

[Named person policy has 'run aground and should be scrapped'](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Named person policy has 'run aground and should be scrapped'

7 Mar 2017



The SNP's hated named person policy "has run aground and should be scrapped", the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Education secretary John Swinney told Holyrood today that he would bring forward a new bill for state guardians in the summer, and aimed to have it up and running by 2018.

Following the policy being ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court, he added some changes would be made to the data-sharing provisions.

However, shadow education secretary Liz Smith said the policy should be scrapped and, as it stands, will only be heading straight back to the courtroom.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"This is a scheme that has run aground and the fact the delay is now at two years shows exactly that.

"If the SNP had been listening properly it would have recognised months ago that it is completely unworkable and unwanted.

"Every opinion poll on the policy has made clear that the vast majority of parents do not want it, and it's clear many professionals tasked with delivering it are extremely concerned.

"Rather than muddy the waters even further, John Swinney should scrap this policy once and for all.

"As it stands, the named person policy is heading straight back to court."

The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly opposed the named person scheme:
<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/named-person/>

[Never mind indyref2: SNP must own up to the lies of indyref1](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- [Never mind indyref2: SNP must own up to the lies of indyref1](#)

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Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney are being urged to “come clean” over the SNP’s claims of an oil “bonus” after independence, after a close ally admitted this week it was made up.

The head of the SNP’s Growth Commission Andrew Wilson admitted that oil formed part of the “basis” of the SNP’s figures for independence – and was “baked in” to their assumptions.

His comment has exposed the SNP’s previous position, which repeatedly stated that oil would be a “bonus” that could be used to top up spending on the NHS, education and other public services in Scotland after independence.

Former First Minister Alex Salmond – one of the most enthusiastic proponents of the myth – has so far failed to speak out over Mr Wilson’s comments.

The Scottish Conservatives are today publishing a dossier of quotes from Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney from the referendum campaign on oil.

Both claimed that an oil “boom” was coming – with Mr Swinney even saying that an oil fund could be set up on day one of an independent Scotland.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“Never mind bringing forward plans for a second referendum, the SNP needs to own up to the lies it told in the first.

“Andrew Wilson has admitted that even the SNP knew its claims about an oil ‘boom’ were rubbish.

“Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney should now come clean.

“Time and again during the referendum campaign the nationalists told people in Scotland that we’d be rich thanks to the ‘bonus’ we’d get from a second oil boom.

“They now must stop hiding and – as Mr Wilson has done – admit they tried to deceive people.

“We can only be grateful that two million Scots saw through it and kept our

union of nations together.”

Pre-Referendum quotes on oil

Nicola Sturgeon

· **Nicola Sturgeon said that independence would bring a ‘second energy bonanza’.** ‘A no vote means Shetland’s natural wealth continues to flow to London, with a Yes vote Shetland can reap the benefits of a second energy bonanza’ (*Scottish Energy News*, 27 August 2014, [link](#)).

· **Sturgeon said that it was ‘Project Fear’ to argue that Scotland is better able to manage the fluctuations in its oil industry as part of the UK.** ‘According to Project Fear, small nations can’t manage oil. Someone really should tell Norway with its £470 billion oil fund’ (*Nicola Sturgeon Twitter*, 2 September 2013, [link](#)).

· **She said that there were ‘boom years ahead’.** ‘Oil Analysis shows boom years ahead’ (*Nicola Sturgeon Twitter*, 11 March 2013, [link](#)).

· **She failed to listen to warnings that the oil price could fluctuate.** ‘Let us hear no more from #no about oil being a problem’ (*Nicola Sturgeon Twitter*, 9 January 2014, [link](#)).

· **Sturgeon claimed that Scotland could establish a ‘national energy fund’ with oil revenues.** ‘Shetland showed the rest of Scotland the way when it established its oil fund in 1976. That charitable fund has grown to £200m and the investment it has made in Shetland communities is here for all to see. Independence means the rest of Scotland can take the same approach and invest in our future through a national energy fund, but it also means a new opportunity for Shetland communities to benefit from the industry off their shores’ (*BBC*, 27 August 2014, [link](#)).

· **She described oil revenues as a ‘massive advantage’ that other countries would give their ‘eye and teeth for’.** ‘And yes we have oil and gas in abundance. And I’ll let you into a wee secret – having oil and gas reserves worth £1.5 trillion is not really a problem. It’s not the sum total of our economy, but it’s a massive advantage that other countries would give their eye and teeth for. And it’s high time Scotland started getting the benefit of it’ (*Daily Record*, 24 March 2013, [link](#)).

