

## ANNEX A

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**1. Transcription of First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and Patrick Harvie opening speeches and subsequent media Q&A. Press conference for launch of 'Building a New Scotland' paper, *Independence in the modern world*. Bute House, Edinburgh. 14 June 2022**

First Minister

Good morning, everyone. A very warm welcome and thank you for coming along. Today, we publish the first in a series of papers – “Building a New Scotland”. These will make afresh the case for Scotland becoming an independent country. An independent country better able to chart our own course here at home and, as the outward looking nation we have always been, play our part in building a stronger, safer, better world. Today, Scotland – like countries across the world – faces significant challenges. But we also have huge advantages and immense potential. The refreshed case for independence is about how we equip ourselves to navigate the challenges and fulfil that potential, now and in future. In their day to day lives, people across Scotland are, of course, suffering the impacts of the soaring cost of living, low growth and increasing inequality, constrained public finances and the many, many implications of a Brexit that we did not vote for. These problems have all been made worse or, most obviously in the case of Brexit, directly caused by the fact we are not independent. So at this critical juncture, we face a fundamental question: do we stay tied to a UK economic model that consigns us to relatively poor economic and social outcomes which are likely to get worse, not better, outside the European Union, or do we instead lift our eyes, with hope and optimism, and take inspiration from comparable countries across Europe? Comparable neighbouring countries with different characteristics. Countries that, in many cases, lack the abundance of resources that Scotland is blessed with. But all of them independent and, as we show today, wealthier and fairer than the UK. Today’s paper – and those that will follow in the weeks and months to come – is about substance. That is what really matters. The strength of the substantive case will determine the decision people reach when the choice is offered – as it will be – and it is time now to set out and debate that case. After everything that has happened – Brexit, Covid, Boris Johnson – it is time to set out a different and better vision. It is time to talk about making Scotland wealthier and fairer. It is time to talk about independence - and then to make the choice. Now, how we secure that choice – as we are committed to doing – is of course a highly pertinent question, so while today is very much about substance, let me address briefly the issue of process. I was re-elected as First Minister just over one year ago on a clear commitment to give the people of Scotland the choice of becoming an independent country. And the people of Scotland elected a Scottish Parliament with a decisive majority in favour of both independence and the right to choose. The Scottish Parliament, therefore, has an indisputable democratic mandate, and we intend to honour that. A referendum, though, if it is to be deliverable, command confidence and achieve its objective, must be lawful. It is the parties opposed to independence, and only them, who would benefit from doubt about the process. These parties don’t want to engage on the substance of this debate, because they know how increasingly threadbare their arguments are. Their only hope is to cast doubt on the process. Those of us who relish the opportunity to make and win the substantive case for independence mustn’t allow them do so. Of course, if this UK Government had any respect at all for democracy, the issue of legality would be put beyond doubt, as in 2014, through a Section 30 order. I make clear to the Prime Minister again today that I stand ready to discuss the terms of such an order at any time. But my duty, as the democratically elected First Minister, is to the people of Scotland – it is not to Boris Johnson or to any Tory Prime Minister. This is a UK Government that has no respect for democracy, and, as we saw again yesterday, it has no regard for the rule of law either. That means, if we are to uphold democracy here in Scotland, we must forge a way forward, if necessary, without a Section 30 order. For the reasons I have set out already, however, we must do so in

a lawful manner. We know that in these circumstances the competence of the Scottish Parliament to legislate is contested, and that, therefore, is the situation we must navigate to give people the choice of independence. Now, that work is well under way, and while I do not intend to go further into the detail today, I can say that I do plan to give a significant update to Parliament very soon indeed. The principles of democracy and the rule of law are fundamental. They should unite all of us, regardless of our politics. Indeed, democracy within the rule of law is how differences of political or constitutional opinion should always be resolved. The fact that these principles are now so deeply disrespected and disregarded, day and daily in the UK, is itself an indication of how broken Westminster governance is. Indeed, that has become part of the argument for independence - and it is to that substantive case that I now return. The choice people arrive at on independence must be an informed one. The case we make must speak not just to those who already support independence but also – indeed even more so – to those not yet persuaded. It is an obvious point but one that I think always bears repetition – Scotland will only become independent when a majority of those who live here vote for it. It is in that spirit, therefore, that we publish this first in the ‘Building a New Scotland’ series of papers. Today, we set the scene. I can confirm, though, that papers to come later in the series – and which are already in preparation - will include the issues of: currency; Scotland’s fiscal position and how with independence we can build a more sustainable economy and therefore stronger public finances; pensions and social security; EU membership and trade; defence and security. In these papers, we will set out how Scotland can benefit from the opportunities, the massive opportunities, independence will present. We will also confront openly the challenges. We will not shy away from tough questions. We will address key issues relating to the transition from a yes vote to independence and the infrastructure that will be required for the governance of an independent country. Of course, on that latter point, Scotland has already come a long way since 2014. A great deal of nation building has been done in the years since. For example, Scotland now has our own tax and social security agencies, an independent fiscal commission and a national investment bank.

In other words, substantial parts of the infrastructure that an independent Scotland will need, and which did not exist in 2014, are now in place. That means Scotland today is even more prepared for independence than we were in 2014. Of course, any case for change starts with an analysis of the status quo - and that is the purpose of the paper we are publishing today. It really isn’t difficult to list the many ways in which Westminster governance is currently failing Scotland and holding us back. We have a Prime Minister with no democratic authority in Scotland, and no moral authority anywhere in the UK. Brexit has ripped us out of the EU and the single market against our will, with massive damage to trade, living standards and public services. Thanks to Brexit, the cost of living crisis is worse here than in any other G7 country - inflation in the UK is double that of France. UK growth is now projected by the OECD to be the second lowest in the G20 next year - only sanctioned Russia will be worse. The end of freedom of movement has left our businesses and public services struggling for workers. It has also robbed young people of opportunity. And, to compound all of that, we face the real risk now of an EU trade war due to the UK government’s threat to breach international law over the Northern Ireland protocol. That this is the very same UK government that negotiated and signed the protocol – a protocol that is actually delivering significant economic benefits to Northern Ireland - only adds to the absurdity. In short, the case for Scotland charting our own course - a better course - is strong and compelling. But the evidence we set out today shows that this case does not just rest on recent or temporary developments. In today’s paper, we look in detail at 10 comparator countries - Ireland, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Iceland, Sweden, Austria, Belgium and Finland. The evidence is overwhelming that these countries - now and over time - perform better than the UK. Compared to these countries, many of them smaller or similarly sized to us, Scotland - under Westminster

