

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 09 November 2022 11:49
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

Hi [Redacted] – the corrected figure is fine since that was the statistic that FM was referring to. In short, it refers to the renewable electricity target which measures the amount of renewable electricity that we produce (and how it is *equivalent* to 98.8% of the gross electricity that we consume. Note that the briefing that you attached has a figure of 98.6% which was later corrected to 98.8%.

The 63% (which is also correct) refers to a different statistic and relates to the source of the electricity that we *actually* consume:

The most recently available data show that in the year October 2021 to September 2022, 63.1 per cent of the electricity consumed in Scotland came from renewable sources⁴ .

The difference between what we produce and what we consume is net exports.

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted] **On Behalf Of** First Minister
Sent: 09 November 2022 10:40
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

[Redacted],

I don't need to rehearse the background context to the below email exchanges, and the fact that we subsequently made a change to the OR (as attached) – which was confirmed on 12th October. However, see below extracts from a story in today's Times, citing alleged discrepancies in our corrected figures. Can someone advise on the veracity of the content below and on whether further action will be required?

Sturgeon criticised for 'Orwellian' energy stats

Mark McLaughlin

Nicola Sturgeon has been accused of presiding over an Orwellian "Ministry of Truth" after her claims about Scotland's renewable energy output were repeatedly called into question.

The first minister was forced to correct the parliamentary record after she erroneously told MSPs Scotland's "net energy consumption is already provided by renewable energy sources".

The correction stated "the equivalent of 98.8 per cent" of Scotland's consumption was provided by renewables.

The correction may have to be corrected again following a clarification by the UK Statistics Authority that puts the figure closer to 63 per cent.

Sir Robert Chote, chairman of the authority, said: "Where statements are made in public debate it should be made clear what the underlying statistics measure, to avoid misinterpretation."

"We have asked the chief statistician in Scotland to ensure that the first minister's office is briefed on this matter."

The Scottish government has also admitted that its claim Scotland has "25 per cent of Europe's offshore wind potential", first expressed in 2010 but repeated by ministers and officials to this day, is out of date.

Stephen Kerr, the Conservative MSP who obtained Chote's clarification, yesterday urged Holyrood's presiding officer to compel Sturgeon to come before parliament to publicly correct her mistake.

He said: "Correcting the official record behind the scenes and on the quiet is not enough."

"The official record should not be treated by ministers as a *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Ministry of Truth, giving ministers a get out of jail card for mistaken or misleading statements."

"It has been said in the past if you tell a lie big enough and often enough people will believe it. The truth is important ... We must find a way to

avoid the perception that lies are being told for political ends."

In George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Ministry of Truth was employed to rewrite history books and newspapers to remove mistakes, discredited policies and "unpersons" that the ruling party later disowned.

The "big lie" quote is often attributed to Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi

Continued on page 2

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Sturgeon's 'Ministry of Truth' propaganda chief, although later research indicates it may be apocryphal.

These Islands, a unionist campaign group, obtained correspondence from Scottish government officials from 2020 admitting that "the 25 per cent estimate has never ... been properly sourced" and "we tend not to use it any more".

In January 2021, one official said: "We did recycle those figures quite robotically without really checking them."

These Islands said a more "realistic, up-to-date, estimate of Scotland's share of the potential European offshore wind resource is 4 to 6 per cent".

It traced the source of the claim to

Alex Salmond, when he was still in opposition in 2006, and he repeated it liberally while he was first minister until 2014. While officials privately admitted the statistic was suspect, it has been repeated by senior Nationalists since. Kate Forbes, the finance secretary, repeated the claim in her national strategy for economic transformation in March this year.

The SNP recycled the claim on its website last month in an article on how "Scotland can lead the green industrial revolution through independence".

A Scottish government spokesman said: "The statistic relating to Scotland having 25 per cent of Europe's offshore

wind potential was set out in a 2010 publication and was calculated accurately at the time. We recognise that

changes in technology and use of marine space mean that this statistic now requires updating and will be undertaking work to update the figure.

The spokesman added: "Upon identifying this error, the first minister immediately requested a correction to the Official Report - in line with established procedures for members to make such amendments."

● The most potent greenhouse gas in the world, sulphur hexafluoride, escaped from Seagreen wind farm, 27 miles off the Angus coast, in June, the RMT union revealed to Energy Voice. The leak caused all 84 workers to be evacuated as the gas can be harmful. One worker informed the union, Petrofac, which runs the farm, said the 11kg leak was too small to require reporting.

Thanks,
[Redacted]

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

From: [Redacted] **On Behalf Of** First Minister
Sent: 04 October 2022 16:54
To: [Redacted] **Cc:** [Redacted]
Subject: RE: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

Thanks [Redacted] – confirming FM is content with the proposed correction.

[Redacted] /**FMQ team** – grateful if you could take forward as appropriate with OR.

Thanks,
[Redacted]
[Redacted]



Office of the First Minister of Scotland
FirstMinister.gov.scot
Prìomh Mhinistear na h-Alba

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 04 October 2022 16:49
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: FW: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

A point of order was raised after last Thursday's FMQs in response to a comment made by FM on renewable energy. The attached gives some background and for approval a proposed line to issue as a correction to the record.

Thanks
[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 03 October 2022 13:56
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

Please find attached a short note relating to the renewable electricity target as requested.

Happy to provide additional information if needed.

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 30 September 2022 15:34

[Redacted]

Subject: FW: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

Hi [Redacted] – grateful if you could pull together a draft short note on Monday for FM, per request below. Happy to discuss if helpful. Ps apols, meant to copy you into below exchange directly!

