

Russell says voting process will continue

Following enquiries about the voting process from SNP leadership candidates, SNP President and Acting Chief Executive, Michael Russell has responded by issuing a statement this evening confirming the voting process will continue.

In the statement he said: "I have heard from each of the candidates, or their teams, today and I am glad that we are all working together to ensure that there is confidence in the integrity of the current process.

"On the specific issues raised today, it would clearly be massively disruptive and confusing for members to be able to recall their ballot – something that is not done in any public election and which cyber security experts have advised, most recently to the Conservatives when they considered an online ability to change a vote, could be subject to hacking attempts.

"Moreover, the precedent cited by one of the candidates does not provide any sort of comparison, and potentially exists only where a candidate had withdrawn, or been removed, from a contest.

"On the question of another statement from candidates, the rules and practice governing the ballot were made very clear to the candidates from the beginning and accepted by them when

they chose to take part.

“Of course, the views of all the candidates on internal and external issues pertaining to the contest have been widely shared through nine hustings – most of which were live-streamed – five TV debates and in every media outlet.

“It is, frankly, very unlikely that any member could be unaware of the vital matters at stake, the key issues that impact on our country and the party, and the candidates ‘views on them.

“It is, of course, the National Executive Committee who set the rules for the contest. Those rules are clear and we have rightly proceeded on that basis to date.

“We will continue to do so and would therefore hope that this allows all three candidates to focus for the last few days of the campaign on the positive case they can and are making for their leadership bid and of course for independence.”

ASH REGAN MSP

Earlier in the day Ash Regan MSP, who is one of the three candidates, called for the option for those who had already voted to rethink who their preferred candidate is. She said that some voters might have voter’s regret.

Her campaign team issued this statement this morning: “Due to the volatile nature of recent events Ash Regan has held off from media to forge a path forward in conjunction with SNP HQ.

“The campaign team thanks Mike Russell for stepping in and understanding the situation.

“There has been a surge in traffic in our campaign mailbox and social media from concerned members, looking for guidance on whether the ballot will go ahead unaltered or if the ballot will be reset.

“My team have put forward proposals that provide assurance to members with minimum disruption to the election process that we can move ahead constructively on.

“In 2015 selection contests for Westminster candidatures had varying end dates. In some cases, candidates were removed from the ballot before a race ended, where this happened members were able to update their vote. The facility exists within the Mi-Voice system.

“This would have the benefit of not disrupting members who are happy with their vote while providing an opportunity to reconsider for those who are not.

“In addition each candidate would be allowed to send one email to the members using the SNP mailing system – allowing a last minute updated message that reflects current events.

“We thank Mike for taking this suggestion seriously and lend our support to the integrity of the ballot. It is important that all parties respect the outcome of the ballot and give full support to the new leader of the SNP.”

FURTHER RESPONSE FOLLOWING MIKE RUSSELL’S STATEMENT

Ash Regan issued this statement in Twitter on Monday night: :
“I believe the power lies with the members of the SNP to select their next leader. There was an amendment to the normal established timeline as detailed in the SNP constitution for a leadership election – creating an inappropriately short time frame for this selection contest.

“I do not believe the NEC have had the opportunity to review my proposal fully – nor do I understand the problem with allowing members to change their mind, given the revelations of the weekend.

“Allowing members to edit their vote enables the ballot to continue on its current timeline, while solving the

outstanding issue for those who are dissatisfied.

“Our membership deserve the process of this election to be the start of transparency and demonstrable probity. However I encourage the members to now demonstrate their will with SNP HQ.”

<https://twitter.com/AshReganSNP/status/1637913802384523268?s=20>

Kate Forbes MSP

Kate Forbes told the BBC she was “very confident” that the party had the ability to complete the leadership process, although she had previously called – along with Ms Regan – for an independent third party auditor of the voting process.

Humza Yousaf MSP

Humza Yousaf admitted the membership numbers should have been released and said this was not the party’s finest hour. He has said the party requires internal reform.

The SNP leadership election will declare the new leader of the party and the new First Minister next Monday after voting closes at 12 noon.

Earlier in the day the BBC’s Glenn Campbell produced this package about the matter: