

Thank you for your request dated 30/11/22 under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA).

Your request

You asked for "Please provide any communications including Scottish Ministers which refer or relate to the far-right group, Patriotic Alternative from March 2021 to the present date."

Response to your request

I enclose a copy of some of the information you requested in the format you asked for.

2. The answer to your question is

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 30 March 2022 12:25

To: [Redacted]

Subject: RE: (Case Ref: KB1479) Keith Brown MSP correspondence

Hi [Redacted]

Please find optional additional lines to include from us at SVT:

- Scottish people overwhelmingly reject prejudiced rhetoric, whatever its source.
- We are committed to building strong, inclusive communities that are resilient to these divisive, hateful narratives.
- Scotland's communities are our strongest ally. We work closely with them and Police Scotland to ensure we are both resilient to divisive messages and stand together against those who wish to divide us.
- Any form of hate crime or prejudice is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Any threatening or abusive behaviour should be reported directly to the police.

Hope this helps, happy to chat too –

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 30 March 2022 11:34

To: [Redacted]

Subject: RE: (Case Ref: KB1479) Keith Brown MSP correspondence

Hello there

So sorry I should have provided a timescale. I was only given your details yesterday as a suggestion to approach and I apologise, but if it is possible to return by tomorrow, that would be very helpful as I need to get my reply up then.

Thanks so much

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 29 March 2022 15:56

To: [Redacted]

Subject: FW: (Case Ref: KB1479) Keith Brown MSP correspondence

Hi [Redacted]

I am hoping you may be able to help please with a piece of correspondence I am trying to put together for the Minister for Community Safety to reply to the Cab Sec for Justice on a constituency case. I have been pointed in your direction and the correspondence is attached.

To be honest I don't feel this sits particularly well with ourselves but so far I have the following lines from hate crime colleagues and serious crime colleagues have confirmed the group is not proscribed. I would like to point the constituent in the direction of a source of support if possible.

Is there anything you feel you could add to the draft as it currently stands?

Draft response

Thank you for your letter of 18 March concerning your constituent's concerns about the Patriotic Alternative group who are reported to be operating in the Alva area.

I can understand why your constituent has raised their concerns and is troubled by this group. I would advise however that Patriotic Alternative is not a proscribed organisation and that proscription is a reserved matter.

As you are aware, hate and intolerance should have no place in any community across Scotland and the Scottish Government unequivocally condemns any form of hatred or prejudice. It has a hugely damaging effect on both victims and communities so it is indeed important that everybody plays their part to challenge it at all times. Scotland, as you know, is a diverse, multi-cultural society and this diversity strengthens us as a nation which is why we work cooperatively with a range of organisations throughout the country to tackle all forms of hatred and prejudice

Should your constituent experience or witness a hate crime they should report it to Police Scotland by dialling 101 in non-emergencies, or 999 in emergencies. Alternatively reports can be made online by completing Police Scotland's [online reporting form](#).

I hope this is helpful.

Thanks so much

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 15 October 2021 20:09

To: [Redacted]

Subject: RE: CAB SEC CLEARANCE - Patriotic Alternative - Sun

Thanks, will issue now

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 15 October 2021 20:06

To: [Redacted]

Subject: RE: CAB SEC CLEARANCE - Patriotic Alternative - Sun

[Redacted]

Cab Sec is content to clear.

[Redacted]

Sent with BlackBerry Work (www.blackberry.com)

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 15 Oct 2021 18:45

To: [Redacted]

Subject: RE: CAB SEC CLEARANCE - Patriotic Alternative - Sun

Adding in Mr Brown's MSP address.

Grateful if you can come back ont his chain.

Many thanks

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 15 October 2021 18:07

To: [Redacted]

Subject: RE: CAB SEC CLEARANCE - Patriotic Alternative - Sun

Copying duty colleagues to take forward.

Many thanks

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 15 October 2021 17:18

To: [Redacted]

Subject: CAB SEC CLEARANCE - Patriotic Alternative - Sun

Good afternoon PO, Cab Sec,

We've been approached by the Sun seeking comment on far-right group Patriotic Alternative Scotland who have been hijacking anti-vax and passport rallies to try and recruit members to their cause.

