

Scotland's female STEM struggle revealed

28 Apr 2017



The SNP need to do more to encourage females into participating in STEM subjects, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The calls come after latest figures from the SQA show that girls are significantly underrepresented in STEM subjects at Higher and National 5 level.

Of those taking Higher exams, only 9 per cent of engineering science, 27 per cent of physics and 17 per cent of computing students were female.

National 5 level also revealed a lack of female participation – 7 per cent of engineering, 27 per cent of physics and 18 per cent of computing examinees being girls.

Those girls who did take STEM subjects were shown to have performed better than boys – 81 per cent of girls achieving grades A to C compared to 72 per cent of boys.

Scottish Conservative shadow secretary for education, Liz Smith MSP said:

“These statistics are further proof of the extent of the STEM challenge facing the Scottish Government.

“The number of female students entering key subjects is only a very small fraction of the total entries from their male counterparts.

“Therefore, it begs the question about the effectiveness of the Scottish Government’s STEM strategy – a strategy that is already facing criticism from some academic bodies like the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

“Those female students who do enter for STEM subjects generally perform very well indeed, so it is even more disappointing that there are such low entries.

“Almost every report published by the science and technology industries tell us how important STEM subjects are to the future of the Scottish economy and how important women are to these new employment opportunities.

“The Scottish Government has much to do to address these concerns. Scotland needs many more graduates skilled in STEM subjects and women must be a very important part of that.”

Statistics were taken from SQA's Annual Statistical Report 2016 available via this link: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/63001.html>

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Farming income across Scotland decreased by almost half as rural communities struggled amid the SNP's chaotic approach to CAP payments.

Figures released today revealed, in 2015/16, the average income fell by £11,500 to £12,600.

The decrease came as rural communities were forced to wait months extra for hundreds of millions in CAP payments.

The Scottish Conservatives said today the statistics confirmed the SNP was letting down rural Scotland when it needed help the most.

And shadow rural affairs secretary Peter Chapman said it underlined just how important it was for the Scottish Government to get the farming payments right in future.

Scottish Conservative shadow rural affairs secretary Peter Chapman said:

"This goes to show that when farmers across Scotland were enduring huge falls in income, the SNP was nowhere to be seen.

"Instead of supporting them when they needed it most, the Scottish Government was starving the rural economy of hundreds of millions of pounds after messing up the CAP payments system.

"This will have made life for the country's farming communities all the more difficult.

"This drop in income is significant, and the Scottish Government needs to spell out exactly what it's going to do to help.

“It is extremely worrying that while Scotland’s food and drink is recording record sales and exports our farmers are not sharing in any of this success.

“Farmers desperately need a fairer share of consumer spending for providing quality food reared to the highest standards of animal welfare and environmental conditions.”

For more information, visit:

<https://news.gov.scot/news/scottish-farm-incomes>

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27 Apr 2017



Nicola Sturgeon has been accused of “treating the electorate like fools” after failing to clarify her party’s position on fishing and the EU.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson challenged the First Minister after splits emerged within the SNP over the controversial Common Fisheries Policy.

At the weekend, Angus Robertson said the party wanted to stay in the EU and, as a consequence, the CFP.

But days later, two SNP MPs signed a pledge describing Brexit as a “sea of opportunity”, promising to ensure Scotland – independent or not – would never be returned to the CFP.

However, at First Minister’s Questions today, Ms Sturgeon failed to clarify the party’s position on the CFP, or whether or not full EU membership would be in the SNP’s General Election manifesto.

Ruth also challenged the SNP leader on why she said this upcoming election has nothing to do with separation, a claim directly contradicted by her predecessor Alex Salmond on radio yesterday.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“Nicola Sturgeon is treating the electorate like fools.

“She thinks she can face both ways on fishing, the EU and independence, promising all things to all people.

“But Scotland’s fishing communities can see straight through this approach, and won’t forgive the SNP for trying to ignore the EU referendum and force them back into the hated CFP.

