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# Referendum Debate

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## **Majority of Conservative MPs oppose maintaining Barnett Formula**

**Exclusive**

**By Liam Kirkaldy**

An overwhelming majority of Conservative MPs believe that the Barnett Formula should be changed in the event of a No vote, raising questions over a pledge from the three main UK party leaders that it would be preserved.

While David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg came together to release a statement – named The Vow – earlier this week promising to maintain the Barnett Formula, just ten per cent of Conservative MPs and well under half of Labour MPs backed the idea. Over 80 per cent of Conservatives said it should be changed.

Dods Polling questioned a sample of MPs over a range of issues relating to the independence referendum.

On the future of the Barnett Formula, 63 per cent said that the formula needs to be changed if Scotland votes No, with 83 per cent of Conservatives, 41 per cent of Labour MPs and 78 per cent of Lib Dems supporting the idea. None of the Lib Dems surveyed supported plans to maintain it.

The findings contradict a statement from the three main UK party leader earlier this week promising ‘extensive new powers’ to Scotland, in a move aimed at averting a Yes vote, following polls showing rising support for independence.

The joint statement says: “Because of the continuation of the Barnett allocation for resources, and the powers of the Scottish Parliament to raise revenue, we can state categorically that the final say on how much is spent on the NHS will be a matter for the Scottish Parliament.”

MPs were also asked about whether an independent Scotland should share the pound with the rest of the UK. Overall 82 per cent rejected the idea, with 95 per cent of Conservatives opposed, 72 per cent of Labour MPs and 89 per cent of Lib Dems.

Nearly two thirds of MPs said the referendum had damaged relations between Scotland and the rest of the UK – including 70 per cent of Tory MPs – while 63 per cent said that the campaign had increased demands for further in the rest of the UK.

The findings, revealing significant back bench opposition to further devolution, raise questions over whether the UK party leaders could deliver on their promises in the event of a No.

Earlier this week Christopher Chope, MP for Christchurch, said: “My constituents are saying 'hang on a minute, you can't have a devo max settlement for Scotland, which we're paying for, without having a look at the balance of competences and powers within the United Kingdom as a whole. I certainly think that the people in Scotland should recognise that this is a pledge, in inverted commas, by party leaders, but that is not a guarantee that it would be implemented in the United Kingdom parliament.”

On Europe, 59 per cent of respondents said that Scots were more favourable towards the EU, with 20 per cent disagreeing with the idea.

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