

# A fresh start indeed

## First Minister Yousaf has his work cut out at Holyrood

Holyrood Diary (from the [May print edition](#) of *The Edinburgh Reporter* )

Burner phones, police searches, missing cash and a mysterious camper van sitting in a 92 year old's driveway. The bizarre scenes from the police investigation into SNP finances seems more like *Breaking Bad* than real-life Scottish political drama. The enduring image of last month has to be the forensic tent outside the former First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon's home, which she will be desperately hoping does not become the enduring memory of her time as leader. Quite what they were seeking as they poked around her barbecue is yet to be revealed.

This is a undeniably a nightmare start to the new First Minister, Humza Yousaf's dream job. The so-called 'continuity candidate' was extremely keen to hit the reset button as he set out a "fresh vision" at Holyrood last month, based around the three themes of "equality, opportunity and community". The fresh vision included delaying policies causing him headaches, such as the deposit return scheme and the proposed ban on alcohol advertising, and bringing back the previously ditched, revolutionary policy of measuring Scottish education against international standards. Unfortunately for him, the former SNP Treasurer Colin Beattie was arrested the very same day he laid out this bold plan, ensuring his efforts were "utterly torpedoed" as Lib Dem Leader Alex Cole-Hamilton put it.

To his credit, Mr Yousaf has not shirked from the media during the SNP's ongoing woes. Instead he has proven himself to be an

excellent feed for headline writers, with journalists delighted to learn from the new FM that he did not believe the SNP was operating in a criminal way, and that he was surprised when one of his colleagues was arrested.

There has certainly been plenty lively debate in the Holyrood chamber, not all of it from the politicians. Rowdy climate protestors regularly make more incomprehensible mutterings than the MSPs, which takes some doing. There was a particularly robust protest during Humza Yousaf's inaugural First Minister's Questions, leading to the gallery being cleared of all but a few unlucky schoolchildren. Conservative Leader Douglas Ross was caught uttering some rude curse word into his microphone, frustrated that his own attempts to show how grumpy he could be were overshadowed.

Mr Ross was not the only one caught being unparliamentary this month, with Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing having to tell off her brother Fergus for his passionately expressed views of the Greens, or "wine bar revolutionaries" as he put it. Mr Ewing wants to continue things like fishing in all parts of Scottish waters, and exploring for North Sea oil and gas, which is not really so popular with the junior partners in the Scottish Government. As for the rest of the SNP's views on this, they shuffle uncomfortably and make some non-committal mutterings about a "just transition" so it's anybody's guess, really.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the chamber, you can almost feel the glee in the Labour camps as they sense the political winds changing. Their Leader Anas Sarwar announced an "election ready reshuffle" with Jackie Bailie and Edinburgh South MP Ian Murray given the role of general election campaign co-ordinators. The rest of the new shadow cabinet team may well be advised to say as little as possible for now and just watch the show. As the famous Napoleon quote goes, "never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake".

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