

Sarah Boyack – regeneration of our town centres needed



Boyack prioritises investment in town centre regeneration as leadership contest closes

Scottish Labour Leadership candidate, Sarah Boyack, has used the final hours of the campaign to set out her ambition for greater investment in Scotland's town centres.

She has issued a challenge to the Scottish Government to deliver on the ambition of its Town Centre Action Plan and to give local authorities the resources to play a leading role in regeneration.

Sarah Boyack MSP said:

“With two weeks to go to Christmas, town centres across the country are buzzing with shoppers picking up presents for their friends and family. I want to see greater action to spread that positivity through the rest of the year.

“Town centres should be at the heart of our communities. Retail is a key sector but we must also adapt to the changing make-up of our high streets. There is now a greater emphasis on providing leisure and other services and I am particularly keen to see action to encourage more residential developments.

“This town centre first principle is supposed to be at the heart of the Scottish Government's action plan but the resources simply aren't there for local authorities to make it happen.

“As leader, my focus would be on reversing the trend of

centralisation we've seen from the SNP to return meaningful power to local authorities to meet the needs of their communities. Fixing local government funding with a fairer alternative to council tax is a priority and I welcome Nicola Sturgeon's commitment to a cross-party commission on the issue.

"But we need to consider additional ideas. I am eager to explore new ways to allow councils to generate revenue to drive innovation. Ideas like a tourism levy work in other countries across Europe and would be worth exploring here.

"Over the weekend we celebrated Small Business Saturday which showcased local innovation in business. With independent retailers occupying more than half of retail units and a fall in vacancy rates there are signs of optimism. The challenge now is to provide the investment we need to see to transform our town centres."