

News

Salmond ready to rumble in London

Nick Draine

Alex Salmond declared that he wanted to “rumble up” Westminster and wield influence over the next government yesterday as he announced that he would stand for election as an MP.

The SNP's popularity has soared and the former first minister is hoping to convert this into seats at next year's general election. Big gains could give the party significant power if Labour or the Conservatives fail to win a majority.

Despite signing up to the Smith Commission, Mr Salmond has attacked its proposed model of more devolution, pledging that his party would fight for even greater powers. Mr Salmond, who stood down as party leader after losing the independence referendum in September, announced he was a candidate for the SNP nomination for the Gordon constituency in Aberdeenshire. It is represented by the Liberal Democrats' Sir Malcolm Bruce, who is retiring in May.

Mr Salmond said there was the “prospect of real power for Scotland” but that if it could not be realised, the country faced the “bleak prospect” of further austerity. He would not lead

the SNP's group of MPs at Westminster if elected, but would seek “to have a role in negotiating the progress for Scotland which would arise from a powerful group of SNP MPs and our allies” in the event of a hung parliament.

He said it was “unlikely” he would sit in a cabinet with Labour and that the SNP would not deal with the Conservative party in “any shape or form”. However, if, as predicted, the party wins more than 30 seats, it could exert pressure to gain extra powers for Scotland.

“There are other possibilities, and in these possibilities a strong group of SNP MPs will have the capacity to rumble up Westminster,” he said.

The former SNP leader said that the Smith Commission proposals had “not lived up to what was promised” during the referendum campaign by the three main Westminster leaders. Referring to Gordon Brown's decision to stand down as an MP, he continued: “The man who said he would stand as guarantor of that near federalism has now ridden off into the political sunset, leaving us with a showdown with the three Westminster amigos.”

Mr Salmond is MSP for the Aberdeenshire East, which covers some of the same areas as the Gordon seat. If elected as an MP in May, he will continue to serve at Holyrood as well.



Alex Salmond ruled out a post-election deal with the Conservatives in any form



Leading lady Helen Mirren arrives for the star-studded Moët British Independent Film Awards, which were held at Old Billingsgate Market, in London, last night

Farage blames migrants for traffic on M4

Graham Keeley

Nigel Farage has blamed his failure to attend a reception in Wales on “open door” immigration, saying the M4 is “not as navigable as it used to be.”

After missing an event with supporters in Port Talbot, the Ukip leader said that it was because the “population was going through the roof”.

“It took me six hours and 15 minutes to get there,” he told the BBC. “It should have taken three-and-a-half to four.”

“That is nothing to do with professionalism, what it does have to do with is a population that is going through the roof chiefly because of open-door immigration and the fact that the M4 is not as navigable as it used to be.”

Owen Smith, the shadow Welsh secretary, said it was “clearly absurd to suggest heavy traffic on the M4 is caused by immigration”.

Mr Farage did reveal yesterday, however, that there are some European things he has a fondness for when he boasted about the amount of rioja he consumed. He told a Spanish newspaper he drank a pint of beer a day and saw no problem enjoying a tipple. He added: “I don't know any man alive who has drunk more rioja than me and I enjoy it a lot. Thank you Spain.”

The MEP said that Ukip had wiped the smiles off the faces of many politicians from other parties because of the rising support for his party. Thunderer, page 26

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