

Nicola Sturgeon's statement on EU negotiations and Scotland's future

Read the statement given by the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, to the Scottish Parliament on EU negotiations and Scotland's future. Check against delivery.

Sturgeon's leadership 'leaking credibility by the hour'

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Nicola Sturgeon's leadership is "leaking credibility by the hour", the Scottish Conservatives have said after the First Minister shelved her second referendum plans.

Addressing MSPs today, the SNP leader said she would "reset" the proposals tabled earlier this year, when she said she wanted to bring forward plans for another vote immediately.

Instead, she said, she would wait for the outcome of Brexit negotiations.

The climbdown follows the General Election where the SNP lost 21 MPs north of the border, and repeated polls showing Scots don't want independence, and don't want to have to go through another referendum to prove it.

Responding, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said ministers should go further, and promise there will be no separation vote for at least the duration of the Scottish parliamentary term.

Ruth said, far from being reasonable and listening to the public, Sturgeon was "in denial" about her mistakes and losing credibility in her leadership as a result.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"The issue we have had this last year has been with a First Minister who

tried to use the UK's decision to leave the EU to impose another referendum on Scotland at the earliest opportunity.

"No once in a generation, no Edinburgh Agreement of respecting the result, just a single-visioned drive to the line for Nicola Sturgeon to try to secure her place in history.

"Today's statement fails to give people any assurance that the First Minister has been listening.

"Instead, she appears to be in denial about her mistakes over this last year and, as a result, is leaking credibility and confidence in her leadership by the hour.

"Her response hasn't been to reflect.

"It's been simply to lash out at the UK Government at every opportunity and to sing the same old songs in the same old tune.

"She now claims to be putting the referendum to one side.

"She should just give the country some certainty and take it off the table for the rest of this parliament at least."

Bill to introduce landfill disposals tax in Wales is passed

The Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Bill is the third of three Bills to establish tax arrangements in Wales.

Landfill disposals tax, which will replace landfill tax in Wales, will come into effect in April 2018. The revenue raised will help fund public services in Wales.

Landfill disposals tax – similar to the current landfill tax, which is collected throughout Wales and England – will be a tax on the disposal of waste to landfill. It will be paid by landfill site operators who pass these costs on to waste operators.

The Bill extends the application of landfill disposals tax to unauthorised disposals of waste. This will introduce a financial deterrent to discourage people from disposing of waste unlawfully, encouraging them to pay their fair share of tax by disposing of waste at a registered landfill site.

There are currently 25 landfill sites in Wales, operated by 20 landfill site operators. In Wales, the Office for Budgetary Responsibility forecasts that landfill tax will generate £25m in 2018-19.

The Finance Secretary will announce the rates for landfill disposals tax by October 1 and the regulations will be laid after the UK Autumn Budget.

Local communities affected by the disposal of waste to landfill will benefit from a new grant-funded scheme in Wales – the Landfill Disposals Tax Communities Scheme, which will be introduced in April 2018.

Welcoming the passing of the Bill by the National Assembly, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“ This Bill is the third piece of legislation to establish tax arrangements in Wales and another important step in our devolution journey.

“In less than a year’s time, we will be introducing the first Welsh taxes in almost 800 years and Wales will become responsible for raising our own money to spend on public services.

“Once law, this Bill will enable us to introduce a tax on landfill disposals in Wales from April 2018. The Bill ensures public services in Wales will continue to benefit from the revenues raised by this tax.

“Wales is at the forefront of waste policy and landfill disposals tax is an important element of achieving our goal of a zero waste Wales.

“ We have worked closely with stakeholders in developing this Bill. While it is broadly consistent with the existing landfill tax, therefore providing stability to businesses and minimising the risk of waste tourism, we have made a number of improvements to the tax.

“It is simple and clear to apply; addresses areas of confusion and uncertainty; is up to date and relevant to Wales. Together with the other tax legislation we have introduced it will pave the way to a smooth transition to tax powers.”

The Landfill Disposals Tax (Wales) Bill is anticipated to receive Royal Assent in the summer.

ONS persistent poverty figures show you can't trust the Tory lie that

poverty only affects a small group in our society – Abrahams

Debbie Abrahams MP, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting on the ONS persistent poverty figures, said:

“This persistent poverty data from the Office of National Statistics shows you can’t trust the Conservative lie that poverty only affects a small, fixed group in our society.

“The high poverty rate of nearly 17 percent combined with the lower persistent poverty rate in this data shows that poverty can affect us all at different times in our life.

“We therefore desperately need a social security system which, like the NHS, is there for us all in our time of need.”

Ends

Ministers must improve process of fire safety checks after only 95 tests completed since Grenfell – Healey

John Healey MP, Labour’s Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, commenting on reports that 95 cladding samples from high-rise residential buildings have failed a combustibility test, said:

“These results point to a collapse in our system of fire safety checks and controls.

“Ministers must now do a great deal more to reassure residents that everything is being done to keep them safe.

“They must improve the testing process which has so far been too slow, too narrow and too secretive. The Prime Minister promised that 100 tests a day could be done but two weeks on from the Grenfell Tower fire only 95 have been completed.

“Ministers must also not outsource all responsibility for urgent remedial action to councils and housing associations. They must guarantee that

where fire risks are found they will make available upfront funding, including for re-cladding buildings, fire prevention work and retro-fitting sprinkler systems, starting with the highest-risk blocks.”

Ends

Notes

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It is being reported that all 95 samples of exterior cladding from high-rise residential buildings so far tested have failed a combustibility test being conducted for the government by the Building and Research Establishment in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire.

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The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid MP confirmed to John Healey yesterday in the House of Commons that only the exterior cladding on buildings was being tested:
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-06-26/debates/02718B34-06C3-4984-9C4C-EAB30F2F0026/GrenfellTowerFireFireSafety#contribution-4320C1F4-1592-483E-8CD5-5FE8B7A9B0C9>

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The Prime Minister has previously said that capacity was available to test 100 buildings a day:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-commons-statement-on-grenfell-tower-22-june-2017>.
There are an estimated 600 buildings that may be at risk as a result of similar cladding to that in place at Grenfell Tower.

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John Healey and other Labour MPs put a series of questions on support, checks, funding, and overhaul of fire and building safety rules to Sajid Javid yesterday in the Commons which remain unanswered. John Healey’s speech yesterday is here:
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-06-26/debates/02718B34-06C3-4984-9C4C-EAB30F2F0026/GrenfellTowerFireFireSafety#contribution-1DBB53D7-BCD8-480B-A93A-98F93B78E551>