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- Citizens' Assemblies remit cannot disguise 'talking shop for independence'

27 Aug 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have stated that the publication of the Citizens' Assembly remit cannot disguise its real purpose as a 'talking shop for independence'.

The assembly remit focuses narrowly on Scotland's constitutional arrangements.

The Citizens' Assembly was announced by the First Minister in April, at the same time as cross-party constitutional talks and referendum legislation, all designed to play a role in furthering the case for independence.

In addition, the impartiality of the Citizens' Assembly has already been compromised as an SNP MP referred to it as 'the perfect way' towards independence, and the pollster in charge of picking Assembly members is Mark Diffley who also co-chairs Progress Scotland which aims to 'help prepare the case for Scotland to progress towards independence'.

Adam Tomkins, Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman said:

"The SNP's Citizens' Assembly will never be viewed as impartial – it is simply a talking shop for independence.

"As we've just seen with the GERS figures, the SNP will contort anything to try and support their separatist agenda.

"The SNP believes the constitution is the most important priority but the majority of Scots simply want the Scottish Government to tackle our worsening education system, worst ever hospital waiting lists, crumbling

roads and faulty children's hospital.

"If this assembly is considering options to improve Scotland's future why aren't they considering health, education or climate change?

"The simple fact is that the SNP's destruction of our economy and public

services are the biggest threats to the successful future of Scotland.”

[SNP notches another hat-trick of missed health targets](#)

27 Aug 2019



The SNP has missed three key health targets “spectacularly” in the last quarter, new figures have shown.

Performance on treating outpatients within 12 and 18 weeks of referral were well short of the standard, while the nationalists’ infamous Treatment Time Guarantee was also way off the mark.

ISD Scotland statistics revealed just 73.5 per cent of new outpatients began treatment within 12 weeks over the previous three months, missing the target of 95 per cent.

And the pledge to ensure 90 per cent of people’s journey through the health system lasts no longer than 18 weeks from referral for care was also missed – with just 79.2 per cent hitting that timeframe.

In addition, while the TTG promise set out by Nicola Sturgeon in 2011 improved slightly, it still saw 27.5 per cent of inpatient and day cases miss out on the legally-binding policy between April and June.

It means so far this year the pledge has been broken 42,911 times.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said the “hat-trick of failures” was another sign the SNP government was letting the NHS down.

He added that both patients and staff were growing increasingly frustrated at repeated missed targets in key areas.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“This hat-trick of failures by the SNP is leaving patients in the lurch.

“The nationalists aren’t even close to hitting these targets, and are lazily hoping that hardworking staff will continue to pick up the pieces.

“The SNP’s continued negligence – spectacularly missing these targets – is running the NHS into the ground and is becoming increasingly unacceptable. Frankly, it is running out of excuses.

“Every month we hear glib assurances from SNP ministers that investment will be made and things will get better.

“But it never happens, and now patients are understandably at their wits’ end.”

[MSP slams NHS Tayside’s ‘disgraceful’ handling of Bridge of Earn GP surgery situation](#)

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- MSP slams NHS Tayside’s ‘disgraceful’ handling of Bridge of Earn GP surgery situation

23 Aug 2019



Scottish Conservative MSP Liz Smith has branded NHS Tayside’s handling of the impending closure of the Bridge of Earn GP surgery as “disgraceful.”

The MSP criticised the total lack of communication from the health body after it was revealed earlier this month that two GPs from the surgery had handed in their resignation, and she has also slammed them for their unwillingness to meet elected officials and local residents as a matter of urgency.

Liz Smith, who represents the Mid Scotland and Fife region, contacted NHS Tayside on Thursday following news of the surgery closure and invited health officials to attend a meeting on Monday in Bridge of Earn with herself, members of Earn Community Council and the community.

However, NHS Tayside have not confirmed if they can attend the meeting, leaving elected officials and residents in limbo about the whole situation.

The matter came to a head when residents found about the decision to close the surgery on social media yesterday (Thursday). A note had been posted on the window of the GP surgery but no notification had been

issued by NHS Tayside to inform local residents.

NHS Tayside have said they are in the process of writing to all 3,500 registered patients of the surgery in a bid to allocate them a new GP. However, Liz Smith has slammed the health body over what she sees as a total

lack of communication on their part.

