

[Backbench SNP MSP goes rogue on the NHS](#)

3 Apr 2017



An SNP MSP has taken the unusual step of launching his own plan for future of the NHS – despite having no involvement in his party’s health set-up.

Alex Neil, who previously occupied the role of health secretary, unveiled his strategy today through the organisation Options for Scotland.

In it, he acknowledges that the longer-term challenges facing the health service have been “swept under the carpet” and suggests a range of solutions.

However, his event doesn’t appear to have the backing of either the SNP nor the Scottish Government, even though Mr Neil is a member of both.

The launch release makes no mention of current health secretary Shona Robison.

This is the latest example of Mr Neil contradicting both SNP and Scottish Government policy, after he admitted voting for the UK to leave the EU last year.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Donald Cameron said:

“It appears Alex Neil is so dissatisfied with his own government’s running of the NHS he deems it necessary to go his own way on the matter.

“SNP HQ will be furious that he is trying to sideline the health secretary on this one.

“People will wonder why on earth an SNP backbencher is taking it upon himself to do this.

“His pleas internally have obviously fallen on deaf ears, and now he is taking his own agenda to the wider public.

“There’s no question that the NHS in Scotland needs substantial review, and many of these points are worthy of consideration.

“But as long as the SNP prioritises the break-up of Britain over the running of the NHS, no real improvements will take place.”

For more on Alex Neil’s plans, visit:

<http://www.optionsforscotland.com/2017/04/03/a-stimulus-for-a-national-debate>

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3 Apr 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have accused the SNP government of “blatant spin” after ministers today described their decision not to pass on tax cuts to thousands of Scottish workers as a sign of “fairness and equality”.

In a press release heralding new Scottish rates of income tax, finance secretary Derek Mackay also claimed that his decision – which will drag more workers into the higher rate of income tax – would make Scotland “an attractive place to live and work”.

This is despite the fact that business leaders have warned that higher rates in Scotland could create a “dangerous precedent” for the Scottish economy.

Following pressure from the Scottish Greens, the SNP government decided last month to freeze the higher rate of income tax at £43,000.

By contrast, in the rest of the UK, the threshold for the higher rate will rise this week to £45,000.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“Even for the nationalists, this blatant attempt to spin the SNP’s tax plans is astonishing.

“The truth is that, later this week, tens of thousands of families elsewhere in the UK will get a long overdue tax break.

“But, thanks to the actions of this SNP government, families in Scotland earning the exact same in their pay packet will be denied it.

“Instead, many police officers, teachers and senior nurses will continue to be dragged into the higher rate of tax.

“Derek Mackay’s claim that this provides ‘fairness and equality’ for people in Scotland suggests the SNP has finally gone through the looking glass.

“Nicola Sturgeon’s decision to make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK is utterly unnecessary and unjustified.

“The fact that her government is resorting to spin in order to hide the fact suggests she knows it too.”

The full Scottish Government release is here from today is here:

<https://news.gov.scot/news/scottish-income-tax>

Scottish Chambers of Commerce reaction to the SNP budget is

here: <http://www.scottishchambers.org.uk/press-policy/press-releases/2016/12/882>

[Sturgeon would struggle to pass the salt – never mind pass a bill](#)

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- Sturgeon would struggle to pass the salt – never mind pass a bill

2 Apr 2017



Nicola Sturgeon’s SNP Government is set to become the first administration since devolution not to have a passed a single substantive bill in the year following their election, new figures show today.

In further evidence of how she has ignored the day job in pursuit of a 2nd referendum on independence, Ms Sturgeon’s government’s only legislative act so far since last May’s election has been to pass a Budget – a legal requirement.

By this point in the parliamentary cycle, both the 1999 and 2003 devolved governments had passed four bills.

By contrast, this SNP Government has spent a total of 43 hours debating either Brexit or Independence – and has delayed its flagship education bill.

It comes as Nicola Sturgeon plans to step up her focus on constitutional politics, by threatening to derail Brexit legislation, and outlining further efforts to stage a second referendum.

This is despite the fact that said that education would be “number one

priority”.

Scottish Conservative chief whip John Lamont said:

“The SNP once said of its opponents that they wouldn’t be able to deliver a pizza, never mind a parliament.

“That turned out to be wrong. But now they’re in charge, it seems Nicola Sturgeon would struggle to pass the salt, never mind pass a bill.

“It is a disgrace. Nicola Sturgeon promised to prioritise our children’s education. Instead, she’s dumped that pledge in order to focus on the SNP’s only priority – splitting our country in two.

“She has become a part-time First Minister, and full-time nationalist activist.

“Instead of a competent government, we have a chaotic administration which has back-tracked on education, u-turned on the economy, and put up taxes on job creators.

“The threat of a second referendum will further damage Scotland’s reputation. It is time Nicola Sturgeon got back to the day job and delivered.”

