

Prime Minister's address to the Scottish Conservatives Conference

The Scottish Conservatives are holding their party conference in Aberdeen.

Fresh off the plane from Saudi Boris Johnson told the Scottish members that Scotland will be at the forefront of the renewables push – and that the SNP and Scottish Labour are crazy to shut down domestic only to buy it at a premium from Russia.

The Prime Minister may have overlooked that the oil and gas in the North Sea would be sold at the same price as any other fossil fuels from elsewhere as it is part of an internationally structured market. Today Brent Crude is \$107.70. As a result of sanctions European traders are said to be avoiding Russian oil but that is being snapped up by India at an [apparent](#) discount of \$20 to \$30 a barrel.

This is what Mr Johnson said: "I know that everyone here in Aberdeen today will remember those words from Zhenya Dove and I say to you Zhenya what I told President Zelensky again on the phone this morning: 'We stand with you.'

And at a time when your people are facing such horror, with such courage, when you are fighting not just for your lives and homes and your democracy and the cause of democracy and freedom itself, we know that we must do more to help – and I pledge to you all that we will.

It was the UK that saw months ago how the Putin war machine could be unleashed and we were the first European country to begin sending defensive weaponry.

And where we led, dozens have now followed.

And we have led the way on sanctioning SWIFT and Aeroflot.

And we have now sanctioned 1,000 individuals and companies – and we will dispossess them of their yachts and their other ill-gotten assets.

But we must and will do more.

We will do more, with more defensive weapons, to help the Ukrainians against these pitiless bombardments.

More to tighten the vice around Putin's economy.

And with every day that the slaughter continues I believe the resolve of the world is growing and that Putin will fail.

He will fail because he fatally underestimated the resolve of the Ukrainians to fight.

He underestimated western unity and among other things he underestimated the passionate commitment of the people of this country to help.

Since that great Aberdonian Michael Gove announced the scheme on Monday, we have seen 147,000 people and families across the UK open their homes to the evacuees – many of them here in Scotland, and Aberdeenshire has the highest number of people to sign up so far.

Only a few of weeks ago I met highly-skilled shipbuilders in Rosyth, who were fitting out two minesweepers for the Ukrainian navy.

And, of course, we will get them into the Black Sea as soon as is practicable.

But there is one crucial way in which we can begin now to help the whole world to stand up to Putin.

And that is to wean ourselves off dependence on his oil and gas.

And in that great national effort, Scotland will be in the lead.

I mean doubling down on the UK's production of offshore wind energy – much of it driven by the great gusts off the Scottish coast.

I mean investing in tidal – putting £39m into some revolutionary projects.

I mean more solar, and more nuclear, and more hydrogen, which is now powering municipal buses here in Aberdeen.

But I also mean making sensible use of this country's own natural resources.

Are we not crazy to shut down domestic production, only to buy oil and gas – at a vast mark-up – from Putin's Russia?

And yet that, unbelievably, is the policy of the SNP and of the Labour Party.

It was in Glasgow that the world came together for that epoch-making COP 26 Summit.

And pledged to move beyond coal and hydrocarbon-fuelled cars and to plant billions of trees.

And, of course, we in the UK can continue to transition to a low carbon future.

In fact, we can continue to lead the world in cutting carbon emissions.

But it is also vital to recognise that in this transition

there will be a continuing role for oil and gas – not least in producing hydrogen.

And that's why it makes sense for the government to help this crucial industry in north east Scotland with a North sea transition deal worth £16bn.

And what is the policy of Labour and the SNP?

Turn the taps off now, cap the wells.

What a disaster that would be. It means prices up, jobs lost and just when householders are feeling the pinch of high prices.

And it means exposing the UK to continued blackmail from Putin.

Together the UK is leading the world in standing up to the hydrocarbon drug-pushing bully of the Kremlin.

Together we are going to wean ourselves off our addiction and together we are a force for good in the world.

It was as Team UK that we invented, developed and bottled the Astra Zeneca vaccine that has saved millions of lives around the world.

And it is development officials in East Kilbride who help get it to the countries that need it.

It was as one united Team UK that we got through Covid together, from the furlough that was delivered by the might and firepower of the UK Treasury, to the testing systems that relied on labs across the country to the vaccine and booster rollouts so fast that the UK now has the fastest growing economy in the G7.

And whatever the occasional cosmetic differences between the different parts of the UK, sometimes perhaps judiciously

magnified for political effect, we have overwhelmingly moved forward together.

And now is the time as we bounce out of Covid to learn from this success go beyond the failed economic model of previous decades and unleash the full potential of every part of the UK.

When we conservatives see inequality, our instinct is not to tear down or to punish success.

We believe in giving people the tools to level up.

So when we see wages 50 per cent lower in Inverclyde than they are in East Renfrewshire, we celebrate and encourage the achievement of those who are doing well, but we also believe that with better infrastructure and better skills and technology we can unleash such energy and talent.

And trigger such a tsunami of investment that this can be the most prosperous economy in Europe.

And that's why we are working directly with the 32 local councils in Scotland to distribute the Levelling-Up Funds.

Because we know that local people understand best where the opportunities are.

And we won't let politics or structures get in the way.

We are spending £5 billion to deliver gigabit broadband across the whole country bringing a smile to the face of even the humblest crofter as he orders a new waistcoat online.

And now is the time to go beyond the parochialism and constitutional myopia of the SNP and drive forward projects that will bring jobs and growth to the whole UK – as Peter Hendy has pointed out in his excellent Union Connectivity Review – the A77, the A75, the A1, improving the West Coast Mainline to Scotland and yes of course – in time – the logic

says HS2 must come to Scotland as well.

I am glad that working with the Scottish administration to create at least two new freeports – superfertilised seedbeds for high-skilled jobs.

And we are strengthening the UK's position as a science superpower, from a computer outside Edinburgh that is capable of making a billion computations a second, to the international barley hub in Dundee – helping to prevent global food shortages by protecting crops against pests, to the burgeoning Scottish space sector in Ayrshire, Shetland and the space port in Caithness.

And after his success on Russia Today perhaps we should invite Alex Salmond to join his fellow cosmonauts in orbit.

And I have a feeling that is an issue on which Nicola Sturgeon and I might see eye to eye.

And it is by driving that Levelling-Up agenda and by a relentless focus on the people's real priorities, combined with a fearless weekly interrogation of the First Minister that Douglas Ross has been able to defy the sceptics and stop Nicola Sturgeon from getting an overall majority and to get more votes than any other Scottish Conservative leader – 100,000 of them.

And I will tell you why else Douglas has been successful.

He is the only political leader in Scotland to be saying loud and clear what is blindingly obvious to everyone – that this is not the moment to be having another referendum.

This is not the time for yet more delectable disputations about the constitution when our European continent is being ravaged by the most vicious war in Europe since 1945 and when public services and the economy need to recover from the pandemic.

And how incredible that Labour should be so spiritually cowed that they have become nothing but the lapdogs and the enablers of the SNP.

And, on the subject of rolling over and having your tummy tickled, how incredible that even now it should be the policy of the SNP to respond to Putin's sabre-rattling by getting rid of this country's nuclear deterrent.

And be in no doubt that at any UK General Election it would be those terrible twins – Labour and the Nats – each vying to be more left wing, more high-taxing, more generally hectoring and bossy and nannying, that would try to form a coalition.

And be in no doubt that Labour would rather work with the Nationalists to bring down this government, than work with us to stop the SNP from breaking up Britain.

When we face so many challenges but also when we have so much going for us, so much to look forward to, let's put that endless confected division behind us and let's take this country forward in a way that makes us all proud – delivering prosperity and opportunity at home, and giving the leadership that makes us a force for good around the world.

That's what this government delivers.

That's what Scottish Conservatives deliver.

And that agenda – massive but exciting – should be our focus in the months ahead.

Thank you all very much.”