

## **HOT TOPICS**

**20/07/2018**

### **In the News**

- Humanitarian Emergency Fund to support aid projects in Syria, Yemen and South Sudan
- Scots aligned with SNP against Tory power grab
- Vote Leave: Davidson must come clean over Tory dark money
- £10 million investment in Flexible Workforce Development Fund
- £7.7 million for South of Scotland projects
- Record year for overseas visitors

### **Parliamentary business**

#### **Holyrood**

- In recess.

#### **Westminster**

- Tories win 'by skin of their teeth' as Labour Brexiteers come to their aid
- PMQs: "A Prime Minister in Office but not in power"
- SNP challenge Prime Minister on record number of drug deaths

### **Social Media**

#### *Twitter*

[Labour refused to protect Scotland against a Tory power grab.](#)

[Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing MSP has announced £7.7m of funding to boost the South of Scotland economy.](#)

#### *Facebook*

[Scottish tourism is booming: new figures show a record level of overseas visitors and spending.](#)

## **IN THE NEWS**

### **HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY FUND TO SUPPORT AID PROJECTS IN SYRIA, YEMEN AND SOUTH SUDAN**

People being impacted by three separate conflicts are to be assisted by emergency aid from the Scottish Government.

A total of £300,000 from the Humanitarian Emergency Fund (HEF) has been made available to help alleviate suffering in Syria, Yemen and South Sudan / northern Uganda, with up to £100,000 allocated to each of the three crises.

Commenting, **External Affairs Secretary Fiona Hyslop** said: *"The conflicts in Syria, Yemen and South Sudan have caused terrible suffering. It has led to the large scale displacement of local populations, with severe humanitarian consequences and an urgent need for assistance from the rest of the world. We want Scotland to be a good global citizen and our Humanitarian Emergency Fund aims to provide emergency life-saving aid to those most in need."*

The Scottish Government press release can be found [here](#).

### **SCOTS ALIGNED WITH SNP AGAINST TORY POWER GRAB**

A majority of those expressing an opinion are aligned with the SNP against the Tory power grab, according to a poll published by the Daily Record.

This follows a Daily Record poll which showed that support for the SNP in Westminster is up at 38%, while the Tories and Labour are both 11-points behind on 27% - a result that would see the SNP gain four seats, rising from 35 to 39, with Labour losing three of its seven seats, and the Tories losing one. The poll also showed that support for independence is sitting above 2014 levels, with a growing expectation among voters that Scotland will soon become independent.

Deputy SNP Leader Keith Brown MSP said: *“The Tories think they can do whatever they want to Scotland and get away with it. People trust the SNP to stand up for Scotland in the face of Tory belligerence – that’s why our support is growing while the Tory vote is well and truly on the slide.”*

### **VOTE LEAVE: DAVIDSON MUST COME CLEAN OVER TORY DARK MONEY**

The SNP has renewed calls for Ruth Davidson to come clean over the Tories’ own dark money – after Brexit campaign group Vote Leave was fined and referred to the police by the Electoral Commission.

Earlier this month, SNP Westminster Leader Ian Blackford raised the issue of dark money funding the Tory party in Scotland, and links to the Vote Leave campaign, with the Prime Minister.

SNP MP Pete Wishart said the revelations added further weight to the need for the Electoral Commission to fully investigate the Scottish Unionist Association Trust, and its possible ties to the Leave campaign and the Scottish Conservatives.

The SNP support giving new powers to the Electoral Commission, to provide them with higher sanctioning powers, increasing the maximum penalty from £20,000 to £1,500,000.

Commenting, **Pete Wishart MP** said: *“The findings from the Electoral Commission mean enough is enough – Ruth Davidson has to be honest with the electorate about who funds her party and where this money comes from. This is a staggering revelation, proving that the Brexit vote was not won fairly by the Leave campaign. It is a serious breach of electoral law – and it is only right that this is now a police matter.”*

### **£10 MILLION INVESTMENT IN FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FUND**

To ensure our workforce has the skills and training required to meet the changing needs of employers and the Scottish economy, £10million will be invested to extend the Flexible Workforce Development Fund pilot.

