

Ruth's reaction to General Election announcement

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Ruth's reaction to General Election announcement

18 Apr 2017



Please see below a comment from Ruth following the announcement from the Prime Minister regarding a General Election this June.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"I very much welcome the Prime Minister's announcement. The Scottish Conservatives are ready for a campaign, we are organised, and we are optimistic about the prospect of increasing our number of seats.

"In Scotland, we will have a clear election message – only a vote for the Scottish Conservatives will ensure we get the strong leadership we need to get the best Brexit deal for the whole country.

"And only a vote for the Scottish Conservatives will send a strong message that we oppose SNP's divisive plan for a second referendum.

"We know the SNP will use this campaign to try and manufacture a case for separation. And with Jeremy Corbyn having already said he is 'absolutely fine' with an immediate referendum, we also know that Labour can't be relied to stand up to them.

"By contrast, the Scottish Conservatives have the strength right across Scotland to stand up for people who oppose the SNP's plans.

"The choice is simple: it's between a strong government led by Theresa May working to get the best Brexit deal, or a weak Labour government, led by Jeremy Corbyn, which cannot stand up to the SNP.

"The Scottish Conservatives will be fighting a Scotland-wide campaign in this election. Our aim is to gain support all over the country. We will be fighting for every vote."

SNP must crack down on drug driving menace

18 Apr 2017



The Scottish Conservatives are today launching a new campaign to demand tougher laws to crack down on drug-driving – amid growing evidence of the havoc it is wreaking on our roads.

The number of people on drugs dying at the wheel is now the same as the number fatalities who test positive for alcohol, new research has revealed.

Yet, despite this, the law and standard practice in Scotland lags significantly behind other parts of the UK.

Today, the Scottish Conservatives are setting out their own plan for action, and demanding that the SNP Government acts to deliver without delay.

The calls back those made by parents whose children have been killed by drug drivers in Scotland, such as Janice Ward.

Her 20-year old daughter Rachael was killed by a man driving at over 70 mph on the wrong side of the road, high on amphetamines.

Across the UK, including in Scotland, it is an offence to drive ‘impaired by drugs’.

But, unlike in England and Wales there is no specific drug limit for motorists, and police do not have standard access to roadside drug testing equipment.

Furthermore, in Scotland, if a case makes it to court, it is not enough to show that a driver had a specific amount of intoxicants in their bloodstream – instead prosecutors have to prove that a driver was ‘impaired’ by drug intake.

The Scottish Conservatives are now calling for 3 reforms to be taken immediately.

1. A prescribed limit for legal drugs – making it easier to prosecute motorists who put other road users at risk by taking dangerous levels of medicinal drugs.
2. Zero tolerance to driving on illegal drugs – effective use of new and existing legislation to reduce the prevalence of drug abusers getting behind the wheel.
3. Roadside drug testing kits – new roadside drug equipment to be supplied for quicker and easier detection of offenders.

Douglas Ross, the Scottish Conservatives' justice spokesman said:

"The evidence is clear – drug driving is just as dangerous as drink driving. Yet in Scotland, the government has simply failed to respond to this menace on our roads.

"We need immediate action now to bring a halt to the growing number of deaths and injuries caused by people on drugs getting behind the wheel.

"That means improved legislation to tackle driving under the influence of all dangerous substances, and a zero tolerance approach to anyone foolish enough to drive having taken drugs.

"We must also give our police the resources and equipment to put this into practice.

"Quite simply, Scotland has lagged behind other parts of the UK in failing to tackle this issue. The SNP Government needs to take action without further delay."

1. The Current Framework

Across the UK, including Scotland, it is an offence to drive 'impaired by drugs', but unlike in England & Wales there is no specific drug limit for motorists in Scotland, and police do not have access to roadside drug testing equipment. The current approach has many difficulties and fails to identify and prosecute motorists who are putting other road users at risk.

When confronted by a driver they believe is intoxicated by illicit substances, the police in Scotland can only conduct what is known as a 'field impairment test' at the roadside, which requires the driver to demonstrate their co-ordination by doing things like walking in a straight line or standing on one leg. If the person fails this test, the police officer has to take the person all the way to a police station to conduct a blood test, which can then be relied on in court.

If the case makes it to court, it is not enough to show that the driver had any or even at least a specific amount of intoxicants in their bloodstream. Under Section 4(5) of the Road Traffic Act 1998, prosecutors must prove that a driver was 'impaired' by the drugs in their system.

Field impairment tests, originally designed for testing levels of alcohol intoxication, are impractical, inefficient and unreliable. They do not offer a dependable way of distinguishing between drugs and alcohol. Put simply, they are not fit for purpose in a modern police force.