control - is being held back. With independence, we too would have the levers and the autonomy that these countries take for granted to help fulfil their potential. Let's look at the evidence presented today. Every single one of these comparator countries is wealthier than the UK - and that wealth gap has been maintained over the long term. All of these countries have greater income equality than the UK. Poverty rates are lower in every single one of them, with fewer children living in poverty. Most of them have a smaller gender pay gap. All of them have higher social mobility. And they have more productive and innovative economies too. All of them have higher productivity. Most of them spend more on research and development. Business investment is higher too. The evidence set out in this paper is clear and it is unambiguous - all of these countries - all of them - are wealthier, fairer and more productive than the UK. And all of these countries - all of them - are independent.

So as we look to the future the great question before us is this: if all these countries can use the powers of independence to create wealthier and fairer societies, why not Scotland? With our vast energy resources, why not Scotland? With our globally recognised record of innovation, invention and learning, why not Scotland? With our exceptional food and drink industry, extraordinary natural heritage and the strengths we have in advanced engineering and cutting edge industries of the future, why not Scotland? Above all, with the talent and potential of all of the people who live here, why not Scotland? Now, independence does not guarantee success for any country - and we should never pretend that it does - but for Scotland, independence will put the levers that determine success into our own hands. It will mean we can work in partnership with our friends in the rest of the UK - but not be subject to decisions of Westminster governments we don't vote for and which are taking us in the wrong direction. It will give us the ability - just like these comparator countries - to fulfil the vast potential we have and build the wealthier, fairer, happier country we know is possible.

That, then, is the prize. Building a better nation - now and for the future. That indeed is the whole purpose of independence. Grasping that prize will not be without challenge. Nothing worth doing ever is. So in the months ahead, we will set out in detail how we can make the transition to independence. How we can navigate and overcome these challenges so that this precious prize - the opportunity of a better country - can be won. Scotland - now and for the generations that come after us - deserves the very best. And independence is how we can secure that. Thank you very much for listening. I will now hand over to Patrick to say a few words before both of us take your questions. Patrick.

Patrick Harvie

Last year, of course, we were elected on manifesto commitments to deliver an independence referendum within this Parliamentary term. We promised to lay the groundwork for an independent nation that is progressive, compassionate, and built on the principles of democracy, equality and respect for the planet. So, it's a privilege to be here with you today, alongside the First Minister and as part of the Scottish Government, to set out how we intend to deliver this commitment. Our world is changing. Economic inequalities are widening. People across Scotland are under ever more intense pressure as inflation grows. We are accelerating towards climate and environmental breakdown. Now with the limited levers and finite budget the Scottish Government currently has available, we are already doing what we can to navigate these stormy waters, and deliver our vision of a fairer and greener Scotland. Just to give a few examples, the Scottish Child Payment is putting money into the pockets of those who need it most. With free bus travel for young people and record investment in energy efficiency, targeted at lower income households, we are cutting the cost of living and helping tackle the climate crisis. These actions and much more show our determination to deliver on our promises. But we also have to be honest about the

precarious situation Scotland is in for as long as Westminster is making decisions over us. Countries the world over are facing economic turmoil and the challenge of transitioning to net-zero, but we're forced to do so with our hands tied by the limits of the devolution settlement, held back by a hostile UK government. With the powers of a normal, independent European country, we could be able to chart a different future. The paper we have published today illustrates this basic but powerful point. It shows that we are being held back: environmentally, socially and economically by successive Westminster governments that Scotland did not vote for. And we all suffer the consequences, either directly or indirectly as the Scottish Government is forced to spend limited devolved resources to tackle the income inequality that's being created by UK policies, while other European countries succeed by building more equal societies in the first place. The simple fact is that hanging on to the Etonian coat-tails of the UK Government in the hope that one day they might start make the right decisions for the people of Scotland has not worked. Nor will it ever work. Just look at their response to the cost of living crisis. A crisis that is global in reach, but has been turbo-charged by a hard Brexit. The inflation that we are all struggling with driven up by the damage wrought by Brexit. And the Westminster response compared to other European countries has been inadequate, and extracted only after months of pressure and largely because of the Prime Minister's desperation to distract attention from the pile of fixed penalty notices in the Downing St inbox.

Independence would mean that the decisions that affect Scotland would be made here in Scotland. It means a Scottish Government and Parliament chosen by the people of Scotland, for the people of Scotland, being fully empowered to rise to the challenges that we now face. Just like any other normal European country. Like the comparable countries set out in this first paper, with the powers of independence we can build a prosperous, equal and greener Scotland. We can create a fairer society where people aren't forced into poverty. And, by working with our European neighbours, we can play a powerful part in tackling the climate emergency, creating a net-zero economy based on clean industries, both restoring nature and creating high quality, lasting green jobs. So these *Building a New Scotland* papers will set out what we could do with independence. They will establish a blueprint for those early years of our new nation - a fairer nation and a greener nation that can rise to the challenges we face. They won't be the only vision for our future. We want everyone to have a say in what an independent Scotland looks like. That is the very definition of independence after all - Empowering the people of Scotland to choose our own future. So whether you voted yes or no in 2014, or if you are one of the half a million young people who didn't get to vote last time but are now of voting age, or indeed if you are one of the many people who have since moved to Scotland and made this your home. I hope you will join us over the coming months and play your part in making this an optimistic, constructive and inspiring debate about our potential, our future and the country we want to be.

First Minister

Thanks very much, Patrick. I'm going to move to questions now. I should say at the outset, time is not completely unlimited, but I do intend to get through as many questions as possible today. I can't promise we will get to absolutely everybody, but I will get round the room as effectively as I can. I'll start with Glenn Campbell.

