# Opposition slams Scottish Government secrecy over school mothballing review



Opposition parties have unleashed fierce criticism against the Scottish Government for what they describe as "bizarre secrecy" surrounding the review of school mothballing practices. At a recent session of First Minister’s Questions, SNP MSP Christine Grahame pressed Deputy First Minister John Swinney for clarity regarding the government’s assessment of existing guidelines governing this controversial issue. Mothballing, which refers to the temporary closure of educational facilities typically permissible only when pupil numbers dip to nearly zero, is now at the heart of significant political contention.

In his response, Swinney conceded the importance of rural schools in sustaining local communities but failed to provide substantive answers. He stated, “The Scottish Government recognises the vital role that rural schools and early years provision play in sustaining local communities,” yet his vague assurances were no match for the public's rising concern. The government's ongoing review of mothballing guidance appears more like a façade than a genuine engagement, especially given reports that local councils—most notably Aberdeenshire—have acted against existing guidelines by announcing school closures without prior consultation with parents and families.

Adding to the chaos, councillors in Dumfries and Galloway recently intervened to prevent the mothballing of Drummore nursery, reflecting widespread frustration with the opaque decision-making processes employed by the SNP. Furthermore, local activists in the Scottish Borders have voiced their discontent, demanding that their council abandon proposals affecting early learning facilities. This growing disquiet amplifies calls for the government to act transparently and justly in a matter critical to rural education.

In light of these mounting concerns, The Herald sought firm confirmation from the Scottish Government regarding the initiation date of Swinney's mothballing review. Requests for details about the review's progress, including meeting dates and expected completion timelines—particularly in light of the upcoming Holyrood elections—have largely gone unanswered. While a government spokesperson did confirm that a review is "under way," they provided little more than a reiteration of Swinney’s earlier statements, leaving many skeptical.

Education spokesperson for the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Willie Rennie, demanded greater elucidation, insisting that parents need reassurance regarding educational decisions affecting their children. He remarked, “At this point, we need a straight answer out of the Education Secretary as to whether any work has actually taken place.” This call for transparency is part of a broader critique of the SNP's governance style, which has faced increasing backlash for a lack of accountability and clarity.

The stakes couldn't be higher. As the SNP grapples with significant electoral setbacks—particularly after losing to Labour in the recent elections—the pressure is mounting to rectify its governance practices and restore public confidence. The demand for a comprehensive account regarding the mothballing review transcends immediate educational concerns; it functions as a bellwether for a broader expectation of accountability from a party increasingly perceived as out of touch with its constituents.

As scrutiny intensifies, the SNP's ability to navigate these mounting issues will be crucial for its survival in the shifting landscape of Scottish politics. The rising tide of opposition sentiment underlines a critical need not only for transparent educational policies but also for a radical rethinking of how the party engages with the communities it purports to serve.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25203660.snp-told-give-straight-answer-mothballing-review/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25203660.snp-told-give-straight-answer-mothballing-review/?ref=rss> - The article reports on opposition parties criticising the Scottish Government's lack of transparency regarding the review of school mothballing procedures. During First Minister's Questions on April 24, SNP MSP Christine Grahame questioned John Swinney about the review's progress. Swinney acknowledged the review but provided no specific details, leading to demands for clarity from the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Conservatives, and Labour. The article also highlights instances where councils, such as Aberdeenshire and Dumfries and Galloway, have proposed mothballing schools without adequate consultation with local communities.
3. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24010545.2023-review-snps-year-hell/> - This article provides an overview of the Scottish National Party's (SNP) challenges in 2023. It discusses the party's internal struggles, including leadership changes and policy shifts. The piece also covers the SNP's performance in elections, noting a significant defeat in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election, where Labour secured a decisive victory. The article highlights the party's declining support and the need for revitalised leadership and strategy to regain public trust.
4. <https://www.thenational.scot/politics/24083016.snps-era-safe-cautious-managerial-politics-come-end/> - The article examines the end of the SNP's era of cautious and managerial politics. It discusses the party's dominance over the past 17 years and the challenges it faces in adapting to a changing political environment. The piece highlights the SNP's internal issues, including a lack of clear direction and strategy, and the erosion of public trust. It calls for a new approach centred on self-government and decentralised power to address the party's current difficulties.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/12/29/alex-salmond-scotland-moving-politically-backwards-snp/> - Former First Minister Alex Salmond criticises the SNP's direction under current leadership, claiming Scotland is 'moving politically backwards'. In his New Year message, Salmond reflects on a 'decade of drift' since the 2014 independence referendum, attributing the erosion of the government's competence to the SNP's failure to present a coherent independence strategy. He also notes a decline in First Minister Humza Yousaf's popularity compared to his predecessor, Nicola Sturgeon, with some independence supporters shifting support to Labour.
6. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/04/14/imploding-snp-faces-electoral-disaster-scotland/> - The article discusses the SNP's potential electoral challenges, highlighting tensions with the Scottish Greens and internal party disputes. It notes that the Greens have benefited from appealing to SNP supporters for second votes, but the alliance is showing signs of stress. Senior SNP politicians have called for an end to the cooperation agreement with the Greens, citing broken trust and disagreements over policies like the Gender Recognition Reform Bill and the Hate Crime and Public Disorder (Scotland) Act.
7. <https://www.socialistworld.net/2024/04/26/scotland-snp-scottish-green-government-collapses/> - The article reports on the collapse of the power-sharing agreement between the SNP and the Scottish Greens. Tensions over climate targets and other policy disagreements led to the SNP unilaterally ending the agreement, resulting in the Greens leaving the government. The piece discusses the implications of this collapse, including the SNP's shift to a minority government and the potential impact on upcoming elections, highlighting divisions within the party and the Greens over issues like climate policy and social services.