

Thornberry won't rule out SNP deal

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The Scottish Conservatives have attacked Labour after its shadow defence secretary Emily Thornberry refused to rule out a deal with the SNP after next week's election.

On Newsnight last night, Ms Thornberry was asked whether or not Labour would have a coalition agreement with the SNP. She replied: "I'm not dealing in hypotheticals with you"

It comes after Jeremy Corbyn confirmed earlier this week that he would open to discussions with Nicola Sturgeon about a second referendum on independence.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

"Emily Thornberry wouldn't answer the question about a deal with the SNP because the truth is Labour would jump into bed with the SNP in a heartbeat.

"Jeremy Corbyn has already said he is happy to speak to Nicola Sturgeon about a second referendum. And both parties are also preparing to raid the magic money tree, borrowing billions more.

"Her performance only goes to show that if you want to bring a halt to the SNP's second referendum, you have to vote Scottish Conservative at this election.

"A vote for Labour is a vote to let Nicola Sturgeon roll out her referendum. Only we can stop the SNP in their tracks."

The Newsnight clip can be seen here:

<https://twitter.com/BBCNewsnight/status/870220413116321797>

News story: CMA considers undertakings in Autodata/Solera merger

The companies supply vehicle repair and maintenance information (RMI) platforms across the UK, which give access to digital data and are mainly

used by workshops and other repairers to diagnose, service and repair vehicles.

On 26 January 2017, Solera Holdings Inc. acquired the ultimate holding company of Autodata Publishing Group Limited.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) subsequently conducted an investigation into this acquisition and found competition concerns, should the merger be allowed to proceed.

This was due to the fact the companies are the 2 main suppliers of these platforms in the UK and compete closely with each other. Other suppliers face significant barriers to entry and expansion in the UK.

Solera has since offered to overcome these concerns by selling its RMI platform in the UK, E3 Technical (which is part of CarweB), to a buyer approved in advance by the CMA. It has also offered to provide transitional support to the buyer of the divested business.

The CMA considers there are reasonable grounds for believing the undertakings offered, or a modified version of them, might be acceptable, and will open a public consultation on the undertakings in due course.

The CMA has until 27 July to consider whether to accept the undertakings, or a modified version of them, with the possibility of extending this deadline to 22 September 2017 if there are special reasons for doing so.

All information relating to the investigation is available on the [case page](#).

Tourism experiences further growth in 2016

Last year was the first of Wales' themed years and it proved to be great success – Visit Wales' marketing activity for 2016 generated an additional £370 million for the Welsh economy – which is an 18% increase on 2015. This is based on those definitely influenced by Visit Wales marketing before taking a trip to Wales. The Economy Secretary recently announced the continuation of the themed years with a new 'Year of Discovery' in 2019 which will build on the three themes of adventure, culture and great outdoors and follow the 2018 Year of the Sea.

In the context of the 2017 Year of Legends it is great to see that Cadw sites in Wales benefited from the increase in visitors in 2016, welcoming 1.4m visitors to its staffed sites– an 8% increase on the previous year and the heritage organisation's best year on record. There were large increases in visitor numbers at its top historic attractions, including Caernarfon,

Caerphilly and Chepstow Castles. Caernarfon saw an increase of nearly 60% in visitors – many of which, had travelled to see the site's iconic Weeping Window exhibition. The arrival of a giant Welsh Dragon, which toured Cadw sites as part of its innovative "Historic Adventures" marketing campaign, also played a crucial role in attracting a new generation of visitors to sites. Following last year's success and having now gained widespread fame as Wales' resident Dragon – for the Year of Legends – Dewi the Dragon has been joined by Dwynwen and over the weekend they welcomed two baby dragons to Caerphilly Castle.

The Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

"The tourism Industry in Wales is in fantastic shape and I'm delighted that the Cadw sites attracted so many additional visitors last year. This shows that innovative ideas like the Cadw Dragon help to spark a renewed interest in our heritage which not only has a positive impact on our historic environment but also on Wales's wider economy. These iconic sites are continuing to inspire the people of Wales and bringing our past to life during our Year of Legends.

"Last year, we also saw record breaking spend from overseas visitors and crossed the million visitors for the first time in 8 years, which is excellent news. We fully recognise how competitive the market is and the challenges facing the industry. Our future vision – especially in light of the EU Referendum result – is to do more again to build on this sense of confidence and to internationalise our reputation and approach. We're making the most of every opportunity presented by the UEFA Champions League Final to raise awareness of Wales as a holiday destination in our key markets."

The Economy Secretary, continued:

"Although most of our performance indicators look good and feedback from the industry is positive, overnight GB figures showed a fall in 2016 compared with the record year of 2015, as did figures for all overnight trips to GB. However, the overall picture for Wales – taking into account tourism day visits, international visitors as well GB overnights visits – shows a substantial increase in overall tourism volumes compared with 2015. The total of visits across all three categories was 15% up during 2016 – which builds on the previous successful years.

"Campaign work to convert early interest and opportunities arising from the weak pound will continue with the Summer campaign."

Adverts will shortly appear on London Underground Stations with the Year of Legends TV advert featuring Luke Evans being played on the Waterloo motion

screen. The TV advert will also be shown on Channel 4 in London to coincide with the Cabins in the Wild programme – as well as on Sky Regional London and Sky Adsmart Meridian.

Figures published this week on accommodation occupancy show positive trends for 2017 with Room occupancy for guesthouses/B&Bs over the 12 months ending March 2017 at 40%, 2 percentage points higher than the same period in 2016.

Over the 12 months ending March 2017, self-catering unit occupancy rose by 2 percentage points to 54%, compared with the same period in 2016.

The SNP manifesto: what it means for disabled people

We have now launched our manifesto for the General Election on 8 June. It sets out how we will ensure that there is strong opposition to a re-elected and increasingly hard line Tory government at Westminster.

Aberystwyth to Cardiff bus service to continue until at least December

The 6 month extension to the current pilot will allow the Welsh Government to better assess the needs and travel patterns of customers, taking account of the summer tourist season and beyond, before making a long term decision on the service.

Ken Skates said:

“When we introduced the T1C service a little under six months ago, we did so to facilitate direct bus travel between west Wales and Cardiff. We’ve since seen this service used by a variety of groups and individuals, from students to shoppers to holiday goers.

“At the same time, however, we have made no secret that the service is not as popular as we might have expected. This can perhaps be explained by the introduction of a commercial service run by Stagecoach Megabus earlier this year covering largely the same route, albeit with notable exceptions.

“Given this, I think there is great merit in extending the pilot for another 6 months. This will ensure any long term decision on the future of the service is made with a full year of data, whilst allowing us to continue to talk to passenger groups, bus operators, councils and interested parties about the service they would like to see and how best to achieve it.

“I’m delighted that our Traws Cymru service continues to offer regular bus travel to communities across Wales who might otherwise be without the option of public transport. I’m pleased to announce that the T1C will continue to be part of that offering until at least December.”

T1C service stops at all stops between Aberystwyth – Aberearon – Lampeter and Carmarthen and then operates limited stops between Carmarthen and Cardiff via Cross Hands, Swansea Bus Station and Bridgend Outlet Village.