*Glenn Campbell*

*First Minister, you stood in this room six years ago on the morning after the Brexit vote and said an independence referendum was highly likely. Is that any more believable today than it was then? And to Patrick Harvie, do you now share the First Minister's vision to use independence to try and grow the economy, or are you and your Green colleagues against economic growth?*

First Minister

I will briefly take that first of all. You know that last six years have been the most tumultuous as Scotland, the UK, the world has lived through, not least a global pandemic that has now persisted for more than two years. Although, thankfully we are now, I hope, we are now on the other side of the acute phase of that. Circumstances over the past six years have changes and been difficult. I firmly believe we will have an independence referendum, I believe people will have that choice. I am setting out today the first in what will be a very substantial argument for independence. And a very substantial exposition of how we make the journey from a majority of people opting for that and becoming independent. I have indicated the issues that we are navigating, and I'm being candid about the issues we are navigating in order to secure that process when we are up against a UK government that has no respect what so ever for democracy. But I am intent on navigating a way through that and as I said I will set out more on that in the very near future. I will hand over to Patrick now. All I would say in the generality here is, and I hope I'm not saying anything too controversial right now. An independent Scotland will not be a one party state. Whether I like it or not. And I should say I like that fact that it will not be a one party state. An independent Scotland will be a democracy. And people will put forward different policies, different views, different approaches to the governance of Scotland in elections in an independent country. That is the essence of democracy. The fact Patrick and I, while we agree on many, many things, have a partnership agreement underpinning the Scottish Government. The fact that we disagree on some things actually makes the case for vibrant democracy, it does not in any way detract from that case. Patrick.

Patrick Harvie

Yeah, I think one of the ways which Scotland is like normal European countries is that you have political parties willing to sit down and acknowledge the differences, talks about to resolve those differences, and work together on the common ground. The issue of economic growth is excluded from the cooperation agreement between the greens and the Scottish government, that is because Greens around the world challenge the idea that everlasting economic is sustainable, or that it measures people's wellbeing. But Scotland is already taking really significant steps for creating and defining what a wellbeing economy looks like. I have no doubt that that will continue. I think the point about this paper is thought, the evidence in here shows whatever part of the political spectrum you are on, whatever your economic priorities, the status quo isn't working. It isn't working in terms of productivity or GDP. It isn't working in terms of social equity and fairness. And it isn't working environmentally either.

First Minister

Ok, Colin Mackay

*Colin Mackay*

*You have said you have contacted the Prime Minister today, is that in writing?*

First Minister

No, I said I was making it clear to the prime minister today. I don't know whether he will be watching or not, but if he is, I make it clear Prime Minister I stand ready to negotiate the Section 30 order if you decide if you are a democrat, I have to say the

evidence of that up to date is not promising. But I will set out what we do in those circumstances if he continues to deny democracy very soon.

*Colin MacKay*

*So you haven't asked for the Section 30 order officially. But two prime ministers now, Boris Johnson and Theresa May before that, what is going to change there?*

First Minister

Well I set out today what is going to change, I will set out a lawful way forward without a Section 30 if that is what is required. The other thing that I think is pertinent here is that we have a UK government, and certainly on this issue this applied to Theresa May, but on this and many other issues this certainly applies to Boris Johnson, a UK government that does not respect democracy, and does not respect the rule of law. We saw that very powerfully as recently as yesterday. And ultimately, while I think it would be better for the people of Scotland and the people of the UK if we had two governments able to sit down on that democratic and agree that we disagree on the substance of independence, agree the process by which the people of Scotland would decide, that would be far better. But I do believe the problem of having a democracy denying UK government and prime minister ultimately is their problem much more than it is mine than mine. Because it becomes one of the powerful arguments for Scotland becoming an independent country where democracy and the rule of law are the fundamental principles underpin everything that we do. James Cook

*James Cook*

*Thank you. First Minister, none of the comparator countries that you refer to have been embedded in a 300-year-old trading and political union with their closest neighbour. If leaving the EU has been as disastrous for Scotland and its economy as you describe. Why wouldn't leaving this far more deeply embedded union be much worse, particularly in the first years or decades of independent Scotland?*

First Minister

I think I would answer that in two ways, James. Firstly it was not inherent in the Brexit process that it ended up the deep mess that it has become. It has no planning. There was no prospectus, no basic honesty in the platform that was put forward for the Brexit referendum. We had the slogan, the lie as most people now recognise it to be on the side of the bus. I mean, I am publishing today the first in what will be a series of documents. Already in just one scene setting document today making the case for independence there is more thought, there is more evidence, there is more clear planning for the way ahead than there was in the entirety of the Brexit campaign. Constitutional change, the world has many examples of constitutional change. It is often say, you know, in the years around the second world war there were 50 independent countries in the world, it is 200 or there about today. Constitutional change is not something that is unknown in the world. What matters is the way in which that is planned and the integrity and the honesty of the platform on which it is built. And in that sense there could not be more difference between the case for independence and the case for Brexit. The second point I would make though is, I don't accept, and I know you are putting a journalistic question to me so this is not in any way having a go at the question. But, my opponent will put very pejoratively that point in the way that you have put it. I don't believe that will be the experience of a planned and properly executed road to independence. But for any country, and this is choice that I think crystallises for Scotland right now. If we conclude, and I think it is

hard to conclude otherwise right now, that being part of the Westminster system is not serving Scotland's interest, either in terms of growth and productivity or in terms of social equity, fairness, tackling poverty if we conclude that it is not serving purposes and it is not serving our interests now. And if we look ahead to the UK outside the European Union and conclude that it is unlikely to start to do so in these circumstances. Then the choice is do we just accept that, do we just accept that we are going to be consigned to a future of, compared to all of our neighbours, poor economic and social outcomes, not fulfilling our potential. Being in a second best, to put it politely, situation. Or do we say change is never easy. Change is never without challenge. But actually if all of these countries can be as successful relative to the UK as they are. Then with hard work, with commitment, with good planning, why not Scotland. and that is the choice people in Scotland will have to make. And it will be the people in Scotland who make that choice. But just as I have an obligation to put the case for independence with my colleagues, with the wider independence movement, there is a real responsibility for the people who argue for the status quo to set out why they think that any longer serves the interests of Scotland. I am going to go to Alan Smith from Bauer.

