

Keir Starmer responds to Tory calls for a 'root and branch' review of EU regulations

Keir

Starmer MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, responding to Tory calls for a 'root and branch' review of EU regulations, said:

"The report that Iain Duncan Smith cites describes basic employment rights as costly regulations.

"On the eve of triggering Article 50 it is increasingly clear that rights and protections are seen by many senior Tories, including in the Cabinet, as an "expensive" luxury that British workers and consumer consumers can do without.

"That is why one of Labour's six tests for the Brexit deal is that it defends hard fought for rights and protections and doesn't lead to a race to the bottom.

"The Prime Minister must stand up to the growing voices in her Party that see Brexit as a once in a generation opportunity to dismantle the rights and protections that underpin our economic model."

THE WILL OF THE SCOTTISH PEOPLE SHOULD BE RESPECTED

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THE WILL OF THE SCOTTISH PEOPLE SHOULD BE RESPECTED – DUGDALE

The SNP should respect the will of the Scottish people by scrapping its plan for another divisive referendum, Kezia Dugdale said today.

Speaking in the latest Scottish Parliament debate on independence, the Scottish Labour leader said that Scotland is already divided enough.

If you believe that Scotland should remain part of the UK, sign up to our

website www.togetherstronger.scot and add your support.

Here is the full text of Kezia Dugdale's speech in the Scottish Parliament:

Last week we came together to remember those who lost their lives or were injured in the Westminster terror attack.

We united in our condemnation of a barbaric act, and reaffirmed our commitment to the values of tolerance and integration, freedom and solidarity.

It was right that last week's debate about a second independence referendum was postponed.

But the business of the Scottish Parliament has now resumed.

And here I am once again responding to remarks from the First Minister about a second independence referendum.

If it feels familiar to those of us in here just imagine how familiar it must feel to those outside of this chamber.

To people who very rarely tune in to these discussions.

Who just want political leaders to focus on the business of government by delivering good schools and hospitals, and on growing the economy to provide jobs and prosperity.

But once again they see us debating the issue they thought had been decided in a once-in-a-generation vote in 2014.

Yesterday's meeting between the Prime Minister and the First Minister summed up where we are in this country.

Two intransigent leaders focussed only on the constitution, while the business of government gets pushed to one side.

Nicola Sturgeon demonstrated that she has given up any pretence that she wants the best Brexit deal for Scotland.

Instead of fighting for more powers to come to Scotland from Brussels, it's independence or nothing for the First Minister.

And we had the spectacle of Theresa May claiming to be the best protector of the Union.

Just ponder that for a moment...

The leader of a Conservative Party that has caused so much division in our society.

That set Scotland against England in the General Election.

And whose reckless Brexit gamble brought us to this point, where leaving the

EU just provides the SNP with the latest excuse it was looking for to push for another referendum.

So some humility from the Tories, and a genuine desire to probably engage with this place wouldn't go amiss.

Presiding Officer, in the week since we last met to discuss, at least three issues which would normally dominate the front pages of our newspapers have been buried in the back of the book.

We have learned that the SNP has abandoned a promise to reduce the working hours of junior doctors. A promise made by the former First Minister to the parents of a woman who lost her life.

We have seen a damning report into the quality and provision of child and adolescent mental health services.

And just today, it has been confirmed that Scotland's cancer waiting times have not been met for four years.

Each of these 3 issues constitutes an individual scandal.

Together they represent a complete abdication of responsibility.

But we aren't discussing any of those things. After all, why would the government responsible for the NHS want to debate its 10 year record on the health service?

Not when there is yet another independence debate to be had.

We all know the outcome of the vote tonight.

The compliant Greens will once again back their fellow Nationalists in the SNP.

Let's not pretend that this SNP-Green push for another divisive referendum reflects the will of the Scottish people.

Because it doesn't.

85 per cent of the population voted in the last referendum, and we voted decisively to remain in the UK.

That's the will of the people and it should be respected.

My message to the First Minister remains unchanged: we are divided enough – do not divide us again.

Because leaving the UK would mean £15 billion worth of extra cuts to schools and hospitals in Scotland.

And every time I am in a tv studio with a member of the governing party, as I was this morning, they seek to try and rubbish or ridicule these figures – but they simply can't deny that these are the government's own numbers.

The government's own stats say Independence would be catastrophic for working families.

That's why I could never support a policy that would hurt our poorest communities, so the question beckons, why would the First Minister?

We are just hours away from the start of the formal process of leaving the European Union.

The First Minister and I agree that Brexit risks damaging our relationship with Europe.

It will threaten thousands of jobs right here in Scotland and hold back our economy.

