

Former MSP jailed for a year

✘ Former MSP Bill Walker who represented Dunfermline for the SNP has been jailed for 12 months at Edinburgh Sheriff Court this morning. Mr Walker resigned as an MSP two weeks ago, and was expelled from the SNP party last year.

Mr Walker was convicted of 23 counts of domestic violence against his three former wives and his stepdaughter following a two week trial last month.

Commenting on the sentence, Scottish National Party leader Alex Salmond said:-“The custodial sentence handed down to Bill Walker reflects the extremely serious nature of his crimes, for which he has shown no contrition.

“In terms of the political process, the people of Dunfermline constituency now have the opportunity to elect a new MSP, to give its communities the service and representation they deserve.”

SNP Dunfermline by-election candidate Shirley-Anne Somerville said:-“I welcome this sentence – the maximum available to the sheriff.

“The First Minister has publicly said that the SNP are sorry Bill Walker was ever selected as a candidate – which of course I entirely agree with. The party investigated the matter and changed its assessment procedures to ensure nothing like it can happen again.

“What is important now for Dunfermline is that the people elect a new MSP who is focused on their priorities, and that is my pledge to local people in this by-election campaign.”

Green MSP Patrick Harvie says the case raises serious questions.

Mr Harvie, Green MSP for Glasgow and Co-convener of the Scottish Greens, said:-“The fact that the maximum sentence Walker was liable for was twelve months raises questions about summary treatment of serious cases. We need answers from the Procurator Fiscal service about this as hearing cases at summary level risks leaving many women unprotected from further violence.

“The Walker case forced the Scottish Parliament to take hasty action. The idea of giving constituents power of recall or disqualification hasn’t gone away and deserves to be explored.”

Following the news of the former MSP’s sentence, **Stacey Devine, NUS Scotland’s Women’s Officer, said:-**“I suppose I’m pleased to see Bill Walker receive the maximum sentence he could, in the court he was tried. However, very serious questions need to be asked as to why Bill Walker was tried in a summary trial rather than a solemn trial, where a longer sentence would have been possible.

“Bill Walker was found guilty of 23 counts of domestic violence spanning over 28 years of abuse. If we’re to send the clear message to perpetrators and victims of abuse, that as a country we’re taking this seriously, then 12 months in jail is simply nowhere near enough.

“Scotland must now come together and focus all our efforts on tackling violence against women in all its ugly forms. That needs education from a very early age, and investment in support services. Equally, the Scottish Parliament must work to ensure that any MSP convicted of crimes on this scale must never be allowed the choice as to whether to continue as an MSP or not.”