*Alan Smith*

*Thank you, First Minister. You spoke about forging a way ahead without a Section 30 order if necessary and that a referendum would be lawful. On what basis can you say that? I mean what advice have you received to say about moving ahead without a Section 30 order. And can you detail perhaps what some of those options and ways forward would be?*

First Minister

I'm not going to do that today, Alan. And I'm not going to do that because the work is under way. You also know the constraints I'm under when it comes to talking about legal advice in particular. And I'm sure you weren't inviting me to breach the ministerial code. But in case you were I'm going to resist that invitation. I, and I'll say this very, very clearly. I understand, I'm sure there will be questions as we go through this press conference about the process, I understand how important those questions are and I understand how important it is to answer those questions. But I also understand, and take very seriously the responsibility to do that properly. The situation that we are in right now is not one of my choosing. I think it would be better for everybody, on both sides of the independence debate, to have a Scottish Government and a UK Government – as was the case in 2014 – that respected the democratic process, and recognised that we differ on the substance but we have an obligation to enable the people to make the choice.

That's not the position we are in. We – as I've said previously already this morning – we are dealing with a Prime Minister that doesn't respect democracy, the law, or any of the norms that underpin democracies in, well used to underpin democracies in the UK and still do in most other countries. So, I have to deal with that reality. Is that... does that pose challenges? Does that... and I set those out. The ability of the Scottish Parliament to legislate without a Section 30 order is contested. I believe we can navigate a path forward. But I'm going to do that responsibly and I'm going to do that properly. And then I'm going to set that out to parliament in the way that people would expect me to. I'm going to go now to Peter MacMahon

*Peter MacMahon*

*Thank you, First Minister. First Minister, you're confident you can have a legal referendum, you're very confident that you can win that referendum, and you want*



*Scotland to become a member, again, of the European Union. That inevitably will mean – won't it – that there will be a hard border across this island in the South of Scotland, between the South of Scotland and the North of England – there just has to be, because that would be the EU border, and won't that have very significant and potentially very damaging implications for the South of Scotland?*

First Minister

I indicated in my opening remarks that one of the papers we will publish in this series will be on European Union membership. We will also... it may be the same paper, it may be two separate ones, on trade, and as part of that, of course we will confront the implications of Brexit, which of course is not something the Scottish Government has chosen but does, you're right to say, present different challenges around these issues, and of course we're then – I shouldn't say "we" here, because it is the UK Government – is in a deep mess over the Northern Ireland protocol, with lots of very damaging implications because it has never levelled with the people of Northern Ireland or indeed the rest of the UK about the implications. Now, I think it's important to say, and I'm sure I've said this to you before, that we're not dealing here with issues about the movement of people. The Common Travel Area, I don't think there's anybody, certainly nobody with any credibility, who would argue that Scotland would not remain within the Common Travel Area, but the issues in terms of regulatory and customs issues around goods, we've got to work out how that operates in a way that would fulfil the requirements that would be on us in terms of European Union membership, and remember the big advantages and benefits of European Union single market membership, a marketplace seven, eight times the size of the UK. Enormous potential to grow our trade and to grow our exports. We need to set out how we would deal with that in a way that isn't damaging to the South of Scotland, and isn't damaging to businesses. I believe, again, and I will no doubt make this point on many occasions, not just today but throughout this debate, much of the mess the UK Government is in is because of a lack of being honest with people and a lack of doing any planning for this. And because they're not prepared to be honest about the challenges that they need to overcome, in a sense they're not able to do that planning because that then says what the problems are. That's the mistake we've got to ensure that we don't replicate. So I'm not going to shy away from any of these issues. I think the benefits of Scotland being independent far outweigh any of these challenges, but how we overcome the challenges is important and we have a duty to set that out clearly, and the future work in this series will do that. Ciaran Jenkins.

*Ciaran Jenkins.*

*You say you want to be honest about these challenges, you want to be frank with people; you want to be in the EU – do you, therefore, agree with just about every reputable expert who say that there will be checks on goods going from England and Wales to Scotland and there will be a trade border between England and Scotland? Will there be a border, First Minister?*

First Minister

I would encourage you to listen back to the answer I've just given to Peter. I am not going to repeat the mistakes of Boris Johnson and pretend that implications of the decisions we take don't exist. If we are in the single market and the rest of the UK is outside the single market, then, yes, there are issues in terms of regulatory and customs requirements that need to be met. What I'm saying is not that these challenges don't exist, but these challenges can be managed in a way that doesn't present disadvantages to our businesses and, of course, what the benefits of that

situation are is the ability to trade freely within a market that is seven, eight times bigger than the UK. So... **[CROSSTALK]**

*Ciaran Jenkins*

*In the spirit of that honesty, you would presumably say that Brexiteers try to wish away this problem; will you be frank with the Scottish people...*

First Minister

I will be frank.

*Ciaran Jenkins*

*..and say that there will be a trade border.*

First Minister

I think I've said very clearly – there will be customs and regulatory issues on trade if we are in the single market. I think the benefits of being in the single market outweigh the challenges there, but what I'm saying to you very frankly is we need to set out how those challenges will be met. Now, in a sense, and I said earlier on, this is the absurdity, or one of the many absurdities of the UK Government's position on the Northern Ireland protocol – right now, the Northern Ireland protocol, which is allowing Northern Ireland, effectively, to trade in the single market while continuing to trade across the rest of the UK, has enormous benefits because it has... and we can see that, the Northern Irish economy is doing better than any other part of the UK, so there are... and actually some of the suggested revisions and amendments put forward by the EU to the protocol actually make sense in terms of easing that, so this is not about shying away from these issues; it's about saying these issues are not insurmountable if you come about them in the right way... **[CROSSTALK]**

*Ciaran Jenkins*

*You have shied away from the word 'border' and the word 'checks'.*

First Minister

I've perhaps shied away of giving you an easy headline, but people who are listening, people who are... **[CROSSTALK]**

*Ciaran Jenkins*

*Or the reality of the situation, according to just about everybody.*

First Minister

I think everybody listening will hear what I'm saying and what I think is important is that people do – and actually this is what happened in 2014, which maybe not everybody, but most people in here who covered the referendum will recall – people were able to understand the complexities, the nuances to get beyond the headlines and to understand the real implications of what we're doing, and that is what... that is the spirit in which we will continue to take forward this debate. Patrick, do you want to add?

