

EU Referendum – Scottish political comment



The result of the EU Referendum has been announced, and while the Prime Minister waited till 8.15 am when he tendered his resignation, comments began filtering in from all major parties in Scotland where every local authority area in Scotland voted to Remain.

Commenting on the result of the EU referendum in Scotland, First Minister and SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon said:

“Scotland has delivered a strong, unequivocal vote to remain in the EU, and I welcome that endorsement of our European status.

“And while the overall result remains to be declared, the vote here makes clear that the people of Scotland see their future as part of the European Union.

“Scotland has contributed significantly to the Remain vote across the UK. That reflects the positive campaign the SNP fought, which highlighted the gains and benefits of our EU membership, and people across Scotland have responded to that positive message.

“We await the final UK-wide result, but Scotland has spoken – and spoken decisively.”



Ruth Davidson

Speaking at the party headquarters in Edinburgh, Ruth Davidson said: “This morning I spoke to the Prime Minister and offered my thanks on behalf of the party in Scotland for his service to this country.

“He has served Britain honourably for these last six years and I know he will discharge his duties these final few months with the same diligence and love of country that has marked his tenure.

“I will speak to the First Minister this afternoon.

“I am pleased they have both been in discussion already today, and that the Prime Minister has already made it clear that the devolved administrations will be fully involved in the negotiations that will now follow.

“That is the right way forward. Such co-operation will be vital as we chart our way forward.

“All of us, and both our governments, need to work together for the common good, and in the awareness that families and businesses today are fearful for the future, and need reassurance.

“That requires a calm, measured response to the challenges we face – and a commitment to put our separate political priorities to one side to enable discussion and co-operation.

“As everyone knows, last night’s decision was not the outcome I campaigned for in this referendum. It was not the result I sought and I am deeply saddened that this is where we are.

“There can be no avoiding the fact that the days ahead will not be easy.

“We are being tested.

“But I still have no doubt that all of us – Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales – will come through this test as we have come through trials before.

“To do that we need to work together – we need to come together.

“Let me close by referring to the First Minister’s comments just now.

“Like the First Minister I am disappointed with the result.

“Like the First Minister I want to see stability prioritised in the days ahead. Scotland will open for business next week in the same way as it closes today.

“But I do not believe that a second independence referendum will help us achieve that stability nor that it is in the best interests of the people of Scotland.

“The 1.6 million votes cast in this referendum in favour of remain, do not wipe away the 2 million votes that we cast less than two years ago.

“And we do not address the challenges of leaving the European Union by leaving our own Union of nations, our biggest market and our closest friends.

“I believe in Scotland’s place within the United Kingdom today as much as ever.

“And I believe that – in or out of the European Union – the strength, security and durability of the United Kingdom will endure.”



Patrick Harvie MSP, Co-convener of the Scottish Greens, said:

“It’s devastating to see that the deceitful, manipulative and at times downright racist Brexit campaign has succeeded south of the border, and looks set to tear up the many benefits of EU membership and play fast and loose with our economic future. The Leave campaign claimed to be defending democracy, but they now propose to remove the rights of EU citizenship from Scotland regardless of the way people living here voted.

“Scotland must keep open every option for protecting ourselves

from this threat. The Scottish Parliament and Government must be represented in the negotiations about what comes next. A cross-party plan of action should be sought, so we can defend our rights as EU citizens.”

Mr Harvie added:

“Over recent weeks we’ve watched as the referendum debate has shown us a country and a political culture we simply don’t recognise as our own. Whether people voted Yes or No to independence in 2014, many watching the events of recent weeks will have concluded that we simply cannot be dragged along with this.

“Over the years the UK’s broken economic system, which serves the interests of the wealthiest at everyone else’s expense, has created feelings of political alienation for a great many people. But we cannot allow that justified anger and resentment be turned against those least to blame, providing fertile ground for xenophobic and far right politics.

“The Green Parties throughout these islands – and across Europe – will recommit ourselves to giving people an alternative, and the chance to join an outward looking, internationalist political movement that brings people together instead of dividing them, and which works for the common good.”

Commenting on the result of the EU referendum, Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Willie Rennie MSP said:

“I am angry that we have lost our place in Europe. It is bad for our country and the people who live here. It means cutting our ties with our biggest economic market despite the consequences for trade, business, jobs and incomes.

“It means we are turning our back on cooperating with our closest neighbours on security, peace, the environment and workers’ rights.

“I am embarrassed by the signal it sends to the rest of Europe and the rest of the world.