LEGISLATION PASSED IN SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT SESSIONS

Bills passed by the Scottish Parliament (completing Stage 3) by the 1 April in the year following a Scottish Parliament election. Dates included are of Stage 3 completing rather than Royal Assent. Budget Acts are not included.

Following 1999 election

Mental Health (Public Safety and Appeals) (Scotland) Act 1999	8 September 1999
Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000	1 December 1999
Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2000	15 March 2000
Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000	29 March 2000

Following 2003 election

Education (School Meals) (Scotland) Act 2003	11 June 2003
Robin Rigg Offshore Wind Farm (Navigation and Fishing) (Scotland) Act 2003 [Private Bill]	26 June 2003
Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Act 2004	18 December 2003
Vulnerable Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2004	4 March 2004

Following 2007 election

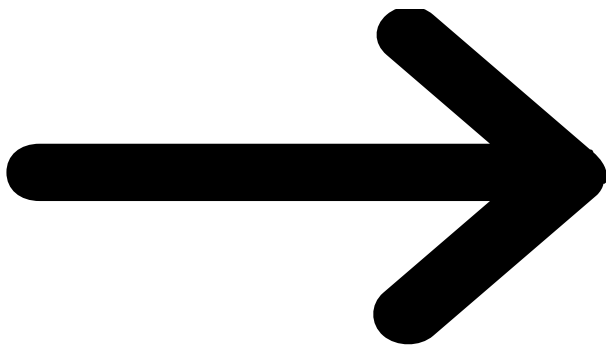
Abolition of Bridge Tolls (Scotland) Act 2008 20 December 2007
Graduate Endowment Abolition (Scotland) Act 2008 28 February 2008

Following 2011 election

Offensive Behaviour at Football and
Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012 14 December 2011

FM indyref plan “unwanted and unworkable”

31 Mar 2017



Nicola Sturgeon’s call for a second referendum has been dismissed by the Scottish Conservatives today.

Reacting to the First Minister’s proposal, deputy leader of the Scottish Conservatives Jackson Carlaw said the proposal was both “unwanted and unworkable”.

The Scottish Conservatives’ position continues to be that a referendum cannot happen until people have had the chance to see Brexit play out – and should not happen when most people in Scotland don’t want it.

The SNP has said again today it wants a referendum by March 2019 – before Scotland and the whole UK leave the EU.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“At the very moment we should be uniting as a country to get the good deal out of Brexit, Nicola Sturgeon is trying to divide us again.

“Her plans are unwanted and unworkable.

“Unwanted, because people made a decision on this just three years ago and

don't want to go back to yet more division.

“Unworkable, because under the SNP’s plans, people would have no idea what they are voting on.

“She wants a referendum campaign to start right now – despite still not having answered basic questions on the currency, on EU membership and the cost of independence.

“We have had enough of SNP stunts and First Ministerial photo-calls.

“Nicola Sturgeon should dump her referendum plans now, work to get the best deal possible Brexit deal for Scotland and the UK – and then get back to the day job of improving our schools and hospitals, as she promised.”

[SNP perform u-turn on scrapping enterprise and skills agencies](#)

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30 Mar 2017



The SNP Government have been forced into an embarrassing u-turn on their plans to abolish the boards of several enterprise and skills agencies.

Keith Brown had announced plans to replace the boards of Scottish Enterprise, Highlands & islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council with an overarching statutory board controlled by ministers.

However in today’s statement he announced that all boards would be remaining in place, although there are still questions over the role of the strategic board and what powers it will have.

It follows sustained pressure to reverse the decision, which culminated in the parliament voting to reverse the plans following a Scottish Conservative debate in January this year.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

“This is an embarrassing u-turn from the SNP Government and shows that they have finally caved after the sustained criticism these plans received from all sectors.

“The vote following the Scottish Conservative debate earlier this year proved that there was no political will for this move either, and it was clear it needed to be stopped.

“We need to see a step-change in the performance of the economy, but abolishing these boards would have only hindered our ability to deliver an economic strategy and to grow.

“What is totally unacceptable is the SNP’s attempts to bury this news on the last day of the parliamentary term.

“Placing it amongst several other important statements is a crude way of trying to hide this from the Scottish people, and it just shows the extent that the SNP is willing to go to in order to hide their incompetence.

“This latest u-turn from Keith Brown comes after a woeful week for the Cabinet Secretary.

“Earlier in the week he had to announce a second delay to the completion of the Queensferry Crossing, and this was followed by having to make a humiliating apology over last year’s potential investment by Chinese investors, which was dubbed a ‘Shambles’ in China.’”

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“It’s welcome that the economy secretary has finally seen sense on this issue.

“Their proposals had the potential to do a lot of harm, and experts throughout the sector had warned them against it.

“However there are still several question marks over the role of the strategic board and what powers it will have.

“Until the SNP provide more detail on this many people will still be cautious about what this means for the future autonomy of these agencies.”