

Permanent Secretary  
John-Paul Marks



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Murdo Fraser MSP  
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21 December 2023

Dear Mr Fraser,

Thank you for your letter, in which you raise concerns around the accuracy and impartiality of a Scottish Government social media post from 17 December.

I would like to assure you that I take very seriously the professionalism and integrity of the Civil Service within the Scottish Government. It is on that basis, and in line with our values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality, that I have carefully considered, with senior colleagues, the points you raise.

I think it would be helpful to set out the context which informed the communications in the lead up to publication of the Scottish Budget 2024-25. As you know, the majority of funding received by the Scottish Government is from block grant adjustments derived from spending decisions made by the UK Government. Scottish Ministers have a long-standing policy of ensuring health-related consequentialia are passed in full to the Health and Social Care budget in Scotland. Additional consequentialia relating to health funding from the Autumn Statement for 2024-25 were £10.8 million and Ministers wanted to highlight this within the context of a Scottish Health and Social Care budget of over £19 billion.

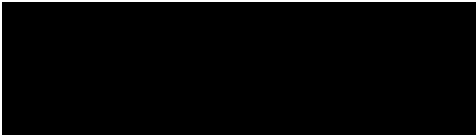
In advance of the Scottish Budget, the Scottish Government published a news release and social media on 17 December and an accompanying summary [paper](#), assured by the Chief Economist, which provided broader context and analysis on the UK economic and fiscal outlook. That published assessment provided the analytical basis for the associated communications activity.

I welcome your feedback and have given careful consideration to the points you have raised. I appreciate that social media messaging has limitations when communicating complex material, which is why we also published the associated analysis at the same time; and have since published much more material too in the Budget 24-25 documents. Following review and assurance from my Chief Economist and senior colleagues, I am content that the messaging within the communications products is consistent with the accompanying and assured Scottish Government paper.

I will continue to ensure that our teams are focused on communicating clearly, impartially and linking always to objective evidence wherever appropriate. I can also assure you that as part of the regular review process, which follows all fiscal events, we will seek to use the points you raise to inform our continuous improvement.

I hope this letter assures you of my commitment to upholding the highest standards in serving the government of the day and I wish you well for a restful Christmas.

Best wishes,



**JP Marks**  
**Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government**