“The Scottish Conservatives are clear – Brexit means being out of the CFP for good.

“In addition, no-one believes her when she says this upcoming referendum has nothing to do with independence, even before Alex Salmond confirmed this as a lie.

“The SNP’s position on both is nothing short of absurd.”

Angus Robertson’s appearance on Sunday Politics Scotland at link below. He is asked about EU membership and the Common Fisheries Policy at 48.21:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b08mh836/sunday-politics-scotland-23042017>

The Scottish Fishermen’s Federation issued a challenge to all UK election candidates yesterday to sign its pledge to exit the EU and the CFP:

<http://www.sff.co.uk/industry-challenges-election-candidates-sign-brexit-pledge/>

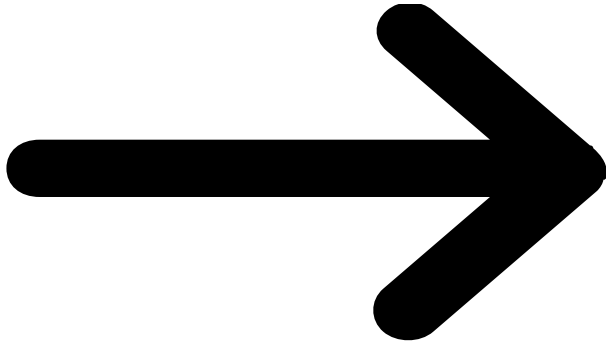
Eilidh Whiteford and Mike Weir both signed the pledge yesterday:

<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/business/1229521/snp-mps-accused-of-hypocrisy-for-signing-fishing-pledge/>

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26 Apr 2017



Labour have announced their candidate to fight the East Renfrewshire seat in the upcoming Westminster election – even though members there don't have any faith in their leader.

Blair McDougall will contest the seat in June's vote.

However, he will have to convince voters to back Labour despite the fact the party's own branch doesn't endorse Jeremy Corbyn.

In an open letter, 14 members across Eastwood said Corbyn "cannot provide the leadership" to form a government.

They added: "We need a credible, competent opposition, but Jeremy Corbyn is currently unable to fill all positions on his front bench. Jeremy Corbyn wants to captain a ship for which he has no crew. For the good of the party and, more importantly, the country, he must step aside."

And McDougall himself has been a regular critic of Corbyn.

During the leadership election he backed Owen Smith on the basis "we cannot win with Jeremy".

He also described as "fantasy" a remark by Corbyn that Labour were ahead in the polls last year.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader and MSP for Eastwood Jackson Carlaw said:

"How can the Labour candidate in East Renfrewshire expect people's votes, when members themselves won't back Jeremy Corbyn?"

"It demonstrates the chaotic state the Labour party finds itself in.

"Even Blair McDougall thinks Jeremy Corbyn can't win, which tells voters across East Renfrewshire everything they need to know.

"Only our candidate, Paul Masterton, can beat the SNP here, as we did at last year's election."

The open letter from Labour members is available here:

<http://labourhame.com/scottish-labour-members-call-for-corbyn-to-go/>

The Scottish Conservative candidate for East Renfrewshire is Paul Masterton.

To see a list of critical tweets and retweets by Blair McDougall about Jeremy Corbyn, visit:

<https://twitter.com/blairmcdougall/status/767111872025878529>

<https://twitter.com/blairmcdougall/status/763811597554941952>

<https://twitter.com/blairmcdougall/status/759477962714513408>

<https://twitter.com/blairmcdougall/status/766772372955357184>

<https://twitter.com/blairmcdougall/status/768759041514405888>

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26 Apr 2017



The SNP is “running scared” after begging the Greens not to stand candidates in seats it thinks could be vulnerable.

MP Tommy Sheppard said the Greens would “have to choose” when it came to certain constituencies in a bid “not to split the pro-Yes vote”.

