# SNP faces backlash after Union flag removed at Nicola Sturgeon event



The Scottish National Party (SNP) is embroiled in controversy following the inexplicable removal of a Union flag during a high-profile campaign event featuring former First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. Sturgeon visited a gymnastics club in the Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse constituency to support SNP candidate Katy Loudon, amidst a crucial by-election that is not just a battle for seats, but a symbolic confrontation for Scotland’s identity under the newly elected Labour government.

This meticulously organised outing, showcasing local talent, turned into a political spectacle when the Union flag, prominently displayed in the venue, was conspicuously taken down mere moments after Sturgeon’s arrival. Eyewitness accounts suggest that the flag's removal was preceded by hushed discussions between SNP aides and club management, raising questions about intent and respect for symbols of British unity. This incident vividly illustrates the SNP's dismissive attitude towards such symbols, reinforcing criticisms from various quarters that paint the party as increasingly out of touch with the sentiments of Unionist voters.

Deputy Scottish Labour leader Jackie Baillie seized the moment to highlight the irony of Sturgeon, once a fervent advocate for independence, now presiding over actions that seem to undermine the very fabric of British identity. Meanwhile, Rachael Hamilton of the Scottish Conservatives called this act a revealing glimpse into the divisive policies that Sturgeon has historically championed, echoing a growing sentiment that sees the SNP as a driving force behind Scotland's destructive drift away from its Unionist roots.

The backdrop of this incident is a fiercely competitive by-election triggered by the passing of SNP's Christina McKelvie. It pits the SNP not only against Labour but also against the rising voice of Reform UK, a party positioning itself as a champion of British values and unity, asserting that the current government's trajectory could lead to further fragmentation of the UK's cohesive identity. Richard Tice, Deputy Leader of Reform UK, condemned Sturgeon’s appearance as a calculated move aimed at capturing local sentiment for her own purposes, rather than addressing the needs of constituents.

Amid the unfolding drama, Sturgeon shifted the discussion to immigration policy, launching a barrage against Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer's remarks about the UK becoming an "island of strangers.” Such comments, framed as “dumbest of dumb politics,” reveal her attempts to divert attention from her party’s controversial actions while stoking fears about national identity. This tactic serves to underline the SNP’s challenge in a political landscape increasingly dominated by a Labour government that holds sway over traditional issues.

This incident involving the Union flag not only represents a clash over national identity but also highlights deeper fractures within Scotland’s political fabric. Past controversies have dogged Sturgeon regarding her party’s attitude towards British symbols, and while she denies any intent to diminish the flag’s prominence, her policies have invariably pointed toward an unsettling narrative for Unionist supporters.

As the June 5 poll approaches, the unfolding saga surrounding the Union flag's removal serves as a microcosm of Scotland's ongoing struggle for identity and governance. Sturgeon’s management of both the flag incident and her critiques of immigration policy will be scrutinised closely, especially as voters aim to respond to the stark political realignment following the July election, where a shift toward divisive policies underpinned by Labour’s governance could leave a lasting impact on Scotland and its relationship with the rest of the UK.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14722805/Union-flag-mysteriously-disappears-Nicola-Sturgeon-campaign-visit.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-42830255> - The Scottish Daily Mail published an apology to First Minister Nicola Sturgeon over a story claiming she had decreed that the Union Jack should no longer be flown from public buildings on the Queen’s birthday. The Mail clarified that the decision was made by former First Minister Alex Salmond in 2010 and updated in December 2017, with no involvement from Sturgeon. The First Minister welcomed the apology, emphasizing the importance of challenging falsehoods in the media.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-42803031> - A fact check by the BBC clarified that the policy of flying the Union flag only on Remembrance Day was implemented by former First Minister Alex Salmond in 2010, not by Nicola Sturgeon. The recent update to the guidance was an administrative step to reflect this longstanding practice. Sturgeon emphasized that she had not issued any instructions or opinions regarding changes to flag policy.
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/2018-01-24/sturgeon-union-flag-scotland> - Nicola Sturgeon denied media reports that she had banned the Union flag from flying in Scotland on special occasions. She stated that she had issued no instructions to replace the Union flag with the Lion Rampant flag on government buildings for royal events. The policy, initiated by Alex Salmond in 2010, had not changed under her leadership.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/02/18/nicola-sturgeon-orders-eu-flag-flown-scottish-government-buildings/> - Nicola Sturgeon ordered that the EU flag be flown daily from Scottish government buildings, despite the UK leaving the EU. The decision was made to reflect Scotland's overwhelming vote to remain in the EU and to show solidarity with EU citizens residing in Scotland. The Union flag was to be flown only on Remembrance Day.
6. <https://fullfact.org/online/european-flag-scotland/> - Full Fact clarified that Nicola Sturgeon did not ban the Union flag from Scottish government buildings. The Union flag continues to be flown on Remembrance Sunday, while the European flag is now flown daily, except on specific flag flying dates. The change was part of updated guidance issued by the Scottish government.
7. <https://pressgazette.co.uk/publishers/nationals/scottish-daily-mail-says-sorry-to-nicola-sturgeon-over-union-jack-ban-story/> - The Scottish Daily Mail apologized to Nicola Sturgeon over a story claiming she had decreed that the Union Jack should no longer be flown from public buildings on the Queen’s birthday. The Mail clarified that the decision was made by former First Minister Alex Salmond in 2010 and updated in December 2017, with no involvement from Sturgeon. The First Minister welcomed the apology, emphasizing the importance of challenging falsehoods in the media.