

Kate Forbes steps aside to allow Swinney a coronation as leader

As widely expected after the announcement of John Swinney as a contender for the SNP leadership, Kate Forbes MSP has announced that she will step aside, allowing for a coronation, unless someone else puts in a bid by Monday at noon.

During his speech announcing he would stand for election as leader, Mr Swinney spoke of Ms Forbes as a friend and colleague, outlining what he would like to happen if he was First Minister and given the opportunity of selecting a cabinet. He said: "I want Kate Forbes to play significant part in that team. She is an intelligent, creative and thoughtful person, who has much to contribute to our national life."



Ms Forbes said in a statement: “I have listened very carefully to the vision John Swinney set out this morning for Scotland. I welcomed, and embrace, his commitment to ensure internal respect for robust and divergent debate in the party, which is the lifeblood of any democratic institution like the SNP. I was also greatly heartened by his drive to restore a sense of courtesy and dignity to the way we conduct ourselves as a party and as a Parliament. If we want to rewin the trust of the people, tone and language matter in the way we conduct ourselves.

“I have also had the opportunity to speak directly with him to discuss the future of our party and our country. Those discussions on the future of the SNP and our vision for Scotland were both frank and constructive. What emerged was that we share a powerful common purpose for the country. That includes a passion to revitalise our party, reach out to those who feel disempowered and reinvigorate the independence movement. It also includes an understanding that economic growth and tackling poverty must again be key priorities, and

that a just transition to 'net zero' must work with, and not against, our communities and businesses. More than that, John is clear that he is determined to return the SNP to governing from the mainstream. Competent, candid government earning the trust of the people. That was the vision I offered in the last leadership contest & is evidently demanded by the Scottish public.

"I've therefore weighed the decision whether or not to seek the leadership of the party with great care. I've concluded that the best way to deliver the urgent change Scotland needs is to join with John and advocate for that reform agenda within the Scottish Government. I can therefore today announce that I will not be seeking nomination as the next SNP leader. John will therefore have my support and endorsement in any campaign to follow. I sincerely thank every party member, and each of my parliamentary colleagues in Holyrood and Westminster, who have been in touch to urge me to stand. I recognise many might be disappointed that I'll not be contesting the position of Leader. To those people I say this – you can be certain that delivering on the priorities for which we have, together, advocated in recent years has been at the heart of today's decision.

"It is now clear from this morning's statement that in John Swinney we have someone who not only understands that need for reform, but has now committed to delivering it. I look forward to playing my role in making that happen."

Mr Swinney will become the seventh First Minister since the devolved parliament was set up unless opposed before then. That would appear reasonably unlikely as many ministers were at the press conference called on Thursday morning when he announced his leadership bid.

He said: "I am no caretaker. I am no interim leader. I am offering to lead my party through the Westminster elections and to lead us beyond the 2026 elections – two contests which

I intend to win.

“So, my message is crisp and simple. I am stepping forward to bring the SNP together, to deliver economic growth and social justice, to deliver the very best future for everyone in a modern, dynamic, diverse Scotland. I want to unite the SNP and unite Scotland for Independence.

“I invite everyone in the SNP and in Scotland who wants to join me in that journey to do so now.”





Ms Forbes stood unsuccessfully in the leadership election last year against Humza Yousaf and the SNP MSP, Ash Regan.

Ms Regan later quit the SNP and joined the Alba Party led by former First Minister, Alex Salmond.

In March 2023 from a turnout of 70% of the potential 72,169 voters, Mr Yousaf attracted 48.2% of the **first preference** votes. After eliminating the third candidate, Ash Regan, the **second preference** votes were recast for Mr Yousaf and Ms Forbes.

The final result was that Humza Yousaf was declared the new leader with 52.1% of the vote against 40.7% cast for Ms Forbes.



Kate Forbes MSP when standing as candidate in 2023 for the leadership of the SNP PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter
Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar said: “The people of Scotland are crying out for change – but all the SNP is offering them is yesterday’s man in John Swinney.

“John Swinney was the Finance Minister who broke the public finances, the worst Education Secretary in the history of the Scottish Parliament, the Deputy First Minister who deleted evidence meant for the Covid Inquiry and the man who has been at the heart of this incompetent SNP Government for the past seventeen years.

“Scotland’s public services are in crisis with almost one in six Scots on NHS waiting lists, the economy stagnating and homelessness on the rise.

“But rather than facing up to the challenges that we face, the SNP has put the interests of their party before the country yet again.

“It’s time for change.

“While the SNP stands in the way of democracy, Scottish Labour is looking to the future and is focused on delivering the change that Scotland needs.”

Douglas Ross, leader of the Scottish Conservatives asked at First Minister’s Questions earlier if this was the best the SNP could do. He said electing John Swinney would be the SNP going “back to the future”, and that he is “a continuity candidate pushing more of the same nationalist obsession that has damaged Scotland for more than a decade”.

Mr Ross said: “The next First Minister must focus on what really matters to Scotland. They have to forget about independence, and prioritise growing our economy, creating jobs and improving public services.

“By focusing his campaign on ‘uniting for independence’, all John Swinney offers is more division for Scotland.”