“Be in no doubt that this decision sets our country back.

“Now the Prime Minister should act with caution. He should not head towards the exit door with haste. The country needs stability and time to come to terms with this result before any steps are taken.”

Rev Dr Richard Frazer, Convener of the Church & Society Council, has given this reaction to the UK’s decision to leave the European Union.

“The UK has voted to leave the EU at the end of what has been, at times, a bitter and polarising campaign. I believe this is a decision which many people will regret. The Church of Scotland has spoken out consistently over the last 20 years in favour of our continued membership to the European Union – but it is the democratic decision of people living in the UK and we must honour that. In Scotland, the majority voted differently and this will inevitably raise questions about Scotland’s future in the rest of the UK. That is for another day.

The natural inclination of the Church has been internationalist, because our Christian faith does not recognise borders but sees the world and all its people as one. We are part of a world-wide community with a responsibility to one another and the whole of creation. Over recent years, the urgency of taking that international responsibility seriously has become more clear as global poverty, environmental degradation, and the refugee catastrophe call us to find co-operative and international responses.

It feels as though this vote is a vote against that spirit of international co-operation and those who have campaigned to leave have rarely addressed some of the issues that we in the

Church of Scotland feel are crucial. Least of all, this vote hardly seems to be an act of solidarity even with our friends in places like Greece, which is going through so much turmoil at the moment both economically and in bearing the brunt of the refugee crisis.

Today, it is important to recognise that those who were our neighbours yesterday are still our neighbours today. And our neighbours are not just those we live next to but, within the Christian tradition, anyone who is in need. At a recent meeting of the Church of Scotland's Church & Society Council, we heard from the Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees coordinator about his recent visit to Lebanon where over a quarter of the population of that country are Syrian refugees. They too are our neighbours.

The UK has made a momentous decision but it must not be construed as us pulling up the draw bridge. We are citizens of Europe and the world – and our future and the future of others is dependent upon us working together.

Closer to home we also need to play our part, together, in healing some of the divisions which have opened up and in promoting a more generous spirit between and towards our political leaders.”

The Electoral Reform Society Scotland has called for a constitutional convention to avoid “constitutional chaos” after the UK voted to leave the European Union – despite Scotland, London and Northern Ireland voting to remain.

ERS Scotland criticised the “piecemeal and ad hoc” approach to previous constitutional change and are calling for future change to involve “joined-up deliberation” to “let the public

in" following the conflicted result.

Scotland voted to remain in the EU by 62% to 38%, with every local authority voting for remain, but 52% of the UK as a whole voted to leave. The result has led to renewed calls for Scotland to find a way of staying in the EU despite the UK-wide result, with the Scottish Green Party launching a [petition](#) called "keep Scotland in Europe" which asks Holyrood's politicians to "examine and exhaust every option for continuing Scotland's close ties with Europe."

Dr Richard Dixon, Director of Friends of the Earth Scotland, said:

"The vote to leave the EU is a huge challenge to decades of progress on improving the environment and tackling climate change. Many of the politicians backing the leave vote are climate sceptics and against renewable energy, and much of the 'red tape' they complain about are the laws that have given us cleaner air and water, and forced companies to reduce pollution. In the 1980s our environmental record had us known as the 'dirty man of Europe.' The fight is on to stop us slipping back to the bad old days.

"One of the biggest reasons for being in the EU has been to work together to tackle climate change. Being out of the EU will mean the UK will have to negotiate its own climate targets with the UN and the people in charge are very unlikely to share Scotland's high ambition.

"The current UK government has been desperately unenthusiastic about renewable energy, holding back offshore wind and solar developments in Scotland. EU targets helped to push them a bit but any new UK government is likely to be even more of a blockage to unlocking Scotland's huge renewable energy potential.

"There will likely be a huge fight at the UK level to keep laws which protect nature, prevent pollution and set standards

for a clean environment. Most of EU environmental law is devolved to the Scottish Parliament so Scotland can decide to keep these protections in place but we will still feel the impact of deep cuts to budgets for the environment. As a society we lose the protection of being able to appeal to European courts if either the UK or Scottish governments are failing to protect the environment.”

Author J K Rowling tweeted that this vote will trigger a second Independence Referendum in Scotland

Scotland will seek independence now. Cameron's legacy will be breaking up two unions. Neither needed to happen.
<https://t.co/4MDj7pndcq>

– J.K. Rowling (@jk_rowling) [24 June 2016](#)