Liz Smith, Scottish Conservative MSP for Mid-Scotland and Fife said:

“The impending closure of the Bridge of Earn surgery is bad enough but the manner with which NHS Tayside has handled this matter is nothing short of disgraceful.

“I am not the only elected member who has made several efforts over several weeks to meet with NHS Tayside to discuss this matter and find an acceptable resolution.

“We have been constantly rebuffed and told everything was ‘in hand to find a sustainable solution.’ That is clearly not the case and I feel so sorry for all the patients who have been left in the dark.

“There has been a complete lack of transparency which is the opposite of NHS Tayside’s own guidelines about community engagement.

“I have been in touch with Earn Community Council and have made representations to NHS Tayside that they should meet with the local community as a matter of extreme urgency. Nothing less is acceptable.”

[SNP putting ‘cart before the horse’ in bid to empty prisons](#)

20 Aug 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have accused the SNP government of putting the ‘cart before the horse’ as they abolished prison sentences of up to a year before convening the group to improve community orders.

The National Community Justice Leadership Group will meet for the first time tomorrow to implement the SNP’s policy of increasing alternatives to prison sentences for criminals.

However, the SNP already introduced a presumption against prison terms of less than a year in favour of community sentences in June this year.

The latest statistics show that last year 9,500 criminals were sentenced to less than 12 months in jail. Out of that 9,500, 100 were convicted of attempted murder or serious assault, 98 were sexual offenders and 329 were convicted of handling offensive weapons.

The Scottish Conservatives have accused the SNP of emptying Scottish prisons

at any cost.

Liam Kerr, Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary said:

“The SNP has put the cart before the horse here – they have already abolished prison sentences of less than a year but are only now considering how to improve the overwhelmed community justice system.

“The SNP’s abolition of prison sentences of up to a year could see 9,500 criminals a year avoid jail and go into the community – that includes drug dealers, violent attackers and child pornographers.

“Already the community justice system cannot cope as a third of community sentences are never completed and a quarter of do not include any unpaid work element.

“In addition, the SNP’s claims on reoffending were totally torn apart by academics in evidence to the justice committee.

“Only this week a judge expressed that he would have sent a serial offender to jail for serious wildlife crimes if the SNP government hadn’t tied his hands.

“The SNP is relentlessly emptying our prisons regardless of the lack of capacity in the community justice system, the lack of evidence regarding reoffending, the insult to victims and the risk to the safety of the public.”

[Scottish Conservatives propose major reform of key element of Curriculum for Excellence](#)

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18 Aug 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have today called for a complete reform of National 4 so that all pupils studying at this level will be required to sit exams in both basic literacy and numeracy.

At present, pupil assessment in National 4 is based only on teacher judgment and does not allow pupils to gain formal qualifications in the basic skills – something which many parents, teachers and employers believe is a serious flaw within Curriculum for Excellence.

Four years on from Nicola Sturgeon's request to "judge me on education" the recent SQA results show that Scottish education has "gone backwards" on her watch and urgent reform is necessary.

Scottish Conservative Shadow Education Secretary Liz Smith has said that National 4 should be completely reformed so that all pupils are required to sit examinations in basic literacy and numeracy.

The Scottish Conservatives are also calling for:

- The SNP to reverse their decision to take Scotland out of the TIMSS and PIRLS measurements.
- Education Scotland to no longer be the "judge and jury" in charge of both curriculum development and inspection.
- Full clarity within curriculum guidance.

Scottish Conservative Shadow Education Secretary Liz Smith said:

"Four years ago, Nicola Sturgeon asked us to "judge her on education."

"That statement now has a very hollow ring to it. No-one can pretend that all is well in Scotland's schools. Four years on, the recent SQA results show that Scottish education has gone backwards.

"The pass rates for Higher and Advanced Higher are the lowest since the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) was introduced and there has been a fall in Higher pass rates for four consecutive years.

"That is a trend and a very worrying one, especially when the Higher is supposed to be the "gold standard" of Scottish education.

"Our pupils and schools are being let down by the SNP's botched implementation of the curriculum and its qualifications system.

"Above all, National 4 should be completely reformed with new exams in basic literacy and numeracy that ensure every pupil leaves school able to read, write and count to a high level.

"A renewed focus on core skills in literacy and numeracy at the Broad General Education (BGE) phase and National 4 level would be far more complementary to vocational training and better prepare young people for the world of work."