Last month the Sunday Herald revealed that some inside the “Better Together” campaign actually refer to themselves as “Project Fear”. It has been easy to see why they use such a name. Better Together’s chief tactic – to do everything they can to scare Scots into voting No – contrasts starkly with the positive vision for the future of our country presented by Yes Scotland.

Although the No campaign protest accusations of scaremongering, the sheer weight of their wholly negative rhetoric weighs increasingly heavy. And yet, their scare stories are often baseless or easily undermined. The UK Government’s latest paper in the “Scotland Analysis” series, like those before it, has been thoroughly discredited.

Whether the No campaign’s scaremongering has been undermined by their own words, their own actions or by the demonstrable reality of the situation, the wholly negative nature of their campaigning is becoming increasingly transparent. And not least because some of the stories they tell today are virtually identical to those which were peddled in the past, and which were proved entirely wrong.
Undermined by their own words

1. “Scotland Could Be Forced To Join The Euro”

It has long been a common argument of the No campaign to suggest that an independent Scotland could be made to enter the Eurozone if it wanted to be part of the EU. Scottish Labour leader Johann Lamont has claimed that Scotland “could be forced to join the Euro”1 if we vote to become an independent state. Other senior No campaign figures have frequently repeated such claims.

However, this argument is plainly false. Articles 139 and 140 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union make it clear that member states have the prerogative to make the decision if and when to join the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERMII), a step which must be taken before accession to the euro area can be considered.

Sweden is the perfect demonstration of this fact. A member state since 1995, it lacks an opt-out but has no intention of joining the Eurozone – rejecting the adoption of the currency in a 2003 referendum. EU official Olli Rehn, the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Euro, has made clear that joining the euro is “up to the Swedish people to decide”.

The European Commission also notes that “Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary and Lithuania do not currently have a target date for adoption of the euro.”2 Indeed, all of these countries have opted to delay joining indefinitely, citing the unfavourable economic situation. As sovereign independent states, EU members make their own decisions about when to join the common currency.

Thus undermined by the facts, the No campaign have been further discredited by Prime Minister David Cameron’s own admission to BBC News in December 2012 that “not all countries in the European Union will join the Euro...there are...countries in the European Union who have no early, or immediate or indeed, longer than that prospects of joining the euro and I think that is the important point.”3

David Cameron’s recognition that European nations cannot be forced to join the euro flatly contradicts his colleagues in the Better Together campaign and utterly undermines the Eurozone scare story.

1 – http://www.labour.org.uk/an-independent-scotland-would-have-to-re-apply-to-join-the-eu,2012-12-06
2. “Scotland Will Have To Renegotiate 14,000 Treaties”

In February 2013 the UK Government claimed that, on the contested assumption that Scotland would be treated as a new state, independence would require the renegotiation of 14,000 treaties which the UK currently is subject to. The claim was designed to suggest that a Yes vote would entail a lengthy process of bureaucracy and red tape, and to imply that such a task would be impossible.

However, it soon emerged that many of these 14,000 treaties were long obsolete and would not be needed in an independent Scotland. One example concerned the borders of Canada when it was still a part of the British Empire - the “Convention between the United Kingdom and the United States of America respecting the Boundary between the Dominion of Canada and Alaska”.

Others included the “Treaty with the King of Dahomey, Peace, Commerce, Slave Trade, Human Sacrifices” from 1877, and the treaty on “Withdrawal of Nyasaland Protectorate from Anglo-Estonian Commercial of July 20, 1920, with effect from six months from May 12, 1922”.

Former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Labour peer, Mark Malloch-Brown, rejected the UK Government’s attempts to portray the process of becoming an independent country and negotiating Scotland’s place in the world as exceedingly difficult, saying:

“Most of that can be done pretty quickly and to be honest people are trying to make a mountain out of a molehill for political reasons.”

The No campaign’s embarrassment was further compounded when the UK Government’s Europe Minister admitted that “Some of the treaties are either no longer in force, or they are no longer in force for the UK because they were concluded by the United Kingdom on behalf of a former colonial territory.”

5 – http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-21525120
6 – http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/scottishnews/4818978/Ministers-wrong-on-treaty-toll.html
3. “Scotland Relies Too Much On Oil”

In their efforts to suggest that an independent Scotland would be economically unstable, the No campaign have repeatedly suggested that the country would be overly-reliant on oil. Although Scotland doesn’t need oil to be independent, with a range of other successful key sectors in our economy, Better Together recognise the valuable asset that North Sea oil provides to Scotland, and seek to undermine confidence in the resource.

However, we know that North Sea oil investment will reach “record levels” in the coming years⁷, and the value of oil left in the North Sea is estimated to be up to £1.5trillion.

