

Top lines

- Due to the coronavirus crisis, it is clearly not be possible to organise and hold an independence referendum that is beyond legal challenge before the end of the current Parliamentary term next year.
- The Scottish Government now plans to publish, before the end of this Parliament, a draft bill for an independence referendum – setting out the terms of a future referendum clearly and unambiguously to the people of Scotland.
- The draft bill will set out the question to be asked, subject to appropriate testing by the Electoral Commission, and the timescale in which, within the next term of Parliament, we consider the referendum should be held, most likely in the early part of the new Parliament.
- Timing of an independence referendum will take account of the development of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of publication of the draft bill, and will ensure the flexibilities to respond to any further restrictions caused by it.
- If there is majority support for the bill in the Scottish Parliament in the next term, there could then be no moral or democratic justification whatsoever for any UK government to ignore the rights of the people of Scotland to choose our own future.
- Other work to prepare for an independence referendum has been paused for the time being as the Scottish Government is focused on responding to the current COVID-19 pandemic and we will return to the issue when it is appropriate to do so.