

# Nicola Sturgeon announces her retirement from politics at the 2026 election

**Former First Minister – and the first woman to hold the office – Nicola Sturgeon MSP, has announced her retirement from politics in a letter to her local constituency.**

She said: “I have decided not to seek re-election to the Scottish Parliament next year.”

She continued: “Reaching this decision has been far from easy, however I have known in my heart for a while that the time is right for me to embrace different opportunities in a new chapter of my life, and to allow you to select a new standard bearer. Whoever you choose will have my full support.”

Later she wrote on Instagram: “Being one of the original 1999 members of the Scottish Parliament, serving (by the time of election) for 27 years – almost exactly half my life – and getting to represent Glasgow Southside the best constituency in Scotland, has been an honour beyond words.”

And she added: “Of course for most of my years as an MSP I have also been a Minister in the Scottish Government. I hope the the policies I have been able to implement – particularly as First Minister – from the Scottish child payment and expanded early years education to investment and housing and new hospitals, have benefited my constituents as much as they have people across the rest of Scotland.

“I joined the SNP in 1986 because I wanted to play my part in building a fair and prosperous Scotland and I have dedicated my life to that task ever since. I believed then that winning our country’s independence was essential to Scotland reaching her full potential and I still do.

“Even though I am preparing to leave elected politics I hope to contribute in different ways to making that ambition reality. Indeed given the challenges facing the world today it is more important than ever that progressive voices inside and outside of Parliament continue to speak up for fairness, equality and dignity for all.

“Be in no doubt that I will always speak out and stand up for what I believe in.

“In making this announcement it is inevitable that I feel a mixture of sorrow and anticipation. I am sad to be closing the book on this remarkable and deeply fulfilling chapter of my life, but I am also hugely excited about the start of a new phase in which I will discover different ways to advance the causes I care so much about.”



First Minister Nicola Sturgeon at St Andrew's House 2 March 2020 PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

Scottish Conservative deputy leader, Rachael Hamilton, said: "We wish any departing MSP well, regardless of their party or politics.

"But we cannot forget the deep divisions in our country that Nicola Sturgeon created, fostered and encouraged.

"By any objective analysis, her record as First Minister is one of failure. Scottish education standards collapsed on her watch and the poverty-related attainment gap, which she promised to eradicate, widened.

"She presided over a drugs-death emergency, a ferries scandal, a crisis in our NHS, crumbling roads – and all while raising taxes on hard-working Scots, which stifled economic growth.

"Her reckless gender self-ID policy betrayed women, her soft-touch approach to justice betrayed victims and her shameful deletion of Covid WhatsApp messages denied bereaved families

answers and highlighted the secrecy and cynicism that characterised her government.”

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP said: “Whatever you think of her legacy, Nicola Sturgeon’s impact on Scottish politics has been undeniable.

“The SNP have been in power for too long, and the departure of another big figure is further proof of their decline.

“For so many people across Scotland, it feels like nothing works anymore. Next year, they will have a chance to draw a line under SNP division and neglect. At the 2026 election, Scottish Liberal Democrats will be focused on standing up for faster access to local healthcare, lifting up education and giving our economy the attention it deserves.”

Alastair Cameron, chair of Scotland in Union, said: “Like all SNP First Ministers, Nicola Sturgeon’s obsession with independence ruined relationships, damaged the economy and led to the neglect of all devolved policy areas.

“Her legacy is a divided Scotland.

“Future leaders should abandon the constitutional focus and instead prioritise the things people really care about like schools, hospitals and jobs.

“Ms Sturgeon’s resignation from frontline politics presents an opportunity for Scotland finally to move on from years of divisive and destructive nationalism.”

