

Douglas Ross proposes Aberdeen economic recovery plan

6 Aug 2020



Scottish Conservative party leader Douglas Ross MP has today proposed a recovery plan to protect jobs and businesses in Aberdeen.

On his second day as leader, Douglas has set out solutions to help the city get through the localised lockdown that was announced yesterday afternoon.

The practical steps include a commitment to double coronavirus testing and financial support for businesses and workers who have lost out.

In July, Oil and Gas UK said more than 7,500 jobs have already been lost in the North East as a result of coronavirus and up to 30,000 positions may be at risk.

Douglas has also started work on delivering a jobs plan within his first month as leader.

Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross said: “The new restrictions placed on Aberdeen will be a further blow to the local economy that has already suffered severely from coronavirus and the drop in oil and gas prices.

“The decision to reintroduce these measures was from a public health standpoint and it is vital that we work together to make sure Aberdeen is not left behind and local people are fully supported through this extremely difficult time that will have hit many businesses and workers hard.

“That’s why I am putting forward a set of straightforward, practical proposals to help the city get through this new lockdown and kick-start the Aberdeen economy as soon as it is safe to do so.

“We must do all we can to keep jobs and businesses in Aberdeen safe and I urge the Scottish Government to take these proposals forward as soon as possible.”

Scottish Conservative co-leader of Aberdeen City Council, Douglas Lumsden, said: “It’s absolutely vital that we do everything we can to support businesses and workers in Aberdeen through this tough period.

“I hope the Scottish Government will take on board these serious and sensible proposals, and work with the council to get support to everyone who needs it.”

Notes

Oil and Gas UK warned 7,500 workers had already lost their jobs:

<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/politics/uk-politics/2323814/oil-and-gas-bosses-renew-calls-for-sector-deal-as-coronavirus-crisis-claims-7500-north-sea-jobs/>

Douglas Ross' economic recovery plan for Aberdeen is as follows:

1. Commit to doubling testing in the city over the next week, working with the Armed Forces and UK Government wherever necessary, to get the virus under control and help ensure people can get to work safely.
 2. Follow the success of the UK Government Eat Out to Help Out scheme and commit to providing a discount on meals at bars, restaurants, cafes and pubs when they reopen in a few weeks.
 3. Establish a financial support scheme to help hospitality workers who have lost wages this week.
 4. Set up a general Hardship Fund for workers and small businesses in the area who have lost out directly because of the immediacy of the lockdown.
 5. Establish a financial support scheme for the hospitality industry to help them with losses on food and perishable stock that will go to waste this week.
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Douglas Ross: give pupils every chance to succeed

6 Aug 2020



Scottish Conservative party leader Douglas Ross MP has said that the SNP Government should give pupils every chance to succeed and change the rules on grades this year.

Douglas has said pupils this year should be allowed to choose to take their existing result, or sit exams this coming autumn or receive their prelim grade.

He added that students waiting for clarity on exam results to take up university offers should be prioritised so they are not held back any longer.

In his first statement as leader yesterday, Douglas already called for the Scottish Government to "ensure the appeals process is accelerated."

Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross said: “Pupils, parents and teachers have contacted me to say they feel let down by what has happened and the lack of solutions that have been proposed.

“In light of the exceptional circumstances of the last academic year, it is only fair that pupils are given every single chance to succeed.

“We should allow pupils far more flexibility and give all pupils – no matter their background – every opportunity to get the grades they deserve.

“Pupils have already earned their prelim grades and if they are determined enough to want to sit the exam later this year, they should be encouraged to do so in order to give themselves the best possible future, with those waiting on university places receiving first priority.

“The futures of an entire year group of young Scots are in the balance. It’s not just their exam results that have been downgraded, but their life chances. That cannot be allowed to stand.”

Scottish Conservative education spokesperson, Jamie Greene, said: “John Swinney’s full focus must be on urgently fixing this mess.

“The Aberdeen lockdown clearly requires the SNP Government’s attention but that cannot come at the expense of pupils who have been so badly failed.

“The education secretary must get on top of this and leave the management of the local lockdown in Aberdeen to his colleagues.”

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- SNP must withdraw hate crimes bill after Faculty of Advocates criticism

6 Aug 2020



The SNP must u-turn on its “damaging and inept” hate crimes bill following a blistering attack by legal experts, according to the Scottish Conservatives.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr made the call after the Faculty of Advocates published its response to Humza Yousaf’s controversial draft Bill, which ended its consultation phase on July 24.

The professional body warned there is “no alternative but to reconsider” the Bill and warned it will trigger a “large number of prosecutions” with “no likelihood of being enforced” if the legal system was not prepared for it.

It goes on to say the bill’s broad scope could cause “unfounded complaints” leading to the “invasion of privacy and domestic life” and the seizure of telephones and computers.

The faculty commented that social media posts would fall foul of proposals as they stand on a “daily basis”.

It joins the Scottish Police Federation, Catholic Church in Scotland and the Law Society of Scotland in raising concerns about the SNP’s legislation.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“Ever since the beleaguered justice secretary cobbled together this ill-fated draft Bill, groups from every area of Scotland’s public life have warned that it is damaging and inept.

