

Ross criticises the “cosy Holyrood consensus”

Douglas Ross has accused Labour of “playing for Team Sturgeon” – because he says Anas Sarwar’s party agree with, and vote with, the SNP on a number of key issues.

The Scottish Conservative leader will use a speech in Edinburgh today to claim that the Conservatives are the only credible opposition to the SNP because “you can’t fit a hair between Labour and the SNP”.

He will cite the GRR Bill, the Hate Crime Act, North Sea jobs, prisoner voting, rent controls, the future of Scottish education and Covid laws as policy areas where Labour are indistinguishable from the SNP.

By being part of “a cosy Holyrood consensus”, he believes Labour are betraying those pro-union voters who crave an alternative to the Nationalist coalition.

And at Westminster, he claims, there would be no need for a post-election pact between Labour and the SNP because Keir Starmer looks to the First Minister “for inspiration”.

Douglas Ross will admit he is glad to see the back of a “difficult” 2022, in which the Scottish Conservatives struggled to get their message across due to turbulent events at Westminster.

But, with the return of “quiet competency” under PM Rishi Sunak, he believes his party is up to the major challenge of

regaining the trust of Scottish voters desperate for a real alternative to the SNP.

Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross MSP will say: “Right across our nation, there are so many people crying out for the end of Nicola Sturgeon and this SNP Government.

“They see failure stacked upon failure and question how any government can survive it.

“Yet Labour are an opposition to the SNP in name only – they only offer more of the same.

“Anas Sarwar has claimed that he has brought his party back onto the pitch, yet Labour are now playing for Team Sturgeon.

“Nicola Sturgeon faced more opposition in the passing of her Gender Recognition Reform Bill from SNP backbenchers than she did from Anas Sarwar and his party.

“On North Sea jobs, on prisoner voting, on rent controls, on the future of Scottish education and on Covid laws – Labour backed the Nationalist position.

“And at Westminster, Labour MPs abstained in the face of an SNP attempt to secure a second independence referendum.

“Even more incredibly, Keir Starmer actually looks to Nicola Sturgeon’s government for inspiration. He has said that a UK Labour Government would introduce their own Hate Crime Act and GRR Bill.

“There is no need for a post-election pact – a Sturgeon-Starmer alliance already exists. You can’t fit a hair between Labour and the SNP.

“Scotland will continue on the path of decline if our choice is between an SNP Government and a Labour Party who will work together and offer the same solutions to the challenges our nation faces.

“There needs to be a viable alternative to the cosy Holyrood consensus. So now is the time for the Scottish Conservatives to get back to the task of building Scotland’s Real Alternative to the SNP – because only we can.

“Unionists in so many communities across Scotland tactically voted for Anas Sarwar’s party on a promise that they would work to stop the SNP.

“But on the Hate Crime Act, the Gender Recognition Reform Bill and so many other votes in the Scottish Parliament they have been betrayed.

“That is why it is essential that the Scottish Conservatives step up to offer voters a real choice at the next election.

“A choice between higher taxes or a more competitive economy, between waste and ever declining standards or better public services.

“Our health service is in the grip of a crisis and Humza Yousaf has no clue how to reverse it; in education, the attainment gap remains as wide as ever.

“Our economy is forecast to lag behind the rest of the UK, we are behind on environmental targets, our transport system is letting down communities, violent crime continues to rise and Scotland’s most deprived communities are scarred by the highest drug deaths in Europe.

“Last year was difficult for the Conservative Party across the UK. To be frank, we haven’t lived up to expectations.

“Our focus, as a UK and Scottish party, must be on working to re-earn trust. But Rishi Sunak’s first couple of months in office have shown a return to the quiet competency that voters expect from us.

“Decisive action has been taken to support every family with rising energy costs, and our public services have been given

the resources they need to offset global inflation.

“This UK Conservative Government is taking the necessary action to get our whole country through these difficult times. Yes, these are early days and there is a lot more work to be done, but I believe we have turned a corner.”

LABOUR RESPONSE

Shadow Scotland Secretary Ian Murray MP said: “It is going to take more than a few New Year’s resolutions and a badly delivered speech to make flip-flop Douglas Ross politically relevant.

“His first resolution should be to apologise for backing Liz Truss, Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak while the whole country looked on in horror.

“As we face another year of economic chaos, Scotland knows that the Conservative Party remains the biggest threat to union.

“The catastrophic record of the Tory government are the SNP’s get out jail card and their number one recruiting sergeant in the campaign to divide the UK.

“And we know that with the Tories it is always party first, country second – and people are sick of it.

“Across Scotland and the UK people are crying out for a change, but only a Labour government can boot the Tories out of Downing St and deliver it.”



Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross on a walkabout in Davidson's Mains with local candidate James Hill ahead of the 2022 local government election PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh

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