

Secret Indyref preparations revealed

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Freedom of Information documents published by the Scottish Conservatives today reveal the Scottish Government's secret preparations for a second independence referendum.

A key advice note from permanent secretary Lesley Evans – originally redacted by SNP Ministers – reveals that:

- **The Scottish Government's top civil servant warned that another referendum might have an "impact" on the delivery of the SNP's so-called key priorities.**
- **A referendum would start the clock on Scottish Government's civil servants beginning "transitional planning" for "moving to an independent Scotland"**
- **Delivering a referendum would mean the civil service having to step up the "deprioritisation of activity" in other key domestic priorities.**

The Scottish Conservatives are today calling on SNP Ministers to halt all civil service work preparations on independence, and instead focus all resources on key domestic priorities – education, law and order, and the NHS.

The advice note from Ms Evans was sent to the First Minister, Deputy First Minister John Swinney and Finance Secretary Derek Mackay in March 2017, a few weeks after Nicola Sturgeon had declared her plan to push for a second referendum on independence.

She has now insisted such a referendum should take place as early as next year – and made clear on Tuesday's statement to parliament that this is her priority.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"The SNP tried to keep this document under wraps and it's clear why.

"It shows that delivering Nicola Sturgeon's referendum on independence won't just divide our country all over again, it will push your school, your local hospital and your high street to the back of the queue.

"Instead of focussing on delivery, Sturgeon's Nationalist government will be focussed on division.

"And instead of sorting our Scotland's schools, a referendum would see taxpayer-funded civil servants working on the 'transition' to independence.

"She said it would be once in a generation. It turns out it's been every hour of every day since she lost. It's a complete betrayal of the 2014 vote.

“With violent crime on the rise, hospital projects in tatters, and our education system failing to deliver, Nicola Sturgeon needs to listen for once. Dump the independence referendum, and focus on what really matters.”