

Green lies on referendum re-run exposed

20 Mar 2017



The Greens' election manifesto will be deemed a "lie" if the party sides with the SNP in backing a second independence referendum, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

A series of remarks from the party and its "co-convenor" Patrick Harvie have revealed a massive u-turn in recent months.

The information was compiled by the Scottish Conservatives ahead of a two-day Holyrood debate on whether or not there should be a second independence referendum.

Following the No vote of 2014, Mr Harvie said Scotland should "live with" the result and "find ways to work together".

A month later, he added the country should "move beyond" the independence debate, and failing to do so would be "damaging".

The Greens also set out in their Holyrood manifesto that one million people should have to sign a petition, and that public demand should be "irresistible", before another vote was called.

In May last year, Mr Harvie said there would be "little point" in revisiting the poll unless opinion had shifted "markedly".

Most tellingly, the manifesto stated: "If a new referendum is to happen, it should come about by the will of the people, and not be driven by calculation of party political advantage."

However, since the turn of the year, the Greens' position has completely changed.

The party's own campaign, under the banner of Yes 2, has already begun, while just two months ago Mr Harvie said the independence option "has to remain on the table".

The Greens' vote is expected to be crucial, with their MSPs compensating for the lack of an SNP majority.

Scottish Conservative MSP Annie Wells said:

"The Greens like to think they're a bit different, and above the idea of manifesto pledges and hypocrisy.

"But they aren't, and these wild contradictions expose that.

"They were elected on a promise they would only back another referendum if the people wanted it.

"But that now looks like a lie, and it will be confirmed as such if they back the SNP on holding another unwanted and divisive referendum."

After the referendum, Patrick Harvie said that Scots would have to 'live with' and 'move beyond' the result

- **Harvie said that Scotland would have to 'live with' the referendum result.** 'I knew whatever the result Scotland would have to live with it, and find ways to work together. That's not always easy for people with passionately held opposing views, and it's only possible when we see and acknowledge each other's humanity. Now the result is in, there are many bitterly disappointed Yes campaigners around the country. There's also more than a little glee on the No side. Well OK, fair enough; they feel the need to celebrate and I've no doubt I would too if the position was reversed' (*Daily Record*, 20 September 2014, [link](#)).
- **He said that we have to 'move beyond' the referendum result and that it would 'damaging' to 'obsessively focus' on people being Yes and No voters.** 'There are many people who are still very proud of being part of the 45 per cent who voted Yes. And there are some who are finding it difficult to accept it wasn't a win. But I think it's important to say that this dividing line between the 45 per cent and the 55 per cent is one that we are going to have to move beyond. Focusing too much on that is going to become increasingly meaningless. That dividing line is one that isn't relevant for us as individuals anymore and it isn't helpful for the party and I think it would be damaging for Scotland as well to obsessively focus on that dividing line for the future.' (*Daily Record*, 12 October 2014, p11).

The Greens said that a future referendum should be reliant on 1 million people signing a petition rather than political parties doing a deal behind 'closed doors'

- **Patrick Harvie said that a second independence referendum should wait until public demand for another one is 'irresistible'.** 'Any government that wants to put another referendum forward to win it, would be well advised to wait until the public demand from outside of the pro-independence movement is irresistible. I don't want to scrape by with 51 per cent. I want a clear and decisive choice to be made. If we went into another referendum right now that wouldn't happen.' (*Common Space*, 28 May 2015, [link](#)).
- **In a statement on a second referendum, the Greens asserted that the timing of a referendum should be based on 'public appetite' and they cited 1 million people signing a petition as a way of showing this.** 'The timing of the referendum should be determined by public appetite: Scotland should decide, when Scotland wants to decide.... In assessing

public appetite for a second referendum we will respect new kinds of citizen-led initiatives – for example, a call for a referendum signed by up to 1 million people on the electoral register.’ (*Scottish Greens*, 18 September 2015, [link](#)).

- **Patrick Harvie demanded that the public be responsible for calling another independence referendum, not political parties ‘carving up a deal behind closed doors’.** ‘The question of independence may well be put again, but let’s say that the people of Scotland are in charge of that. We propose a citizens’ initiative so that it is the public who say when they are ready for that question to be put, not political parties carving up a deal behind closed doors.’ (*STV*, 10 October 2015, [link](#)).
- **He said there would be ‘little point’ in a second referendum unless opinion shifted ‘markedly’.** *The Scotsman* reported that ‘Harvie said there would be ‘little point’ in having another referendum unless opinion had shifted ‘markedly’ towards independence. ‘Will that happen? I hope so, I don’t know’. (*The Scotsman*, 14 May 2016, [link](#)).
- **The manifesto on which Scottish Green MSPs were elected said that another referendum should be called on the ‘will of the people’ rather than the ‘calculations of party political advantage’. It had no other triggers for Green support for a second referendum.** ‘Citizens should be able to play a direct role in the legislative process: on presenting a petition signed by an appropriate number of voters, citizens should be able to trigger a vote on important issues of devolved responsibility. As we proposed on the one year anniversary of the Independence Referendum, this is the Scottish Greens’ preferred way of deciding to hold a second referendum on Independence. If a new referendum is to happen, it should come about by the will of the people, and not be driven by calculations of party political advantage’ (*Scottish Green Manifesto 2016*, p36, [link](#)).
- **Patrick Harvie said that Brexit would not be the ‘strongest context’ to convince Scots to vote for independence.** ‘Greens support independence. I don’t think we’re ever going to argue against that position. What I have argued is that those on the pro-independence side who have almost seemed to be relishing the prospect of that Brexit scenario would be well advised to think carefully. I don’t think it’s the strongest context within which to continue to build the case that convinces those who weren’t convinced of independence. I’ve no doubt at all that if that scenario takes place, there will be many who will demand another referendum. But I suspect they will already be the people who were convinced in 2014. They won’t be the kind of people who felt uncertain in 2014 and those are the people that independence advocates need to engage with.’ (*Herald Scotland*, 10 May 2016, [link](#)).

Now the Greens have broken their own promises by doing background deals with the SNP on a second referendum with little public appetite.

- **Last summer, Patrick Harvie and Sturgeon had a backroom meeting on a second referendum.** An SNP spokesperson said ‘The plans for the SNP’s new initiative on independence have had to take account of the EU referendum

outcome. However, our campaign will be launched before the end of the summer recess and we look forward to working with others across the Yes movement to build majority support for independence.' (*The National*, 17 August 2016, [link](#)).

- **The Greens have already begun to campaign under the banner of 'Yes 2' and would do so 'regardless of what the SNP is doing'.** A party spokesperson said 'Ahead of our conference in October we will be announcing to our members proposals for relaunching the Green Yes campaign.' (*Express Online*, 10 August 2016, [link](#)).
- **Harvie is pushing for a second referendum to be held in March 2018.** 'What's been very clear is that the option needs to remain on the table, and we support that. That means the legislation to allow Holyrood to make that decision has to be progressed this year... I think a reasonable guess at the moment might be that if Scotland chooses to have this question put again, if the UK chooses to dig its heels in and refuses to respect the way that Scotland voted to remain in the EU, then maybe at some point round about the halfway mark of the two-year Brexit negotiation period, or not long after that halfway mark, we might need to be in a position to put that question to the public. (*Herald Scotland*, 13 January 2017, [link](#)).
- **Recent polling has shown that over two thirds of Scots are against a second referendum.** A BMG poll for Mev Brown of 1,009 adults carried out between 23 and 27 February found that, when don't knows are removed only, 33 per cent of Scots support a second referendum (*Daily Express*, 6 March 2017, [link](#)).