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- By-election triumph in Brown's back yard proves Labour are a 'busted flush'

7 Sep 2018



A Scottish Conservative victory in a Fife council by-election in Gordon Brown's home patch proves Labour are a busted flush, the party have said.

Candidate Dave Coleman increased the share of the vote and will now become the Inverkeithing and Dalgety Bay ward's second Scottish Conservative councillor.

It also means Labour have no councillor in that area, despite it being the stamping ground of former leader and Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

It was also the seat vacated by Labour's current deputy leader Lesley Laird.

The Scottish Conservative share of the vote increased, while that of Labour and the SNP fell, with Cllr Coleman securing 2309 first preference votes, far ahead of any of his rivals.

Scottish Conservative Mid Scotland and Fife MSP Murdo Fraser said:

"This is a devastating result for Labour, which shows they are a busted flush.

"This was the council seat vacated by the shadow Scottish secretary, and Scottish Labour deputy leader Lesley Laird, but still the Labour vote fell while the Conservatives increased.

"It reinforces the fact that, right across Scotland, it's a straight fight between the Scottish Conservatives and the SNP.

"Even in Labour's heartlands, we are the only ones who can stand up to the nationalists and their relentless pursuit of breaking up Britain.

"It also means Gordon Brown has two Conservative councillors to call on now for any local issues he may have, but not a single Labour one."

[Pilot scheme for Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme “a positive step in the right direction”](#)

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- Pilot scheme for Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme “a positive step in the right direction”

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Angus MP Kirstene Hair has welcomed an announcement of a pilot scheme to allow fruit and vegetable farmers to hire workers from outwith the EU.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said the scheme will provide 2,500 Seasonal Migrant Worker Visas to non-EEA workers.

There are an estimated 75,000 temporary migrant workers in agriculture every summer. The 75,000 figure falls short of the 80,000 workers the industry claims are currently needed and far short of its expected ‘need’ of 95,000 by 2021.

Ms Hair has been campaigning to reintroduce the SAWS the issue since her election and has been calling on UK ministers to reintroduce the scheme now rather than awaiting MAC report due to the strong evidence which had been brought forward.

The Home Secretary had previously stated he would wait for the recommendations from the Migration Advisory Commission (MAC).

Scottish Conservative MP for Angus, Kirstene Hair, said:

“I am delighted with this boost to our soft fruit industry across the UK.

“Following months of campaigning, I am pleased to see the government have listened to concerns raised following the steady decline in seasonal workers in recent years.

“It is certainly a very positive step in the right direction and one I have been long calling for.

“The pilot will go some way to addressing some of the current shortfall in labour and will be welcomed by the agricultural industry, especially in my constituency of Angus. However, it will need to be adopted fully if labour

demand is to be met.

“This is a time-critical issue as farmers have already lost income through crops being left unpicked. I will continue to monitor the situation in the coming months as it is important that pressure on the government is maintained to ensure a Seasonal Migrant Scheme is introduced fully and with the capacity required to support this iconic British industry.”

Home Secretary Sajid Javid MP said:

“I would like to personally thank Kirstene for all her tireless work supporting farmers in her constituency and championing the benefits of a Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme.

“I hope this pilot will ensure farmers across the UK have access to the seasonal labour they need to remain productive and profitable during busy times of the year.”

[Tax shock for SNP as high earners bring in £550m less than thought](#)

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The SNP government has been urged to rethink its high-tax agenda – after new figures revealed receipts from high earners last year were £550 million lower than thought.

A new Scottish Fiscal Commission report has stated that the 2016/17 income tax take for Scotland was £10.7 billion – less than the previously forecast £11.3 billion.

The drop occurred while the SNP government was preparing to increase taxes in Scotland, a move which was eventually rubber stamped in April.

Now the Scottish Conservatives have warned that there are fewer payers of high taxes north of the border than the SNP thought, and that could impact on future budgets.

Today's tables showed vast differences between estimates on the amount of higher rate and additional rate taxpayers in Scotland.

Now, official figures have shown the number of higher rate tax payers is 14,500 lower than projected, and the number of additional rate earners lower by 2200.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“This analysis shows there are considerably fewer earners on higher and additional rates than the SNP government thought when it was plotting its tax hike.

“That means future tax receipts could be badly out, and that will have an impact on the Scottish Government’s ability to pay for hospitals schools and infrastructure.

“It also proves the need for a rethink on taxation.