· **She also said that setting up an ‘oil fund’ was one of her six reasons to vote Yes** (*Glasgow Evening Times*, 19 March 2014, p4).

John Swinney

· **John Swinney said that Scotland was on the verge of a ‘massive oil boom’ and that it could not ‘afford to be independent’.** ‘Crucially, at the same time as this expected surge in price, the North Sea is experiencing a renewed boom, as underlined in the recent report from industry body Oil & Gas UK which says that the additional investments which have been ploughed into

the sector in the last couple of years will generate an extra £3bn in revenues in 2017 when these new developments will be coming on stream. Taken together, this surge in investment and the rising price of oil mean that the early years of an independent Scotland are timed to coincide with a massive North Sea oil boom.... The question every voter in Scotland must ask themselves between now and the autumn of next year is whether, given all these facts, Scotland can afford not to be independent.' (*The Sunday Herald*, 10 March 2013, [link](#)).

· **At the same, a leaked SNP Government briefing paper warned Swinney of the 'volatile' nature of oil tax revenue.** The paper said 'North Sea tax receipts have been more volatile than onshore receipts... Given the relative importance of North Sea revenues to Scotland's public finances, these downward revisions have resulted in a deterioration in the outlook for Scotland's public finances.... In an independent Scotland this will have important implications for budget setting and estimating public sector borrowing requirements... However, this would, on present assumptions about on-shore tax revenues, require some downward revision in current spending.' (Better Together, *Leaked Scottish Government briefing to John Swinney*, 6 March 2013, [link](#)).

· **He also hailed the oil 'bonus' that Scotland would receive from independence.** 'North Sea oil is a bonus, not the basis for Scotland's economy, and with up to 24 billion barrels of oil left worth an estimated £1.5 trillion, it will continue to contribute to the wealth of Scotland for a long time to come' (*Herald Scotland*, 3 September 2013, [link](#)).

· **He said oil would provide an 'economic bonus' only made possible by Scotland becoming independent.** 'If we pursue the policies that only an independent Scotland will be able to pursue then we can deliver an oil fund from the point of independence and secure an economic bonus that can only be delivered by independence' (*BBC News*, 25 May 2014, [link](#)).

· **A spokesperson for Swinney, even after the Referendum, said that they expected the oil price to recover and that claims otherwise were 'clearly ridiculous'.** 'Oil is a bonus, not the basis of Scotland's economy – and most independent forecasts expect the price to rise again next year, with OPEC predicting a price of \$110 per barrel for the rest of the decade and around \$100 in real terms in the long-run. Labour's calls for an inquiry are clearly ridiculous. At time of the Scottish Government's publication in March last year, the \$113 price assumption was the average price over the previous two years.' (*The Telegraph*, 17 December 2014, [link](#)).

Alex Salmond

· **Alex Salmond said that Scotland was moving into a 'second oil boom'.** 'This bulletin shows the impact that increases in investment could have on production and revenues, and examines a range of scenarios. It demonstrates that, when the expected increase in production to two million barrels a day is taken into account, there can be little doubt that Scotland is moving into a second oil boom' (*BBC*, 11 March 2013, [link](#)).

• **Salmond said that oil was a 'huge bonus'**. 'If oil is taken out of the equation, then Scotland's economic output per head is almost identical to that of the UK. The benefit we get from oil and gas will be a huge bonus' (*The Sunday Times*, 21 July 2013, [link](#)).

• **He said that Scotland could create 'an oil savings fund' as soon as it became independent**. 'Scotland in strong position to start an oil savings fund from the point of independence' (*Alex Salmond Twitter*, 28 May 2014, [link](#)).

[Revealed: the health boards where half wait too long for mental health care](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Revealed: the health boards where half wait too long for mental health care

7 Mar 2017



Statistics released today have shown the health boards in Scotland where more than half of those referred for mental health treatment are being made to wait too long.

The ISD Scotland data revealed two NHS boards where children were more likely to miss the 18-week referral-to-treatment standard than be seen on time.

In addition, figures from the last quarter show one health board where 56.5 per cent of adults also missed the target.

It is the latest report showing shortcomings in psychological treatment north of the border, despite the Scottish Government claiming it has a parity of esteem with physical health.

The SNP states at least 90 per cent of adults referred by a GP for treatment should begin that within 18 weeks.

However, between October and December last year, just two health boards – Lanarkshire and the Western Isles – managed this.

In NHS Forth Valley, only 43.5 per cent were seen on time, while in NHS Lothian the figure was around two-thirds.

And for under 18s the picture is similarly grim.