“The very principles of free speech itself are under threat.

“Genuine hate crime should be punished but this law goes too far.

“The fundamental flaws in the drafting, which seem to have been missed by Humza Yousaf, have been highlighted time and again by voices from across the political spectrum.

“These warnings from the faculty are another major setback for an ill-conceived piece of legislation.

“There is still time for the SNP to withdraw it and for Humza Yousaf to rethink the execution of his bill.”

The full response is found here:

<http://www.advocates.org.uk/media/3414/hate-crime-and-public-order-bill-final-faculty-response-4-august-2020.pdf>

Key quotes from the response include:

‘potentially criminalise a number of social media postings made on a daily basis’ Page 4.

‘If it is anticipated that criminal proceedings will be raised in such cases, then **a large number of prosecutions could result**. If this is not anticipated, the Faculty **would question the rationale for legislation** which has no likelihood of being rigorously enforced.’

‘extensive disruption to life and livelihood, and to the legitimate operations of businesses and institutions’ could be caused by malicious complaint. Page 18

And follows that there is a scope for unfounded complaints to cause:

'invasion of privacy and domestic life, the seizure of telephones and computers, and the prolongation of disruption caused to people, businesses and institutions' Page 19.

It concludes that there is **'no alternative but to reconsider the draft bill'**.

'the Faculty has significant reservations about the proposed legislation... arising from the drafting of the Bill in terms of its breadth, and its **restrictive effects on freedom of expression'** Page 10.

'the terms of the proposed section 6 of the Bill risk augmenting the effect of factors active in society with the tendency to stifle or suppress free and lively debate' Page 19.

'concern that allegations that acts or words are expressions of 'hate... "shutdown", discussion of matters which are the subject of legitimate debate' 'these issues are not currently adequately reflected in the Bill'. Page 19.

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6 Aug 2020



Newly-elected Scottish Conservative party leader Douglas Ross MP has pledged to focus not on the divisions of the past but on rebuilding and restoring Scotland.

Speaking ahead of his first appearance as Scottish Conservative and Unionist party leader in Forres this afternoon, Douglas has said he will deliver a positive and credible alternative to the SNP for everyone who wants to move the country forward to a post-referendum Scotland.

Douglas has also confirmed he will deliver a jobs plan within his first month as leader.

Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross said: "Becoming the leader of the

Scottish Conservatives today is the honour and privilege of a lifetime. I want to thank all those who have given me so much encouragement over the last week.

“In taking on this job today, I am applying for another: to champion a post-referendum Scotland where we focus not on the divisions of the past but on rebuilding our country from the brink, restoring our reputation for educational excellence, empowering our regions and remote communities, and providing the decent jobs that everyone can aspire to.

“I am applying to work for anyone and everyone in Scotland who wants that to be the focus of our national debate, who wants to move the country forward, and wants that work to start now.

“I begin this next step in my life as many young people consider their own futures. The nervous wait for exam results by thousands of young Scots yesterday ended for too many – particularly for those from more disadvantaged areas – in disappointment, confusion and anger. As leader, education will be a crucial policy area for the Scottish Conservatives. Right now, I know many young people and teachers don’t feel that it is a top priority for the Scottish Government. “All of this requires a huge amount of work – in a short space of time. But my guarantee to Scots is that when we head to the polling stations next May, the Scottish Conservatives will provide them with the credible and competent alternative to the SNP that the country so desperately needs.”

Freedom of speech must not be destroyed by SNP

28 Jul 2020



The SNP government’s controversial hate crimes legislation must be dramatically altered to protect free speech, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The call comes after both the Law Society of Scotland and the Scottish Police Federation have stated serious reservations about the bill.

The Scottish Police Federation, the voice of Scotland’s police officers, published their response to the bill today, writing that parts of the bill are ‘too vague to be implemented’.

The organisation is also concerned that the bill, as drafted, “would devastate the legitimacy of the police in the eyes of the public.”

Just yesterday, in their response to the bill, the Law Society criticised the legislation for being an assault on democracy; "We have significant reservations regarding a number of the Bill's provisions and the lack of clarity, which could in effect lead to restrictions in freedom of expression, one of the foundations of a democratic society."

These reservations have been echoed by a number of other organisations and individuals including Roddy Dunlop QC, the Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, the National Secular Society and the Christian organisation CARE Scotland.

Liam Kerr, Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary said:

"The SNP government must amend this bill to protect freedom of speech.

"Lawyers, police officers and a wide range of civic organisations have now expressed serious reservations about the scope and effect of this legislation.

"These informed and thoughtful interventions are from experts in their field.

"The Justice Secretary's response to these serious and reasonable concerns appears to be little more than name calling.

"The SNP's hate crimes legislation is far too vague, it poses an extreme danger to freedom of speech and it will criminalise well-intentioned members of the public who pose no threat.

"Mr Yousaf must now listen to these experts and amend his deeply flawed bill."