

Glasgow's bid to host major climate summit another 'union dividend'

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9 Aug 2019



Glasgow's bid to host a major summit on climate change next year is "more evidence of the union dividend", the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The UK Government announced today that Glasgow would host the UN's COP 26 event if its bid for presidency of the organisation is successful.

The event at the Scottish Events Campus by the Clyde would last for two weeks at the end of 2020, and attract 30,000 delegates.

Shadow environment secretary Maurice Golden said it was an opportunity for Scotland to lead the world on climate change, and showcase Glasgow as a major global conferences location.

He added that it was more evidence of the economic opportunities presented by Scotland remaining within the UK.

Scottish Conservative shadow environment secretary Maurice Golden said:

"This announcement is excellent news for Glasgow and Scotland.

"It would underline the city's reputation for hosting world-leading summits, and showcases Scotland's potential as a world-leader on climate change.

"It's also more evidence of the union dividend – an example of the UK Government placing Scotland's biggest city right at the heart of its future plans.

"We are much stronger when we work together and we will have more impact tackling climate change as part of the UK.

"Nicola Sturgeon's relentless drive to break up Britain would make bids like this considerably more difficult as well as weaken our efforts to tackle climate change."

Revealed: SNP Lowered the bar for maths exams

7 Aug 2019



The SNP government lowered the pass threshold for maths exams across the board, it has been revealed, and performance still dipped.

Figures released yesterday showed a 2.1 per cent drop in maths passes at Higher level.

And now it has emerged that the reduction in passes occurred even though the boundaries had been reduced at Higher, Advanced Higher and National 5 level.

In 2019, pupils needed to secure 67 per cent for an A at Higher, and 44 per cent for a C. To gain a D award, students needed to reach just 32 per cent.

That compares to last year's thresholds of 73 per cent for an A, 48 per cent for a C, and 42 per cent for a D.

Maths was the only subject where the pass boundaries reduced at all three levels from Higher to National 5 and Advanced Higher.

It also saw the biggest drop of any subject in pass rates at both National 5 and Advanced Higher, and one of the biggest drops at Higher.

Shadow education secretary Liz Smith said the changes made yesterday's results even more disappointing, and was more evidence of the SNP's neglect of an education brief it's been in sole charge of for more than 12 years.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"These are damning statistics which show the extent of the current issues facing the Curriculum for Excellence.

"While grade boundaries are a vital tool within examination marking, there is a very worrying trend developing in the core subject of maths which indicates that grade boundaries have not only been lowered over recent years but that this is happening across the different levels of maths exams.

"It seems that pupils can routinely collect a pass in maths for less than 50 per cent and also acquire a D award at Higher for as low as 32 per cent.

"That trend is surely a very major concern and, once again, it raises issues about the lack of rigour within the new curriculum.

"That cannot be allowed to continue since it further undermines the previous strengths of Scottish education."

Shadow Chancellor paves way for Labour pact with SNP

7 Aug 2019



Ruth Davidson has said that Labour is ‘proposing a pact with the SNP in order to parachute Jeremy Corbyn into Number Ten’.

This follows the statement by John McDonnell, the shadow Chancellor that the Labour Party would not block Indyref2.

In an interview with Iain Dale at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival last night, Mr McDonnell said that a Labour government would not stop a divisive second referendum on independence. “We would not block something like that,” he said.

This statement represents a massive u-turn from Labour’s manifesto commitment in 2017 to oppose a second independence referendum.

Mr McDonnell is due to appear at another event in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival at lunchtime today.

Commenting on the u-turn, Ruth said:

“John McDonnell’s comments yesterday were met with complete dismay by Labour voters in Scotland.

“Today it’s becoming clear why he said it. Labour is proposing a pact with the SNP in order to parachute Jeremy Corbyn into Number Ten.

“The fact is this – Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell would happily sell Scotland down the river if they thought it could give them a sniff of power.

“That is a rank betrayal of the 2 million Scots – including thousands of Labour voters – who voted to stay part of the UK.

“I can’t imagine Scotland’s Labour MP’s were chuffed to hear Mr McDonnell describe Westminster as an ‘English parliament’. It’s not. It’s a parliament for the whole UK with representatives from every corner of the country.

“With Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell doing Nicola Sturgeon’s work for her, the First Minister must think Christmas has come early this year.

“Scottish voters can rest assured that the Scottish Conservatives will always stand up for our place in the United Kingdom and no Conservative Prime Minister would entertain doing a dodgy deal with the nationalists.”

SNP being 'dishonest' about policing figures

6 Aug 2019



The SNP government has been accused of dishonesty, after claiming it was still funding an additional 1000 officers.

Official figures released today showed there were 17,259 police men and women in Scotland, which ministers said was 1025 more than in 2007, meeting the officer-number pledge.

However, it has now emerged that 400 of those officers are in place to deal with Brexit, and not funded by the SNP government.

And a further 300 officers are directly funded by organisations like councils and airports – again not financed by central government.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr urged the Scottish Government to start being honest about the figures, and admit were it not for external support, it simply wouldn't be meeting the 1000-extra officer commitment.

He also said the SNP government should set out how it intends to spend Barnett Consequential cash from justice spending on extra officers in the rest of the UK.

The UK Government has confirmed it will hire an extra 20,000 officers, meaning Scotland should get funding for roughly an additional 2000.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“It's time the SNP stopped taking the people of Scotland – and police officers themselves – for mugs.

“It can't boast about retaining an extra 1000 officers when it patently isn't stumping up the cash.

“In fact, were it not for the UK Government, councils and other organisations, the nationalists would be miles away from keeping this pledge.

“In contrast, we have a UK Government committed to bringing in thousands of new police officers to make our streets safer and bring criminals to account.

“And when that money comes north in the form of Barnett Consequentials, it will allow the Scottish Government to secure around 2000 extra police men and women.

“That would improve our justice system and ease the strain on overworked officers.

“It’s time for the SNP to stop the spin, and commit to beefing up our police force.”

Exam results ‘shame SNP complacency’ on education

6 Aug 2019



Today’s exam results which show the persistent decline in attainment should “shame” the SNP government’s complacency on education, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It was revealed this morning that Higher passes are down two per cent from last year, dropping below 75 per cent.

Advanced Higher passes have also reduced from 80.5 per cent in 2018 to 79.4 per cent this year.

Only National 5 results showed any improvement, but even they remain lower than every other year except last year.

Attainment in core subjects is down across the board, with Higher pass rates in the key areas of English down 2.7 per cent, and maths 2.1 per cent.

Shadow education secretary Liz Smith said the dip in pass rates was not only bad news for pupils and their career ambitions, but could damage the economy too in future years.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“It is important, first of all, to warmly welcome all those individual pupils who have been successful in these exams.

“A lot of hard work goes into months of study and due recognition should be given to their teachers too.

“However, the overall national trend is a matter of very serious concern given the fall in attainment levels across the board with the exception of National 5.

“John Swinney has made a great deal in recent years about the Higher being the ‘gold standard’ of Scottish education.

“That claim now looks very hollow given further drops in pass rates, and it comes at the same time as last year’s improvement in the Advanced Higher has been reversed.

“The whole structure of the Curriculum for Excellence has been brought into question by these results.

“We have known for months that subject choice has been squeezed and that there have been deeply worrying downturns in some key subject areas which have a major impact on the economy.

“Mr Swinney has persistently refused to listen to what teachers, parents and young people are telling him. These results shame that complacency.”