

First Minister steps down triggering leadership election

Despite claims by the Scottish Conservatives that it was their motion of no confidence in the First Minister which caused his downfall, it appears to have been an internal SNP decision that the First Minister of Scotland, Humza Yousaf has stepped down as leader of the SNP after only a year.

Amid rumours of an announcement on Monday morning the news came just after 10 that a hastily arranged press conference would be held at Bute House when 39 year-old Mr Yousaf was expected to make a resignation statement.

He has indicated to the SNP National Secretary today that it is his intention to step down as party leader and has asked that she commence a leadership contest for his replacement.

Last Thursday the First Minister called the Co-leaders of the Greens to Bute House to sack them as Scottish Ministers and end the Bute House Agreement. The acrimony which then ensued after the two motions of no confidence were lodged – one in the First Minister and one in the Scottish Government – indicated that the Greens would not back him. He would have

been left to rely on Ash Regan MSP and the Alba Party led by former First Minister, Alex Salmond, but that proved an impossible hill to climb.

Mr Yousaf said: “After spending the weekend reflecting on what is best for my party, for the government and for the country I lead, I’ve conclude that repairing our relationship across the political divide could only be done with someone else at the helm...”

He said: “Last week, I stood here to announce the ending of the cooperation agreement between the SNP and the Greens – The Bute House Agreement – and that the SNP would seek to govern as a minority government. I made that decision as the leader of the SNP, as I believed ending the Bute House Agreement was the right one for the party I lead.

“And I still do believe that to be the case. But most importantly, I believe it was the right decision for the country. My hope was to continue working with the Greens in a less formal arrangement as the SNP moved into a new phase of minority government. Unfortunately, in ending the Bute House Agreement in the manner that I did, I clearly underestimated the level of hurt and upset that caused Green colleagues. For a minority government to be able to govern effectively and efficiently trust when working with the opposition is clearly fundamental. And while a route through this week’s motion of no confidence was absolutely possible I am not willing to trade my values and principles or the deals with whomever simply for attaining power.

“Therefore after spending the weekend reflecting on what is best for my party, for the government and for the country I lead, I’ve concluded that repairing our relationship across the political divide could only be done with someone else at the helm. I have therefore informed the SNP’s national secretary of my intention to stand down as party leader and asked that she commences a leadership contest for my replacement as soon as possible. In order to ensure a smooth and orderly transition it is my intention to continue as First Minister until my successor has been elected, but particularly as the parliament will be debating some incredibly important legislation in the coming days and the coming weeks.”

The Scottish Greens have issued this statement: “Co-leader Patrick Harvie said: “Humza Yousaf is right to resign. His position was no longer tenable after he broke the bonds of trust with the Scottish Greens and with everyone who wanted a stable, progressive, pro-independence government.

“It is regrettable that it has ended this way, it didn’t need to. We draw no satisfaction or pleasure from this.

“But the Scottish Greens could no longer have confidence in Humza Yousaf after he chose to unilaterally end the Bute House Agreement.

“In doing so he let down the large majority of Scottish Green and SNP members who approved the agreement who wanted it to work.

“He chose to end a stable majority government and jeopardised the progressive policy programme that both parties had committed to and were working to deliver.

“It is to his credit that he has taken personal responsibility.

“Now though is the time to return to some stability.

“The SNP is still the largest party in Parliament by some distance, and has the right to form a minority government.

“The Scottish Greens have a long track record of working constructively from opposition and will do so with any First Minister who shares our progressive values and who can secure our confidence.

“We know many people will be disappointed by the events of the last week. We are too. But we cannot afford to look backwards.

“This is a pivotal moment for our country, and our politics must live up to the challenges we face, and hold true to our values .

“All parties have a responsibility for what happens next, and the kind of country we build. The Scottish Greens will play our part, as we always have done.

“Important work is already underway on a range of issues, from tenants rights to transforming the way we heat homes and buildings. It is essential that work continues.

“We will reflect on what has happened and do everything that we can to ensure that people and planet remain at the heart of our politics.

“Finally, to the next First Minister. Trust matters, integrity matters, values matter. Do not ever take them or your political allies for granted. The country expects, demands, and deserves better.”



Bute House Charlotte Square