

Housing market must be able to reopen efficiently

7 Jun 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have demanded that the SNP government enable the housing market to reopen efficiently by allowing property professionals to visit homes.

The demand comes after the latest Scottish sales figures highlight the colossal impact of the lockdown on the property market.

In April this year Scotland recorded only 103 sales, down from 5765 in March this year and 6285 in January this year.

The size of the drop is no surprise given the housing market has been in lockdown, but surveyors and estate agents are worried that the confusing advice given to them for easing lockdown will mean that the much-needed reopening of the housing market will be undermined.

The Scottish Government's road map to lifting lockdown outlines that in phase 1 'preparing for the safe reopening of the housing market' can take place.

However, estate agents cannot open branches to the public during this period or visit people's homes for photography or to carry out market appraisals.

Surveyors are unable to return to work because they are not allowed to visit any properties. If surveyors cannot access properties then they cannot be valued or inspected prior to sale which will almost certainly delay the 'reopening of the market' in Phase 2.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has specifically stated that Phase 1 and Phase 2 are not clear enough in setting out exactly what estate agents and surveyors can and cannot do.

Therefore the Scottish Conservatives are calling for surveyors and estate agents to be allowed to visit properties for valuation which would be completely safe with the use of personal protective equipment.

Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative shadow communities secretary said:

"The decimation of the housing market over the last two months is well known, but the figures are still utterly shocking.

"The property industry is a vital part of our economy and it is absolutely crucial, for all those waiting to move, for all those who work in property, for everyone in Scotland, that it is able to reopen and operate as efficiently as possible.

“In order to do this surveyors and estate agents need far more clarity for the next phases of lockdown and, importantly, property professionals must be able to view and inspect properties.

“There is no reason that property professionals cannot visit residential properties and follow social distancing guidelines, wear masks and gloves.

“At present the guidance is just not clear enough, which will only lead to a stuttering start when purpose and direction is needed.

“Unless the Scottish Government provides clear, sensible and relevant advice the property industry will not be able to open effectively, seriously hindering any economic recovery we hope to make.”

[SNP must back Scottish fishermen in negotiations with EU](#)

3 Jun 2020



The Scottish Conservatives are demanding the SNP support Scottish fishermen against the EU demands for access to our waters.

In a statement on the Brexit negotiations in the Scottish Parliament this afternoon the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Mike Russell claimed, “never has a no deal been more likely.”

While Brexit negotiations have stalled, this is mainly due to the EU demands for access to UK fishing grounds as a precondition to further talks.

The Scottish Conservatives are clear that they will not sell the Scottish fishermen out and are asking the SNP government to do the same.

Murdo Fraser, Scottish Conservative shadow constitution secretary said:

“The SNP spent last year telling us that there would be no withdrawal agreement, that the UK would leave on a No-Deal basis, that the UK Govt were not even involved in serious negotiations.

“They were wrong on every single one of these claims, and inevitably they will be proved wrong again.

“The SNP knows that the real blockage to progress is the EU 27’s unreasonable demand to access our fishing grounds as a precondition to further talks.

“The Scottish Conservatives could not be clearer – we will not sell our

fishermen out.

“But the question remains; whose side is the SNP on?

“Does the SNP government stand with our Scottish fishermen and the UK Government in holding firm against these unreasonable demands, or are they on the side of the EU27 who want our fish before negotiation?”

Care homes being failed ‘all over again’

3 Jun 2020



The SNP government is failing care homes “all over again” on the issue of testing, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Two weeks ago, health secretary Jeane Freeman pledged that all care home staff would be routinely tested for coronavirus.

However, latest testing figures have suggested that drive is falling well short, and at First Minister’s Questions today Nicola Sturgeon was unable to provide a statistical update.

One major provider – Renaissance Care – said barely half of its staff had been tested for Covid-19, despite the promise.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw challenged Ms Sturgeon on the issue today, and pointed out that 7000 tests a day would be needed to regularly test care home staff.

