

Dundee Labour News Digest

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Kevin Keenan : Gamesa Dundee 1,000 jobs blow : SNP Government told to produce its plans for energy jobs for the city

Kevin Keenan , Labour group leader on Dundee is calling on the SNP Government in Edinburgh to spell out its plans to help Dundee attract large-scale renewables jobs to Dundee in the aftermath of the 1,000 jobs blow decision by Gamesa to rule Dundee out of consideration.

Councillor Keenan is writing to Energy Minister Fergus Ewing calling for it to "spell out in some detail precisely how they propose to bring large-scale employment to Dundee through the renewable energy sector. "

Councillor Keenan said,

"They need to tell Dundonians of the city's advantages and disadvantages in terms of :

- * distance from the large windfarm developments
- * the development of supply chains
- * the availability of land for expansion.

"They need to tell the city how they will address these issues with an outcome that favours Dundee both in the short-term and in the long-term.

" Last year the Dundee Partnership Forum indicated that Dundee's share of energy-linked jobs 'could rise to 1,000 jobs in direct manufacturing with the same again in support employment with around 400 long-term jobs in terms of operations and maintenance.'

How do the SNP Government :

*Propose to do ensure that the city will have the manufacturing capacity to do this?

* Ensure that there will be sufficient numbers in a workforce qualified in the maintenance of renewable technologies to sustain the industry in the city ?

*Ensure the provision of sufficient graduates of degree courses and training schemes to sustain the development of the industry in Dundee ?

"This will require industry specific skills as we in Dundee embrace this developing technology.

"Therefore greater resources and publicity must be given to the excellent courses being run by Dundee Renewables and the Skills Alliance."

"There are many individuals and organisations in the city who are working long and hard to promote Dundee's merits in the renewables industry.

"The SNP Government owes it to them to make clear how it will help the city now that Gamesa have said that they will look elsewhere in Scotland other than Dundee.

"It is now time for the SNP Government to spell out in some detail precisely how they propose to bring large-scale employment to Dundee through the renewable energy sector.



NHS Tayside staffing : Three Facts and An Admission Marlyn Glen

Three significant NHS staffing figures were published last month and one highly significant admission was made.

*The latest official government figures show that the number of nursing and midwifery staff in NHS Tayside continues to remain below the level it was at when Alex Salmond's SNP Government took over in 2007.

*The overall NHS workforce in NHS Tayside is now over 300 less than it was two years ago .

*Around 1 out of 4 student nurses in abandon their courses.

and

Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon finally admitted that the number of nurses and midwifery staff in the NHS in Scotland is now lower than the number was under Labour.

Let's look at the first fact.

The latest official government figures show that numbers of nursing and midwifery staff in NHS Tayside continue to fall under Alex Salmond's SNP Government.

They remain at a level below the number of nursing and midwifery posts in the health board when the SNP came into government in 2007.

It's now 23 whole-time equivalents in staffing numbers below what the figures were back then.

The headcount figure is also down on the 2007 level.

This trend stacks up poorly against the record of the previous Labour-led Scottish Executive.

In the last 4 years, under Labour from 2002-2006, the number of nursing and midwifery staff in NHS Tayside increased each year, and increased in total by over 230.

Let's look at the second fact again now.

The overall number of NHS staff in NHS Tayside is now over 300 less than it was two years ago.

Today there are 13,914 staff in the health board, including GPs and dentists, (using the SNP Government's preferred choice of headcount figures.)

This is a decrease of almost 320 from the 14,230 staff level reported two years ago.

This trend also stacks up poorly against the record of the previous Labour-led Scottish Executive.

In its last 4 years, under Labour, the overall number of staff in NHS Tayside increased each year and increased in total by almost 900.

These figures were already expected because of the SNP Government's failure to match the Labour-led Scottish Executive's growth in health spending.

The third fact is that the number of nursing students who drop out of their courses, known as the "attrition rate" still affects around 1 in 4.

The reasons for this are well-known and long-standing and include the need for childcare assistance and better support for clinical placements as well as financial difficulties and problems with career prospects.

This last issue, career prospects, now looks like taking on a greater significance.

In terms of demand, as the population ages there will be more need for nursing staff

In terms of supply, there is a need to replace an ageing NHS workforce with younger staff.

Some 10,000 of Scotland's nursing workforce are now over 55

In addition more of them are needed to meet the rising demand from the elderly.

However, student nurses can now see their career opportunities being restricted as the number of nursing posts in the NHS in Scotland falls - 2,000 lost in the past year, and so these diminishing career prospects will create anxiety, disquiet and perhaps a career re-decision.