The Greens’ “co-convener” Maggie Chapman has already hinted at support for “non-Green candidates” in parts of the country, so long as they’re backing separation.

In 2015, 31 Green candidates stood in the General Election, losing the deposit in all but three seats.

The Scottish Conservatives have warned the party to “put up or shut up”, adding that its core voters wouldn’t forgive lying down to the SNP.

Scottish Conservative candidate for Aberdeen South Ross Thomson said:

“The Greens have to put up or shut up.

“They can’t pretend to be a proper party while sitting this election out and begging its voters to back someone else.

“That’s a shameful approach, and any genuine Green voter will be disgusted with it.

"It's also very telling that the SNP has taken this step.

"It shows the party is rattled and running scared, and its MPs right across Scotland are terrified of losing their seats.

"So they should be. People are sick of the nationalists' rabble-rousing on separation, and this latest intervention will just put more people off."

- **Maggie Chapman said that she would be happy to support 'non-Green candidates' and that the Party would not stand in constituencies that it had previously lost its deposit in.** 'I would be quite happy for us to support non-Green candidates if it meant getting Tories out of Scotland and making sure we had elected representatives who walk the walk of the politics of the new Scotland we want to see... I think what we need to do is use this as an opportunity to talk about the kind of Scotland we want to see, the kind of politics we want to see, and I'm hopeful we can agree to say let's back the candidates who offer those kinds of views and that kind of outlook for Scotland. I don't see us standing in seats in areas where we lost deposits last time.....I've always advocated political co-operation. I think it's an important element of how we do politics as Greens and this is possibly an opportunity for us to put this belief into practice, to work with it to make sure we see a more forward and outward-looking representation for people.' (*The National*, 19 April 2017, [link](#)).
- **Patrick Harvie said that the Greens had to 'weigh up' reducing the number of Scottish Conservative MPs and staying true to their 'principles' and 'the reasons we're in politics at all'.** 'The question of course for independence supporters is how the cause can be advanced in the context of this snap election... Few people would wager a pint of beer against the SNP winning most of Scotland's constituencies in June, but I dare say not many would bet heavy on them winning 50 per cent of the vote single-handed... So as all our parties approach an election we didn't expect, we have a lot to weigh up. How to minimise the Tory presence in all our lives, and the reach of their odious policies. How to successfully reassert the mandate for an independence vote. And how to stay true to our principles and the reasons we're in politics at all' (*The National*, 20 April 2017, [link](#)).
- **The SNP have ordered the Greens to not split 'the pro-Yes vote' and to stop 'targeting' SNP marginals.** Tommy Sheppard said: 'I know the Greens will want to stand some candidates but I also know they have never stood everywhere. So they are going to have to choose. They will want to stand some candidates as they are a national party and will want to put their case to their base, but in deciding which seats to contest and not to contest I think they should be mindful of not splitting the pro-Yes vote and certainly not splitting the anti-Tory vote.' Referring to Edinburgh South particularly he said 'It's not a four way marginal with the Greens, it's a three way marginal and in those circumstances I don't think the Greens should be targeting that sort of seat.' (*The National*,

26 April 2017, [link](#)).

- **Patrick Harvie has recently said that the Greens could enter into a formal coalition with the SNP in the Scottish Parliament.** 'Absolutely. I think the idea of remaining in opposition for all time isn't one that's attractive to any political party. If you believe in proportional representation you believe in a fair balance of political parties across parliament and coalition is the most likely way for a government to form a majority. The previous session, where there was a single party majority, was, I think, an aberration, and I don't think it's likely to happen again.' (*Daily Record*, 18 April 2017, [link](#)).
- **In the 2015 General Election the Scottish Greens stood candidates in a record 31 constituencies.** However, they were only able to save their deposit in three Edinburgh East, Edinburgh North and Leith and Glasgow North (*Scottish Greens*, 22 February 2015, [link](#)).