# John Swinney defends excluding Reform UK from Scotland’s anti-far-right political summit



First Minister John Swinney has defended his decision to exclude Reform UK from an upcoming political summit aimed at addressing the threat posed by far-right groups in Scotland. The summit, scheduled for Wednesday, was announced by Swinney last month and seeks to bring together parties represented in the Scottish Parliament, alongside trade unions and civic leaders, to discuss shared values and strategies to safeguard Scotland’s democratic systems.

Reform UK, led by Nigel Farage, has not been invited to participate, despite the party’s protestations that it does not identify as far right and its significant recent electoral gains. The party secured 7% of the Scottish vote in the 2024 general election, and recent polls suggest this support could rise to as much as 17% ahead of the next Holyrood election, potentially granting Reform UK a considerable presence in the Scottish Parliament.

Swinney expressed concern particularly over Reform UK’s stance on immigration, which he said raised “enormous concern” and was not aligned with Scotland’s inclusive and welcoming values. Speaking to BBC Scotland’s The Sunday Show, he said: “If we are passive about this we run the risk that those democratic systems will be eroded by the challenges that we face. The threat that is coming to our democratic system is coming from a range of pressures that seek to undermine some of the central values of our society. There are parts of the argument and rhetoric of Reform that contribute to that.”

The First Minister emphasised that all parties currently represented in Holyrood had been invited to the summit. He described the meeting as an opportunity to unite against far-right ideologies and to protect the democratic fabric of Scotland. “The summit is the right thing to do,” he stated. “I’m reaching out to people in Scotland to say that they shouldn’t be tempted by the simple solutions that are offered by the ideologies that are represented by Reform and others.”

Reform UK’s Thomas Kerr, a councillor and leading figure for the party in Scotland, criticised the summit as “anti-democratic” and condemned Swinney’s characterisation of Reform’s immigration policies. Speaking to BBC Radio Scotland’s The Sunday Show, Kerr said: “We are a right wing political party, John Swinney is a left wing politician that is absolutely fine, we are on two different sides of the political spectrum that’s why you debate each other. But to say that because you disagree with illegal immigration, you want to clamp down and make sure we secure our borders is racist I think is fundamentally wrong. It is an argument to have in a policy debate, on a policy platform absolutely, but the key point of this summit is this is taxpayers’ cash and a first minister that has over stepped his mark in an anti-democratic summit.”

The Scottish Conservatives have also indicated they will not participate in the summit, describing it as an unnecessary “talking shop.” While the Conservatives have distanced themselves from the forum, Reform UK councillor Kerr suggested his party may consider abstaining in any vote to select the next First Minister after the 2026 Holyrood election. Kerr told BBC Scotland News that both Swinney and Labour leader Anas Sarwar were “totally incapable of taking this country forward.” He declined to specify whether Reform might back the SNP or Labour, saying it was “like being asked to get punched in the face or punched in the gut.”

Reform UK’s leader, Nigel Farage, recently stated there would be no deal with Labour at Holyrood, contrasting with the party deputy leader Richard Tice’s earlier remark that “anything is preferable to the SNP” when asked about Labour taking power. These mixed signals highlight the complex positioning of Reform UK as it seeks to increase its influence in Scottish politics.

The summit, convened by Swinney, aims to focus on protecting democratic processes in Scotland from what he describes as far-right challenges, and to reinforce shared values among political parties, civic organisations, and trade unions. The exclusion of Reform UK has sparked debate about the definitions of far-right politics and the inclusivity of political discourse in Scotland.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)