They've handed out and posted thousands of leaflets calling for an end to government "tyranny" and are urging those who share their views to attend their meetings. Supporters have also been using social media to make threatening comments towards various MSP's.

I'd be very grateful for Mr Brown's clearance to issue the below response, agreed with SpAds and officials.

A Scottish Government spokesman said:

"Hatred of any kind is completely and utterly unacceptable to the Scottish Government and the vast majority of Scots and the actions seen to be taken by this group are extremely concerning."

"Any threatening or abusive behaviour should be reported directly to the police."

Many thanks

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 14 October 2021 11:46

To: [Redacted]

Subject: Patriotic Alternative

Hi [Redacted]

Thanks for looking into this.

As discussed, far-right group Patriotic Alternative Scotland has been hijacking anti-vax and passport rallies to try and recruit members to their cause.

They've handed out and posted thousands of leaflets calling for an end to government "tyranny" and are urging those who share their views to attend their meetings.

Hope Not Hate and opposition politicians have condemned PAS for using the pandemic to recruit.

Does the government have a view on this?

Also, PAS supporters have been using social media to share lists of MSPs who voted in favour of passports.

One of them suggested of John Swinney, "can we please gift this [Redacted] a jute necklace?"

Another replied to this stating: "The time for nasty letters is over. "It's time to pack up that politeness and unleash the fervour of our ancestors."

I'd suggest these are threatening in tone and can only see that the reference to a jute (rope) necklace refers to lynching or hanging.

Does Scot Gov feel it acceptable these kind of threats are being made regarding MSPs by right-wing groups, particularly after what happened to Jo Cox?

Best,

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 03 November 2022 08:04
To: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: Incident in Larkhall

Morning all

Apologies, I just wanted to correct an error in the PA bullet points. [Redacted], just to be completely accurate.

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 02 November 2022 10:12
To: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: Incident in Larkhall

Good morning

Please see lines re PA that can be used with stakeholders if needed

[Redacted]

Thanks

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 01 November 2022 13:37
To: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: Incident in Larkhall

Is the group Patriotic Alternative maybe as I've looked that up and it's a far right group. Copying SVT colleagues for awareness.

Many thanks

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 01 November 2022 13:02

To: [Redacted]

Subject: FW: Incident in Larkhall

Hi [Redacted]

I had a quick look on Twitter and there are numerous messages with video of the incident. It refers to the offender being from 'Patriot Alternative' which I've not heard of before. After trying to hand out leaflets and then trying to pick a fight with what appears to be a schoolboy, the guy is chased from the school by numerous pupils some throwing bottles at him, so not sure his message was getting through! I would imagine that [Redacted] will have picked this up and may well be in touch, following their concerns about Kanye West and anti-Semitism.

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 01 November 2022 12:25

To: [Redacted]

Subject: Incident in Larkhall

Hello teams

[Redacted] has today been made aware of an incident which occurred outside a school in Larkhall in the last few days which is being widely circulated on social media. A male has allegedly been arrested over the incident. The individual was allegedly disseminating material denying the existence of the Holocaust to school children and making anti-Semitic/racist comments. The Minister wanted me to share with officials for awareness. Copying in both Hate Crime team & Faith and Belief team in case stakeholders get in touch about this.

Thanks

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 11 November 2020 15:55

To: [Redacted]

Cc: [Redacted]

Subject: FW: PA Scotland

Hi both,

Thanks for taking the time to catch up today, it was really useful hearing more about your team and your work.

Please see below the information I was saying about Patriotic Alternative and its Scottish based activity. Happy to discuss any of that if it's of interest.

I've CC'ed [Redacted] from our team who can kindly add you both to our product distribution list (we just have to confirm with you that you have Security Clearance) and once that's confirmed I can send over some examples of our recent assessments. [Redacted], feel free to set up call if you'd like to hear more about the specifics of our analytical work if that's useful – happy to have informal chat through any of the content of the work/put you in touch with relevant analysts.

[Redacted].

Finally, I'll set up a quarterly meeting for our teams starting mid-Jan so that we can check in with each other more regularly – I'm afraid I don't have your colleague [Redacted] email address but feel free to pass the invite on further.

Thanks again for taking the time today and look forward to keeping in touch.

