

Kez Dugdale responds to Brexit Bill

Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale today said Labour will not support the Tories' EU Withdrawal Bill unless there is a 'clear presumption of devolution'.

Ms Dugdale said the Tories are intent on forcing through a Brexit that risks jobs and livelihoods, and the SNP has no interest in the deal that works for the entire UK, meaning only Labour is committed to an alternative to Theresa May's Brexit plans.

Ms Dugdale this week met with Labour's Shadow Secretary for Exiting the European Union, Keir Starmer, in London.

Commenting on the publication of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale said:

"This Bill may have changed name yet again, but that can't disguise Theresa May's attempt to force a Brexit on the UK that risks jobs and livelihoods.

"Labour believes there should be a jobs-first Brexit; not one that allows the Tories to erode workplace rights, consumer rights or environmental standards.

"Labour will seek a clear and binding commitment to repatriate powers in devolved areas to the Scottish Parliament. We will insist this must be done in a short, but achievable timeframe.

"If there is not a clear presumption of devolution, as well as the other demands set out by Keir Starmer, Labour has been clear that our MPs will not support this Bill in the Commons.

"It is my firm belief that we must not lose sight of the potential to strengthen the powers of the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh and Northern Irish Assemblies or the regions of England as part of a more federal United Kingdom.

"The Bill must also set out an acceptable financial settlement to accompany the newly devolved powers, as the Tories cannot be allowed to simply inflict further austerity on UK nations and regions.

"The SNP has absolutely no interest in a Brexit deal that works for the entire UK, and it's now fundamentally clear that Labour is the only party committed to an alternative to Theresa May's Brexit that will deliver for the many, not the few."

Labour promises pay rise to 130,000 young Scots

New figures show Scottish Labour's plan to create a Real Living Wage of £10-per-hour would give a pay rise to 130,000 young people in Scotland.

Unveiled in Labour's manifesto last month, which inspired millions of young people across Britain to vote Labour, our plan would bring an end to low-paid work in the UK by not only increasing the minimum wage but also by abolishing the existing youth rate, which is even lower.

The minimum wage is one of Labour's proudest achievements, but Scotland needs a pay rise. There are 129,000 18 to 24-year-olds here earning less than the £8.25 living wage. That's more than half of all working young people.

For too long young people have been let down by a Tory government only interested in protecting the privileged few and an SNP government in Scotland more interested in running a referendum campaign than using the powers of the Scottish Parliament to end austerity.

Labour's government-in-waiting in Westminster offers something different.

As well as increasing the minimum wage to £10 per hour, we would abolish zero hour contracts, ending the scourge of insecure work for the millions in Britain who wake up not knowing if they are going to work on any given day.

We will create a society that provides real opportunity for young people, by governing in the interests of the many, not the few.

[We need action on period poverty now](#)

Today the Scottish Government is launching a pilot scheme in Aberdeen providing free sanitary products to women and girls on lower incomes.

I'm pleased the campaign I have started as an opposition MSP has pushed SNP Ministers to act, but the reality is that women and girls urgently need national action now.

A pilot scheme is a welcome step in the right direction, but we must go much further to help women and girls across the country who are facing a monthly struggle to access the products they need.

After relentless austerity over the last few years from both the Tories and the SNP, there are too many women and girls in Scotland who are unable to afford essential sanitary products during menstruation due to poverty.

Yet there's no reason why any woman or girl, in a wealthy country like Scotland in 2017, should be unable to access these vital products which are essential to their health and wellbeing.

We need to end period poverty and improve access to sanitary products right across Scotland and that's why I will soon be launching a consultation on a Members Bill proposal which will give all women in Scotland the right to access these products for free, regardless of their income.

During my campaign I've been inspired to meet so many committed activists who are championing the issue of access to sanitary products in their own professions, classrooms and communities.

I hope as many people as possible will take part in my consultation and that SNP Ministers will embrace my ambition to make Scotland an example to the world on menstrual health.

[Frank McAveety's tribute to Alistair Watson](#)

Alistair Watson Tribute

To all who are here today – Elected Members, Leader of the Council, former Leaders, MPs and MSPs – thank you for coming today on such a sad occasion.

I stand here today, on behalf of the Glasgow Labour Party, fellow councillors and party comrades, carrying out a task that is premature and totally unexpected.

We share the grief of Alistair's family and their relations and friends. A special word too for Cheryl, Jordan and their mum Christine, Alistair's brothers Jackie and Brian, and the unforgettable Evie whom her Granda doted on.

It has been a tough few weeks for the Labour family in the City with the loss of former Councillor Margaret McCafferty and former Depute Lord Provost Gerry Leonard.

The news early last Thursday of the sudden loss of our friend and colleague Alistair Watson on the day of the final Council meeting before recess shocked everyone in the City Chambers.

Today as we join together, there are two motions that have been tabled in the House of Commons and the Scottish Parliament from an SNP MP and Labour MSP, demonstrating the high regard and respect held for our colleague Alistair Watson.