But like her I, accept that Brexit is going to happen. Scotland is leaving the European Union.

The First Minister has finally dropped the pretence that we could remain in the EU and that clarity is welcome.

The First Minister has another decision to make now too.

Is she going to spend the next 2yrs and 100% of her time campaigning for Scotland to leave the UK, at the expense of governing... or will she roll up her sleeves from today and seek to secure more powers for this Parliament when they return from Brussels to Britain?

Because tomorrow I will be in Cardiff doing just that.

Working with the Labour First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, who is prepared to put in the hard work necessary now to secure the best Brexit deal for Wales and for the United Kingdom.

Because this isn't a battle between independence and the status quo.

It's about the SNP's never ending campaign for separation and what the people want – and voted for – a powerful Scottish Parliament within the United Kingdom.

These benches will campaign with everything we have for Scotland to remain in the UK.

A UK where political and economic power is in the hands of the many, not the few.

A UK that delivers for the people of Scotland.

That was our manifesto commitment and we will honour that tonight by voting against the SNP's plan for another divisive referendum.

[News story: £100 million a year boost for energy intensive industries](#)

Regulations to save heavy electricity users like steel and chemical companies around £100 million a year in energy costs have been laid in parliament today.

The government expects the new measures to benefit over 130 eligible energy intensive companies across the UK in sectors including steel, chemicals, glass and cement. The new measures will exempt these companies from a proportion of costs of the [Contracts for Difference scheme](#), which is designed to encourage investment in low-carbon energy generation.

Contracts for Difference are won through a competitive process which drives down costs and guarantees companies a certain price for the low-carbon electricity they produce for a set number of years. This gives them the support and certainty they need to attract investment and get projects off the ground.

The costs of funding the scheme are recovered through a levy on energy suppliers which is passed on to domestic and business energy bills. This only makes up a minor part of most electricity bills, but has a more significant impact on those industries that use a lot of electricity.

The government committed in the [Industrial Strategy green paper](#) to minimise business costs and commission a review of the opportunities to reduce the cost of achieving our decarbonisation goals in the power and industrial sectors.

Energy Minister Jesse Norman said:

We want the UK to be one of the best places in the world to build and grow a business, and that means creating the right conditions for companies to thrive and succeed.

These industries are worth £52 billion to the UK economy, support 600,000 jobs and produce essential products that people use every day. That is why we have taken this action to support them.

Although energy costs on average account for 3% of UK business expenditure, there are 15 sectors where this reaches 10%.

In addition to the support announced today the government is continuing discussions with the European Union about securing further exemptions from policy costs for energy intensive industries. In the meantime a compensation scheme for the policy costs of the Renewables Obligation and Feed-in Tariff

schemes remains in place.

1. The government launched a [consultation into the proposed Contracts for Difference exemption for energy intensive industries](#) last year. The response to this consultation has been published today.
2. The other policy costs the government is seeking exemptions for energy intensive industries from are the Renewables Obligation and Feed-in-Tariffs. Discussions with the European Union are continuing about securing these exemptions and we will make a further announcement in due course.
3. The energy intensive companies receiving relief are typically located in areas with above average unemployment. Over half of energy intensive industry compensation is paid to sites in the bottom 18% of local authorities by claimant count.

[Press release: Talented graduates wanted for career in social work](#)

Graduates across the country are being encouraged to apply to a fast-track programme to become the next generation of child and family social workers.

[Applications open today for Step Up to Social Work](#), a 14-month programme that combines real-world experience in a local authority social work team with high-quality university training.

Successful candidates will be awarded a postgraduate diploma in social work when they graduate, allowing them to register and practice as a social worker.

The government is working hard to make this a country that works for everyone, and social work is at the heart of this fairer society. This includes making social work a career that many more people will aspire and have the opportunity to join.

This is backed by an over £800 million investment in social worker training and improvement, including through teaching partnerships, bursaries and our fast-track programmes [Frontline](#) and Step Up.

Edward Timpson, Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families, said:

Whether you are a recent graduate or someone whose student days are long behind you, this is a fantastic opportunity to begin a new career helping children and families. We want all young people to be able to go as far as their talents will take them, and part of that is making sure childhood is a happy and safe time in their lives.

I have been inspired by previous graduates of the programme, and I'm sure this year will be no different. I look forward to meeting the next generation of social workers who will be transforming children's lives.

Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, said:

I know from my own experience what a challenging and fulfilling career child and family social work is, and I'm pleased to see that this programme is encouraging more people to consider it. Programmes like this one are attracting hundreds of talented graduates each year, who could make a real difference to the lives of children and families.