Cheers

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 30 September 2022 11:23

To: [Redacted] **Subject:** RE: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

Monday fine. I am off today (I know, I am doing it wrong) so happy to review any note on Monday.

Regards

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted] **Sent:** 30 September 2022 11:09

To: [Redacted] **Subject:** RE: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

All – I'm happy for OCEA to draft a note. When is it needed by? [Redacted], our main Statistician is out today but back on Monday.

[Redacted] **From:** [Redacted] **Sent:** 30 September 2022 09:11

To: [Redacted] **Subject:** RE: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

Adding [Redacted] back in – sorry [Redacted], I somehow cut you out of circulation when I responded

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]

Sent: 30 September 2022 09:05

To: [Redacted] **Subject:** RE: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

Thanjs all.

Adding [Redacted] for FMQ purposes.

Grateful if a draft note can be prepared suggesting what the text of a correction might be.

I will wish to review before it goes to FM.

[Redacted]

Sent with BlackBerry Work (www.blackberry.com)

From: [Redacted] **Sent:** 29 Sep 2022 20:14

To: "[Redacted] **Subject:** FW: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

Thanks [Redacted]

Agree those are the correct ways to express the stat

To confirm re the FM's statement, it was incorrect on two counts:

- Referred to **energy** when it was clear that she was intending **electricity**
- Inferred that all of Scotland's electricity consumption is from renewable sources; to clarify: electricity generated from renewable sources is equivalent to 98.8% of gross consumption and electricity generated from non-renewable sources is equivalent to 61% of gross consumption. What we actually consume is a mix of renewables and non-renewables

As [Redacted] notes, this inaccuracy is currently the subject of an EIR concerning a further eight occasions where ministers have made similar statements

[Redacted]

From[Redacted] **Sent:** 29 September 2022 18:42

To: [Redacted] **Subject:** RE: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

Thanks, [Redacted] – this has also been the subject of an EIR/FOI recently – querying where we have occasionally slightly inaccurately referenced the quantity of renewable electricity Scotland produces.

The following are accurate lines/ways of describing this, agreed with OCEA statisticians:

We already generate enough renewable electricity in Scotland to cover the equivalent of 98.6% of our gross final consumption

Based on figures from 2020, renewable electricity generation in Scotland is equivalent to 98.6% of our gross final consumption

In Scotland, the equivalent of nearly 100% of our gross final consumption of electricity could be met by generation from renewable sources

We generate enough renewable energy in Scotland to account for the equivalent of almost 100% of our gross electricity consumption

From: [Redacted] **Sent:** 29 September 2022 18:17

To: [Redacted] **Cc:** [Redacted] **Subject:** RE: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

[Redacted],

Much appreciated – copying [Redacted] too.

Thanks again.

From[Redacted] **Sent:** 29 September 2022 18:08
To: [Redacted] **Subject:** RE: Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

[Redacted],

Copying in our OCEA analytical leads ([Redacted]) and also [Redacted] for this one – as I think it is a complex point with a few nuances.

I think that FM quote below could be challenged as technically inaccurate – the reference to ‘energy’ (as opposed to electricity) could be problematic. But, it may be that it can be overcome by a minor update to the line – i.e. say the point was referring to electricity, not energy.

I’d welcome a steer from colleagues cc’d on how we best advise on this point and if there are any work arounds...

[Redacted]

I think the formal description for electricity is:

The Scottish Government has a target to generate the equivalent of **100%** of Scotland’s own electricity demand from renewable sources by **2020**. This does not mean that Scotland will be fully dependent on renewables generation, but rather that renewables will form the key part of a wider, balanced electricity mix. Final figures for **2020** indicate that the equivalent of **98.6%** of gross electricity consumption* was from renewable sources, rising from **89.8%** in **2019**.

For energy as a whole, I think the text is:

One of the headline targets in [Scotland's Energy Strategy](#) is for the equivalent of **50%** of the energy for Scotland's **heat, transport and electricity** use to come from **renewable** sources. This is also one of Scotland’s 81 indicators in the [National Performance Framework](#).

Scotland's renewable energy target is calculated by the sum of renewable electricity and heat generation and estimated biofuel use in transport in Scotland, divided by Scotland's gross electricity consumption, non-electrical heat demand and energy used for transport. Therefore, progress towards the target will come from **increasing renewable generation and reducing energy consumption**.

Provisional figures for **2020** indicate that the equivalent of **25.4%** of total Scottish energy consumption came from renewable sources; the highest level to date. It **increased** from **24.0%** in **2019**. Renewable energy generated **increased** by over **2,200 GWh** between **2019** and **2020**. Renewable electricity contributes about four-fifths of all Scotland’s renewable energy, followed by renewable heat and biofuels in transport.

From[Redacted]
Sent: 29 September 2022 17:50
To[Redacted] **Subject:** Quick question - Scotland's energy consumption

[Redacted],

Earlier today during FMQ's FM said "Under this Government, our net energy consumption is already provided by renewable energy sources. Scotland leads the world when it comes to renewable energy, and ScotWind is a shining example of that." there was then a point of order later in the day from the Conservatives suggesting that FM had misled parliament by stating that our net energy consumption is already provided by renewable sources. Is the assertion correct?

Coming to you directly as [Redacted] would welcome a chat with you on it before any formal response is prepared. So if I've come to the right place and you are able to provide a steer, let me know and I'll connect you with [Redacted].

Happy to chat ([Redacted], if easier).

Thanks,
[Redacted]