

# Shadow Scottish Secretary makes first major speech in Morningside



Labour's Shadow Scottish Secretary, Ian Murray MP, called for "a new generation to take the Scottish Labour Party forward" in his first major speech since being appointed to the Shadow Cabinet.

In a speech at Morningside Parish Church in Edinburgh earlier today, Ian Murray said that "The Scottish Labour Party can no longer turn to the 'big beasts'" and that the responsibility for rebuilding the party now has to fall to a new generation of politicians and activists.

He talked about his own experience of building a coalition of voters in Edinburgh South and the lessons from that victory for the whole of the Scottish Labour Party.

He said: "I was eighteen in 1994, half way through my degree at Edinburgh University. I remember feeling, first, sadness and shock at John Smith's death, but then anger that again, the possibility of victory had been snatched away from us.

"Here we were, three years from the next election, just getting over a defeat that we hadn't expected, facing yet another leadership election, emerging from a bruising internal fight over party reform.

"This was Labour at a low ebb, at a time when we could have easily descended into chaos. John Smith knew the Labour Party had to change, he had to continue the reforms started under Neil Kinnock and that huge baton of responsibility had now been passed to the next generation of reformers.

"21 years ago we said goodbye to John Smith from this church, but three years later we went on to win the first of three historic election victories.

"Not just that, but we started one of the most sweeping periods of reform this country had seen.

"Transforming every corner of the UK. Lifting millions out of poverty with the minimum wage and tax credits, changing public attitudes towards gay and lesbian people with civil partnerships, and concluding the work that John Smith had begun in the 1970s by establishing a Scottish Parliament.

"Our lowest points can be the catalyst for our greatest victories."

He explained that his victory in Edinburgh South points the way to how the Scottish Labour Party can win again: "The way people engage with politics has changed, but the way the Scottish Labour Party has worked hasn't kept pace.

"As a start that has to mean our politics has to be community based, bringing together a broad range of people across the constituency.

"There can be no no-go areas.

"That is what we did here and given this constituency is a microcosm of Scotland, with both wealth and poverty, we can use this as the blueprint for the future.

"We spoke to people in the Inch about their lives on zero-hours contracts and what Labour would do to fix it. About increasing the minimum wage. About dealing with anti-social behaviour. And giving their kids more opportunities.

"But we also had something to say to people in Fairmilehead about defending the valuable greenbelt from inappropriate developments and in Marchmont about the relationship between a transient student population with the settled residents.

“Underpinning all this was a community-based approach that we had built up since 2010, responding to what the local community wanted and the issues they raised with me. Giving them the ownership of the problem and support to access the solutions.

“We campaign here to build real relationships with voters. Showing people that we didn’t just come to their door at election time but we were listening all year round.

“And that is what I will try and do in every corner of Scotland as the Shadow Secretary of State. Listening to communities and responding with Labour solutions.

“From my own experience I see the way the Scottish Labour Party has to rebuild – as a community based movement in every street, town and city across Scotland. It’s easy to say “stronger for Scotland” but we need to be stronger for our communities.

“By being rooted in the communities we seek to represent, we will begin to once again win the trust of voters.

“Recognising that the majority of people see politics through the prism of the place, the town or city they’re from and the conversations they have with neighbours and friends – we need to be seen as standing up for their area.”

He called for a new generation of members, activists and politicians to take the Scottish Labour Party forward: “This is – and has to be – a new start for the Scottish Labour Party.

“We are a proud party with a great history. But we have to put the past behind us and keep firmly focused on the future.

“We will elect a new leader in a matter of weeks and the hard work will begin.

“A fresh team, a fresh approach, a new generation. I’ll play

my part in whatever way I can.

"A party which takes inspiration from those who went before – Smith, Dewar, McConnell, Brown.

"All of them made their own unique and lasting contribution to our party and to our country.

"But the Scottish Labour Party can no longer turn to the big beasts. It falls to a new generation to take the Scottish Labour Party forward.

"I want us to look back twenty years from now, in government in the UK and in Scotland, and be able to say that when the burden of responsibility passed to the next generation we were up to the challenge.

"In his final speech before his untimely death, John Smith said: *"We will do our best to reward your faith in us, but please give us the opportunity to serve our country. That is all we ask."*

"Today, I say to people across Scotland, we will work every day to listen to you, to talk to you, to work with you.

"This will be the work of the new generation. It has to be the work of the new generation because we cannot go back.

"A new generation that will change the party so we can change the country for the people we seek to represent.

"A new generation that will give people the confidence to place their trust in us again and, ultimately, the opportunity to serve once again."