

Labour call for Slater's dismissal

Scottish Labour has demanded that First Minister Humza Yousaf takes responsibility for what they say is the “shambolic” Deposit Return Scheme, and remove it from Lorna Slater's portfolio following the delays the First Minister announced on Tuesday.

The scheme has been under fire for months but Ms Slater, the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity has repeatedly dismissed concerns and failed to answer questions.

In a letter to the First Minister, Scottish Labour's spokesperson for Net Zero, Energy and Just Transition Sarah Boyack branded the scheme a “farce” and questioned whether Lorna Slater was capable of regaining the trust of the sector.

The text of the letter is below:

Dear First Minister

Deposit Return Scheme

Scottish Labour has always supported a viable Deposit Return Scheme from the beginning, as part of our drive towards net zero – we need action to boost recycling rates, but this farce has delivered nothing but chaos and confusion.

Over recent months it has become clear that the current planning by the Scottish Government and Circularity Scotland ahead of its launch later this year does not command the confidence of consumers or businesses nor would the Scheme meaningfully contribute to reaching Net Zero.

The delay you announced yesterday in Parliament is welcome, but long overdue. In your Statement to Parliament yesterday you said, "I – and the Circular Economy Minister- have heard the concerns of business, particularly about the Scheme's readiness for launch this August." However, the reality is that the Minister has denied the inevitability of this delay for too long and now the whole scheme is in jeopardy to the point you have had to announce a delay.

Stakeholders have repeatedly expressed their frustration that the Minister does not meaningfully engage with them on amendments or revisions to the Scheme and that she often passes the buck to Circularity Scotland, particularly in relation to the impact of the scheme on existing recycling and waste management schemes. However, Circularity Scotland is of course an organisation set up by industry, is not accountable and is exempt from standard transparency mechanisms such as FOI.

Having listened to businesses and other stakeholders over the last few months and raised their concerns both in Parliament and directly with the Minister, I strongly believe that to make the most of this further delay Ministerial oversight and that leadership must also change.

Lorna Slater as the Minister in charge has repeatedly dodged the most basic questions in an attempt to avoid acknowledging the failures in the proposed scheme. Scottish Labour believes that a Government that does not take responsibility for governing, or for its mistakes, is not a Government that can make better choices moving forward.

A change in approach from the Scottish Government is required and given the Minister's previous intransigence I would question whether Lorna Slater MSP can regain the confidence of the sector. I am therefore calling on you to remove Ministerial responsibility for the Deposit Return Scheme from Ms Slater. In doing so I believe your Government must take responsibility and demonstrate that it is serious about re-setting the relationship between your Government and businesses and that you are changing your approach so that we can implement a Deposit Return Scheme that works and delivers for Scotland.

I look forward to receiving your reply,

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Boyack



Humza Yousaf MSP is elected as the Scottish Parliament nomination for 6th First Minister of Scotland. 28 March 2023 . Pic – Andrew Cowan/Scottish Parliament