Best wishes,

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 04 November 2020 14:51

To: [Redacted]

Cc: [Redacted]

Subject: PA Scotland

Hi [Redacted]

I wanted to flag something to you and your team in regards to Patriotic Alternative and their Scottish-based activity. This may be something you're already up-to-date with but thought I'd send over in case.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8YeoiGnQgM>

The above YouTube video outlines some of the activity being pushed by the group, which promotes a (non-violent) white nationalist agenda, in Scotland (see timestamp 15:50 as well as later in the discussion of regional activity approx. 33:00).

Then on the PA website it has leaflets for Scottish supporters to publish 'SNP Hate Crime Bill';

https://www.patriotalternative.org.uk/leaflets_and_resources

I've CC'ed in [Redacted] as he has viewed a lot of PA content and is knowledgeable on the group so may be able to offer some more insights if useful and [Redacted] for his info.

For your awareness, I am currently looking into the group's efforts to encourage home-schooling, which you can see details of on their website. You should have that assessment distributed to your team when it's completed later this month.

[Redacted]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 03 November 2022 14:55
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Patriotic Alternative

[Redacted]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 03 November 2022 14:54
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Patriotic Alternative

Thanks [REDACTED]

Much appreciated.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 03 November 2022 14:16
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Patriotic Alternative

Hi [REDACTED]

Given the situation at Larkhall Academy recently, I thought it might be helpful to share some high level information on Patriotic Alternative incase useful for the safeguarding network or others more generally.

[Redacted]

Many thanks
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 17 August 2022 13:50
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Patriotic Alternative - Prevent Sub Group

Hi [REDACTED]

We were thinking it might be helpful to include a 2-3 min update on Patriotic Alternative footprint/support/activity in Scotland recently and currently (and how or if this is translating to referrals) if possible as part of the Police general overview?

We are looking to do a more in depth briefing on them at the following Sub Group so might be good to give a bit of an intro at this one if possible?

Happy to chat

Thanks
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 March 2022 17:02
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: POLICY VIEW PLS - Patriotic Alternative - The Times

Thanks [REDACTED]

As that is the case, may just be worth giving the journalist a call to say that.

Will come back once I get a hold of them.

Thanks
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 March 2022 16:46
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: POLICY VIEW PLS - Patriotic Alternative - The Times

[REDACTED]

Suggest the response is a short one and would align with other similar queries on proscription in the past (although not about Patriotic Alternative).

- This is a Reserved matter.

[REDACTED]
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 March 2022 16:37
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: POLICY VIEW PLS - Patriotic Alternative - The Times

Colleagues,

An approach from the times asking if any MPs, MSPs, governmental organisations or non-governmental organisations made representations to SG to have Patriotic Alternative or its local chapter Patriotic Alternative Scotland proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000.

The journalist said he is happy for a response by 13:00 tomorrow, however would be great to have something ready to send to SpAds tonight if possible.

We haven't been approached on this before so would be grateful for steer on a response from officials.

Many thanks
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 March 2022 16:06
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Press query - The Times: Patriotic Alternative

Hi there,

I hope all is well.

Have any MPs, MSPs, governmental organisations or non-governmental organisations made representations to you to have Patriotic Alternative or its local chapter Patriotic Alternative Scotland proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000?

As it is late in the day I am happy to have a deadline of 1pm tomorrow.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 October 2022 14:16
To: [Redacted]

Subject: RE: Prevent Sub Group - Input on Patriotic Alternative and Online Radicalisation - Scotland [OFFICIAL]

Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks for suggesting/arranging a call.

My availability is ok before 12pm this Friday if that's any use?

Thanks
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 October 2022 10:02
To: [Redacted]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Prevent Sub Group - Input on Patriotic Alternative and Online Radicalisation - Scotland [OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Morning [REDACTED]

Thanks for coming back to me. What would your availability be for this and who else would be useful to have on this call ? I have some capacity this week but next week isn't good for me.

[Redacted], would you be around for this ?

Let me know how you are placed

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 21 October 2022 09:36

To: [Redacted]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Prevent Sub Group - Input on Patriotic Alternative and Online Radicalisation - Scotland

Hi [REDACTED]

I think a teams call would be helpful. Our [REDACTED] colleagues have kindly agreed to present on PA at the meeting so it would be good to have a chat to coordinate.

