

Exclusive interview with Ash Regan MSP for Edinburgh Eastern

Ash Regan MSP for Edinburgh Eastern has spent the last few weeks criss-crossing the country with the other two candidates in the SNP Leadership Election attending almost 20 hustings and debates.

The Edinburgh Reporter met up with Ms Regan to find out how she felt the campaign had gone – and what she had not been asked about. It seemed the debates were filled with much the same questions each time, and this interview gave us the opportunity to ask about other policies she may have wanted to put forward, but did not really get the chance.

She also told us that the campaign was made all the more difficult owing to the lack of membership data which SNP HQ gave to the candidates, so that for example emails or phone calls could not be made to members as her campaign team just did not have the information. And of course this was one of the topics which was raised repeatedly during the last few weeks.

She said: “The same topics kept coming up again and again to the detriment of other issues we might have wanted to talk about. For instance I don’t think we had a single question about the drugs crisis in Scotland. I had assumed people would have wanted to know what the candidates would deal with that.

I felt like there was not a lot of opportunity to get into a big policy programme with lots of detail was just not possible. I think the public would have been interested in that too.”

Last weekend the SNP got bogged down in internal affairs with three senior members resigning: Liz Lloyd, Senior Policy Adviser to the First Minister, Murray Foote who was Head of Communication, and Peter Murrell, Chief Executive of the SNP. She said this confirmed her view that the party is in serious need of reform.

A couple of surprising things that Ms Regan told us – apparently Humza Yousaf had never said he was the continuity candidate and resists that description. Secondly, she considers Kate Forbes to be a good friend.

And she said that she is much more of a team builder than the kind of messianic leader which the SNP has had in the last two leaders, Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon. She also told us that she has received praise from some for the evolution she has gone through during the campaign.

And we asked a question on behalf of the Edinburgh Bus Users Group about improving local transport.

She replied that she would be looking at improving bus services, and had been in contact with Lothian Buses before this campaign began to talk about the changes to buses in Lochend, Craigentiny and Willowbrae areas of the city. That is something she will be picking up again with Lothian.

We also talked about the Climate Emergency, and she explained that with independence Scotland could much more easily reach net zero within a few years.

The announcement of the new leader of the SNP will be made on Monday afternoon.



Ash Regan MSP At Dynamic Earth in the last few days of the SNP Leadership campaign PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter