

Scotland might need to take note of Extinction Rebellion...

Published: January 13, 2026, 5:39 pm

Philip Stephens is an FT columnist for whom I have about as much enthusiasm as I do for Simon Jenkins in the Guardian. But even those I usually and instinctively disagree with have their moments, when they reveal that an obvious truth has dawned on even the furthest flung target. Take this from [Stephens' latest column](#):

When Scotland voted to maintain the union with England, the argument that separation would diminish both nations seemed compelling. Five years on, Nicola Sturgeon says Brexit has broken the bargain. Scotland's first minister and leader of the Scottish National party is preparing for a possible second referendum by mid-2021. Ms Sturgeon may be a touch impatient. She is also essentially right.

His argument is that there is simply no argument left for Scotland staying in the Union, and Unionist politicians' own actions make this case. His conclusion? It's this:

Small states flourish in the EU – witness the Republic of Ireland, which has junked the anti-British grievances and resentments that once defined its worldview. The break-up of the UK union would be England's great loss. But how to persuade Scotland that it still has something to gain from staying?

Bizarrely, Simon Jenkins reached a remarkably similar conclusion recently, suggesting that independence was now almost inevitable.

My suggestion is that when such people realise that the game is up for the UK then it is. It really is time to talk about what happens next. Although, given the reluctance of Westminster to address any issue of any consequence who knows how long this inevitability can be drawn out by them? The chance that Scotland might need to take some direct action to precipitate the necessary steps to secure what it wishes for seems to be high.