Patrick Harvie

I do think we also need to recognise the democratic imperative in this debate. Let's remember that Scotland was told in the run-up to the 2014 referendum that the way to protect our place in the European Union was to vote no. Now, that hasn't happened. That promise has been broken, and it would be unreasonable – wildly unreasonable, I think – for that situation itself to be used as the argument for saying that Scotland and the people of Scotland are no longer able to make this choice and that the Government of Scotland is no longer able to put that choice to them.

First Minister

Do we have Sky? Yeah, Sky, thanks.

*Katerina Vittozzi*

*Yes, I'm Katerina Vittozzi, standing in for James Matthews. You've spoken a great deal about the future today, but currently, domestic issues over which the Scottish Government does have a great deal of autonomy – health care, education, transport – are in crisis and have declined. We've seen a decline in the outcomes of those since you have been in power. Is there any way you can give confidence to voters, and why should voters believe that there would be any better outcomes over the additional responsibilities afforded by a successful independence vote?*

First Minister

I don't accept some of the premise in the characterization of that question, but I will deal with the substance of it. So it's not the case... You take the health service, for example, right now, as with the situation in most countries, the impact of a two-year global pandemic has had an adverse effect on the waiting times of the National Health Service – that is not something that is in any way unique to Scotland. On education, there has been a COVID impact, but we are seeing improvements in attainment in education. Just a couple of weeks ago, we saw the Scottish Government in the opinion of our independent fair access commissioner meet its targets on the access to university of young people from our more deprived communities. The commissioner described that as an unambiguous success, so we are seeing real progress coupled with real challenge across a range of the responsibilities we have under our control right now. It is absolutely legitimate for people to look at that and decide do they trust, overall, the Scottish Government, and democratically elected Scottish governments of whatever party, to make decisions for Scotland more than they do UK governments, and that is part of the decision people in Scotland will arrive at, and the last thing I would say, and I appreciate I'm standing with the co-leader of another political party right now, but scrutiny is not something that has been short supply in Scotland. I've been First Minister here for less than eight years. I've fought eight elections in that time, and my party has won all of them, so people understand the challenges we deal with, but the trust in the party that leads the Scottish Government, I think, has been demonstrated. Patrick, I should probably give you the opportunity on that note to say something.

Patrick Harvie

I mean, I think, obviously there are people out there who maybe in 2014 saw the case for independence but weren't convinced yet. There are people in the middle ground who can... you know, might not have decided yet how they'll vote in the next referendum, so we do want to make the case to them, and I think the people in that

situation should look in particular at some of the policy areas that sit partly between devolved powers and reserved powers, partly between the Scottish Government and the UK; on material equality within our society, the drive against child poverty; just contrast the actions that are being taken by a Scottish Government that's doubled – created the Scottish Child Payment in the first place, then doubled it and committed to continuing to increase it against a UK Government that's taken £20 out of Universal Credit. Contrast some of the energy issues. You know, I think more people than ever before are clear that the responses we need on the climate emergency, on the cost of living crisis and on energy security are the same agenda, they're the same actions. This Government in Scotland is putting record investment into energy efficiency, to cut people's fuel bills; the UK Government's energy security strategy had nothing at all to say on that, and it's still not taking the regulatory decisions on energy that it needs to to save people money – powers that we wish we had the ability to exercise here. So, compare and contrast, look at the status quo, and I think if you do that with a fair and impartial mind, you'll see that on so many of these issues, the status quo isn't working.

First Minister

PA, do you want to ask a question?

*Neil Pooran*

*During your speech, you said that improvements after independence weren't guaranteed; how do you plan on persuading people that despite that fact, you should still vote yes, and do you think that Scots should accept an element of risk if they vote yes in another referendum?*

First Minister

I think the risk of not being independent, as we have seen to our great cost over the last few years, is much, much greater than any risk that comes from being independent. I mean, that statement should not be controversial. The very fact of just being independent, for any country in the world, doesn't magically guarantee success. What it does do is put the levers that determine success into your own hands, and like all of us, I think, would accept in our personal lives, we prefer to be in charge of the decisions that determine the paths we take and how successful we are than allow these decision to be taken by somebody else, and I think people understand that. It's not possible to see into the future, you know, five, ten, 20 years from now for any country. Any country will face challenges and setbacks. The question is what is the best system of governance to equip you to deal with those, and I think if you went to any other country across the world right now that's already independent and suggested to them that somehow they'd be better not being independent when it comes to dealing with these challenges, they'd look at you a bit askant. So I think people understand that point and I think they understood that in 2014, and I think with all of the experience since 2014, they'll understand it even more now. I mean, if you were to go back to 2014, if we were able to turn the clock back and tell people the things that would have happened because we voted no then – we'd be taken out of the EU; we'd have Boris Johnson as Prime Minister, with everything that's come from that; we'd have the economic situation we've got right now, exacerbated by Brexit – does anybody really believe that that result wouldn't have flipped the other way in 2014? I think it is almost inarguable that people, if they had known what they know now, would have voted for independence then, because we understand that it's much better to chart your own destiny than have somebody else do it for you, and we've learned that pretty brutally in some respects in the years since 2014.

Gina, do you want to ask a question?

*Gina Davidson*

*Yes, thanks. Can I just ask who you are pitching this at today, because a lot of the arguments we are hearing are ones we have heard before from pro-independence campaigners, particularly comparators with other small countries; is it just those new voters, those younger people who are now on the voters' roll? Is it those new Scots who've arrived here? Is that who you're pitching this at, because there doesn't seem to be anything different that we've heard today – but correct me if I'm wrong on that. And also, can I ask, you mentioned you're going to make a statement to Parliament; will that be before recess, and is it fair on independence supporters that you come here today, announcing all this, but without telling them how you're going to navigate your way through that iceberg dead ahead which is Boris Johnson?*

First Minister

I would call Boris Johnson many things, none of them as polite as iceberg, I should say, but I'll leave that to one side. Icebergs melt, so, there we are.

