

Prime Minister's first visit to Edinburgh met with booing crowds

The Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited First Minister Nicola Sturgeon at Bute House in Edinburgh today after a visit this morning to Faslane. During his visit Ms Sturgeon explained that the Scottish Government will be pursuing its Framework Bill towards a second independence referendum and after what she described as a 'lively debate' she offered him an on camera debate on the question of independence.



The First Minister said afterwards : “Behind all of the bluff and bluster this is a government that is dangerous.

“I think the path that it is pursuing is a dangerous one for Scotland and for all of the UK.

“The Prime Minister said it publicly, and he said it to me again today, that he wants a deal with the EU but with no clarity whatsoever about how he can get from the position now. He has taken a very hard line : the Withdrawal Agreement is dead, the backstop is dead and the EU say it is not open for negotiation. I think if I listen to all of that and what is not being said I think this is a government which is pursuing a no deal strategy however much they deny that in public.”

The First Minister also said that in the weeks and months leading up to 29 March she had been immersed in no deal planning and so she does not feel that it is right to be as sanguine about the prospect of a no deal as the Prime Minister obviously is. She continued : “I think we in Scotland we should choose our own future and not have that future decided

for us. We briefly touched on a range of other issues but that was the main thrust of our discussions. I guess I am surprised that he did not have the guts to go and meet people in Scotland today. I'm sure I read last week that he did not want to do what Theresa May did : come in and be ushered into somewhere that kept him away from members of the public and just leave again but that is just exactly what he has done. I think it speaks volumes about the lack of confidence in the position and his ability to persuade people in Scotland that the position he has taken and the path he is pursuing is the right one."

Speaking to journalists after the visit ended the First Minister commented that she knew Alister Jack was not Ruth Davidson's choice and she was not sure that he would have been her own choice either.

She continued : "I did not know Alister Jack and I am not sure that I had actually met him before today. I don't have much insight into what he might be like to work with. We will see what he brings to the job. There is a sense that the circumstances the UK is in over Brexit is not business as usual. We are in unprecedented circumstances and there are profound differences between our governments but we will always look for common ground and try to make progress on anything."

As to why the Prime Minister left by the back door, the First Minister was absolutely clear that this was the choice of the Prime Minister's own advisers and not any advisory from the First Minister's office at Bute House.

*The Prime Minister is inside Bute House with [@NicolaSturgeon](https://twitter.com/NicolaSturgeon)
pic.twitter.com/e9WtYkzzY0*

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [July 29, 2019](#)

She acknowledged the crowds in Charlotte Square.

Around 200 or so people waited in Charlotte Square along with staff working in nearby offices who came out onto the front door steps to watch Boris Johnson arrive. Many booed his arrival as he stepped out of his car with the newly appointed Secretary of State for Scotland Alister Jack. The First Minister said to journalists : "People have a right to protest and that was a peaceful protest. There is a really strong feeling right now about Scotland that we are in a position where we have a Tory government we did not vote for and a Prime Minister we did not vote for. We are facing being taken out of the EU against our democratic wishes so it is not hard to understand why there is that strength of feeling."

After a half hour meeting the Prime Minister may have left by the back door of Bute House, but the Secretary of State for Scotland stepped out into Charlotte Square to continued boos from the crowd and his ministerial car.



Leader of the Scottish Conservatives and Edinburgh Central MSP Ruth Davidson said after her meeting with the Prime Minister at Holyrood : “First and foremost, the Prime Minister and I

spoke about our shared determination to strengthen the Union and to make the case against Nicola Sturgeon's plans for a second referendum on independence.

"We also discussed the many ways the UK Government can work in Scotland, for Scotland, to boost our economy and support key Scottish businesses.

"On Brexit, the Prime Minister has made clear the government's preference is to leave the European Union with a deal. I back him wholeheartedly in that aim.

"Indeed, all 13 Scottish Conservative MPs backed a deal the last time one was presented in the House of Commons, as did the Prime Minister.

"The SNP's warnings about No Deal are utterly hypocritical.

"Nicola Sturgeon has already made clear that SNP MPs will vote against any deal the new Prime Minister brings to parliament, just as they voted against the deal brought forward by Theresa May three times.

"Rather than complain from the sidelines, it's time the First Minister worked with colleagues across the UK, and supported a deal that delivers on the referendum result, gives clarity to Scottish business, delivers for the Scottish fishing industry, and works for us all."

Yesterday writing for the Mail on Sunday Ms Davidson asserted that she could not back a No Deal Brexit. She wrote : "I don't think the Government should pursue a No Deal Brexit and if it comes to it, I won't support it."

Comment on the meeting between Boris Johnson and Nicola Sturgeon.

Ian Murray, Scottish Labour MP for Edinburgh South, said: "This is a meeting between two nationalist leaders determined to divide communities – the proponents of Brexit and Scexit.

“While Nicola Sturgeon is right to warn the Prime Minister of the absolute chaos of a no-deal Brexit, it begs the question why does she want to inflict even deeper economic harm on people with independence?

“And while Boris Johnson is right to talk about the importance of keeping the UK together, that begs the question why does he want to put the Union under pressure with a hard Brexit?

“The people of Scotland and the UK deserve a final say on Brexit and the chance to remain so that we can build bridges between nations, not create barriers.”