But the response from all the Party Leaders at the Full Council demonstrated the respect and love felt for our friend Alistair from across the political divide.

We all shared the thought that only Alistair – a Councillor well versed in the Machiavellian skulduggery essential for survival amidst the Victorian grandeur of the City Chambers – was achieving his final revenge by taking over the Full Council meeting.

Alistair would have enjoyed that as he had been a significant figure from the very first day he entered the City Chambers as an elected politician in 1995.

My first encounter with Alistair was to avoid him as he made his way into the Debating Chamber. I wasn't prepared to argue with a 6ft 3 inches railway worker from Govan whose affiliation in football terms was not quite what mine was.

But from that day on Alistair became more than just a physically towering figure in the City Chambers. He made it his own as he represented his constituents to the best of his ability.

He relished the hurly burly of his work in the City Chambers; he enjoyed the nature of the boisterous Debating Chamber where he stood, rock like as his political opponents questioned his values and his party.

But Alistair could cope as he was a product of his family background; a son of Govan, proud of his time at Govan High School and his time working for the railways and representing fellow workers at Corkerhill Depot.

The Debating Chamber held no fear for Alistair and he ensured that his fellow Councillors would hear all about his passions and interests.

For 22 years that is what Alistair did

For 22 years we witnessed his commitments to the people of his Ward..

For 22 years we recognised his contribution to improving the great City of Glasgow.

Alistair loved what Local Government could do to transform his city and to ensure that every person in the city could realise whatever potential within them.

But Local Government needs people who have ideas that are transformative; people who think big about how to change a sometimes cautious and mighty institution.

Alistair was one of those who did think big : from the simple idea of his Socialist youth that ordinary men and women, if given the opportunity, can do extraordinary good things.

To the idea that Glasgow, once again – if given the power and resources – could recreate the ambition of its predecessors as they forged a model of municipal, democratic public services – serving the people and not Mammon.

I had the task, earlier this week, of sorting out the things that were in Alistair's office.

Although it wasn't difficult to gain access – I guessed his entry code was 1872!!

My oh my! What an office that was.

But if a room could sum up what the passions of Alistair Watson were they were contained within those four walls.

- Many photographs of his family – in the good times when they were all together;
- Some fantastic old railway registers – all hand written and entered by his predecessors in the past;
- His train sets, his photograph of Govan High School at the Millennium; his Rangers pennant and Rangers tie! (How he loved to show me those!!)
- His Labour Rosettes from endless campaigns ...

But there were three articles he had written that illustrated the driving commitments of Alistair's political career.

They were all about Transport and Infrastructure:

- One called "At a Crossroads" arguing for greater fairness in the allocation of national funding for roads maintenance;
- another called "Waiting For A Bus" arguing for reregulation of buses;
- and a third one titled "Getting On The Right Track" seeking public sector control of our taxpayer funded railway service.

What they all revealed was Alistair's relentless quest for making a difference.

They revealed his passion for Glasgow. He said:

"I love going around Scotland, but I always return to my home city of Glasgow".

But most of all they revealed an unquenchable desire that the purpose of an elected member is to leave a legacy. What a legacy it would be for all of us in this hallowed Church – going back centuries to the heart of Scottish Christianity – if we in public office irrespective of our political affiliations – could fulfil the legacy on putting people and not profit first.

That was Alistair's credo throughout life and we will miss the energy, passion and commitments he gave every day.

We, in the Labour Group, have lost not just a colleague – but a fighter, a

thinker, a doer, a friend and a believer in the capacity of humanity to put each other first.

Alistair may now be on another journey but we should reflect on who he was and the contribution he made.

As he said:

“Mrs Thatcher was wrong. You’re not a failure if you get on a bus. You’re a decent member of the travelling public. On the buses, there is such a thing as society.”

To Alistair’s family – be proud of what he achieved and remember, to the end, he wanted everyone to have a chance. There can be no finer legacy than that.

[Help to Buy isn't helping working people](#)

New analysis from Scottish Labour has shown the SNP’s ‘help to buy’ scheme is failing to help working people.

The analysis shows the average annual income of households benefitting from the scheme was £46,000. Yet the median average income in Scotland is around £27,000 with many earning less than that.

Young people are finding it harder to get their foot on the housing ladder, with home ownership rates at the lowest they have been in decades among Scotland’s young people.

Those on lower incomes in particular are caught in a vicious cycle, being forced into renting because they don’t have the savings to afford a deposit, and then unable to save because of sky high private rents.

Yet the SNP’s ‘help to buy’ scheme offers no help. The top 15 percent of earners are more likely to benefit from the scheme than the average earner.

The reality for Scotland’s prospective homeowners is grim.

The SNP has taken a housing shortage and turned it into a housing crisis.

Labour would do things differently. We would start by building 60,000 new affordable homes in Scotland, tackling the dire shortage of affordable housing.

Only Labour can tackle the housing crisis and fix it for everyone – first time buyers, private renters and social tenants.

We can create better paid jobs by investing in skills and infrastructure.

To do that we need to use the powers of the Scottish Parliament and build a Scotland for the many, not the few.