

Sturgeon knew EU membership could ruin currency plan

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The release of secret SNP documents suggest they deliberately misled the public in their 2014 whitepaper on independence – because they knew the EU could trash their plans.

The 2014 whitepaper repeatedly said an independent Scotland would keep the pound and use the Bank of England as its central bank, with a Scottish Monetary Institute (SMI) created to work under the Bank. It also said that an independent Scotland would be a member of the EU.

But a Freedom of Information request has revealed the details of a proposed SMI, and that the SNP knew that their plans could break EU rules.

Countries joining the EU have to sign up to the full body of EU law. This includes the requirement for all member states to aim to adopt the Euro.

Under a heading of 'hot issues' that could cause problems, the paper admits one such issue would be *'Continued use of Sterling and the EU requirement for new member states to aim for convergence to adopt the euro. Role of the SMI will depend on negotiations with the EU.'*

The EU joining criteria also includes the requirement for member states to have their own, independent national central banks.

The paper recognises this might ruin the SNP's proposals, stating *'This would require negotiation and agreement with the EU, should Scotland be required to have a separate central bank the functions of the SMI can be expanded to fulfil the requirements.'*

The paper also reveals that:

- The EU may have opposed the SNP's plans for an independent Scotland to keep using the Bank of England for wider roles, such as guaranteeing deposits and regulating banks.
- The traditional system of Scottish banks issuing bank notes may have ended, with one option being 'to consider the introduction of a single Scottish issuer.'
- The recruitment of a governor of the institute was 'being undertaken' at the time of the paper's writing and was due to be complete by September 2014.

- The institute would have an estimated running cost of up to £50m and a staff of up to 400 people, spending £60m on consultancy fees, and face total transition costs of up to £69m.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser MSP said:

"This is an astonishing revelation. At the same time as Nicola Sturgeon was confidently preaching that we could keep the pound and share the Bank of England's functions, she knew the EU could ruin those plans.

"The SNP can't even confirm whether they want to be part of the EU any more. If this is the level of their attempts to face two ways, then no wonder.

"Not only that, but their plans for a separate Scottish Monetary Institute would be extortionate, with hundreds of staff needed even if the Bank of England maintained responsibility for a 'large' number of functions.

"Given how damaging these documents are, it's not surprising that the SNP Government covered them up for years and ended up releasing them on Easter weekend.

"We already knew the SNP's economic plans were built on sand. Now we have clear proof they were actively misleading the public."

The full FOI release can be found here:

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/scottish-monetary-institute-foi-release/>

Under a heading of 'hot issues', the paper admits one such issue would be *'Continued use of Sterling and the EU requirement for new member states to aim for convergence to adopt the euro. Role of the SMI will depend on negotiations with the EU.'*

It goes on to explain that *'New Member States are also committed to complying with the criteria laid down in the Treaty in order to be able to adopt the euro in due course after accession.'*

The EU joining criteria includes the requirement for member states to have their own, independent national central banks, and the paper recognises this might ruin the SNP's proposals, stating *'The Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union sets out requirements for each country's National Central Bank. Under the proposed framework the Bank of England would continue to operate as the central bank for Scotland. However this would require negotiation and agreement with the EU, should Scotland be required to have a separate central bank the functions of the SMI can be expanded to fulfil the requirements.'*

With regards to staffing costs, the papers state:

'A significant number of staff would be required for the negotiations with the UK and for establishing the SMI. Based on the current transition plan, with the Bank of England retaining responsibility for a large number of functions it is estimated that from 2017-18 onwards between 300 and 400 staff would be

required. If no agreement is reached with the UK government and the Bank of England does not undertake a large number of central banking functions on behalf of the SMI, then the remit of the SMI would need to be significantly expanded and the number of staff required would be considerably larger – in addition these staff would need to be experts with international reputations recruited from other central banks, the remuneration packages required to attract such individuals are likely to be expensive.'

With regards to the issuers of bank notes in an independent Scotland, the papers say:

'[one option would be] To consider the introduction of a single Scottish issuer (to replace issue by commercial banks). The Scottish Monetary Institute would then be responsible for both management and issue of banknotes, with backing assets held at the Bank of England

Press release: Foreign Office minister comments on Anfal Memorial Day

On the 29th anniversary of the Anfal, Saddam Hussein's brutal campaign against the Kurdish people in Iraq, our thoughts remain with the victims, their families and those who lost loved ones.

Tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis were slaughtered and thousands more were maimed and expelled from their homes. That this campaign was conceived, sanctioned and executed by a state against its own people is beyond comprehension and is a stark warning of what happens when evil is left unchecked.

Iraq's people are now forced to confront a new evil, in the form of Daesh and I pay tribute to their bravery and sacrifice as they move closer to defeating Daesh militarily.

The UK continues to support the people of Iraq in building a better future and Iraq must ensure that their new chapter is one where all of Iraq's communities have a stake in a more stable and prosperous Iraq.

Press release: UK Government calls for

the release of all abducted by Boko Haram

On the third anniversary of the abduction of the Chibok school girls, Foreign Office Minister Tobias Ellwood and International Development Minister James Wharton said:

Our thoughts are with the Chibok girls who remain missing, their families and all those abducted by Boko Haram. We are working side by side with Nigeria in the fight against Boko Haram and call for the release of all those who have been taken.

During our visits to Nigeria last year, we heard how people's lives have been devastated by Boko Haram. We are committed to supporting Nigeria in the fight against these barbaric terrorists. More than 22,500 Nigeria military personnel have received UK training, with a significant number deployed on counter insurgency operations in north-east Nigeria.

Lasting stability and security requires all parties to work together to address the long-term causes of the conflict, and the empowerment of women and girls must be at the heart of this process. The UK was one of the first to respond to the humanitarian crisis in north-east Nigeria, and continues to reach millions of people who have been forced from their homes with lifesaving support to improve education, nutrition and basic health services to stop people dying from starvation and hunger.

We will not be deterred from supporting Nigeria to tackle violent extremism and build peace for the people of north-east Nigeria.

1. Since 2014 the UK has significantly increased its support to help Nigeria in the fight against Boko Haram through the provision of a substantial package of military, intelligence and development support.
2. The UK has contributed £5 million to the Multi National Joint Task Force, a regional force against Boko Haram, comprised of troops from Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Benin.
3. Last year, we provided £74 million for emergency food, shelter and health care for hundreds of thousands of people displaced by Boko Haram's violent insurgency. DFID significantly increased its humanitarian support: from £1m in 2014 to £74m last year.
4. In health, DFID is supporting the International Committee of the Red Cross, who have helped restore basic health care services for over 500,000 people affected by conflict, provided 150,000 immunisations for children and enabled

over 20,000 women to give birth safely. In 2016 alone we reached over a million people with food and provided 34,000 children suffering from malnutrition with lifesaving treatment.

5. In education, DFID is supporting access to education for over 25,000 marginalised children in the north-east, including girls, through an innovative approach that engages government, community members and religious leaders to introduce the teaching of literacy in the local language, numeracy and basic science alongside Quranic education in 200 “Integrated Quranic schools” (IQS). DFID supported research suggesting strong demand from communities affected by the conflict with Boko Haram to expand this approach.

News story: Autonomy on the front line: supplying Armed Forces on the battlefield

As part of the MOD’s Innovation Initiative, £3 million has been invested through the [Defence and Security Accelerator](#) in the next stage of the Innovation Autonomy Challenge. Focusing on the challenging “last mile” of support, this Challenge aims to find innovative new ways of resupplying troops on the front line, and will be led by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).

To reduce the risk to troops and improve efficiency, the UK aims to develop autonomous systems for unmanned delivery of combat supplies, drawing on the rapid progress of the private sector in the development of delivery drones and automated deliveries.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin said:

Making sure we use the latest technology to keep our personnel safe and have the kit they need is a key part of our £800 million innovation fund. We’re challenging industry and academia to work with us to design ground-breaking autonomous systems that will get supplies to the front line.

Our investment in innovative solutions demonstrates how the Government’s £178 billion equipment plan, supported by a rising Defence budget, will ensure that the UK maintains its military advantage in an increasingly dangerous world.

The Innovation Initiative and £800M Defence Innovation Fund aim to transform

Defence to encourage imagination, ingenuity and entrepreneurship. From [laser weapons](#) to autonomous vehicles, the MOD is working with small firms, academics, industry, and the [new Defence Advisory Panel](#) to find Twenty-first century solutions to defence challenges.

Funding will be made available in two tranches, up to £1.5m to develop initial platforms and technology concepts. At least £1.5 million more will then be released to build and test a smaller number of demonstrators, which can then be included in joint UK/US trials from October 2018.

The Challenge is the latest stage in Defence's investment in unmanned and autonomous systems: In February, the Defence Secretary [announced] the launch of a two year £8 million second phase of research and development with Leonardo Helicopters, exploring the future of unmanned air systems.

The competition runs until 21 June 2017 and further details of the competition can be found on the [competition website](#).

The Dstl lead for the Innovation Autonomy Challenge Peter Stockel said:

We are particularly keen to reach out and encourage organisations that might not have worked with the defence and security sector before, such as those developing commercial driverless vehicles, drone delivery services and robotic agriculture, to get involved with the challenge and help us rapidly advance the way we deliver tactical military logistics.

The Innovation Autonomy challenge is part of the UK and US's collaborative approach to innovation announced by Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, and former US Defense Secretary Ash Carter in 2015. The funding for this competition is focused on:

- Airborne and ground-based unmanned systems to collect, transport and deliver supplies across challenging terrain.
- Technology to enable those systems to operate more autonomously in the contested military environment.
- Technology to autonomously manage logistics supply and demand in the tactical environment.

Defence and Industry Working Together

One of the aims of the Innovation Initiative is to streamline Defence's work with industry from SME's to multinationals: making clear what Defence needs from business, but also being open to imaginative and disruptive proposals from any source.

[Most recently](#), over 200 Soldiers, Royal Marines and RAF, including personnel from the US Army, have been putting innovative kit through its paces on Salisbury Plain in the Army Warfighting Experiment 17 (AWE 17). Businesses of all sizes were invited to submit solutions to a range of 'problems' set by the AWE team. 72 products – from a tiny surveillance drone to a self-

sterilizing water bottle – were selected for testing.

One developer taking part in the experiment produced a two-part lift and pulley system designed to take vital minutes off of the time it takes to get a casualty out of a damaged vehicle and to medical aid. The inventor of the system, Paul Bateman, an ex-soldier of 22 years' service, now runs his one man business.

Paul said:

"The AWE has given me a unique opportunity to get my product tested in the field."

Cutting-edge kit is no use unless our troops can use it when and where they need it. To make sure they can, the Minister for Defence Procurement, Harriett Baldwin, [formally opened](#) a huge state-of-the-art £83 million MOD logistics centre in Shropshire, which will streamline distribution and storage, delivering savings of around £500 million by 2028.

Beyond the physical battlefield, but at the heart of security, Dstl has also launched the [Data Science Challenge](#), which will bring the brightest minds in data science—not just those in the defence and security sector—together to solve real-world problems, and is sponsored by Dstl, the Government Office for Science, the Secret Intelligence Service and MI5.

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