

RecordView

No question, it's just chaos

WE ARE just three days into the SNP's independence referendum campaign and Alex Salmond's plans are shrouded in more confusion than ever.

His offer to hold a two-question ballot has opened a real can of worms, as a spat between the First Minister and Scots Lib Dem leader Willie Rennie showed yesterday.

Rennie quizzed Salmond on how the poll would work in practice.

He was told that a narrow majority in favour of independence would carry the day even if a second option - so-called devo max - won by a landslide.

Salmond justified that by comparing his possible two-question referendum to the historic devolution poll in 1997.

Then, Scots were asked if they wanted a parliament and, in addition, whether they wanted a parliament that had tax raising powers. One question depended on the outcome of the other.

But it's not quite the same with independence and devo max, which would see Holyrood gain total control over the country's finances.

Rennie claims they are two distinct options. And he says it would be undemocratic if independence prevailed when a bigger majority of Scots backed devo max.

For their part, the SNP argue it would be just as undemocratic if a majority voted for independence only to be denied their prize.

Nationalists who have strived all their lives for independence would be rightly aggrieved if that happened.

The row is set to run and run.

There are no clearcut answers and the referendum will not happen before 2014 at the earliest in any case. But it does raise some serious questions about the wisdom of settling Scotland's constitutional future with a two-question poll.

Most Scots would prefer a simple, straightforward "yes" or "no" question on whether the country should leave the UK.

Oh, and if the First Minister can answer some of the trickier questions about independence by 2014, then so much the better.

Out of time

THE owner must have plenty of cash - but maybe he doesn't have any time on his hands.

That's one explanation why a mislaid £3000 Omega Seamaster watch, found outside the locker room at St Andrews, has gone unclaimed for three months.

Let's hope the James Bond-style timepiece is reunited with its owner before it is auctioned off next month.

In the meantime, well done to the honest finder, who handed it in to the authorities.

Jo and behold

SCARLETT Johansson brought white van glam to a Wishaw petrol station as she filmed her new movie.

She's playing an alien who kidnaps hitchhikers to send back to her home planet as food in a film version of sci-fi bestseller Under The Skin.

Judging from our snaps, most fellas would risk a trip with the 26-year-old actress.

FEARS OF A CLOWN

Theme park tries to conquer bizarre phobia



TERRIFIED
Halloween and... balloons

FORGET arachnophobia or claustrophobia - one of the most common phobias is coulrophobia - fear of clowns.

More than 7.5 million people in the UK are terrified of them or are uncomfortable with them - that's 12.5 per cent of Brits.

On Halloween, the streets will be full of masked trick or treaters, which might push some coulrophobics over the edge.

Earlier this month, as a Halloween treat, Alton Towers theme park in Staffs decided to try to help folk with a fear of clowns by bringing in a phobia expert.

In just one day, clinical hypnotherapist David Samson, 55, cured dozens of coulrophobics, who turned up at the park's Carnival of Screams attraction. He

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explained: "Last year, Alton Towers bosses got lots of complaints about the scary clowns in their Halloween ride. After some research, they discovered just how many coulrophobics there are in the UK and decided to do something to help.

"They sent an open invite to all coulrophobics to come along for a day with me at the park. Dozens turned up but four or five sobbed or were shaken each time a clown came near them. They were deeply traumatised."

David, who has a practice in London's Harley Street, gave them some gentle hypnotherapy and then reintroduced the clowns.

He said: "Before treatment one girl ran away, another looked like she had been hit by a truck and one guy just sobbed. By the time I had

finished with them, they were sitting on a couch surrounded by clowns. It was so satisfying."

David, who treats some of the world's most unusual phobias, says people develop their fear of clowns when they are children.

He said: "If your mum smiles at you when you are a baby, her eyes twinkle and her whole face moves and she makes you feel happy.

"When you see a clown, his smile is painted on but the face doesn't move and this frightens a lot of children.

"Parents get really excited when they see a clown and usually push their children towards them, which can confuse kids and scar them for life."

He added: "This is also the reason so many people get spooked at Halloween, as people wear masks and dress up and you cannot read their facial expressions

or body language. It's the same with Santa. Kids are plonked on the lap of a strange man and get scared as they cannot see his face."

The therapist also explained we develop all our phobias between birth and six years old.

"Children do not have rational thought until they hit six and until then they look to adults to show them how to behave.

"If mummy screams when she sees a spider, a baby will file away in their subconscious that spiders are frightening.

"If something happens after the age of six, we have enough rational thought to handle it.

"All phobias can be traced back to some event in the past."

There are so many phobias, even the fear of Halloween - samhainophobia. So, are you afraid?

What scares you? Spiders, buttons, work... everything

ARACHNOPHOBIA Famously the fear of spiders. About half of women and 10 per cent of men suffer from it.

GLOBOPHOBIA Fear of balloons. Some are simply scared of touching them, others are terrified of them going pop.

NEOPHOBIA Persistent and abnormal fear of anything new. It leaves sufferers angry, frustrated or scared.

PARASKAVEDEKATRIAPHOBIA Fear of Friday the 13th, around since the mid-19th century. It costs economies millions in lost business as some won't get on a plane, sign up to something or even leave the house.

ERGASIOPHOBIA The fear of work is real. Psychologists believe it could point to an underlying mental health problem.

CALIGYNEPHOBIA A surprising

number of men fear beautiful women. They can become anxious and fearful when an attractive lady is nearby.

TAPHOPHOBIA Fear of being buried alive, made worse by the many horror stories of people being pronounced dead only to wake up.

PTERONOPHOBIA The fear of being tickled by feathers may come from childhood, as an unwilling victim.

GENIOPHOBIA The irrational and bizarre fear of chins.



▲ SCARE
Chin and tarantula

HIPPOTOMONSTROSESQUIPPEDALIOPHOBIA This is the fear of long words, yet its name is one of the longest in the dictionary.

KOUMPOUNOPHOBIA Again stemming from childhood, this is a fear of buttons.

HYPEGLIAPHOBIA Fear of responsibility or growing up. For some, the realities of grown-up life are just too awful to contemplate.

EMETOPHOBIA Deathly fear of being sick, which stops you flying.
PANPHOBIA Fear of everything. Sufferers often won't leave the house.
MYCOPHOBIA Mushrooms. As a child you no doubt touched fungi in a wood then were told they're poisonous.