

Calls for more virus testing

The Scottish Government has ‘fallen far short’ when it comes to PPE and testing, Shadow Scottish Secretary Ian Murray warned today.

Speaking on the BBC Andrew Marr Show, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon admitted: “We can undoubtedly get things wrong along the way.”

Today it has been reported that at least six firms which offered to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to the Scottish Government were ‘ignored’ as the coronavirus death toll mounted.

Fresh concerns about the use of testing in Scotland’s fight against coronavirus have also come to light.

Allan Wilson, president of the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS), told the Sunday Mail: “We have this initial capacity of 120,000 and that’s not being used as much as it could be.”

Labour leader Keir Starmer has written to the Prime Minister to point out that the UK was too slow to enter the lockdown, too slow to increase the uptake of testing and too slow to get PPE to frontline NHS and care staff.

Mr Murray said the Scottish Government has made similar mistakes.

Labour MP Ian Murray, Shadow Scottish Secretary, said: “The UK Government made clear mistakes in its initial response to this pandemic, which Keir Starmer has rightly highlighted – and the SNP has been keen to capitalise on.

“But the Scottish Government has also fallen far short in its own response to the coronavirus outbreak, responding in

lockstep with the UK Government – a strategy it both criticises and follows at the same time.

“The availability of testing in Scotland is nowhere near the level it should be, despite the World Health Organisation making it clear from the start that this should be the backbone of the global response.

“And there is growing concern and anger about the lack of PPE reaching the frontline, with the Scottish Government’s shambolic approach exposed by astonishing reports that companies offering PPE were ignored.

“The consequences of poor planning and preparation by both the UK and Scottish governments is now being felt, and it is vital there is an urgent step-change in the response by the two administrations.”

SCOTTISH GREENS

Scottish Greens Co-Leader Patrick Harvie MSP said: “Scottish Greens have been calling on the Scottish Government to explain exactly how it will fully utilise its testing capacity for some time now.

“On Saturday we outlined a proposal that would see frontline health and care workers regularly tested. The spare capacity that currently exists means this process could be implemented swiftly, easing health and care workers’ anxieties and helping to slow the spread of the virus.

“It’s clear that if lockdown measures are to be eased in the coming months a robust test, trace, isolate policy needs to be introduced.

“As a senior government minister told parliament last week, “There’s no point in having capacity unless you use it.”

“Now that the First Minister has acknowledged that there is significant testing capacity going unused, she must urgently explain what measures she will put in place to use it.”