Following a successful year, The Flexible Workforce Development Fund is part of a range of support for employers subject to the UK Government’s Apprenticeship Levy, which includes the expansion and diversification of our Modern Apprenticeship programme.

Commenting, Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills Jamie Hepburn said: *“The Scottish Government has been clear in our opposition to the UK Government’s Apprenticeship Levy. To help employers with the impact of this unwelcome UK tax on Scottish levy payers, the extension of our £10 million Flexible Workforce Development Fund will continue to support investment in workforce skills and training opportunities.”*

The Scottish Government press release can be found [here](#).

### **£7.7 MILLION FOR SOUTH OF SCOTLAND PROJECTS**

Four key enterprise projects will reinvigorate the south of Scotland’s economy and stimulate inclusive growth, supported by Scottish Government funding.

The South of Scotland Economic Partnership (SOSEP) has awarded £7.68 million to projects across Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, to provide careers opportunities and build community resilience.

Commenting, **Rural Secretary Fergus Ewing** said: *"This is a clear statement of the Scottish Government's intent to grow and regenerate the economy in the South of Scotland."*

The Scottish Government press release can be found [here](#).

### **RECORD YEAR FOR OVERSEASE VISITORS**

Visits and spending by overseas tourists in Scotland rose to its highest level on record in 2017.

The ONS Travel Trends 2017 statistics showed the number of overseas tourists visiting Scotland rose by 16.9% to 3.2 million, while expenditure increased by 23% to £2.3 billion.

Commenting, **Tourism Secretary Fiona Hyslop** said: *"These figures show 2017 was a record year for overseas tourists visiting and spending money in Scotland, which is great news for the industry and our economy. As we get closer to the UK's departure from the EU, we will continue to do all we can to ensure people from across the EU and elsewhere are welcome to work in our tourism sector and visit our beautiful, vibrant country."*

The Scottish Government press release can be found [here](#).

## **PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS**

### **HOLYROOD**

#### **RECESS**

### **WESTMINSTER**

#### **TORIES WIN 'BY SKIN OF THEIR TEETH' AS LABOUR BREXITEERS COME TO THEIR AID**

The Tories narrowly won a vote on membership of the Customs Union following Brexit – despite the threat of Tory rebellions. SNP amendments aimed at giving a level of consultation and consent to devolved administrations were lost as Labour abstained.

Commenting, **Stewart Hosie MP** said: *"The Tories utter arrogance has been staggering – and over an issue as important as this they have shown a total dereliction of duty. They have completely ignored Scotland's interests and continue to ride roughshod over Scotland's Parliament and people."*

#### **PMQs: "A PRIME MINISTER IN OFFICE BUT NOT IN POWER"**

Ian Blackford MP asked the Prime Minister if she will face up to the reality of her Brexit negotiations and extend article 50.

The SNP's Westminster Leader said the Prime Minister caved in to her right wing Brexiters, undermining her negotiating position with the EU.

Commenting, **Westminster Leader Ian Blackford MP** said: *"In her attempt to hold together her fractured party, Theresa May has managed to unite the entire country against this Government."*

#### **SNP CHALLENGE PRIME MINISTER ON RECORD NUMBER OF DRUG DEATHS**

SNP MP Alison Thewliss has challenged the Prime Minister over the rising number of drug-related deaths, and criticised the UK government's refusal to introduce safe drug consumption rooms in order to save lives.

Commenting, **Alison Thewliss MP** said: *"Glasgow has a forward-thinking plan that could help tackle this issue, and give hope to those who are failing to engage with the services currently on offer. We are not asking for drug laws to be overhauled, we are asking for a small change to allow a pilot."*