Similarly, the current legislation used to convict drug-drivers in Scotland is not tough enough. More effective laws and enforcement could reduce drug-related deaths on our roads.

In England & Wales, Section 56 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 inserted a new Section (5A) into the Road Traffic Act 1998. This created a new offence

of driving in excess of a prescribed limit of seventeen drugs, so that driving over the limit of these drugs became illegal in a similar way to alcohol. This came into force in early 2015.

Police in England and Wales also now have access to roadside drug kits to swab for cannabis and cocaine in a motorist's saliva. These so-called 'drugalyser' devices have the potential to increase the detection of drug-driving in Scotland.

It is clear that Scotland is lagging behind in the way we deal with drug-drivers. The changes that have been made in other parts of the United Kingdom should be adapted into Scots law. Now is the time to take action to crack down on offenders, deter future driving on drugs and make Scotland's roads safer.

2. Why We Need Change

Although it is already an offence to drive while impaired by drugs in Scotland, there is a need for this legislation to be built upon. There is evidence both of the scale of the problem in Scotland and the positive impact that change can have.

A recently published article in *Forensic Science International* demonstrated the shocking prevalence of drug-driving in Scotland. The analysis revealed that driving under the influence of cannabis and drink-driving led to the same number of deaths between 2012 and 2015. Out of 118 cases of driver and motorcyclist fatalities examined, 24 (20 per cent) tested positive for alcohol and 24 (20 per cent) tested positive for cannabis. The study also showed a sharp rise in the number of fatalities who had taken drugs alone without any alcohol between 2013 and 2015. The lead author of the study, Dr Hilary Hamnett, has highlighted how far behind Scotland is compared to Scandinavian countries when it comes to drug-driving.

A Transport Scotland study, *Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2015*, demonstrated that a driver or rider being impaired by drugs was possibly or very likely to be a contributory factor in 55 road accidents in 2015.

There is also evidence that changes of the sort introduced in England & Wales will have a real impact. Drug-driving arrests soared 800 per cent in the first year in one force area after new legislation was brought into force, and it was reported that almost 14,000 arrests were made across England & Wales in the same time period. Conviction rates have also increased.

Parents of drug driving victims recently called for new laws to be introduced in Scotland

<http://tinyurl.com/n2mx7j6>

There have also been calls for action by road safety charities such as I Am RoadSmart

<https://www.iamroadsmart.com/media-and-policy/news-and-insights/advice-and-insights/2017/02/09/drug-driving-high-time-we-took-note>

Sturgeon knew EU membership could ruin currency plan

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Sturgeon knew EU membership could ruin currency plan

14 Apr 2017



The release of secret SNP documents suggest they deliberately misled the public in their 2014 whitepaper on independence – because they knew the EU could trash their plans.

The 2014 whitepaper repeatedly said an independent Scotland would keep the pound and use the Bank of England as its central bank, with a Scottish Monetary Institute (SMI) created to work under the Bank. It also said that an independent Scotland would be a member of the EU.

But a Freedom of Information request has revealed the details of a proposed SMI, and that the SNP knew that their plans could break EU rules.

Countries joining the EU have to sign up to the full body of EU law. This includes the requirement for all member states to aim to adopt the Euro.

Under a heading of 'hot issues' that could cause problems, the paper admits one such issue would be *'Continued use of Sterling and the EU requirement for new member states to aim for convergence to adopt the euro. Role of the SMI will depend on negotiations with the EU.'*

The EU joining criteria also includes the requirement for member states to have their own, independent national central banks.

The paper recognises this might ruin the SNP's proposals, stating *'This would require negotiation and agreement with the EU, should Scotland be required to have a separate central bank the functions of the SMI can be expanded to fulfil the requirements.'*

The paper also reveals that:

- The EU may have opposed the SNP's plans for an independent Scotland to keep using the Bank of England for wider roles, such as guaranteeing deposits and regulating banks.
- The traditional system of Scottish banks issuing bank notes may have ended, with one option being 'to consider the introduction of a single Scottish issuer.'

- The recruitment of a governor of the institute was 'being undertaken' at the time of the paper's writing and was due to be complete by September 2014.
- The institute would have an estimated running cost of up to £50m and a staff of up to 400 people, spending £60m on consultancy fees, and face total transition costs of up to £69m.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser MSP said:

"This is an astonishing revelation. At the same time as Nicola Sturgeon was confidently preaching that we could keep the pound and share the Bank of England's functions, she knew the EU could ruin those plans.

"The SNP can't even confirm whether they want to be part of the EU any more. If this is the level of their attempts to face two ways, then no wonder.