The claim that Scotland would be overly-reliant on oil is also wholly contradicted by the fact that Norway, one of the world’s most successful countries in terms of economic output and social indicators, counts on oil and gas for 30.9% of its tax base – compared to just 15% for Scotland, meaning we are half as reliant on oil as they are⁸.

Even more embarrassingly, Better Together undermined their scare stories themselves, when in March 2013 UK Business Secretary Vince Cable told the BBC’s Good Morning Scotland that the North Sea oil and gas industry “isn’t declining, it’s got great prospects”.

The politicians in the No campaign say one thing to Scotland, and another thing to Westminster, playing down the oil industry’s future in an attempt to scare voters away from independence.

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⁷ – http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/be4f240a-a2bf-11e2-bd45-00144feabdc0.html
4. “We Can’t Afford To Be An Independent Country”

The No campaign’s assertions that independence will cost outlandish amounts of money were somewhat undermined when the UK Government suggested that an independent Scotland would cost each Scot £1 per year\(^9\) - and that’s assuming that Scotland makes the same spending choices as successive Westminster institutions which have so often got their priorities wrong.

However, these claims were followed just two months later by the publication of the Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland figures, which showed that Scotland was better off than the rest of the UK to the tune of £824 per person in the 2011-2012 financial year\(^10\).

While ignoring the evidence that Scots would be better off, the most negative scenario the No campaign could muster was to suggest that the people of Scotland would be no worse off than currently if we chose to make our own decisions about our future.

\(^9\) – http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/scotland/article3649898.ece
5. “Independence Will Lose Scotland Our AAA Credit Rating”

Another scare that has been levied against independence was the argument that a Yes vote would jeopardise Scotland’s AAA credit rating as part of the UK, with the prospect of losing the ‘economic security’ of being part of a large country.

Yes Scotland stressed that official figures show that Scotland’s economy has outperformed the UK for many years; that our debt is lower and our deficit is smaller. We also pointed out that many small European nations of comparable size to Scotland, including Norway, Denmark and Finland, have AAA credit ratings and that almost two-thirds of AAA-rated countries have populations of under ten million.

However, the No campaign’s negative arguments were even further undermined when Scotland, along with the rest of the UK, did lose its AAA credit rating – not thanks to a Yes vote, but due to gross incompetence and economic mismanagement from Westminster. Bizarrely, Better Together campaigners were still handing out leaflets playing up the ‘threat’ posed by independence to the credit rating months after the downgrade.

11 – http://www.scotsman.com/the-scotsman/politics/scottish-independence-credit-blow-for-no-campaign-1-2807979

Earlier this month, the UK Government claimed that the postal service in Scotland could be damaged by independence\(^{12}\), threatening the six-day universal service provision.

The coalition’s scares rang pretty hollow, as they seemed to have conveniently forgotten the very real threat that Westminster’s plans to privatise the Royal Mail pose to services. As Scottish Labour MP Katy Clark said just one week before the report’s publication, post offices face “an extremely uncertain future” thanks to Westminster’s damaging policies. She also warned that the affordable 6 day service, which Better Together claims a Yes vote puts at risk, is being threatened by the current UK Government.

In fact, recognising the damaging legacies the Westminster system has left for the postal industry, the Scotland No. 2 Branch of the Communication Workers Union endorsed the Yes Scotland campaign in March 2013, stating “we believe that the only way forward for workers in Scotland is to ensure a YES vote in the referendum and we agree to do all in our power to secure such an outcome.”

Indeed, the Secretary of the branch, Willie Marshall, has said “Privatising Royal Mail will be the biggest threat to customers and employees all over Scotland but particularly in remote and rural areas if the universal service obligation is ditched. People know perfectly well that an independent Scottish government would protect those services in a way that Westminster simply won’t.”

\(^{12}\) – http://postandparcel.info/56646/news/companies/uk-government-claims-scottish-independence-would-disrupt-mail/
7. “The Prospect Of Independence Is Damaging Investment”

One of the most popular refrains of the anti-independence campaign has been that the referendum and the prospect of independence is deterring companies from investing in Scotland due to the surrounding economic ‘uncertainty’.

In November 2011, Tory Chancellor George Osborne claimed that the referendum was ‘damaging investment in Scotland’. His claims that the prospect of independence was creating uncertainty have been repeated by countless Better Together figures from all parties.

Scottish Labour leader Johann Lamont and Scots Tory leader Ruth Davidson have also claimed that the referendum was damaging Scottish business and harming investment.