Patrick Harvie

They have hidden depths as well.

First Minister

Which Boris Johnson certainly doesn't, so... I should probably stop this line... strain of thought before it gets me into trouble. Who am I pitching this at? Everybody out there. Scotland will only become independent when a majority vote for it, and therefore, you know, whether people voted yes in 2014, voted no in 2014, or as Patrick rightly said, whether you are one of the adults out there who didn't have a vote in 2014 because you were too young, this is pitched at you. It's making the case that independence doesn't guarantee success, but what is it about all of these other countries that are, on all of these indicators – and the ones I mentioned in my remarks are only some of the indicators that are set out in here – what is it that makes them so much more successful, and ask people to consider that as the scene setter to the debate that will follow. And lots of things are different because we... you know, we're many years on from 2014, the world has changed. The data in here is much more... it's up to date, so obviously it didn't exist in this format in 2014, and we've seen the changes in the UK that is contributing to this relatively poor performance. So I think there's plenty in here for people to think about and to give people food for thought. In terms of your question about fairness, what would be unfair to independence supporters, in fact unfair to the country, would be for me to stand here and pretend that there's not challenges to navigate through. I want to have the... and I want to give people the choice, that mandate that was given to... not to me as an individual but to the Scottish Parliament last year, I intend to honour that, that is what democracy demands, but there are legal challenges to work through if we are to have what I think is essential to deliver independence a lawful process. And I would be less fair to people if I didn't say that I'm taking all of that seriously and behaving responsibly, and that I will set out that path very soon. Your question I think before the summer recess, I said very soon – I'm not sure I would describe September as very soon, so you can draw your own conclusions from that. Right, this is where my eyesight becomes a bit more of a challenge. I'll take Kieran, and then Sev, and then I'll come to Financial Times, is it? Financial Times. Sorry. OK, I'll go to Kieran first.

*Kieran Andrews*

*Thanks very much. Both of you talked about character and behavior in office – First Minister, one of your MPs, Patrick Grady, was today found guilty of sexual misconduct when he was chief whip of the SNP at Westminster. Is that the sort of behavior you expect from an elected representative making the case for independence, and why is he still an SNP MP?*

First Minister

Thanks for the question, Kieran, I was aware that the outcome of that investigation was likely to be published this morning. As you will appreciate, I think it has been published while I've been standing here. I've not yet had the opportunity to read the report, the findings or any other aspect of it. I will clearly do that and I will issue a response when I've had the opportunity to do it, but it would not be either fair or helpful for me to do it without having seen the outcome. What I would say, and I've said this before, that if we expect the highest standards from others, then we have a duty to ensure that the highest standards are abided by within our own ranks as well.

*Kieran Andrews*

*Was it appropriate for him to have kept the whip all this time?*

First Minister

Look, I haven't seen the report, I've not seen the conclusions of the commissioner, I've not seen what exactly has been upheld, and what the circumstances of that...

*Kieran Andrews*

*He's been found guilty of sexual misconduct.*

First Minister

Indeed, and I'm not questioning that, if that is what you're telling me, but I've not seen the report. But I need to obviously read the whole thing before I comment in substance. I think that is not an unreasonable position to take for something that has been published literally while I've been standing here at this podium. Who do I go to next? Sev.

*Severin Carrell*

*First Minister, thank you. You've already mentioned the significant economic damage and impact of Brexit, the COVID crisis, we are now seeing surging inflation. We are now looking forward now to a flat lining economy, almost certainly a recession this winter and a resurgence of COVID. Your own growth commission suggested it could take ten years before Scotland could start finding itself where its economy would be reaching the sort of performance levels the countries you identified have. So how many years of pain do you think Scots would have to endure, economic pain, tax rises, service cuts and government spending cuts before Scotland reaches any of the GDP rates that you have flagged in this report?*

First Minister

Well firstly we are facing years of pain with low growth, high inflation, with the misery that is heaping on individuals right now if we don't become independent. That is guaranteed and I don't think that is too strong a word to use. The question then is do we just accept that or do we look at comparative countries that have all been dealing with the same challenges in terms of COVID and the wider issues around the cost of living that the UK is and are performing much better. And decide the sooner we get onto that path, the earlier we will work our way towards the kind of success they enjoy. That question is determined by the decisions we take. The starting point of independence, of course, will be subject to negotiations. And then the decisions we take to ensure that we start to emulate comparable countries rather than continue to be consigned to low growth and higher costs of living and lower living standards as a result of remaining within the Westminster system.

*Severin Carrell*

**[INAUDIBLE]**

First Minister

Well the time frame - the starting point is when Scotland votes independence, and then we have a process of negotiation. But this question to me is just as legitimately turned on its head. We know right now if we don't become independent, all of the things you have set out are guaranteed. We are seeing a UK that will next year have the lowest growth of the G20 with the exception of Russia. We see higher cost of living than any other, almost any other developed economy. We are seeing Brexit deliver significant damage to our trading opportunities. That is baked in if we stay in as we are. Now, does deciding to change in any walk of life, any circumstance present challenges, yes. But it is better to get yourself onto a path that you can ensure through the decisions you take as opposed to the decisions opposed on you leads to a better outcome than simply accepting what we know will be the case if we don't change.

Patrick Harvie

I think both of our opening remarks acknowledge, and you know gave some real indication of the challenges the whole world is facing right now, in the here and now and the longer term. For me acknowledging the challenges the world is facing is not a reason to keep our hands tied. Quite the reverse. It is the reason to untie our hands and take the responsibility as well as the opportunity to face those challenges head on.

First Minister

I'll go to the FT, lots of hands up...

*Lukanyo Mnyanda*

*Good Afternoon First Minister, Lukanyo Mnyanda from the Financial Times. I was just looking at the polls and despite everything we know since 2014, and everything you have outlined [INAUDIBLE] Unhappiness about Tory governments and Brexit. Support for independence is not much higher than it was in 2014, why do you think that is the case, and why isn't that resonating with people. Secondly, how worried are you that if, say, you got to compromise with Boris Johnson about a vote in 2023, how worried would you be if you lost in terms, would it write it off for ever?*

Patrick Harvie

We possibly shouldn't lose it then.

