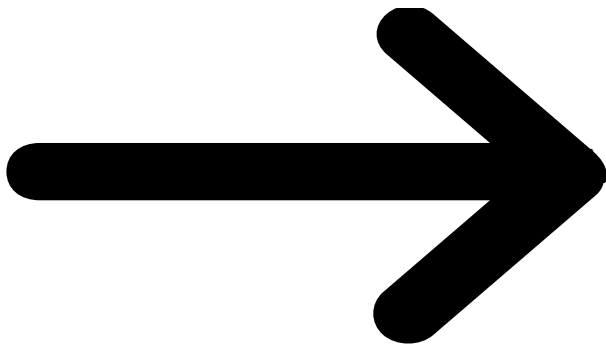


Sturgeon would drag Scotland straight back into hated CFP

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29 Nov 2018



Nicola Sturgeon has refused to deny her plan for the break-up of Britain would drag Scotland straight back into the hated Common Fisheries Policy.

She was challenged today at First Minister's Questions to clarify her party's stance on the CFP – a process an independent Scotland would be forced to join should it reapply to the EU.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw said the Prime Minister's deal would see the UK become an independent coastal state, a point backed by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation.

However, the First Minister reaffirmed that she would not be signing an SFF pledge making that very demand.

The SNP has repeatedly said the priority of a separate Scotland would be to rejoin the EU.

But article 38.1 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states: "The union shall define and implement a common agriculture and fishing policy."

That would mean Scotland would be forced to go straight back into the controversial arrangement, even though it would have left with the rest of the UK in 2020 under current agreements.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"The reason Nicola Sturgeon can't back the fishermen's pledge is that she's trapped by her own ideology on the EU.

"She made it clear again today that, were she to have her way, she'd drag

Scotland straight back in to the hated CFP.

“If that’s not selling out Scotland’s fishing industry, I don’t know what is.

“The nationalists can’t have it both ways.

“They either back the Prime Minister’s deal which would allow us control over our own waters again, or they back the chaos of a no-deal scenario.

“Nicola Sturgeon wants to vote down this deal for no other reason than she thinks it will help her second independence referendum obsession.

“That’s not in Scotland’s interests, and it’s not standing up for Scotland.”

[Council tax payers bail out local authorities after SNP cuts](#)

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29 Nov 2018



Council tax payers across Scotland have been forced to compensate their local authorities following SNP budget cuts, a report has confirmed.

Audit Scotland, in its review into local government finances, stated SNP government funding “reduced in real terms” in 2017/18, but that it was “largely offset by increases in council tax and councils’ fee income”.

Nationalist ministers handed local authorities the ability to hike rates by three per cent last year.

That saw the levy applied to some average family homes in certain parts of the country rocket, making it unaffordable for some hardworking families.

The document, published tomorrow, shows council tax payers coughed up an additional £189 million in 2017/18 as a result.

Over the same period, SNP government funding was slashed by around £220 million.

Councils’ overall debt rose slightly to £15.1 billion, the report adds, while the “forecast trend is for further reductions in funding from the Scottish Government in the medium term”.

Scottish Conservative local government spokesman Alexander Stewart said:

“This report shows in very clear terms that following SNP government funding cuts, council tax payers have been forced to step in and pick up the slack.

“No tangible improvements to services have been made since these hikes, just more of the same under a nationalist government with its priorities elsewhere.

“In some parts of the country, these council tax hikes have made it impossible for normal working families to move to homes they need.

“Yet all of this could have been avoided if SNP ministers, at the very least, had maintained levels of funding for local government.

“This has been a lose-lose scenario for those paying council tax, who are now worse off and still experiencing a below-par level of service.”

[UK ‘must resist’ EU attempts to influence outcome of Brexit talks on fishing](#)

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18 Nov 2018



Scottish Conservative MP David Duguid has said the UK “must resist” attempts by EU countries such as France and Spain to influence the outcome of the Brexit deal on fishing.

The Banff and Buchan MP was responding to weekend reports that several member states have complained to European Commission chief negotiator Michel Barnier about the terms of the deal.

One Brussels negotiator is reported to have said that France, Spain, Belgium, Denmark and Portugal are among the nations unhappy that the EU has not demanded access to UK fishing waters in the withdrawal agreement.

Scottish Conservative MPs wrote to the Prime Minister last week seeking confirmation that the UK will have full sovereignty over its waters after

Brexit and that there will be no link made between access to fisheries in a future trade deal.

Theresa May provided a verbal reassurance to Mr Duguid in the Commons chamber on Thursday, but the north-east MP has said he wants to see it in writing.

David Duguid, Scottish Conservative MP for Banff and Buchan, said:

“France, Denmark, Holland, Spain and Portugal are all deeply unhappy about this deal as it stands – that should tell our fishermen that we are on the right track.

“For far too long, EU boats have landed a larger share of fish caught in our waters than the UK – that needs to change.

“But the Prime Minister and the UK negotiating team must resist any attempts to secure a more favourable deal for the EU.

“My priority remains to get out of the CFP and assume our status as an independent coastal state with full sovereignty over our waters.

We must be in that position no later than the end of 2020 – as was agreed when the implementation period was announced in March.

“We must enter upon annual negotiations as an independent coastal state with the maximum amount of leverage possible.

“We cannot have a future fisheries agreement that links access to fishing waters to trade. I will continue to seek assurances from the Prime Minister on that front.”

[Sturgeon ‘exploiting’ Northern Ireland’s troubled history to boost support for independence](#)

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David Mundell has accused Nicola Sturgeon of ‘exploiting’ Northern Ireland’s troubled history in an attempt to increase support for independence.

