

#SP2021 – Alba fielding four candidates in Lothian

The leader of the Alba party, Scotland's newest political party, Alex Salmond, is very used to the press. He is a former First Minister of Scotland as well as a former MP and MSP.

Putting aside his travails of the last three years he is robustly once more campaigning for independence, and independence now – not in 2023. His 32 ALBA candidates – which includes himself – will only stand on the regional lists across the country. Everyone has two votes on the ballot paper and rather than “waste” the two votes for the SNP, Salmond has done the calculations and wants voters to vote for SNP MSPs in the constituency and ALBA party candidates on the list. This will lead to what he describes as a supermajority in The Scottish Parliament in May.

Three of the four candidates standing in Lothians were present today:



Irshad Ahmed at the Alba Party launch with Lothians candidates
Calton Hill PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter

Irshad Ahmed, an Edinburgh businessman who campaigned for independence for the SNP in 2014. He left the SNP on 29 March and joined the Alba Party the following day. He has been a candidate for the city council, Holyrood and Westminster in the past and is a director of Edinburgh & Lothians Regional

Equality Council (ELREC).

Christina Hendry is a former Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament and a psychologist with NHS. She believes that independence will give Scotland “the necessary powers to tackle poverty and provide accessible education and opportunities in employment”. Ms Hendry was not able to be in Edinburgh.



Alex Arthur at the Alba Party launch with Lothians candidates Calton Hill PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter

Alex Arthur is a former featherweight boxer and firmly believes in independence and Covid recovery. He wants to focus on sport in working-class communities ensuring “no young person is left behind”.



Alba Party launch with Lothians candidates Calton Hill PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter

Kenny Macaskill MP is well-known to most Scots. He was formerly an MSP and Justice Secretary who repatriated the convicted Pan Am 103 bomber Abdelbaset al-Megrahi to Libya on compassionate grounds. Mr al-Megrahi had cancer. Having stood down from The Scottish Parliament in 2016, he then stood in the 2019 election and was elected MP for East Lothian.



Alex Salmond leader at the Alba Party launch with Lothians candidates on Calton Hill PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter

Mr Salmond said: “ALBA is going strong. And the argument we’ve got – obviously we’re for independence, as many people in Scotland are. We see independence as the biggest priority. But the argument we’ve got is on logic. Here in Lothians, over 100,000 people voted SNP in the list at the last election. They elected zero, precisely no list MSPs.

“If half of these people are to switch to ALBA this time round it will elect another four, independence supporting MSPs – so

all of the ALBA candidates will be elected.

I asked if this strategy was just a way of getting back at Nicola Sturgeon in light of his well publicised feud with the First Minister. He replied: "We're arguing that people should vote SNP in the constituency. So if I was wanting to get back at anybody I think I wouldn't be arguing for that. I think the more constituency SNP MSPs people elect, the better. But when it comes to the list, that's ALBA's preserve. There's two votes, one constituency, one list vote – you wouldn't have two votes unless you were able to use the list vote. The wise vote will be for ALBA, for people who support independence, they will want ALBA in.

"As far as personal relationships are concerned, the national's much more important than the personal. This is about the future of the country. So I won't be waiting for a call from Nicola Sturgeon. If I am elected, then I will be in the parliament, and I'll be making the overtures, because we'll be backing independence and we want to see it carried forward with urgency.

"And in week one of that parliament we will be proposing a motion to direct The Scottish Government to open independence negotiations with Whitehall."









I asked if there are other policies apart from independence?

Mr Salmond said: “ALBA’s got a range of key policy priorities. Obviously, independence and making it the priority, and two is economic reconstruction from the pandemic. I have to say that nothing I’ve seen from either Westminster, or indeed from The Scottish Parliament meets the scale of the economic challenge, that’s going to befall us. There’s a tsunami on its way, we are out of Europe, there has been a pandemic. It’s a different world, and therefore, the independence platform has to be different with it.

“We have the women and inequalities paper that’s been published as one of our first ever policy papers. What we’re trying to do is reconcile the understandable desire to ensure equality for all, but also to make sure we’ve got single sex spaces, which are a hard won right in society as well. And what we propose is a citizen’s assembly so that that matter can be taken forward in an entirely reasoned manner, and take some of the heat out of the debate, but also defend the hard

won rights of women in society.”

ALBA Women & Equalities Policy Statement

The ALBA party recognises that by dint of birth and happenstance, we are not all created nor do we live our lives as equals. Scotland's history involves multiple injustices where chance or privilege have dictated outcomes, and today, poverty continues to be the biggest driver of inequality and a blight on our society. These days should by now be past. Surely this modern world and an independent Scotland can cater for all without loss to any.

The Scotland ALBA strives to create, envisions a level playing field where we can become truly equal to each other and where everyone's rights are respected and protected, but, vitally, not at the cost of others.

ALBA undertakes to protect and preserve women's rights, not at any expense to others, but as a safeguard for women and girls.

ALBA believes women have the right to discuss all policies which affect them, without being abused and silenced.

ALBA believes women have the right to maintain their sex based protections as set out in the Equality Act 2010. These include female only spaces such as changing rooms, hospital wards, sanitary and sleeping accommodation, refuges, hostels and prisons.

ALBA believes women have the right to refuse consent to males in single sex spaces or males delivering intimate services to females such as washing, dressing and counselling.

ALBA believes women have the right to single sex sports to ensure fairness and safety at all levels of competition.

ALBA believes women have the right to organise themselves according to their sex class across a range of cultural, leisure, educational and political activities.

ALBA acknowledges and promotes all of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 which are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and sex.

Crucially, ALBA understands the controversy and pain which have characterised Scotland's recent attempts at reform; there has been much heat and at times little light.

ALBA invites and will endorse a citizens' assembly on how best to reform the Gender Recognition process in a respectful, sensitive and positive fashion.

ALBA acknowledges that no single protected characteristic is more virtuous or more worthy of recognition and safeguarding than another. They are all fundamentally important, each on their own, and as a collective.

We're all equal in ALBA.



Mr Salmond said: “We have policies on housing because we see that as the great driver of the economy and economic recovery. We have key policies on health because the public health for Scotland over this pandemic has been exposed as being in a very fragile condition.

“One of the reasons it was so difficult to get test and trace up and running was that public health has been denuded over the last few years, and that must be restored.

“Our attitude is that post pandemic, we're going to go into a new world. We must go into a new world, we're going to have to treat the environment differently, we're going to have to have a different attitude to humanity and the planet. We should want, if we believe in independence, an independent Scotland to be part of that new world and that change. That's why it can't be shunted away to 2023 or thereafter.

“It has to be an immediate priority so that we can have the tools in the parliament to do the job of making Scotland fit for that new world.”

Responding to comments from Alex Salmond in which he makes clear that he doesn't want to wait til 2023 for another independence referendum, Scottish Liberal Democrat campaign chair, Alistair Carmichael MP, said: "Nicola Sturgeon and Alex Salmond don't care about your job, your parent's operation or your child's schooling.

"Scotland deserves better than a nationalist movement that wants to spend the next five years arguing about the timeline for independence.

"If nationalist MSPs get elected they will not even wait til Christmas before pushing for another referendum. People who want to put the recovery first should vote for the Scottish Liberal Democrats and we will make sure that the next Government focuses on education and mental health instead."



Alex Salmond at the Alba Party launch with Lothians candidates
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