Thanks very much.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 20 October 2022 10:40

To: [Redacted]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Prevent Sub Group - Input on Patriotic Alternative and Online Radicalisation - Scotland

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Morning All

Hope all well

Would it be worth getting together over a brief Teams call sometime early next week ? I have some form of a presentation that could be moulded for the audience but it would be good to fully understand the ask to ensure it would be relevant and fit requirements.

Many thanks

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 20 October 2022 08:59

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Prevent Sub Group - Input on Patriotic Alternative and Online Radicalisation - Scotland

Hi [REDACTED]

I have looped [Redacted] from our Disruptions team, who has liaised [REDACTED] colleagues on a presentation and is happy to coordinate with Police Scotland colleagues too.

[REDACTED] – thanks for picking this up for us in HSG.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 18 October 2022 16:27

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Prevent Sub Group - Input on Patriotic Alternative and Online Radicalisation - Scotland

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Hi [REDACTED]

As per the action log from our August Prevent Sub Group sent out today, we are looking for an input on Patriotic Alternative and online radicalisation in Scotland/UK at our next meeting on November 10th.

I thought it might be helpful to link [Redacted] and Police Scotland/Pursue together to coordinate this if/however possible.

We would be looking for an input of about 20-30 minutes and would appreciate the focus being on the PA footprint and current activity/targeting in Scotland but also the relationship with wider UK too as we appreciate the group is largely based in

England. It would be great to understand any current trends within online radicalisation alongside this too.

The input is not directly for Scottish Government, but for the key sector leads who sit on the Sub Group which range from Schools, HE/FE, Local Authorities, Prisons, MOD etc so the aim is to allow/enable them to cascade the content down to their sectors for awareness/action.

Happy to help support this however I can, and always happy to arrange a quick call if easiest.

Many thanks

[REDACTED]

Our aim is to provide information whenever possible. However, in this instance, some of the information you have requested is not held by the Scottish Government for the purposes of FOISA because we received it in confidence from the UK Government. This means that, under the terms of section 3(2)(a)(ii) of FOISA, we are unable to disclose it in response to your request. However, you may wish to submit a new request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) to Home office at foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk who should be able to help you further.

An exemption under section 30(c) of FOISA (prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs) applies to some of the information requested. It is essential for officials to be able to communicate, often in confidence, with external stakeholders on a range of issues. Disclosing the content of these communications about these meetings, particularly without the consent of the stakeholder, is likely to undermine their trust in the Scottish Government and will substantially inhibit communications on this type of issue in the future. These stakeholders will be reluctant to participate in meetings or provide their views fully and frankly if they believe that their views are likely to be made public, particularly while these discussions are still ongoing and decisions have not been taken. This would significantly harm the Government's ability to carry out many aspects of its work, and could adversely affect its ability to gather all of the evidence it needs to make fully informed decisions.

This exemption is subject to the 'public interest test'. Therefore, taking account of all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemption. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exemption. We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosing information as part of open, transparent and accountable government, and to inform public debate. However, there is a greater public interest in allowing Ministers and officials a private space within which to communicate with appropriate external stakeholders as part of the process of exploring and refining the Government's policy position until the Government as a whole can adopt a policy that is sound and likely to be effective. This private space is essential to enable all options to be properly considered, so that good policy decisions can be taken based on fully informed advice and evidence. Premature disclosure is likely to undermine the full and frank discussion of issues between the Scottish Government and these stakeholders, which in turn

will undermine the quality of the decision making process, which would not be in the public interest.

Your right to request a review

If you are unhappy with this response to your FOI request, you may ask us to carry out an internal review of the response, by writing to paul.johnston@gov.scot Your review request should explain why you are dissatisfied with this response, and should be made within 40 working days from the date when you received this letter. We will complete the review in accordance with FOISA as soon as possible, and not later than 20 working days from the day following the date we receive your review request.

If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then have the right to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner. More detailed information on your appeal rights is available on the Commissioner's website at:

[https://www.itspublicknowledge.info/YourRights/Unhappywiththeresponse/](https://www.itspublicknowledge.info/YourRights/Unhappywiththeresponse/AppealingtoCommissioner.aspx)
[AppealingtoCommissioner.aspx](https://www.itspublicknowledge.info/YourRights/Unhappywiththeresponse/AppealingtoCommissioner.aspx).