First Minister

I think that is basically the moral of that question, we don't lose it and don't intend to. I go back to what I said earlier, look when you put a choice before people then it is a choice for people. And you will always have the uncertainties that come with that. I am as certain as it is possible to be the next time of asking, people in Scotland will not miss the opportunity to vote for independence, because for many reasons not least the fact that we remember what happened in the wake of 2014 because we didn't become independent. And many of the challenges we are dealing with right now can take their or have their roots in that decision. On your first question about polls. Again, perfectly legitimate to look at polls. I think almost every poll since 2014 has shown support for independence higher than it was in September 2014. There have been a number of polls that show a majority for independence, a number that show that is not the case. And I would characterise the polls overall as being broadly 50/50. Now I have been in politics a long time, and if you go back to my earlier days in politics that 50/50 for independence was anything other than a very, very good starting point I would have looked at you a bit oddly. So, polls will come and go outside the heat of battle to use that phrase. I think once the campaign is engaged, and today is the starting point of that. People's minds start to focus I think we will see support for independence rise. The only, I will use the ultimate here in politician cliché is the only one that matters is on polling day. Right I am going to try and quickly... Rachel, then to this group here

*Rachel Watson*

*Thank you First Minister. You say you want a referendum by the end of next year, but realistically is the next staging point for a vote not the next general election when you have the possibility of a hung parliament and the possibility of doing a deal with Labour, for example if there is a hung parliament. So we have these huge NHS waitlists, ferries running hugely over budget and limited progress on closing the attainment gap, is this not a huge distraction from the issues we face in Scotland at the moment.*

First Minister

On your first question, I am going to do what I think is important in work to the mandate that my government, the Scottish Parliament won, which is to offer people the choice in this parliament in the timeframe we set out in a referendum, and that's what I'm focused on in seeking to do. No, it's not a distraction. Those who want to say it is a distraction will always take something to argue that case, and usually in terms of politicians and opponents of independence, they say it is a distraction, because they don't want to engage on the substance of the case, because the substance of the case against independence becomes, I think, more and more threadbare by the day. What we are setting out here is an alternative. An alternative to the certainty of all of the things I've just been talking about in response to Sev if we don't become independent. Now, these are the choices people make. The Government's day to day priorities continue. These are priorities I take seriously each and every single day, but giving Scotland the alternative to a continued decline... a declining UK, I think, is really important, and I think this is the right time, and the vital time to do it.

Right, let's see what choice I have. Chris.

*Chris Green*



*First Minister, are you concerned that if for any reason there is a delay in delivering an indyref2 next year, that independence supporters are simply going to run out of patience?*

First Minister

No, but that's mainly predicated on the fact that I intend that there will be. So that's what I'm focused on achieving. Yes?

*Journalist*

*So just, you said on the different issues that the papers coming up are going to look at, I had a quick look at what you said, but there was no mention of energy – I guess this is for kind of both of you – so, I wanted to know, with the campaign coming up, will there be a move away from oil compared to 2014, where that was a really big part of the campaign, and I also noticed that there was a mention of the gender pay gap in this paper, from the very kind of quick read that I've had, so will there be in the future papers as well things towards women and minorities and things, and how that can convince people?*

First Minister

Yeah, so I should say, and apologies if I didn't use the word "include", when I listed that – it wasn't meant to be exhaustive. There will be other papers over and above the ones I've mentioned today. The issues you've talked about certainly will be covered in the canvas – energy, and we're in a transition away from fossil fuels already, the imperative is to do that as quickly and as justly as possible, and you know how important I consider issues of gender equality are, so these will be issues that we cover. What I chose to mention today are the key ones that people always say, "are you going to cover this" when we're talking about the independence debate.

Patrick Harvie

Yeah, and just to reinforce that it's not only the Government and not only our political parties that are part of this debate. We want everybody in Scotland to contribute ideas as well and to be part of shaping Scotland's future. It would be... I think it would be appalling if this debate was monopolised only by the views of those in Government today. This has to be a live and inspiring and engaging debate that brings in all of those visions and challenges as well from right across Scotland, and I think there are a great many organisations in civic society as well as at community group level that will bring real creativity to bear.

First Minister

And now to tell me how he's been persuaded of the case for independence I've made today, I'll go to Simon Johnson of the Telegraph.

*Simon Johnson*

*Thank you, First Minister. It is quite difficult to see Boris Johnson changing his mind on this, given everything else that's going on in the world, and the Supreme Court judgement last October didn't really give you any encouragement that your own referendum bill would be given... would be ruled legal, given that two bills there were described as ultra vires. Are you just disappearing down a constitutional, sort of, rabbit hole here, a cul-de-sac, because it's very difficult to see, with those two options, how*

*you could possibly hold a legal referendum? Linked to that, you recognise that any referendum result would have to be recognised internationally, but the first stage of that is it would have to be recognised by the UK Government, so it's very difficult to set up a process that they don't agree with, and then get them to agree with the result. To Patrick, I remember that the papers that were produced by the Scottish Government before the last referendum, when they were setting out the Scottish Government's position on things like the Queen being head of state, being in Nato – will these papers set out your position as well as the SNP's position on issues such as this? Thank you.*

First Minister

I'll pass to Patrick in a second. I should say, first of all, Boris Johnson is not refusing to give a Section 30 order because other things are happening in the world; he's refusing because he is somebody who has no respect whatsoever for democracy. Let's not, you know, sort of, mess about and beat about the bush on these things. Simon, part of the job of being First Minister is to navigate your way through the difficult things, not just the easy things, so yes, we have the challenges that I've set out today that you have rather more bluntly set out here today. That's my job, it's to find a path through to deliver the mandate I have, and that's what I am doing just now and what I will set out to Parliament soon.

Tom. Oh, sorry, Patrick. Sorry, sorry.

Patrick Harvie

Obviously, the papers that the Scottish Government produces will touch on issues where we already agree on what the first steps for an independent Scotland will be, and it may touch on issues where we need to acknowledge that there's a range of views out there, not just between and within our own political parties, but in wider society as well. The fundamental point, though, that brings this together is that these are questions that the people of Scotland should be able to decide for themselves democratically, and right now they can't.

