# John Swinney brands Nigel Farage a racist ahead of crucial Hamilton by-election



The final weekend of campaigning for the Hamilton by-election has taken a sharp turn into vitriol, with Scotland’s First Minister, John Swinney, denouncing Nigel Farage as a racist. In a speech aimed at energising Scottish National Party (SNP) activists, he accused the leader of Reform UK of introducing “racism and hatred” into the local community, labelling such rhetoric as “repugnant.” When pressed during a subsequent media interaction about whether he believed Farage was indeed a racist, Swinney responded unequivocally, stating, “Yes.” This confrontation reflects a broader struggle within Scottish politics, as the SNP fights to maintain its dominance against a resurgent Reform party.

The backdrop to this political clash includes the unexpected by-election triggered by the passing of Nationalist MSP Christina McKelvie. Swinney's remarks come at a time when national surveys indicate Reform UK is making surprising inroads with the Scottish electorate. One poll suggested that the party could capture 21 per cent of the vote in the upcoming Holyrood elections, a significant shift that threatens to alter the balance of power among Scottish political parties.

Swinney's assertions have stirred the waters not just with Farage but also with Scottish Labour's leader, Anas Sarwar. Speaking to the media, Sarwar labelled Farage as a “clear and present danger to our country,” articulating concerns over the divisive tactics employed by Reform during the campaign. This includes a recent election advertisement that misrepresented Sarwar’s comments, adding to the campaign’s overall atmosphere of animosity. In an open letter to voters, Sarwar cautioned against viewing the contest as merely a face-off between Labour and Reform; instead, he emphasised the need to galvanise support to thwart what he characterised as an assault on community values.

Amidst these tensions, there remains a pronounced commitment within the SNP to present a united front against Farage's politics. Swinney previously underscored this during the campaign, asserting in unequivocal terms that the SNP would engage with neither Farage nor his party under any circumstances. His coherent stance reflects broader concerns among coalition and party leaders alike about the ramifications of Farage's appeal, especially following his provocative rise in England's local elections, where emerged as a populist force.

Moreover, Swinney has previously characterised Farage as an accomplice to a negative and divisive political narrative that detracts from Scotland's values. He has also labelled Farage a “far-right accomplice” to Russian aggression amid the war in Ukraine, highlighting the fundamental differences between their political worldviews and reinforcing the SNP's commitment to unity against external threats to Scottish interests.

As the by-election approaches, the stakes could not be higher for the SNP. With the political landscape shifting and Reform UK potentially positioned to challenge the traditional power structures, Swinney aims to galvanise support by framing the choice as binary: continuity with the SNP's progressive agenda or the risk of embracing divisive and regressive politics. Both he and Sarwar recognise that this by-election is more than a local contest; it is a critical crossroads for Scotland’s political identity as the nation grapples with competing visions for its future.

The outcome of the vote on Thursday will not only determine local representation in Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse but could also set the stage for larger debates in Scottish politics, making it crucial for voters to weigh their decision carefully.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14768183/Campaign-hate-storm-Swinney-says-believes-Nigel-Farage-racist.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.inverness-courier.co.uk/news/national/under-no-circumstances-will-snp-have-anything-to-do-with-farage-swinney-131780/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14768183/Campaign-hate-storm-Swinney-says-believes-Nigel-Farage-racist.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/john-swinney-nigel-farage-first-minister-reform-budget-b2704966.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.shropshirestar.com/uk-news/2025/04/17/swinney-worried-by-high-likelihood-farage-could-become-next-pm/), [[6]](https://www.politics.co.uk/news/2025/02/26/john-swinney-vows-to-unite-scotland-against-increasingly-extreme-and-radical-right/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/john-swinney-nigel-farage-is-a-far-right-accomplice-to-russia-5008296), [[7]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/swinney-scotland-must-be-alive-to-the-threat-of-farage-after-english-elections-5MMIGDATFZMYVIQQKC7EVRZJ2U/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14768183/Campaign-hate-storm-Swinney-says-believes-Nigel-Farage-racist.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/john-swinney-nigel-farage-first-minister-reform-budget-b2704966.html)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14768183/Campaign-hate-storm-Swinney-says-believes-Nigel-Farage-racist.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.inverness-courier.co.uk/news/national/under-no-circumstances-will-snp-have-anything-to-do-with-farage-swinney-131780/> - In April 2025, John Swinney, Scotland's First Minister, firmly stated that the Scottish National Party (SNP) would not engage with Nigel Farage or his party, Reform UK. He emphasised the SNP's opposition to Farage's divisive politics and affirmed that there would be no deals under any circumstances. This declaration was made during the Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse by-election campaign, which was triggered by the death of SNP minister Christina McKelvie. Swinney's comments aimed to distance the SNP from Farage's political agenda and reinforce the party's commitment to unity and inclusivity.
3. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/john-swinney-nigel-farage-first-minister-reform-budget-b2704966.html> - In February 2025, John Swinney, Scotland's First Minister, expressed concerns over the rise of Reform UK, led by Nigel Farage, and its potential impact on Scottish politics. He criticised Farage's views on migration, describing them as based on a fundamentally racist perspective. Swinney also accused Farage of being an 'accomplice' and 'apologist' for Russian actions in Ukraine. To counter this perceived threat, Swinney called for a cross-party summit to unite Scotland against the influence of far-right politics and to protect the country's values.
4. <https://www.shropshirestar.com/uk-news/2025/04/17/swinney-worried-by-high-likelihood-farage-could-become-next-pm/> - In April 2025, John Swinney, Scotland's First Minister, expressed deep concerns about the potential for Nigel Farage to become the next Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. He warned that such an outcome could fundamentally change the values of the UK in a damaging way. Swinney also highlighted the threat posed by Reform UK, led by Farage, in the upcoming Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse by-election, and emphasised the need for Scotland to confront Farage's politics to prevent the spread of hate and division.
5. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/john-swinney-nigel-farage-is-a-far-right-accomplice-to-russia-5008296> - In February 2025, John Swinney, Scotland's First Minister, labelled Nigel Farage as an 'accomplice to the Russian agenda' and an 'apologist' for Russia's actions in Ukraine. Swinney expressed concern over the appeal of Farage's far-right politics to some voters and urged them to consider the implications of supporting such views. He also highlighted the importance of migration to Scotland's economy and rejected Farage's hostile stance towards migration, describing it as based on a fundamentally racist view of the world.
6. <https://www.politics.co.uk/news/2025/02/26/john-swinney-vows-to-unite-scotland-against-increasingly-extreme-and-radical-right/> - In February 2025, John Swinney, Scotland's First Minister, vowed to unite Scotland against the rise of increasingly extreme and radical right-wing politics, particularly those associated with Nigel Farage and Reform UK. Swinney described Farage as an 'accomplice to the Russian agenda' and an 'apologist' for Russia's actions in Ukraine. He called for a cross-party summit to develop a common approach to assert Scotland's values and counter the threat posed by far-right politics.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/swinney-scotland-must-be-alive-to-the-threat-of-farage-after-english-elections-5MMIGDATFZMYVIQQKC7EVRZJ2U/> - In May 2025, John Swinney, Scotland's First Minister, expressed concern over the rise of Reform UK, led by Nigel Farage, following the party's performance in England's local and mayoral elections. He described Farage's politics as populist and deceptive, aiming to give people false hope and blame others. Swinney emphasised the need for Scotland to confront Farage's politics to protect the country's values and prevent the spread of hate and division.