However figures released in June 2013 show that Scottish inward investment in the year 2012 was at a 15-year high13, with a recovering financial services sector, strong interest in Scotland’s renewables potential, record investment planned for the North Sea oil and gas sector in coming years and Scotland’s food and drink industry performing better than ever.

In fact, an Ernst and Young report into the foreign direct investment coming into Scotland over the year concluded that there was “no sign of investors being deterred from coming to Scotland” by the prospect of a Yes vote and that “if anything, the reverse appears to be true”.


In December 2012, The UK Government claimed that the rest of the UK might not purchase Scottish energy in the event of independence. The suggestion was that without UK subsidies, the cost of windfarms and renewable energy would rise, but Yes Scotland argues that it would be in the mutual interests of both Scotland and the rest of the UK to maintain a common energy market after independence. The Coalition’s Energy Secretary, Ed Davey, argued that the common market would ‘disappear’ with a Yes vote.

However, this claim simply doesn’t make sense, given the heavy reliance of England upon Scottish energy resources in order to meet its renewable targets. Simply put, if the common market were to end and the rest of the UK refused to purchase Scottish energy, Scotland would be left with a valuable energy surplus but there would be a real danger of the lights in England going out.

Indeed, last month’s Ofgem Capacity Assessment Report highlighted the narrowing gap between available capacity and peak demand in the UK energy market, and demonstrated that Scotland’s wealth of energy resources would be needed to keep the lights on in the rest of the UK.
9. “Scots Would Be Denied Dual Citizenship With The UK”

While the details of the Scottish Government’s plans for citizenship in an independent Scotland will be detailed in full in the White Paper to be published this Autumn, Yes Scotland anticipates and would encourage an inclusive model of Scottish citizenship. However, it is equally recognised that some Scots may wish to retain a UK passport, and it has therefore been generally understood that an agreement on dual citizenship would be reached.

However, Tory Home Secretary Theresa May has ‘strongly indicated that Scots could lose their British passports and lose out on dual citizenship’ if Scotland votes Yes to independence.15 Her threat, an extremely vague statement that matters of UK citizenship were for the UK Government and not the Scottish Government, was made in the House of Commons in June 2013.

But Mrs May’s threat ignored the fact that the UK allows dual nationality with almost all other nations, which would make the UK Government’s treatment of Scots, should they choose to back independence, different from its policy towards people from all other countries. Given that all Scots currently hold UK citizenship it is ludicrous to suggest that the UK would act any differently towards Scotland just to spite us for voting Yes.

Indeed, following Ireland’s independence dual nationality was afforded to everybody who desired it for decades afterwards. In glossing over facts and precedent, Mrs May’s suggestion that Scots who desired to keep their UK passport would be denied that right in contrast to nationals of other nations is wholly implausible.

15 – http://www.scotsman.com/the-scotsman/uk/scottish-independence-uk-passport-loss-indication-1-2961819
10. “Scotland Would Have To Replicate 200 Public Bodies”

In June 2013 the UK Government released a list of UK public bodies that would need to be replicated in an independent Scotland. Some of these included government ministries such as the Treasury and the Foreign Office which Scotland would have to establish for itself, creating thousands of jobs by moving decision-making centres away from London.

Others were less accurate. Embarrassingly, the UK Government cited a number of organisations for which we already have a fully independent equivalent.

Their suggestion that Scotland would need its own national sports body betrayed a complete lack of awareness of the existence of SportScotland, Scotland’s wholly independent organisation.

They claimed that Scotland would need to replicate the UK Information Commissioner, apparently oblivious to the fact that Scotland has had its own independent post since 2003.

The UK Government said that Scotland would have to create a new version of the British Library, forgetting that we already have our own National Library of Scotland.

Bizarrely, the Coalition also declared that Scotland would have to replicate Public Health England.

Meanwhile, they reminded us of the need to establish a Scottish Food Standards Agency. The Scottish Government is already making plans to create one, but the Westminster government is abolishing its.

The paper, just one in its series designed to create the impression that a Yes vote would entail much bureaucracy, has been completely undermined by the UK Government’s evident lack of understanding of Scotland. The chance to move decision-making powers to Scotland represents an opportunity to create jobs, pursue policies better-suited to our needs and have a more efficient civil service. The No campaign’s error-ridden and discredited scaremongering campaign will do little to persuade Scots otherwise.
11. “Independence Would Mean Higher Mobile Phone Bills”

In the same July 2013 UK Government paper as the discredited postal service scares, the No campaign claims that independence would lead to higher mobile phone bills thanks to the application of international roaming charges between Scotland and England. The Coalition said that Scots travelling in the rest of the UK, or those who lived near to the border and whose mobiles connected to a mast on the opposite side, would incur international roaming charges leading to higher phone bills.