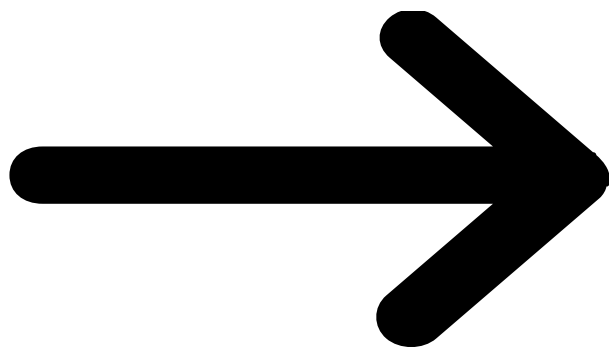
“We need to be encouraging higher earners to come to Scotland, not driving them away with rates higher than anywhere else in the UK.

“As these figures show, a smaller number of higher rate taxpayers translates into a significantly lower tax take – and that can have serious financial consequences.”

[‘Cowardly’ Leonard must explain failure to stand up for Jewish community](#)

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- ‘Cowardly’ Leonard must explain failure to stand up for Jewish community

5 Sep 2018



Richard Leonard must explain his “cowardly” behaviour after he refused to back a bid aimed at eradicating anti-semitism from his party.

Labour's National Executive Committee finally agreed yesterday to adopt the definition of anti-semitism as set out by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

However, Scottish leader Leonard refused to vote on the matter, while four of his Holyrood colleagues objected to the plan.

He has now been urged to explain his behaviour to Scotland's Jewish community, who have endured months of anti-semitic behaviour from elements of the Labour party, and a refusal by UK leader Jeremy Corbyn to stamp it out.

The Scottish Conservatives also urged the four Labour MSPs who voted against yesterday's motions to come clean.

One of them, Rhoda Grant, admitted to her role on today's Good Morning Scotland, but the identity of the other three remains a mystery.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"The drama surrounding this vote, and the fact so many tried to change it or objected rabidly to it, is evidence of genuine anti-semitism at the heart of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party.

"In refusing to stand up to this, Richard Leonard's behaviour has been cowardly.

"This was an opportunity for him to put some distance between Scottish Labour and a UK party that is riddled with anti-semitism.

"Instead, he was inexcusably subservient, weak and should hang his head in shame.

"How can he possibly look Scotland's Jewish community in the eye again?

"And as for the four Labour MSPs who voted against, they've shown they'd rather cosy up to Jeremy Corbyn and his depraved henchmen than defend members of the Jewish community."

[Ruth: 'We'll work with SNP to boost Scottish schools'](#)

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- Ruth: 'We'll work with SNP to boost Scottish schools'



The Scottish Conservatives have offered to work together with the SNP Government to reboot plans for Scottish education, party leader Ruth Davidson has said today.

It comes after Education Secretary John Swinney dumped his flagship legislation to boost Scottish schools at the end of the last parliamentary term.

Davidson says the stark decline in education under this SNP government needs addressed, and last term's embarrassing climb-down by Nicola Sturgeon's team signalled an unwillingness to fight for meaningful improvements.

With the SNP's Programme for Government being unveiled on Tuesday, the Scottish Conservatives say they will meet ministers to discuss changes that put more power in the hands of headteachers and parents – as originally proposed by the SNP.

The Scottish Conservatives are also urging Ministers to press ahead with measures to improve literacy and numeracy rates.

The Scottish Conservatives support

- a new headteachers' charter being enshrined in legislation, so heads are in charge of raising attainment.
- plans to give headteachers more powers over their schools, including over recruitment, school management and structure, and curriculum content
- moves to give parents more say on school improvement and school policies.
- the reintroduction of international literacy and numeracy surveys for Scottish schools
- the cancellation of P1 tests
- an independent review into the decline in subject choice in the later years of Secondary education.

Writing in today's Mail on Sunday, party leader Ruth Davidson said:

"Nicola Sturgeon should go back to the SNP's playbook of 2007 and signal a willingness to listen to other parties at Holyrood.

"Over the last 12 months, working across the aisle with Scottish Conservatives has been omerta to Nicola Sturgeon's government. The demands of her political playbook have taken precedence over the desire of the public just to get things done.

"On education, we on the Scottish Conservative benches are ready and willing to work with the SNP to change children's life chances for the better.

"Handing more power to headteachers and parents is the right thing to do. We

are ready to sit down and thrash out a way forward. Is the SNP prepared to do the same?"