

Opinion piece – Humza Yousaf needs to step up

by Sarah Boyack MSP for Lothian.

“The world is experiencing unprecedented levels of extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and a loss of biodiversity. Failure to act now will pose a threat to human health, food security, and economic stability.

“I am proud of the world-leading climate legislation the Scottish Parliament passed in 2009 and 2019. However, we urgently need to see the SNP/Green Scottish Government deliver on our climate targets right now, not in a decade.

“Scottish Labour is clear: we need stronger action now – the climate emergency demands it.

“Last year’s damning UK Climate Change Committee Report highlighted the need for the Scottish Government to provide a quantified plan for how its policies and plans will achieve the emissions reductions to meet the 2030 target. An obvious priority given the cost-of-living crisis would be insulating our homes and installing renewables. That would lower people’s bills and create local jobs – a win win.

“Although the Covid-19 travel restrictions made it possible for Scotland to meet the 2020 interim target, we’ve seen hundreds of bus services withdrawn meaning as people are returning to workplaces, they won’t have decent public transport options. Without urgent action now, we run the risk of having unattainable future targets.

“Disappointingly the SNP/Green Government is doing what they do best: focusing on rhetoric and PR stunts, instead of being an effective government using the powers to transform people’s lives.

“The same report mentioned the lack of cooperation and coordination between the Scottish and UK Government, which could prove detrimental for both UK’s and Scotland’s plans for decarbonisation.

“The Tories and the SNP have let their constitutional obsession get in the way of much needed climate action.

“The SNP/ Green Government want to brand themselves as a progressive alternative to the Tories, as a coalition of parties that cares for both people and planet.

“However, their incompetence speaks louder than words.

“Let’s look at the Deposit Return Scheme, for instance. Scottish Labour has consistently supported the principle of Deposit Return Scheme from the beginning – as part of our drive towards net zero we need action to boost recycling rates. Unfortunately, the scheme proposed by the Scottish Government is simply not good enough. It has caused massive pressures on businesses and recycling companies, many of whom have faced uncertainty and stress about the details of the scheme.

“In April, I wrote to Humza Yousaf and asked him to take the responsibility for the shambolic Deposit Returns Scheme off Lorna Slater.

“His response was unproductive and highly political – he refused to engage in a constructive dialogue and listen to the concerns raised in my letter.

“The SNP might be in a crisis but Humza Yousaf and his Government have a duty to the people of Scotland; to our coastal and island communities that will experience the acute impact of the climate emergency and urban communities at risk of flooding; to the young people who worry about their future; to the oil and gas workers who need a just transition – we owe it to all of them to act now.”



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