

# Housebuilders want to get back to work – SNP must make it happen

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- Housebuilders want to get back to work – SNP must make it happen

4 May 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have urged the SNP to give housebuilding the green light, on the day construction returns south of the border.

The UK Government allowed work to recommence on building sites today (Monday), meaning across England firms can continue building homes and infrastructure projects so long as they can do so safely.

However, Nicola Sturgeon has refused permission to companies to resume work here, meaning sites around Scotland are still lying empty.

Companies including Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon have already expressed their desire to get back to work in Scotland.

And the Scottish Conservatives have now spoken to several other housebuilders who say they are ready to return safely, but the SNP government is standing in their way.

They said plans were in place to allow different tradesmen in on a rota system to ensure social distances, and that other adequate preparations had been made.

## **Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:**

“We’ve been clear from the start that if the SNP wants to take a divergent approach from the rest of the UK, it has to show why that’s of benefit.

“And while this is first and foremost a public health crisis, we have to acknowledge and plan for the economic devastation too.

“Now we’re seeing work resume on all kinds of building sites from today in England, while in Scotland these remain empty.

“This will cause a disparity when it comes to economic recovery, and that’s not something we want to see replicated across the board.

“If Nicola Sturgeon is to continue this ban on construction, she needs to produce compelling evidence about why she’s doing it.”

**Scottish Conservative shadow housing minister Graham Simpson said:**

“There is already a housing crisis across Scotland, and this needless delay by the SNP is only going to make that worse.

“The further Scotland lags behind under the SNP, the more people are going to miss out on the opportunity of moving into a home that’s either under construction or in planning.

“What’s more, the construction industry and all the trades associated will risk plunging deeper into financial disaster, and many won’t come back from that.

“The industry has said it can return to work safely and that’s what’s now happening elsewhere in the UK.

“It’s time for the SNP to listen to the experts and follow suit.”

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## [SNP tells councils to use reserves to fight coronavirus](#)

3 May 2020



The SNP finance secretary has told councils to use their own reserves to pay for the fight against coronavirus.

Kate Forbes wrote to Cosla in response to calls for her government to pass on all £155 million in Barnett Consequentials intended for local authorities.

But instead of promising to send the cash on, she advised councils to raid their own savings, despite Audit Scotland repeatedly warning that many local authorities were running on empty.

She said: *“I also want to consider what further reprioritisation we could undertake jointly to free up resources to meet the cost challenges now and in the future, along with the use of local government reserves and applications to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (e.g. for ALEOs) to help contain the costs.”*

Councils, all of whom were already under severe financial pressure, have struggled to find the cash to ensure health and social care work continues to be resourced.

It comes as care homes continue to struggle to access vital protective equipment for staff.

And previously Audit Scotland warned: “We urgently need much faster progress in the reform of our health and social care services. The current position is increasingly unsustainable.

**Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:**

“Councils came into this crisis ill-equipped to cope after years of the SNP slashing their budgets to the bone.

“Now, instead of passing on the money they need, the finance secretary is telling them to raid their reserves even further.

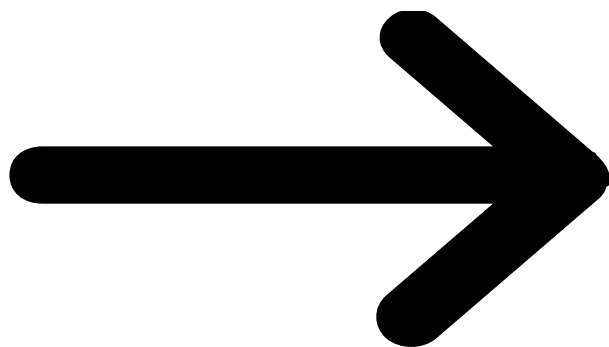
“Some local authorities barely have any reserves left thanks to the SNP’s botched approach to funding.

“And rather than hand over all the Barnett Consequentials in full – money that was specifically targeted for local authorities – the SNP wants to short-change councils even more severely.”

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## [Home carers deserve equal access to Covid-19 tests](#)

1 May 2020



Care workers who look after vulnerable people in the community deserve equal access to coronavirus testing, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Nicola Sturgeon revealed increases in capacity today, but made no specific mention of home carers who continue to struggle to access tests.

The First Minister said 4661 tests took place yesterday, on the same day the UK Government aims to test 100,000 people.

Now the Scottish Conservatives have said more has to be done to ensure mobile testing can be taken both to care homes for staff and residents, but also to care workers in the community.

Last month, Scottish Care stated that more people are cared for by professionals at home than in hospitals and care homes combined.

The SNP government still has significant work to do to reach its 10,000 tests per day target, and has been repeatedly urged to be more pro-active in getting tests out into communities, rather than hope people will come to them.

**Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:**

“The SNP government is still lagging well behind on testing.

“By ensuring care workers in the community have the same access to testing as those in the NHS or in care homes, those numbers would increase.

“That would also mean the very significant number of home care workers could go from home to home a bit safer in the knowledge they aren’t taking the virus with them.

“We need to see more pro-activity from the SNP government.

“As Nicola Sturgeon said herself, it’s no use having the capacity if people aren’t physically being tested.

“If people aren’t able to go to the testing centres, then the testing has to come to them.

“There are many ways for this to be done and, frankly, it’s something we should have seen up-and-running long before now.”

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## [Yet another delay for the new Sick Kids hospital](#)

1 May 2020



The saga of Edinburgh’s new Sick Kids hospital is set to be extended again – after health secretary Jeane Freeman admitted the latest timescale was “under review”.

The facility, which is now eight years late, was supposed to finally open in the autumn.

However, Ms Freeman admitted today in a parliamentary answer that the handing over looked set to be held up again because of coronavirus pressures.

She said: "NHS Lothian is working closely with IHSL to ensure delivery of the programme as close to the timeframe of a full handover in Autumn 2020, but this timeframe is now under review. A refreshed programme is likely to be available during the second half of May and I will of course keep Parliament updated."

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said while this particular delay may be understandable given the Covid-19 crisis, it could have all been avoided had the SNP hit any of the previous targets for opening.

The much-needed facility has been plagued by problems, meaning staff and patients have been forced to continue to use the ancient building in the Sciennes area of the city, which the health board itself has acknowledged is no longer fit for purpose.

**Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:**

"Obviously with the current situation it's inevitable there will be delays with almost all projects of this nature.

"What wasn't inevitable was the SNP's failure to get this hospital open in anything like the timeframe initially set out.

"This vital hospital – which was commissioned, planned and built by the SNP – was meant to open in 2012.

"It should currently be open, thriving and assisting our dedicated NHS staff with the coronavirus battle.

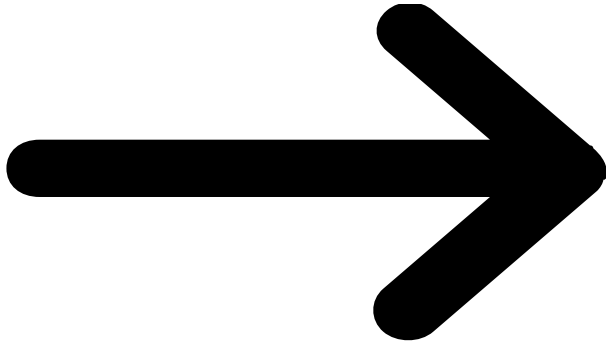
"Instead, it lies empty while the rest of the hospital estate is placed under immense pressure.

"Families across the east of Scotland will not forget the SNP's spectacular mismanagement of the Sick Kids project."

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## **No part of Scotland should be left out of Army mobile testing drive**

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No part of Scotland should be left behind as the SNP finally enlists the Army to help fight the coronavirus crisis.

At the weekend it was confirmed that the Scottish Government would finally agree to calls from the Scottish Conservatives to use the military across the country.

But this morning, health secretary Jeane Freeman said only certain parts of Scotland – in the south and Highlands – would initially benefit from the move.

Now Jackson Carlaw, leader of the Scottish Conservatives, has urged the SNP not to forget about the central belt, north east and other areas in the country.

The Scottish Conservatives have previously called for greater army support and the comprehensive roll out of mobile testing – both of which are necessary due to Scotland's challenging population distribution.

Care homes have been experiencing a worrying surge in Covid-19 cases with numbers of deaths in care homes widely expected to overtake the number of deaths in hospital this week.

Furthermore, testing sites have been set up in various parts of Scotland, but take-up in some has been low.

Rolling out the mobile testing units to care homes in all regions could significantly help the residences identify those carrying the virus and help to contain it.

The UK armed forces have already contributed to efforts to cope with the coronavirus pandemic, supporting the roll out of protective equipment, assisting with the new testing facilities in Glasgow, and patient transport.

**Jackson Carlaw, leader of the Scottish Conservatives said:**

"We know that the key to containing this virus and ending the lockdown is a significant increase in testing.

"While the Scottish Government has already indicated they will roll out mobile testing in Highlands and the South of Scotland – it simply isn't enough.

"I urge the Scottish government to deploy the Army mobile testing units the length and breadth of the country now.

"Our armed forces have already demonstrated their incredible competence and speed, they are capable of meeting this increased challenge.

"Regrettably, the Scottish government has previously been slow to act, particularly on PPE, it must now pick up the pace.

"Care homes are the latest battleground and the Scottish government must act now to stop this virus in its tracks."