In NHS Grampian 55 per cent of youngsters missed the 18-week target, along with 51.7 per cent in the Lothians.

Scottish Conservative public health spokesman Miles Briggs said:

“For a Scottish Government which says mental health is a priority, this is well short of the expected performance.

“No-one’s saying this is an easy situation to address, particularly with increasing awareness of the need to raise concerns about psychological problems.

“But for some health boards to be missing the target more often than they’re hitting it, for children and adults, that is utterly unacceptable.

“Unless these statistics are dramatically improved, no-one will believe the SNP when it says it wants to give parity of esteem to mental health.

“These figures show thousands of vulnerable people across Scotland, young and old, are being failed by a system which is supposed to help them.”

To access the full reports, which were published today by ISD Scotland, visit:

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-03-07/2017-03-07-WT-PsychTherapies-Report.pdf>

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-03-07/2017-03-07-CAMHS-Report.pdf>

The Scottish Conservatives published a policy paper on mental health at the end of last year:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Scottish-Conservative-Mental-Health-Policy.pdf>

Impact of SNP council cuts laid bare by Audit Scotland

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Impact of SNP council cuts laid bare by Audit Scotland

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The impact of the SNP's funding cuts to local authorities will be exposed by auditors in a report published tomorrow.

Audit Scotland will detail how council budgets have been slashed by nearly 10 per cent since 2010/11, with wide disparity between those affected.

'Local government in Scotland: Performance and challenges 2017' will show how £216 million will be wiped from council budgets next year in real terms by the Scottish Government.

It will add that while areas like Shetland will endure a cut of more than 20 per cent, other council areas – such as West Lothian – are to receive a reduction of less than five per cent.

The challenges of an ageing population will also be highlighted, with some councils set to have double the number of over 75s within a couple of decades.

The document will also cast doubt on the SNP and Labour's bid to hike council tax, saying it will have a "limited" impact on resources.

Among the future risks highlighted for councils was the planned implementation next year of the Scottish Government's hated named person scheme, which it says could "impact teachers' workloads".

Scottish Conservative local government spokesman Graham Simpson said:

"We've known for some time that councils across Scotland face a very challenging financial future.

"This report exposes just how great some of those challenges are, and how little the SNP is doing to mitigate them.

"In his budget, Derek Mackay will cut local authority budgets to the bone, something the nationalists have been doing steadily since 2010.

"All the while, the population is increasing and ageing, and the SNP is forcing ludicrous schemes such as named person on these organisations which will only make matters worse.

"Both the SNP and Labour seem to think the only solution to this is to whack up council tax.

"Audit Scotland has now exposed that lazy and punishing policy, pointing out even though it hits people in the pocket, it will have next to no impact on resources."

The report will be published tomorrow morning. For more information, visit:

<http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/>

SNP admits oil “bonus” claim was wrong

6 Mar 2017



The SNP’s claim that oil revenues could be used as a “bonus” in an independent Scotland was wrong, a senior party figure has finally admitted.

In a comment to be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 this evening, Andrew Wilson – who chairs the party’s Growth Commission – concedes that oil revenues “was indeed a basis” for the party’s financial plans during the independence referendum campaign in 2014.

This is despite Alex Salmond’s repeated claim during the campaign that “oil will be a bonus.”

The Scottish Conservatives are today calling on Mr Salmond to admit he got it wrong in the run up to the 2014 referendum and deliberately misled people by trying to claim oil would not be needed to plug massive holes in an independent Scotland’s finances.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“The full scale of Alex Salmond’s bluster and evasion in the 2014 referendum campaign is finally being exposed.

“He tried to claim oil revenues would be a “bonus” to an independent Scotland.

“As his close ally Andrew Wilson has now conceded, oil revenues were ‘baked’ into their numbers and formed the ‘basis’ for an independent Scotland’s finances.

“Mr Salmond has never admitted he tried to mislead people on oil during the 2014 referendum.

“Now that even his own SNP colleagues are owning up, it is time he did so himself.

“If the SNP is now admitting oil is a bonus, it must set out which taxes would rise and what public services would be cut in order to fill an independent Scotland’s £15bn deficit.

“Better still, the Nationalists should stop trying to make their sums work, get on with the day job, and dump their unwanted plans for a divisive second referendum.”

Salmond

quote <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-23389830>

Andrew Wilson's comments were broadcast on BBC Radio Scotland this morning: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08g7xjc>

Andrew Wilson: *I think people – if one was critical of the 2014 campaign – you know, for example, they would argue that oil was a bonus and not the basis, but we did have oil baked into the numbers and it was indeed a basis.”*