

Labour Party Conference – speech by Sarah Boyack MSP

✖ The Labour Party conference is on this week. The party faithful have met this year in Liverpool to discuss amongst themselves what is important for the UK, and its constituent parts. Since the party lost political ground in the Scottish Parliamentary Elections in May, an investigation has been going on to identify the causes of that poor showing and also find ways to remedy it in the future.

Sarah Boyack MSP is attending and yesterday she delivered this speech about the Review of Scottish Labour to conference:-

I want to report on the work Jim Murphy and I have been carrying out since Ed Miliband and Iain Gray asked us to co-chair the Review of Scottish Labour following our election defeat in May this year. We've worked with the Review Group appointed by the Scottish Executive Committee to help us in our task.

Over the summer we've travelled the length and breadth of Scotland and met with huge numbers of party members at packed meetings. We've also now received hundreds of submissions from party members both online and in writing. I want to thank members of the Review Group, party staff, CLPs, individual members and affiliated organisations for their contributions to our work. I also want to thank the members of the working groups who also took evidence and reported their conclusions back to us too.

Our discussions have dovetailed into the Refounding Labour

consultation. Our task is to make recommendations on how we rebuild the Scottish Labour Party.

We're looking at:

- how we refresh our vision,
- how we promote better working together with party members, our elected representatives and our trade union supporters,
- we're looking at how we build and develop our membership
- and a strong base for campaigning, not just at election time
- And we're looking at how we support and develop the next generation of Labour candidates for election at every level of government.

We've produced two interim reports. In July we reported on our recommendations on the Scottish local government campaign to put in place strong campaigning between now and May. That work's now started.

Earlier this month we made our recommendations on the rules for electing the next Scottish Labour Leader. Our proposals were unanimously agreed by the Scottish Executive Committee of the Labour Party. WE propose devolving the powers for the election process to the Scottish Party, so that we have a truly Scottish Labour Leader.

Conference the Labour Party was established over 100 years ago in Scotland. We're proud of the achievements that our party has had. We now take for granted our NHS, hard won equalities and social progress. I'm deeply proud of the fact that we established the Scottish Parliament. After it was set up in 1999 our priority was delivering radical change. Labour policies on health and education, free bus travel for older people, the smoking ban, national parks, land reform and investment in training and jobs. Much to be proud of.

But though we devolved our country, we didn't devolve our party. That work is now long overdue.

Conference, the people of Scotland need a strong Scottish Labour Party to stand up for them. WE don't want separation we want devolution.

Our proposal is to devolve the rules for electing our Scottish Labour leader. It's part of a package for reform. It's a vital part of the process of reform. It's part of the process of rebuilding our party.

Conference I have to say that this is the number one change our members have called for over the summer. There is much more to do.

Today conference is about rebuilding people's trust in us. Our party has to be shaped by our members, for our members. Since we announced the changes we're proposing I've been inundated with party members getting in touch to welcome our proposals. I've also had people getting touch to say they want to join or rejoin the party.

Structures in themselves won't win elections, but they need to reflect our values. We need to change to rebuild people's trust. We need to turn the Scottish Labour Party into Scotland's Labour Party.