

Councillor's tribute as MSP Fiona Hyslop announces retirement

The depute leader of West Lothian's SNP councillors has praised MSP Fiona Hyslop following the announcement she will step down at the 2026 election.

Pauline Stafford, a Bathgate councillor for the SNP since the 2022 local elections described Ms Hyslop as a "pioneering force" in the Scottish Parliament.

The MSP for the Linlithgow constituency who is currently Cabinet Secretary for Transport has announced that she will retire at the 2026 Holyrood Elections.

Councillor Stafford, who serves as the depute-leader of the 14 strong opposition group on West Lothian Council, was also recently selected as the Linlithgow constituency association convener.

She told the Local Democracy Reporting Service: "Fiona Hyslop has been a pioneering force in the Scottish Parliament since it reconvened in 1999.

"Her contribution has shaped so much of Scottish public life over the last 26 years. Among her key achievements in government are the abolition of student tuition fees, the introduction of free school meals for P1-P3, the introduction of free bus travel for under 22s and the expansion of early

learning and childcare hours.

“Fiona’s dedication to public service has been exemplary, an MSP truly rooted in and connected to the communities she represents.”

Councillor Stafford added: “Fiona has been a tireless campaigner for Scottish Independence and is one of the most articulate spokespeople within the SNP, either on the doorstep or on UK national media. She is an inspirational figure for activists and has led from the front to secure many electoral victories for the party.

“Her passion and drive to secure a better future for the people of Scotland as an Independent country is unwavering and I’m sure she will continue to be an important voice in Scottish public life in the future.”

Having been an active campaigner for the reconvening of the Scottish Parliament Fiona Hyslop was elected during the first elections for the Parliament in 1999.

She has served continuously since then as a Lothian Region MSP and as MSP for Linlithgow since 2011. She has been a government minister for 16 out of the last 18 years.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter