

# Scottish Independence Referendum – 100 Days to go



There are now only 100 days to go before the people of Scotland go to the polls to decide the independence referendum, and this week's hot topics appear to be as diverse as the yes and no campaign are.

It appeared to some commentators that US President Barack Obama may have been caught slightly off guard last week at a press conference when asked about whether he thought Scotland should become independent of the rest of the UK. It is easy to know when Obama has a scripted response as his style is much more definite and sure, and reminiscent of the compelling oratory of his campaigning days. In responding to the question about Scottish independence during a press conference in Brussels when standing beside David Cameron, he said in a slightly halting style that the US would wish the UK to remain "strong, robust and united". The Guardian video here will show you exactly what he said and how he said it.



Better Together's Media office immediately produced this graphic.

Following what Better Together described as 'President Barack Obama's intervention in the referendum debate', **Shadow Foreign Secretary and Scottish Labour MP Douglas Alexander said:-** "I welcome this important contribution by President Obama. His clear statement of support for the UK staying

together will resonate with many of us here in Scotland.

“As a global statesman President Obama understands that interdependence is a defining feature of our modern world, and that building bridges, not putting up new barriers, is the challenge of our generation.”

Alex Salmond replied to Obama’s comment using Obama’s own slogan “Yes we can.” [You can watch an interview with Salmond here on the ITV Player](#) where the First Minister mentions that America had to fight for its independence whereas Scotland has a democratic opportunity of gaining independence from the rest of the UK.

[Ahead of the publication of the UK Government paper](#) that highlighted 1400 reasons why Scotland might be better off as part of the UK, [The Scottish Government released one of its own.](#) In that paper, they claim that a separate Scotland would be billions better off with a windfall of £1,000 for every person – dismissed as “pure wishful thinking” by The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander MP.

The UK Government’s analysis was criticised by the academic on whose work it appeared to be based. Patrick Dunleavy of the London School of Economics is quoted in the LSE blog [here](#) saying:-“The Treasury then took this £15 million estimate and said that an independent Scotland government would need to create 180 new bodies. (I’m not clear how they got that number.) Next they multiplied £15 million by 180 to get £2.7 billion as the ‘set-up’ costs of an independent Scotland’s government.

“This is a very crude series of steps to make.”

*A blog explaining Scottish government set-up costs: “The Treasury have woefully misapplied our research estimates”*  
<http://t.co/wYILUcrWuM>

– Patrick Dunleavy (@PJDunleavy) [May 28, 2014](#)

The UK Government said that their analysis concludes that the benefit for people in Scotland of remaining part of the UK – the ‘UK Dividend’ – is worth around £1,400 per person per year over the 20 years from 2016 to 2017. According to their calculations this is the amount per year which would benefit each person in Scotland, in the form of lower taxes and sustained public services as part of the UK.

In an article published on the UK Government website explaining the 1400 reasons why we should remain united. The Chancellor George Osborne said:-“Those who want a separate Scotland must explain how it would work and what the price would be. The First Minister of Scotland and the Scottish government refuse to be open with people about its real risks and costs. In an interview on 29 May, the Cabinet Secretary for finance, employment and sustainable growth for the Scottish government was asked 11 times to say what would be the cost of setting up a separate Scottish state. He couldn’t or wouldn’t say. Why would you buy anything from someone who refuses to tell you the price?”

[The Scotsman’s Andrew Whitaker](#) explained the pressure on the SNP to explain the cost of setting up an independent country would be. The three opposition leaders at Holyrood have now written to the First Minister demanding that he sets out the cost of setting up an independent government following a Yes vote.

The Scottish Government published [The Outlook for Scotland’s Public Finances](#), which they say demonstrates that Scotland will start life as an independent country with strong and sustainable public finances – and by using the powers of independence to grow our economy, could be £5 billion per year better off by 2029-30.

*“On all key fiscal measures forecast by The Scottish*

*Government, Scotland's finances in 2016-17 will be similar to, or stronger than, both the UK and the G7 industrialised countries as a whole.*

*Scotland's public finances show debt, under various assumptions, on a downward trajectory, enabling future Scottish Governments to start an oil savings fund.*

*The detailed projections for public finances also show Scotland's estimated debt to GDP ratio in 2016-17 is forecast to be lower than the UK's under any potential outcome of negotiation with the UK over public sector assets and liabilities. The paper expands the analysis of Scotland's public finances in 2016-17 provided in Scotland's Future by demonstrating how Scotland's fiscal position is likely to evolve as a result of Scotland's future economic performance.*

*The paper shows:*

- Over the period 2008-09 to 2012-13 Scotland's relatively stronger fiscal position is estimated to have been worth £8.3bn, equivalent to £1,600 per person;*
- When compared to projections for the UK in 2016/17 – including projected spending by the official opposition – Scotland's finances are similar to or stronger than the UK in all scenarios;*
- Scotland's net fiscal balance in 2016-17 – taking account of all revenues and all spending including this government's immediate post-independence priorities such as childcare continues to be within the range set out in Scotland's Future.*

*The paper also illustrates the potential long-term benefits to Scotland's public finances from using the powers of independence to grow Scotland's economy and create a more successful country. For example, following independence:*

- A 0.3 percentage point increase in our long run productivity growth rate, which will narrow some of the gap with our competitors, could see tax revenues increase by £2.4bn a year by 2029-30;
- Increasing our employment rate by 3.3 percentage points to move Scotland up to the level of the top five performing countries in the OECD could increase revenues by £1.3bn a year by 2029-30;
- And increasing our population, but still by less than the projected growth for the UK as a whole, could increase revenues by £1.5bn a year by 2029-30.

