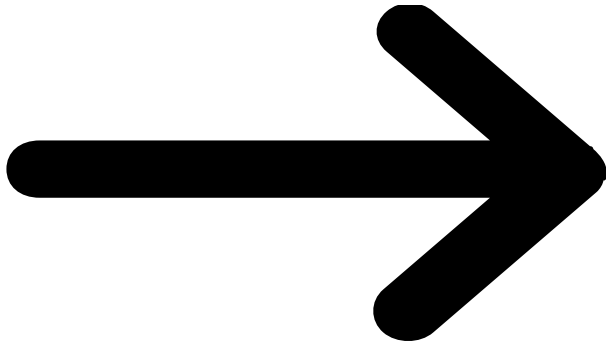


[Response to Nicola Sturgeon conference speech](#)

18 Mar 2017



Please see a comment below in response to Nicola Sturgeon's speech to the SNP conference in Aberdeen today.

Jackson Carlaw MSP, Scottish Conservative deputy leader, said:

"This is the week that Nicola Sturgeon gave up being First Minister and instead put her obsession with independence before the day job.

"This was a disappointing and negative speech. Nicola Sturgeon seems to be more interested in complaining about the UK government than talking up her own.

"The SNP spends so much time plotting games over separation, it now relies on other parties for policies – our plan calling for mental health workers in GP practices and A+Es was published barely three months ago.

"It is flattering that the SNP are catching up, but that does not mask the fact that the vast bulk of this speech was yet another rallying call for independence.

"We now have a part-time First Minister claiming to speak for Scotland, but in fact pursuing her own narrow agenda to the detriment and against the wishes of ordinary Scots."

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- Expert report – uncertainty over independence putting North Sea jobs and investment at risk

18 Mar 2017



Uncertainty over Scottish independence is putting jobs and investment in the North Sea at risk, a new report from a respected energy consultancy has said today.

Edinburgh-based analysts Wood Mackenzie (WoodMac) have said that Nicola Sturgeon's fresh drive for separation could deter investors from committing to new projects.

The report states that prospects for the future tax take are being overshadowed by questions about who will subsidise decommissioning liabilities.

While WoodMac points to 11 billion barrels of oil equivalent (boe) lying in Scottish waters, there is also an obligation to break-up the majority of fields, equating to 80% of the total UK decommissioning bill.

The report adds: "Critically, political uncertainty could deter investors from committing to new projects. With new investment and jobs at risk, and the complicating factors of boundaries and decommissioning tax relief, much is at stake."

Scottish Conservative Energy spokesman Alexander Burnett said:

"It is clear from this report that the currently fragile recovery we are seeing in the North Sea could be put at risk by Nicola Sturgeon's reckless and irresponsible drive for independence.

"Wood Mackenzie have correctly pointed out that the uncertainty caused by the looming threat of a repeat vote on separation could deter crucial investment in the sector.

"The SNP spent part of yesterday's conference in Aberdeen bemoaning the apparent lack of support from the UK Government, which has delivered £2.3 billion in tax breaks in the last three years.

"Far from supporting the industry, the SNP's obsession with independence could cost jobs, reduce investment and cause huge confusion for the decommissioning market.

"Nicola Sturgeon does not have public support for a referendum, and she is

now being warned that it will be damaging for the economy. She should drop these plans immediately.”

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16 Mar 2017



Below is a statement by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson on Nicola Sturgeon's plan for a repeat independence referendum.

“Thank-you.

On Monday this week, the First Minister chose the wrong course for Scotland.

I profoundly regret the course of action she took.

And on behalf of the many, many Scots who do not want to go back to a second referendum – people who voted both No and Yes to independence – I tell her, it is not too late to change course.

The fact is that there are so many other urgent issues that require our attention

...from managing the Scottish Parliament's important new powers over tax and welfare, to the future of our NHS.

The First Minister herself has said that that improving the quality of Scottish schooling would be her number one priority.

In our view, an all-consuming referendum campaign over the next 18 months would show this promise to be worthless.

So I ask the First Minister to act – and act now – to show she is prepared to deliver on those pledges she made.

Unfortunately, all the signs are that the Scottish Government will not take that step.

In addition to Monday's statement, a website for its referendum campaign was set up at the start of this month, and fundraising has already commenced.

That is why the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and myself have decided today to make clear to the Scottish people what response we will adopt.