Discussing the Brexit deal at a Scottish Conservatives gathering in Falkirk, he said:

“We have a deal on the table. The Prime Minister’s judgement is that, other than in the margins, there is no better Withdrawal deal available.

“What is certainly the case is the EU will not accept an agreement that does not contain the so-called Northern Ireland backstop.

“That covers what would happen, on the island of Ireland if a future trading relationship between the the UK and EU is not agreed by the end of 2020. And, most importantly, it’s an insurance policy which both we and the EU hope never comes into operation

“A lot of the discussion this week, and indeed in the Cabinet consideration of the deal, focussed on that backstop.

“Clearly, there are concerns that it should not become permanent and also that the status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom is not fundamentally changed.

“Ensuring that there was not a Northern Ireland-only backstop creating a customs border down the Irish Sea has been a significant achievement by our negotiators, but we do have to be satisfied that here is nothing in the small print of the 150 pages of the Northern Ireland protocol which leads to material change from how things work now on the island of Ireland.”

On Nicola Sturgeon’s demand for arrangements in Northern Ireland to be copied Scotland, he added:

“We’ve all grown accustomed to Nicola Sturgeon politicising and exploiting any issue for her political ends and furthering her agenda of having another independence referendum.

“We’d seen it already with Brexit – out of the traps on 24 June 2016 demanding another independence referendum, but this week she reached a new low with her crass demands for Scotland to be equated with Northern Ireland.

“It confirmed that nothing is off limits now for Nicola Sturgeon – the sensitivities and unique circumstances of Northern Ireland, its geography, history and culture can be cast aside, if there is some opportunistic political point to be made.

“The immediate need to generate some divisive grievance is prioritised, the subject matter secondary to the independence cause and the repercussions ignored.

“Scotland’s circumstances are nothing like those of Northern Ireland.

“Even the SNP used to acknowledge that, speaking out to have the Belfast Agreement upheld, but now none of that seems to matter anymore, compared to the opportunity for tomorrow’s headline, one more seed of division, one more step however achieved on the road to independence.

“We, and Scotland need to be on notice – Scottish politics just got a whole lot uglier. There is nowhere Nicola Sturgeon won’t go.”

On the Prime Minister’s efforts to secure a Brexit deal Mr Mundell also said:

“What she has demonstrated this week is fortitude, resolve, strength of character, determination, desire to do the right thing in the national interest, her sense of duty and public service and her sheer decency in the face of an unprecedented onslaught by detractors and the media, for which she deserves our admiration.

“She is tackling an issue of epic proportions, on which she can never please everyone, and she is doing her very best to find a way through. And let me be quite clear, if it comes to a confidence vote, she will have mine.”

Mr Mundell said the deal was “not perfect” and there were “conditions to ongoing support” including the reassurance that the UK would leave the Common Fisheries Policy in December 2020 to become an independent coastal state able to negotiate fishing quotas and access to UK waters.

But on the need to secure a deal he added:

“The choice in Parliament’s Meaningful Vote is going to boil down to a choice between this deal or alternatives that are even more unpalatable.

“While I have reservations about this deal, I believe that no deal would a much worse outcome for Scotland, seriously damaging our economy and threatening jobs. Just ask Scottish business.

“And there are even worse outcomes. A general election and a Corbyn Government – worse for the UK economy than any Brexit and handing the SNP a second independence referendum as the price of the keys to 10 Downing Street.

“And as for the so called, People’s Vote – another EU Referendum – don’t underestimate how divisive such a referendum would be or how much it would undermine the trust of those who voted to leave in the democratic process.”

On a “time of hard choices” ahead he concluded:

“What guides me in making those choices is keeping our United Kingdom together, keeping Jeremy Corbyn out of Downing Street and delivering the best outcomes for people in Scotland. That’s why I will continue to support our Prime Minister in delivering a Brexit deal.”

PM: UK ‘will not accept’ any deal with

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15 Nov 2018



The Prime Minister has today made clear that the UK Government “will not accept” any deal with the EU that links access to fishing waters with trade.

In response to a question from Banff and Buchan MP David Duguid, Theresa May said that there “have been attempts” to link fisheries access to a future trade deal between the UK and the EU.

The exchange followed a joint letter from Scottish Conservative MPs warning they could not support any agreement that prevented the UK from independently negotiating access and quota share.

The Scottish Fishermen’s Federation (SFF) also said yesterday that any link between access to waters and trade would be “unacceptable” and would defy “all international norms and practice”.

The Prime Minister insisted today, as she took questions from MPs in the Commons chamber, that it will be the UK that determines access to UK waters.

Mrs May said: “We are very clear that we will be an independent coastal state.

“There have been attempts to link fisheries and link access to fishing waters to the trade aspect of this negotiation.

“We have been very clear that we will not accept that, that we will be an independent coastal state so that it is the UK determining access to UK waters.”

Speaking afterwards, Mr Duguid, Scottish Conservative MP for Banff and Buchan, said:

“I am very pleased to hear the Prime Minister make clear today that the UK will not countenance any deal that links access to our waters to trade with the rest of the EU.

“I have campaigned ever since becoming elected to making sure that our fishermen reap the benefits from leaving the EU.

“That means we must leave the Common Fisheries Policy, assume our status as an independent coastal and have sovereignty over our waters.

“I am sure my constituents, and those in the Scottish fishing industry more widely, will welcome the comments from the Prime Minister today that the UK will continue to stand up for our fishermen as we leave the EU.”