*Collectively such improvements amount to a boost to tax receipts of an additional £5 billion a year after 13 years."*

One of the Twitter accounts which parodies the First Minister is pretty quick at reacting to all of these issues. On Saturday when the Lego story broke it came back immediately with this:-

*Better Together aren't allowed to play with Lego anymore. I am. [pic.twitter.com/pcPqP8y8a2](https://pic.twitter.com/pcPqP8y8a2)*

*– Alex Salmond (@AngrySalmond) [June 7, 2014](#)*

Lego had objected to its images being used in the political debate by Better Together in [trying to explain in a report what £1400 could buy a Scot](#). The company says it is politically neutral and demanded that the UK Government stopped using images of its product in a political campaign.

Some support for the Yes campaign came in the unlikely form of Stand owner, Tommy Sheppard. Previously Assistant General Secretary to the Labour Party he says he has not changed his views but, writing in [The Scotsman](#), explains that this is exactly why he is voting in favour of independence:-“That’s

why I'll be voting Yes. I have come to the view that it is easier to change the world if we start first with a country of five million than by pressing the case within a much larger country where many are deaf to the argument."

Actor David Hayman says that he thinks this is an exciting time to live in Scotland and have a vote:-

Former Chancellor Alistair Darling will kick this week off with a major event in central Glasgow to mark 100 days to go until the referendum vote.

Throughout the week senior figures, including politicians and non-politicians, will make their voices heard at events all across Scotland.

The Better Together campaign will hold events the length and breadth of the country – from Glasgow to Barra, Inverness to Stirling, and Edinburgh to Stornoway.

Senior figures will be speaking at campaign events, including Better Together leader Alistair Darling, former Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown and former Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy.

The 'big week' of campaign activity will include:

– Better Together leader Alistair Darling will travel across Scotland next week to mark 100 Days To Go until the referendum. On Monday he will speak at an event in central Glasgow, where he will be joined by hundreds of people from across Scotland who want us to stay in the UK. After the launch, Alistair will visit a small business in Edinburgh, speak at an event in Stornoway in the evening and then on Tuesday travel to Inverness to meet with activists and open a new campaign office.

– Scottish Labour MP and former Secretary of State for Scotland Jim Murphy will launch his "100 Towns in 100

Days" tour. Jim will visit 100 towns across Scotland before the referendum, holding street-corner and town-hall meetings to hear from undecided voters. The tour will kick-off on Tuesday when Jim travels from Barrhead to Barra.

– Gordon Brown, former Labour Prime Minister, will join Liberal Democrat peer Shirley Williams in conversation at a Better Together event in Saint Andrews University on Thursday

– Former Liberal Democrat Leader Charles Kennedy will give a lecture at the University of Glasgow on Friday, setting out the positive case for why Scotland is stronger and better together as part of the UK. Charles Kennedy is a former Rector of the University of Glasgow.

– Annabel Goldie, former leader of the Scottish Conservatives, will speak at a Women Together event in Glasgow next Saturday

The First Minister has written in [The Scotsman](#) about the referendum campaign only having 100 days to run. He concludes:-“No other nation in history has been as well placed as modern Scotland to become independent – and when 18 September arrives, I am confident the people will say “Yes”.”

Lothians MSP Neil Findlay said:- “With 100 days to go until Scotland decides, I would urge people to look at the facts versus the fantasy being proposed by the SNP. Their White paper tries to paint a picture of a Scotland where everything bad miraculously disappears and everything good just gets better all with an X on a ballot paper. Working people know that life is not like that and you only win advances through struggle and political pressure for change. The NHS, the welfare state and the national minimum wage were won by people across the UK uniting to demand those changes. Labour delivered the legislation to create the Scottish parliament and drove the Calman Commission and we will drive further

change enhancing the devolution settlement for the benefit of our people. The motto of the Labour and trade union movement is unity is strength – we forget that at our peril.”

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People living in Scotland are invited to vote in the referendum on independence from the United Kingdom on 18 September 2014. The referendum question is “Should Scotland be an independent country?”

Whether you intend voting Yes or No to that question, your views, and those of others, have a place here. We invite comments and we also invite you to write about what you think by using our Submit your Story feature [here](#).

The Edinburgh Reporter rounds up the variety of views we find across all media as often as we can.

This might be a daily article if there is a lot of chat about the independence referendum, or less frequently if we have too much else to do. If you would like to write about your views on independence then please feel free to submit your article using the Submit your Story feature [here](#). The Edinburgh Reporter does not have a stance on the independence question, but hopes to help you make your mind up about the vote on 18 September 2014 by providing as much unbiased coverage as possible.

There are two main websites where you can obtain further information:-

Yes Scotland can be found [here](#)

Better Together has a website [here](#)