have no intention whatsoever of seeing Scotland taken out of Europe. That would be totally, totally democratically unacceptable. We are a European country and we will stay a European country. And if it means we have to have an independence referendum to protect Scotland’s place, then so be it’ (*Jo Kirby Facebook*, 28 June 2016, [link](#)).