# Scottish First Minister calls for unity against far-right ideologies



At a press conference held on Wednesday at Bute House, Edinburgh, Scottish First Minister John Swinney announced an initiative aimed at uniting various political parties against the rise of far-right ideologies in Scotland and beyond. He expressed concern over what he termed a "significant shift away from fundamental democratic norms," highlighting how far-right anti-democratic parties and candidates have been gaining traction across the UK, Europe, and even the US.

Swinney referred to the increasingly divisive rhetoric permeating political discourse, characterising it as "toxic" and notably misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic, and rife with racist and anti-migrant sentiments. "There are people in a range of political parties who have indulged in that and we need to counter it," he stated, reinforcing the urgency of addressing the situation.

The discourse was further shaped by comments from Scottish Greens leader Patrick Harvie, who affirmed the importance of collaboration among progressive parties. "This is not about the precise balance of Green versus Labour versus SNP seats or anybody else. This is about the ideas which shape our society," he said, suggesting that the threat posed by the far right extends beyond mere electoral outcomes. He acknowledged the public's dissatisfaction with the current state of politics and the economy, linking disillusionment not solely to the prolonged SNP rule since 2007 but as a broader societal issue reflected in various regions, including England.

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP expressed his party's commitment to confronting hate and extremism, stressing the need for substantive improvements in public service delivery in response to widespread political discontent. Cole-Hamilton noted that people feel let down by both Scottish and UK Governments and highlighted the Liberal Democrats’ focus on critical areas such as healthcare and education.

Conversely, Scottish Labour has expressed scepticism regarding the effectiveness of the proposed summit. An anonymous source within the party indicated that historical precedents of cross-party summits facilitated by the SNP, such as an earlier climate summit, had seen minimal outcomes. They attributed the rise in support for parties like Reform UK to the government’s perceived failures in public service reforms.

The Scottish Conservatives have yet to decide on their participation, with a party spokesman criticising Swinney's call for unity and labelling it a distraction from more pressing issues like job creation and healthcare waiting times.

Reform UK leader Nigel Farage, who has frequently been scrutinised for his views, was condemned by Swinney in the same press conference, who labelled Farage an "accomplice to the Russian agenda." Farage has previously asserted that he has done more to combat the far right than any other politician in Britain. In response to Swinney's initiative, a spokesperson for Reform UK asserted that the First Minister was wasting public funds and questioned the efficacy of the summit, arguing that it could be perceived as a tactic to suppress competition rather than a genuine effort for unity against extremism.

Political analysts have also weighed in, with Sir John Curtice from Strathclyde University suggesting that the summit might evoke further divisions among unionist parties rather than fostering cooperation, especially if some chose not to attend.

Amidst this political tumult, Swinney’s summit aims to address complex societal issues as Scotland navigates a tense political landscape marked by rising far-right sentiments.

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

## References

* <https://www.gov.scot/news/first-minister-to-convene-gathering-on-democracy-and-respect/> - This URL supports the claim that First Minister John Swinney is convening a gathering to unite Scotland against far-right ideologies, emphasizing the importance of democracy and respect.
* <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/scottish-leader-calls-for-unity-against-far-right-racist-views-of-reform-uk/3494242> - This article corroborates Swinney's call for unity against far-right views, particularly those associated with Reform UK, and his criticism of Nigel Farage's stance on immigration and Russia.
* <https://news.sky.com/story/scotlands-first-minister-john-swinney-reveals-summit-plan-to-combat-far-right-threat-as-he-accuses-nigel-farage-of-being-accomplice-to-russian-agenda-13317323> - This news piece supports the details of Swinney's summit plan and his accusations against Nigel Farage regarding the Russian agenda.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-> - Unfortunately, a specific BBC article directly addressing the summit and Swinney's comments is not available in the search results. However, BBC typically covers such political developments in Scotland.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/scotland> - Similar to the BBC, The Guardian often covers Scottish political news, but a specific article on Swinney's initiative is not listed in the search results.