But even including all testing, some days have recorded half that number, meaning the target is well off-course.

And the party has today published a detailed account of just how severe SNP failings on testing have been.

‘*Testing and the coronavirus: the record in Scotland*’ analyses how major shortcomings have occurred in the SNP’s approach on testing from the outset.

It also reveals how Scotland has one of the poorest testing records not just in the UK, but also in comparison to countries across the world.

The paper was released on the day it was confirmed care homes have officially overtaken hospitals as the main place of death for Covid-19.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“Lessons about coronavirus testing in care homes should have been learned weeks ago.

“But instead, the SNP is failing care homes, their staff and their residents all over again.

“It has now been a fortnight since the SNP government said all staff would be routinely tested for Covid-19.

“However, it’s clear from testing figures that this drive has fallen woefully short. The fact the First Minister is so reluctant to provide statistics on this shows that she knows it.

“It would take around 7000 tests a day to ensure all care home staff were covered – but the SNP can’t even get close to that figure on the whole, let alone just for these workers.

“The World Health Organisation urged governments across the world to ‘test, test, test’.

“The SNP’s approach has been dither, delay and distract.

“The document published by the Scottish Conservatives today reveals the scale of these failings, and shows they have occurred over several weeks and are being repeated.

“Nicola Sturgeon said she would take full responsibility for her government’s approach to tackling coronavirus.

“As this shameful dossier tells us, the mistakes and shortcomings for Scotland have been considerable.”

SNP must hand over ‘missing millions’ to councils now

3 Jun 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have demanded that the SNP government hands over the ‘missing millions’ due to councils immediately.

In this morning’s local government committee meeting at Holyrood, Cosla confirmed that they still haven’t received the £155m promised by the SNP government to local authorities to help them deal with the Covid crisis.

The UK Government announced that Scotland would receive £155m in Barnett consequential for local government on the 18th April.

While initially reluctant, the Scottish Government finally agreed that all of this money would be given straight to local authorities, on the 6 May.

Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative shadow communities secretary said:

“The UK government announced the £155m in Barnett consequential for local government support over six weeks ago, but the SNP still hasn’t passed it on.

“Councils came into this crisis ill-equipped to cope after years of the SNP slashing their budgets to the bone.

“Despite this, local authorities have worked tirelessly on the frontlines keeping essential services running and supporting their residents and businesses through this crisis.

“First the SNP made them fight for the money and now, for unknown reasons, they still haven’t handed it over.

“Some local authorities barely have any reserves left thanks to the SNP’s botched approach to funding.

“This is a totally unacceptable situation, the SNP government must hand over these missing millions to councils now.”

[Sturgeon and Freeman clash exposes need for transparency on scientific advice](#)

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- Sturgeon and Freeman clash exposes need for transparency on scientific advice

2 Jun 2020



A public disagreement between Nicola Sturgeon and her health secretary on Covid-19 scientific advice proves the need for more transparency, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Today, the First Minister denied she’d ever claimed that her advisers had

told her there was no chance of asymptomatic patients passing on coronavirus to others.

Less than an hour later, Jeane Freeman directly contradicted that, saying: "The clear advice we were receiving from scientific experts was there was no transmission from asymptomatic individuals."

The clash comes on the same day the SNP government refused to publish exchanges its chief medical officer had conducted with UK counterparts.

The Scottish Conservatives said the nationalists should abandon their secretive ways and ensure all key documents were published to ensure better transparency.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"The inconsistencies between the First Minister and her health secretary could hardly be more blatant on this crucial matter.

"One says scientific advice showed asymptomatic patients couldn't transmit the disease, the other says the opposite.

"Of course, this could be settled if the SNP government was willing to publish these key documents.

"Instead, it reverts to its secretive ways in a bid to stop the Scottish public finding out the truth.

"That's unacceptable government at any time, let alone under these most serious of circumstances."