# Scottish Labour faces internal backlash over Anonyvoter’s alleged bias and lack of transparency



Concerns are mounting within Scottish Labour over the integrity of the online voting system used to select candidates for the party, amid ongoing investigations into alleged voter fraud linked to similar systems in England. The Anonyvoter application, already embroiled in controversy, is at the centre of fears that it may disproportionately favour centrist candidates over left-wing ones during selections for the upcoming general election.

Notably, allegations surfaced after the recent selection process for Dundee West, where left-wing MSP Mercedes Villalba, despite receiving more in-person votes, ultimately lost to Michael Marra, who has been proposed as a potential successor to Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar. Sources indicate that Marra received “almost triple” the online votes cast through the Anonyvoter system, stoking suspicions that the software could be manipulated. This trend mirrors events in England, where former MPs Sam Tarry and Beth Winter have openly challenged the system, claiming it played a role in their deselections. Tarry described Anonyvoter as “rigged” to influence outcomes, while Winter has called for an independent inquiry into her own deselection, emphasizing the need for transparency in candidate selection.

Critics of Anonyvoter have voiced grave concerns regarding its lack of independent oversight and the perceived potential for data manipulation. A former Labour staffer highlighted that traditional parliamentary selections involve rigorous oversight conducted by local party officials, a critical layer that is reportedly absent with Anonyvoter. This absence raises pertinent questions about accountability, especially in light of preliminary investigations by the Metropolitan Police into irregularities associated with the system in areas like Croydon.

Scottish Labour is under pressure to address these concerns, as members who have reached out to party leadership about the voting system have received minimal responses. One member reported that their inquiries were dismissed, with claims that no problems had arisen with Anonyvoter in Scottish selections. This situation has created a sense of unease among party members, who fear that what transpired in the Westminster selections could easily echo in the Holyrood candidates' choices.

The controversy surrounding Anonyvoter has not gone unnoticed at higher echelons of the party, with voices of dissent including John McDonnell, the former shadow chancellor. He accused current party leadership of pursuing a “search and destroy” mission against left-wing factions within Labour. The disquiet among Scottish Labour members is exacerbated by fears that the current momentum could hinder the party’s electoral prospects if internal dissatisfaction remains unaddressed.

Anonyvoter's developers maintain that their technology is not at fault for the allegations of election fraud, insisting that issues stem from Labour's internal databases. Despite assertions from a Scottish Labour spokesperson that the party has confidence in the integrity of selection processes, the rising tide of apprehension reflects a stark division within the party, driven by concerns over electoral fairness and potential bias against left-wing candidates.

Editorial calls for reform have also echoed from various quarters, including advocacy groups such as the Electoral Reform Society, which spotlighted the disenfranchisement of voters under the current first-past-the-post electoral system. A 2020 report suggested that over two-thirds of Scottish voters felt effectively ignored during the 2019 UK general election, fuelling arguments for a shift towards a more representative electoral model.

As Scottish Labour gears up for crucial elections, the dissonance surrounding Anonyvoter presents a profound challenge. With growing apprehension surrounding transparency in candidate selections, the party faces a pivotal moment in determining how to navigate these internal disputes while striving for electoral success amidst an increasingly sceptical membership base.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/fears-over-scottish-labour-using-35282783), [[3]](https://nation.cymru/news/welsh-labour-mp-beth-winter-calls-for-inquiry-into-her-deselection-as-police-probe-voter-fraud/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/fears-over-scottish-labour-using-35282783), [[3]](https://nation.cymru/news/welsh-labour-mp-beth-winter-calls-for-inquiry-into-her-deselection-as-police-probe-voter-fraud/), [[4]](https://www.thecanary.co/uk/analysis/2024/09/02/jas-athwal/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/fears-over-scottish-labour-using-35282783), [[7]](https://labouroutlook.org/2024/04/18/vote-rigging-allegations-in-labour-selections-via-anonyvoter-system-must-be-answered/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/fears-over-scottish-labour-using-35282783), [[5]](https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/latest-news-and-research/media-centre/press-releases/general-election-vast-majority-of-scottish-voters-left-voiceless-under-westminsters-warped-voting-system/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/07/07/scottish-labour-rejects-electoral-reform-distorted-win-ever/), [[6]](https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2007/11/scot-n06.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/fears-over-scottish-labour-using-35282783)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/fears-over-scottish-labour-using-35282783), [[5]](https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/latest-news-and-research/media-centre/press-releases/general-election-vast-majority-of-scottish-voters-left-voiceless-under-westminsters-warped-voting-system/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/fears-over-scottish-labour-using-35282783> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/07/07/scottish-labour-rejects-electoral-reform-distorted-win-ever/> - In July 2024, Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar rejected calls to reform the UK's voting system, despite his party achieving a landslide victory with nearly two-thirds of Commons seats on just 34% of the vote. Sarwar emphasized that the current system was well-known and that the party had won by playing within its rules, dismissing the need for a debate on changing the voting system.
3. <https://nation.cymru/news/welsh-labour-mp-beth-winter-calls-for-inquiry-into-her-deselection-as-police-probe-voter-fraud/> - In March 2024, Welsh Labour MP Beth Winter called for an independent inquiry into her deselection process, citing concerns over the Anonyvoter online voting system. The Metropolitan Police's cyber crime unit was investigating irregularities involving Anonyvoter in Croydon East CLP, where Winter's deselection had occurred. Winter's call for an inquiry was renewed amid the police probe into alleged voter fraud.
4. <https://www.thecanary.co/uk/analysis/2024/09/02/jas-athwal/> - In September 2024, allegations emerged that the Anonyvoter system was used to rig selections in the Labour Party. In one instance, candidate Jas Athwal won 43% of in-person votes but 65% of Anonyvoter ballots. Concerns included the lack of independent oversight and the potential for electoral fraud through the generation of additional codes by administrators.
5. <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/latest-news-and-research/media-centre/press-releases/general-election-vast-majority-of-scottish-voters-left-voiceless-under-westminsters-warped-voting-system/> - A 2020 report by the Electoral Reform Society highlighted that 68.5% of Scottish voters were effectively ignored in the 2019 UK general election due to the first-past-the-post system. The report called for a shift to a proportional representation system to ensure fairer representation and address the disproportionate results under the current system.
6. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2007/11/scot-n06.html> - A 2007 report by Ron Gould, a former senior Canadian election official, investigated the May 2007 Scottish parliamentary elections. The report criticized the Scottish and UK governments for focusing on partisan interests over voter needs, leading to widespread voter disenfranchisement. It recommended that future election organizers prioritize voters' interests above all considerations.
7. <https://labouroutlook.org/2024/04/18/vote-rigging-allegations-in-labour-selections-via-anonyvoter-system-must-be-answered/> - In April 2024, Momentum National Secretary Lorcan Whitehead called for an independent inquiry into allegations of vote rigging in Labour's parliamentary selections via the Anonyvoter system. Whitehead highlighted concerns about the system's potential for abuse, including manual vote additions and the generation of additional codes by administrators, and criticized the lack of independent oversight in the process.