# Political Stirrings Across UK Parties and Figures as General Election Approaches



Keir Starmer criticized Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's assertion that the UK has "turned the corner," labeling it as disrespectful given public sentiment about higher taxes and economic instability. Additionally, Starmer voiced concerns about Sunak's plans to abolish national insurance, drawing parallels to past mistakes.

Meanwhile, former First Minister of Scotland Alex Salmond announced that his Alba party would field 20 candidates, framing the election as a referendum on independence. In his campaign launch, Salmond described existing strategies, including reliance on a unionist-backed referendum, as ineffective.

Sunak distanced himself from Conservative attacks on Starmer's age, emphasizing policy substance over personal jibes. He promoted a proposed national service for 18-year-olds, which would include a stipend for those in the military section, aiming to boost skills and national cohesion.

Conservative Party Deputy Chairman James Daly refuted a leaked memo suggesting financial struggles within local party campaigns. Daly, who faces a tight election race, assured sufficient funding for his campaign efforts.

Labour MP Barbara Keeley announced she would not seek re-election due to health reasons, having served since 2005. In Lancing, Labour leader Starmer campaigned with Tom Rutland, the Labour candidate for East Worthing and Shoreham, highlighting the party's efforts to overturn existing Tory majorities.

UUP leader Doug Beattie criticized the notion of a unionist unity candidate in Fermanagh and South Tyrone, underscoring deep policy divides that would complicate delivering a unified message. The UUP has already selected Diana Armstrong as its candidate.

Lib Dem leader Ed Davey also launched his campaign, targeting SNP-held seats in Scotland, aiming for gains in constituencies like East Dunbartonshire and Inverness.

Former Prime Minister Theresa May acknowledged responsibility for the Windrush scandal and expressed regret over her delayed response to the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy. May admitted flaws in Home Office policies that led to the Windrush issues during her tenure as Home Secretary.

The Scottish Tories and SNP clashed over a standards committee's recommendation for sanctions against an SNP MSP for improper expenses claims. The row is expected to influence forthcoming votes and election messaging.

Lastly, Starmer ruled out granting voting rights to EU citizens in general elections, a reversal from his earlier leadership campaign stance. He also defended the proposal to lower the voting age to 16, despite criticisms from the Conservatives and Reform UK.