As David has already said, we reject conclusively the timetable for a referendum set out by the Scottish Government.

For a key reason – because it is unfair to Scottish voters.

We have just come through a referendum campaign when a key complaint among many people was that they did not have the necessary information to help them make an informed decision.

If we were to keep to the First Minister's timetable, this is exactly what would happen in Scotland, too.

On the most important political decision a country can make, we would be voting blind.

I believe that it is only right that people have the opportunity to examine the UK's new relationship with the European Union once it is up and running.

People should only be asked to make a judgement about whether to leave or remain within a 300-year old Union of nations when they have seen for themselves how that Union is functioning, following Brexit.

They should also know what the alternative entails, and we have seen no clarity from the SNP on even the basic questions of their proposition.

But I believe there is another fundamental reason why now is not the right time to take Scotland back to the precipice.

And that is because there is no clear political or public consent for this to take place.

The country – and our Parliament – is divided not over just the question of independence, but over whether we should even hold a referendum or not.

Prior to 2014, this was not the case.

We all accepted – Unionist, Nationalist and those who sat on the fence – that it was right and proper for the question to be asked.

Today, however, that consent is simply not there.

In Scotland, we know to our cost that referenda are divisive.

At an absolute minimum, therefore, I believe there should be agreement across political parties and from the public at large, that it is right and fair for such a referendum to proceed.

And I say:

just three years after the last one

when the SNP promised to respect the previous vote

and when the Scottish public are weary and divided over the prospect of an immediate second vote

that the SNP must earn the right to ask the question again.

They cannot simply claim it. And through that claim, pretend it is true.

In short, I oppose a referendum on independence.

But if the SNP insists on pressing ahead, we will argue that a referendum cannot happen when the Scottish people have not been given the opportunity to see how our new relationship with the European Union is working.

And until there is clarity over the alternative.

And we will maintain that it should not take place when there is no clear public or political consent for it to happen.

Our country does not want to go back to the divisions and uncertainty of the last few years.

Another referendum campaign will not solve the challenges this country will face.

It is my deep regret that the SNP has chosen the path of trying to divide Scotland yet further. It would be irresponsible not to do all I can, to ensure that does not happen.”

[Ruth: Sturgeon's referendum should not take place](#)

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16 Mar 2017



Scotland does not want to go back to the “division and uncertainty” of another referendum, Nicola Sturgeon was told today.

At First Minister's Questions, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said the party would reject the proposals set out by the SNP on Monday.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The Scottish Conservatives reject the proposals set out by the First Minister on Monday.

“A referendum cannot happen when the people of Scotland have not been given the opportunity to see how our new relationship with the European Union is working.

“And it should not take place when there is no clear political or public consent for it to happen.

“Our country does not want to go back to the divisions and uncertainty of the last few years.

“Another referendum campaign will not solve the challenges this country will face.

“We don’t want it. We don’t need it.”

[Growing disapproval over SNP handling of devolved matters](#)

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15 Mar 2017



A report published by YouGov has revealed an increase in disappointment over the SNP’s handling of vital issues.

The report includes survey results from numerous polls aimed at gauging how well or badly the public believe the SNP government is doing in handling education, the NHS, justice, the economy and policing issues.

Every question asked about the SNP’s governing performance revealed an increase in disappointment over its handlings.

48 per cent of respondents felt the SNP managed the NHS ‘fairly badly’ or ‘very badly’ – a five per cent increase from when previously asked in November last year.

The issue of justice also recorded significantly negative results – with 39 per cent of respondents viewing the SNP’s performance as not being good enough.

The report shows the need for a Scottish Government that spends its every waking hour improving standards across the country, and the Scottish Conservatives are now calling for the SNP to start focusing its time on tackling the real issues people are worried about.

Scottish Conservative chief whip John Lamont said:

“This report makes the growing scepticism of the SNP’s ability to effectively run the country clear.

“The SNP has simply brushed aside so many important issues they’ve described as a priority in its bid to break up Britain.

“It shows that behind a government whose clear raison d’être is independence, is a government that has done next to nothing to improve the many issues Scotland faces.

“Nicola Sturgeon needs to take a very clear message from this report – people don’t want independence, they want a government that is fully focused on improving issues that clearly need addressed.”

For a copy of the YouGov report click here:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/k39gmatrzb/Times_Scotland_Results_170314_VI_Indy2_Trade_Domestic_Website.pdf