

# **Blackford to step down at next election**

**Ian Blackford MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, a former leader of the SNP at Westminster has announced he will step down at the next election.**

Mr Blackford supported Humza into his position as First Minister, but was criticised for his support for SNP MP Patrick Grady who was accused of sexual misconduct and suspended from the party.

This has sparked a response from the Scottish Liberal Democrats – it was their former leader, the late Charles Kennedy who was defeated by Mr Blackford in 2015 having held the seat since 1983. At the time there were controversial online comments aimed at Charles Kennedy, and an SNP local branch convener resigned over the many tweets he had sent criticising Kennedy and his known alcoholism.

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP said: “Everybody knows that this seat is going to be a straight fight between the Liberal Democrats and the SNP at the next general election. Whoever the nationalists put up, they will be running against successful local businessman and Highland Councillor, Angus MacDonald. People are ready for change.

“Angus is passionate about this area and its people. He has a track record of generating local employment and helping businesses to thrive and he is already campaigning on the issues that matter, such as replacing the Belford Hospital and

improving the A82.

“The SNP haven’t delivered for the West Highlands. Powers and budgets have been centralised to Holyrood and there has been a complete dearth of infrastructure spend in the Highlands since the SNP came to power.

“The people have been deprived of effective representation there since they lost Charles Kennedy as their MP in 2015.

“At the next election, the choice in Ross, Skye and Lochaber will be clear: a fresh start with local Liberal Democrat Angus MacDonald or more of the same with a central-belt-centric SNP.”

Mr Blackford is due to be a guest on Iain Dale’s All Talk at Edinburgh Festival Fringe on 13 August at 4pm.

The next general election is due to take place no later than 28 January 2025. The last was held on 12 December 2019.



Ian Blackford MP PHOTO UK Parliament/Andy Bailey