"Not only that, but their plans for a separate Scottish Monetary Institute would be extortionate, with hundreds of staff needed even if the Bank of England maintained responsibility for a 'large' number of functions.

"Given how damaging these documents are, it's not surprising that the SNP Government covered them up for years and ended up releasing them on Easter weekend.

"We already knew the SNP's economic plans were built on sand. Now we have clear proof they were actively misleading the public."

The full FOI release can be found here:

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/scottish-monetary-institute-foi-release/>

Under a heading of 'hot issues', the paper admits one such issue would be *'Continued use of Sterling and the EU requirement for new member states to aim for convergence to adopt the euro. Role of the SMI will depend on negotiations with the EU.'*

It goes on to explain that *'New Member States are also committed to complying with the criteria laid down in the Treaty in order to be able to adopt the euro in due course after accession.'*

The EU joining criteria includes the requirement for member states to have their own, independent national central banks, and the paper recognises this might ruin the SNP's proposals, stating *'The Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union sets out requirements for each country's National Central Bank. Under the proposed framework the Bank of England would continue to operate as the central bank for Scotland. However this would require negotiation and agreement with the EU, should Scotland be required to have a separate central bank the functions of the SMI can be expanded to fulfil the requirements.'*

With regards to staffing costs, the papers state:

'A significant number of staff would be required for the negotiations with the

UK and for establishing the SMI. Based on the current transition plan, with the Bank of England retaining responsibility for a large number of functions it is estimated that from 2017-18 onwards between 300 and 400 staff would be required. If no agreement is reached with the UK government and the Bank of England does not undertake a large number of central banking functions on behalf of the SMI, then the remit of the SMI would need to be significantly expanded and the number of staff required would be considerably larger – in addition these staff would need to be experts with international reputations recruited from other central banks, the remuneration packages required to attract such individuals are likely to be expensive.'

With regards to the issuers of bank notes in an independent Scotland, the papers say:

'[one option would be] To consider the introduction of a single Scottish issuer (to replace issue by commercial banks). The Scottish Monetary Institute would then be responsible for both management and issue of banknotes, with backing assets held at the Bank of England

School defect revelations 'deeply worrying'

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- School defect revelations 'deeply worrying'

13 Apr 2017



A BBC investigation that has found that at least 71 schools in Scotland were found to have defects similar to those found in Edinburgh has been described as 'deeply worrying' by the Scottish Conservatives.

17 schools in Edinburgh were shut after a wall collapsed at Oxbgangs Primary School last year, and since then 15 local authorities have carried out work to deal with similar defects.

However, eleven local authority areas admitted that they had not done intrusive surveys that the report into the Edinburgh schools said was necessary to uncover problems. Shadow education secretary Liz Smith described this as 'totally unacceptable' and called on the Scottish Government to do more to ensure that councils carry out their statutory obligations to check school buildings.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith MSP said:

“These revelations are deeply worrying for all parents who are about to send their children back to school after the Easter break and for all pupils and staff who work in our schools.

“The fact that 11 local authorities have not undertaken the detailed building surveys which were recommended in the Edinburgh schools report is totally unacceptable.

“It lays bare the fact that the Scottish Government has not done nearly enough to check that all local authorities are carrying out their statutory obligations to check school buildings.

“Nothing is more important than public safety so it is now imperative that all local authorities carry out these checks immediately.

“The Scottish Conservatives have long argued that there should be no scope to make short cuts on these statutory checks undertaken by local authorities and contractors, and that confirmation of the checks should be made available at the same time as a school is inspected by HMIe so that parents, staff and pupils can be confident that their school is wholly fit for purpose.”

For more information:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-39580308>

[Cost of Scottish schools vermin crisis revealed](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Cost of Scottish schools vermin crisis revealed

10 Apr 2017



Hundreds of thousands of pounds is spent each year dealing with vermin infestation across Scottish schools, research has revealed.

The analysis shows that between 2011-2016, more than £1.5million was spent controlling the likes of cockroaches, flies, rats and ants in schools.

Glasgow was shown to have paid out the most on pest control – spending £132,919 during 2012 alone – and £460,893 between 2011-2015.

The Scottish Conservatives have called for ministers to do more to ensure every child in Scotland can receive education without worrying about pest infestation.

Scottish Conservative schools spokesman Ross Thomson said:

“Given how much is spent each year, these statistics reveal a genuine problem with vermin in Scottish schools.

“Parents and teachers will quite rightly be disgusted at the thought of children being educated in unhygienic environments.

“It’s important for youngsters to be attending a school that is both clean and suitable if they are to reach their true potential during their time in education.”

Full spreadsheet of pest control stats by council area:

[Copy of Pest Control](#)