However, the No campaign’s claims were completely undermined by the reality of the situation – just two weeks previously the EU voted to abolish these charges entirely, with the first step in the phase out beginning on the day the UK Government’s paper was published.

In fact, EU Commissioners decided that the charges will be abolished completely by 1 July 2014, meaning that mobile users will be able to use their phones across the EU at no additional charge as early as two and a half months before the referendum, and two years before Scotland would become an independent country.

17 - http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/mediatechnologyandtelecoms/telecoms/10119159/EU-to-end-mobile-roaming-charges-next-year.html
We've heard it all before

12. International Security

Tory Home Secretary Theresa May recently claimed that there was ‘no guarantee’ of intelligence sharing between the UK and an independent Scotland, and suggested that Scotland would be unable to replicate the UK’s counter-terrorism institutions.

She ignored the fact that the UK cooperates very closely and shares intelligence with nations across Europe and beyond, and that it would be in Scotland and the rest of the UK’s mutual interests to collaborate closely on matters of international security. She was also accused by Scotland’s former counter-terrorism chief, Allan Burnett, of “scurrilous scaremongering”, with Mr Burnett saying that existing policing infrastructure provides a solid basis for an independent security service and that institutions could be “readily created”.

However, her comments were but an echo of the already discredited scaremongering of one of her predecessors, John Reid, who suggested that an independent Scotland would be more at risk to terrorist attack from Al Qaeda.

Mr Reid’s comments were dismissed at the time by the late international relations expert, Professor Paul Wilkinson, who said it was ‘dangerous’ to imply that independence would disrupt intelligence-gathering and that an independent Scotland would have “the opportunity to join in the very best level of international co-operation” on matters of counter-terrorism.

18 – http://www.yesscotland.net/former_scots_security_chief_criticises_no_campaigns_scares
19 – http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/6204088.stm
13. It’ll Cost You

Just as the No campaign today claims that independence would hit Scots’ pockets hard, anti-devolutionists argued that a Yes vote in 1997 would cost the Earth.

On August 8th 1997, in the Herald, William Hague warned that devolution would turn Scotland into a "high-tax ghetto".

In August 1997, according to the version of the No campaign active at that time, devolution would cost us Scots £400 a year, each and every year.

On the 10th September 1997, Mr Hague described our devolved Parliament as "a dangerous trap from which Scotland might never recover".

The success of devolution has proved these claims utterly wrong, and Scotland’s wealth of resources and skills will prove the anti-independence politicians wrong again.
14. Oil And Gas

Almost since its discovery, Scotland has been ‘warned’ that North Sea oil and gas will imminently run out.

On 19 January 1982, Tory MPs Peter Rost and Timothy Eggar suggested in Parliament that North Sea oil would run out by the end of the 1980s.20 These claims were echoed by Labour MP Jeff Rooker in 1984.21

In 2008, there were claims that North Sea oil could run out by 2018.22

Now, despite continued claims that oil could soon disappear, even the UK Government’s Energy Minister, John Hayes, admits that “North Sea oil and gas have a long and bright future”.23

15. Tax Powers

 Speaking in the Herald on 9 December 1995, Tory peer Michael Forsyth likened the prospect of devolution with tax-varying powers to alcoholism, implying that Scotland was a nation of ‘high-tax junkies’.

"An alcoholic asking for the keys of an off licence on the basis of a promise that he would not take a drink would have more credibility with the Scottish people than Mr Blair and his pathetic assertion that he would create a power to raise a tartan tax but that it might not be used."

The powers were never used to raise tax and Scotland managed its finances successfully under devolution - in fact, successive Scottish administrations have balanced the books in every single year of devolution, and the Labour Scottish Executive once even gave surplus money back to Westminster.

Similarly, an independent Scotland will be able to conduct itself in a financially prudent manner - but its tax and spending priorities will be determined by the people of Scotland.

20 – http://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=1982-01-19a.169.0#g203.0
22 – http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2008/may/04/oil.energy
23 – http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130314/debtext/130314-0001.htm#130314445000031
16. “Scotland Could Lose The Pandas”

In January 2012, Westminster claimed that Scotland could lose custody of the pandas at Edinburgh Zoo if Scotland votes Yes in 2014.24

While Tian Tian and Yang Guang will stay in Scotland regardless of the outcome of our independence debate (zoo animals tend not to have constitutional preferences), the fact remains that Scotland has more pandas than Tory MPs! And yet we have a Tory-led government at Westminster calling the shots anyway.

Rather than forming the basis of a convincing scare story, Scotland’s pandas only serve as a reminder of the democratic deficit we suffer that independence would prevent.