# Scottish Labour faces internal doubts over David Russell’s media readiness ahead of crucial by-election



Scottish Labour has recently come under scrutiny for its approach to the upcoming by-election in Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse, particularly regarding its candidate, David Russell. The Scottish National Party (SNP) has accused Labour of being reluctant to allow Russell to engage in media debates, suggesting that the party fears his lack of experience could harm their electoral prospects.

The by-election, slated for June 5, follows the passing of longtime SNP MSP Christina McKelvie, leaving a significant void that both Labour and the SNP are eager to fill. Anas Sarwar, the leader of Scottish Labour, perceives this election as a critical opportunity to challenge SNP dominance in Scotland—a strategic move that could potentially alter the landscape for Labour in future elections. He describes the by-election as a 'launchpad' for the party's ambitions, emphasising the importance of a strong showing in this contest.

However, internal discussions within the party reveal reluctance about Russell's media presence. Reports indicate that Labour sources express concern that Russell may not perform well in front of the cameras, citing his uninspiring social media engagements as evidence. According to one source, there is "little enthusiasm" among party members for putting Russell in the spotlight during televised debates. This sentiment echoes broader anxieties about the party's readiness to compete effectively in the current political climate.

Katy Loudon of the SNP has been vocal in her criticism, claiming, "Davy Russell is either scared to defend his party's record or he's being hidden from media scrutiny by the Labour Party." Such allegations raise questions regarding the party's confidence in their candidate, particularly as the political stakes heighten with Reform UK entering the fray, potentially complicating the race. The presence of Farage's party may challenge Labour for second place, suggesting that the political dynamics are shifting and that Labour cannot afford to take anything for granted.

Russell, aged 62, has deep roots in the community, having been selected by local Labour members largely due to his personal connections and commitment to local issues. His recent victory in a council by-election for Whitburn and Blackburn indicates some level of grassroots support, yet it remains to be seen how this will translate to the broader constituency. Nonetheless, Labour's performance in this race could serve as a bellwether for its prospects in forthcoming elections.

Recent electoral outcomes in other constituencies add further complexity to Labour's ambitions. For instance, Labour's resounding success in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election, which saw a significant swing from the SNP, raises hopes for the party's future in Scotland. Political analysts suggest this trend may reduce the necessity for negotiations with the SNP, positioning Labour as a formidable contender for dominance in Scottish politics.

As the June by-election approaches, the anticipation surrounding Russell's public engagement grows. With pivotal debates on the horizon, the focus will likely remain on whether Labour can bolster its candidate's visibility and competence in the critical weeks ahead. The outcomes of these debates may not only determine the fate of the Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse seat but could also influence the broader narrative of Scottish Labour's resurgence in the face of formidable opposition.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraphs 1, 3, 4
3. Paragraphs 2, 3
4. Paragraphs 1, 4
5. Paragraphs 1, 4
6. Paragraphs 1, 5, 6
7. Paragraphs 1, 5

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/scottish-labour-scared-election-candidate-35255566> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/scottish-labour-scared-election-candidate-35255566> - The article reports that the Scottish National Party (SNP) has accused Scottish Labour of being hesitant to have their candidate, David Russell, participate in a televised debate for the upcoming Holyrood by-election in Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse. The SNP claims that Labour is attempting to hide Russell from media scrutiny, citing concerns over his media performance and limited social media engagement. The by-election is scheduled for June 5th, following the death of SNP MSP Christina McKelvie.
3. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/anas-sarwar-scottish-labour-hamilton-larkhall-and-stonehouse-by-election-5099963> - Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar views the upcoming Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse by-election as a pivotal opportunity to form the Scottish Government in the next election. Sarwar emphasizes the importance of this by-election as a 'launchpad' for Labour's future in Scotland, highlighting the need to win the seat to challenge the SNP's dominance.
4. <https://belviderezion.org/article/barry-ferguson-s-ex-business-associate-selected-as-labour-by-election-candidate> - David Russell, a former business associate of Rangers boss Barry Ferguson, has been selected as the Scottish Labour candidate for the Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse by-election. Russell, 62, was chosen by local members to contest the snap poll, emphasizing his deep roots in the community and commitment to local issues.
5. <https://www.inkl.com/news/scottish-labour-hold-onto-council-seat-in-by-election-victory> - Scottish Labour secured a victory in a council by-election, with David Russell becoming the new councillor for Whitburn and Blackburn. Despite this success, the party faced a setback in Edinburgh, where they lost a seat to the Scottish Liberal Democrats in a different by-election.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/oct/07/labour-stunning-scottish-byelection-win-means-there-may-be-little-need-to-bargain-with-the-snp> - The article analyzes Labour's significant victory in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election, noting a 20-point swing from the SNP. This result suggests that Labour could potentially win numerous seats in Scotland in a general election, reducing the need for negotiations with the SNP.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/10/06/rutherglen-hamilton-west-by-election-results-labour-snp/> - Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer hailed the party's victory in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election as a 'big step in the right direction' towards becoming prime minister. The article details the election results and the implications for Labour's future in Scotland.