And what of the highly significant admission ?

Earlier last month, (10th. November) Nicola Sturgeon finally admitted to the Scottish Parliament, the SNP's failure on nursing numbers which are now below those under Labour.

She stated,

"The number of nurses and midwives has reduced by 0.2 per cent from the level that we inherited. "

No Government or health secretary can afford to have declining health staff numbers , particularly when you have previously declaimed that you " will protect the health service during the lifetime of this Parliament " with fewer nursing and midwifery staff.

Why is the NHS in this condition ?

The SNP Government just simply pass on cuts from the Tory Government in Westminster.

Furthermore, more money being spent on the SNP's populist 5-year council tax freeze means of course less money for spending on the health service.

As a consequence of greater and greater duties being demanded with no increase in resources for the NHS in Scotland, several career options for loyal staff such as voluntary redundancy packages have their appeal.

This, however, result in a further loss of nursing skills, with overworked and under-pressure dedicated staff remaining.

The extent of this working environment is revealed in a new poll of its members by the Royal College of Nursing in Scotland where more than 1 in 3 said that there were discouraged or told not to report their concerns over issues such as staffing levels or patient safety.

When RCN Scotland appeared before the Scottish Parliament's Health and Sport Committee last month, their observation resonated with many :

"Nurses think they are very much on their own and that they are being targeted for savings.....Nursing has lost a sense of all being in it together."



Teacher numbers tumbles again in Dundee

Laurie Bidwell

The SNP Government's latest figures indicate that the number of teachers in Dundee is the lowest for 6 years, lower than when the SNP took over the Scottish Government in 2007.

The figures show that the number of primary school teachers in Dundee is now at its lowest level since 2005.

The numbers fell again in the last year to 639 at the census point.

In secondary schools, the number of teachers in Dundee is also at its lowest level since 2005.

The numbers decreased over the last year to 716 at the census point.

The tables showing Pupil/Teacher ratios also show a noticeable increase from 11.7 pupils to 1 teacher in 2009 to 12.1 pupils to 1 teacher in 2011.

Commenting on the figures, Labour's Education Spokesperson in the City, Councillor Laurie Bidwell said,

"In Dundee the Education Convener says she hasn't removed teachers from the classroom but the growth in the number of pupils to each teacher (the Pupil - Teacher ratio) paints a different picture."

"We can't go on reducing the number of teachers in our schools in Dundee without having a negative effect on the attainment and achievement of our pupils.

"Dundee deserves better.

" Having promised the earth four and a half years ago, the SNP Government still refuses to face up to the truth today that they have not reduced average class sizes.

"They, and their SNP controlled Council in Dundee, are responsible for the decline in teacher numbers and an adverse rise in the pupil/teacher ratios in our City.

"The SNP made unprecedented promises about improvements in education, none of which have ever been properly or fully funded."

Primary School Teachers in Dundee

2011 639

2010 666

2009 676

2008 673

2007 691

2006 654

2005 619

Secondary School Teachers in Dundee

2011 716

2010 732

2009 765

2008 811

2007 805

2006 768

2005 720



Jenny Marra Supports Dundee Students at Education Rally

Jenny Marra MSP showed her support for Dundee students at a rally held before the public meeting on post-16 education in Tayside attended by Cabinet Secretary for Education Mike Russell.

The students gathered to present their response to the post-16 consultation paper that proposes increased ministerial powers over the governance of further education institutions. Earlier this year the paper sparked controversy in its proposal to give ministers the power to merge institutions.

Speaking before the rally Ms Marra said:

"I am delighted to be here to support the students in presenting their response to the post-16 legislative paper. Both Abertay and Dundee university student associations have been clear in their opposition to any merger proposals, as well as the Government's cuts to Colleges. It is important their voice is heard throughout this consultation as it is their future at stake."

William Mohieddeen, president of Abertay Students Union added:

"The University of Abertay Students' Association thanks all supporters of the Hands Off Abertay campaign and those that are backing the Tayside students' response in 'All Taygether Now'.

"Particularly we would like to thank Jenny Marra MSP for addressing the students attending the rally at Dundee Union.

"The campaigning has been fully about projecting the student voice to the highest level in Government and we recognise those such as Ms Marra who are keen to

interact with students and acknowledge the position they have in partnership in their education.

"This has been a significant piece of student activism and we hope to see significant interaction from the education secretary before imposing any further changes to the higher education sector."