The Step Up to Social Work programme runs every 2 years, with more students qualifying as social workers each time. In 2015, 300 students completed their training and we expect over 420 students to graduate in June this year. Many of those graduating will be offered a trainee social worker role with the local authority where they trained.

This year more than 550 funded places are available to support trainees. After applications close in May, students will start training in January 2018.

Candidates are eligible to apply if they have a 2:1 degree, or a 2:2 plus a higher degree, which can include a master's degree or a Postgraduate Certificate in Education, in a discipline other than social work. They should also have the equivalent of a GCSE grade C in maths and English, and experience of working with children, young people or families.

1. Ahead of the formal application process opening today, potential applicants were invited to register interest by providing an email contact. They received an automatic notification email informing them when the application process went live.
 2. This will be the fifth cohort of the Step Up to Social Work programme.
 3. More information about applying to [Step Up to Social Work](#) is available.
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Press release: Illegal boaters sunk with fines

Five boaters who did not register their vessels have been landed with penalties totalling more than £5,000.

River inspectors found the boats moored on the Great Ouse, Little Ouse, Old West and Nene – all part of the Anglian Waterways network managed by the Environment Agency.

It is a legal requirement for boaters to register any vessel they keep, use or let for hire on Environment Agency waterways, and to clearly display a valid registration plate. Vessel owners must also have the appropriate Boat Safety Scheme certificates and insurance, as part of the registration process.

Glen Wheatley of Farcet in Peterborough, Geoffrey Turner of Holbeach in Lincolnshire, Stuart Baker of Hockwold in Norfolk, Phillip Sunman of Eynesbury in Cambridgeshire, and Anthony Hague of Soham in Cambridgeshire all failed to register their vessels, as required by law.

Their cases were heard at Peterborough Magistrates' Court on Wednesday 8 March, and resulted in fines and costs totalling £5,166.10. Mr Wheatley was ordered to pay a total of £827.99, Mr Turner £856.98, Mr Baker £898.71, Mr Sunman £1,208.71, and Mr Hague £1,371.71.

Nathan Arnold, partnerships and development team leader at the Environment Agency, said:

Our historic and precious waterways are an important part of our nation's heritage and are enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people every year," says Nathan Arnold, Partnerships and Development team leader at the Environment Agency.

A significant part of caring for them, protecting them, and ensuring people continue to enjoy them is funded by boaters paying their way. Those who don't contribute as they should are threatening the future of our waterways – and we won't hesitate to take action against them.

As well as not contributing to the upkeep of waterways, unregistered boats can be unsafe, hazardous to other river users, and a pollution risk to the local environment and wildlife.

The Environment Agency looks after 353 miles of navigable waterways in the Anglian network, which includes the Ancholme, Black Sluice, Glen, Welland, Nene, Great Ouse and Stour, as well as associated locks and navigation facilities like moorings, showers and toilets.

More information about boating and waterways, including registering vessels, is available at <http://www.gov.uk/ea>. If you suspect a boat is illegal, please contact the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506 or by emailing our [Waterways team](#).

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- Glen Wheatley of Peterborough Road, Farcet, Peterborough, pleaded guilty by post and was given a fine of £103, and ordered to pay costs of £250, compensation of £444.99 and a victim surcharge of £30. The total penalty was £827.99. His vessel is Lady Angela.
- Geoffrey Turner of Fleet Road, Holbeach, Lincolnshire, was found guilty in absence. He was fined £220, and ordered to pay costs of £250, £343.98 compensation, and a victim surcharge of £43. The total penalty was £856.98. His vessel is Bianco.
- Stuart Baker of Pearces Close, Hockwold, Norfolk, pleaded guilty in court and was given a 12-month conditional discharge. He was also ordered to pay compensation of £878.71 and a £20 victim surcharge (£898.71 total). His vessel is unnamed.
- Philip Sunman of Washbank Road, Eynesbury, Cambridgeshire, pleaded guilty and was fined £200. He was also ordered to pay costs of £100, compensation of £878.71 and a £30 victim surcharge. The total penalty was £1,208.71. His vessel is unnamed.
- Anthony Hague of Bushell Lane, Soham, Cambridgeshire, was found guilty in absence and given a fine of £220. He was also ordered to pay £250 in costs, £873.71 compensation and a victim surcharge of £30. The total penalty was £1,373.71. His vessel is Quest II.
- Powered-vessel owners will require valid insurance to register their vessels and most will also require a Boat Safety Scheme Certificate.
- Registration must be renewed each year for the waterway on which a person is keeping or using their boat. People can also buy a visitor registration for shorter periods.