

Blackford bids farewell to Westminster following a nine-year stint

LOCHABER TIMES News Jun 1, 2024 by Jamie Wills

Ian Blackford officially ended his time as the member of parliament for Ross, Skye and Lochaber on Thursday May 30 after parliament was dissolved in preparation for the upcoming July 4 General Election.



Former MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber Ian Blackford.

Mr Blackford, 63, had announced last summer that he would not seek further re-election.

First elected to the Houses of Parliament in 2015, succeeding Charles Kennedy after an election campaign widely regarded as highly acrimonious, Mr Blackford was the first Scottish National Party MP to represent a full Lochaber constituency at Westminster.

He later became the SNP's Westminster Leader from 2017 to 2022, where his forthright style found praise and critics, and twice led to him being asked to leave the chamber.

During his time serving as a constituency MP, Mr Blackford, who is originally from Edinburgh, spoke in support of the purchase of the Lochaber Smelter and the establishment of a cinema in Fort William, aided the continued use of Kinlochleven High School by South Lochaber Thistle FC and advocated the saving of Lochaber Geopark.

In 2023 he commissioned a 'Roadmap for a Scottish Green industrial Strategy' paper outlining a need for increased green energy infrastructure for the country. Most recently Mr Blackford has been arguing that dementia in football be classed as an industrial injury, thus opening the way for more financial support.

Mr Blackford has yet to publicly announce what form his post-parliament career will take. Prior to becoming an MP he worked in finance, and was chair of a telecommunications company until 2019 and the investment arm of a funeral plan company until 2021. He continues as a director and shareholder in family firm First Seer Ltd.

In his final valedictory speech to the House of Commons (Link: hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2024-05-24/debates/5DAFA076-1E8A-4498-8BCE-E3BFA7C8D725/ValedictoryDebate#contribution-28753A1F-66A2-49F9-8941-11C173E1C805), delivered on May 24, Mr Blackford said his greatest disappointment with the upcoming election was that he had to cancel his summer surgeries, and touched on outstanding problems in the UK economy and constitutional issues relating to Scottish independence votes.

His regrets included the house not working cross-party to stay in the single market and customs union during Brexit, and not resolving the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaign.

He concluded by thanking House of Commons, constituency, and leadership staff, as well as the Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

"Leaving this House is a bittersweet moment for all of us who are departing. I thank everyone for their cooperation, and for the arguments that we have sometimes had as well. We should remember that all of us come here to serve. What a privilege it is for each and every one of us. I thank all the voters of Ross, Skye and Lochaber. It has been the privilege of my life." Mr Blackford said.

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