*Simon Johnson*

*You need the UK to accept the result... [INAUDIBLE]*

First Minister

Well, Simon, I will leave it to you, if you want to go even further than I have in demonstrating that the UK Government is not in any way respectful of democracy. But if you're really premising a question on the premise of not only will they not agree the transfer around Section 30, but they wouldn't agree a democratic vote by the people of Scotland, then... **[CROSSTALK]** Look, I will set out the way forward in the way that I've set out today, and I will perhaps leave the Telegraph to be one of the last remaining defenders of the indefensible when it comes to Boris Johnson. Tom.

*Tom Gordon*

*Thank you, First Minister. Yesterday, Glenn Campbell asked you if the referendum would take place next year, and you said yes. But you've said several times today that the law on the issue is uncertain in the absence of a Section 30 order. How can you be categorical about the timing when you cannot be categorical about the law?*

First Minister

Well, look, my intention is that it will be before the end of next year. I think there is the ability to do that, and I will set out the path that I think achieves that very soon.

*Tom Gordon*

*Just a quick follow-up on that – are you therefore saying that a referendum next year is contingent on a positive decision from the United Kingdom Supreme Court?*

First Minister

I'm not saying anything other than I've already said...

*Tom Gordon*

*But it's your intention rather than a guarantee.*

First Minister

I have said what I've said, you can look at what I've said to Glenn. You can see what I've said today, you can see what I've said in my remarks, and I will say more shortly.

Alistair.

*Alistair Grant.*

*Hi there, thanks very much. Would you like to see a kind of formal broad church yes campaign, as in 2014? And I think you were asked this yesterday, but I wasn't sure if there was a clear answer on it – would you share a platform with Alex Salmond?*

First Minister

That latter one probably qualifies as one of the least important questions of the entire independence debate. It's not about me, it's not about Alex Salmond, and with the greatest respect, it's not even about Patrick Harvie. It's about the future of Scotland, and I'm going to continue to focus on the issues that matter to people across Scotland and, as First Minister, as leader of the SNP, to lead that debate. And, in terms of a broad church, the campaign for independence is broad church and will be broad church. And actually that is one of its great strengths. Because independence is fundamentally about democracy. And in any democracy you have a difference of opinion and people decide in elections which path they want the country to take. So that's a strength, not in any way a weakness. Andy.

*Andy Philip*

*Hi. Oil and gas and energy has been touched on a little bit there. I can't help notice but a lot of the comparator countries: Norway features very highly and, you know, we've already acknowledged that there's going to be a long run-up to meeting these comparator countries. Is it not tempting then to try and squeeze a little bit more out of the oil and gas before you rush into, fulfilling the sort of Net Zero ambitions? I mean you've disagreed in the past. Do you disagree still about the best way to use the oil and gas industry as a way of funding, as it did in 2014? It was baked in as a way of funding this new prospectus?*

First Minister

Look, our position, joint position, is set out in the Bute House Agreement and we agree very strongly that the climate crisis is real and pressing and urgent. And, not just in Scotland but across the world, we have to accelerate the move away from fossil fuels. Happily for Scotland, and not every country can say this, there are massive economic advantages in that transition. We see that just in the ScotWind auction for example. So we are in perhaps a more fortunate position than many countries are in making that transition, but it's got to be a fair one. Nobody is arguing that you switch off oil and gas overnight, or anything like that. But making that transition and planning for that transition in a fair and just way, I think, is an essential part of what Scotland has to do, whether or not we become independent, although we take more powers with independence over some of these issues than we have right now.

Patrick Harvie

Yeah, I think very clearly that possession of the Scottish Government has changed significantly from 2014. And I think some of that had already begun to happen before the Bute House Agreement which brought the Greens into government. Some of it has happened subsequently. But the reality of how fast a transition we need to make, I think, is now well understood. You know, if the world had begun the kind of transition that needs to have happened 20 or 30 years ago, it could've been done slowly. The only reason that we're in a climate emergency is that that early action didn't happen all of those decades ago, when the scientific community around the world was first ringing the alarm bells. But we can make that change in a fair, as well as a fast way, and I think the fact that the comparator countries in this document include fossil fuel producers as well as countries that are not fossil fuel producers and are more dependent on an existing energy system. They include countries that have different types of economic model, you know, broadly social democratic, left of centre societies as well as others that have an economic model that I personally wouldn't support and would criticise. This is a broad range of comparator countries. Not only... There's not one, you know, kind of parallel Scotland in this report; there's a broad range of countries with different economic challenges, opportunities, contexts and economic policies, and I think the fact that the comparison is so clear across the broad range of those countries really reinforces the point that we're making.

First Minister

It is a fact that we're going to be seeing rising oil and gas revenues because energy prices are as they are, you know, now and in the future. The question should be, and this would be a question if these were coming to an independent Scotland, is how we use them to support and accelerate the climate transition and ensure benefits for future generations. Right, we are running very short of time and have gone over the time allotted, but I'm looking to see if there are... Yeah, OK. Can I... Very quick questions, I'll take this one here, and Tom. **[Inaudible]** Sorry, yes.

*Journalist*

*Hi, I just wanted to ask if you can outline for us the timeline of the publication of the subsequent papers that you have. I also wanted to ask about voter fatigue. As you've pointed out, Scots are never finished voting, so how are you going to try and ensure that high level of engagement within this debate?*

First Minister

Politician fatigue might be more of a real issue than voter fatigue! I think 2014 tells us, when this issue comes to be decided on, you will have massive, I think, interest,

enthusiasm and voter turnout. I'm not... Literally, I'll be candid with you, we haven't determined or decided yet the precise order and sequencing and dates for the subsequent papers, but they will, you know, come over the months and fairly steadily over the latter part of this year. And, lastly, Tom.

*Tom Eden*

*Thank you, First Minister. You describe today as a starting point for the independence campaign; the questioning today will give an indication that the whopping great elephant in the room is the legality of a future referendum. Can I explain... or can you explain, sorry, why you've decided to open this push for independence with this comparison document rather than setting out why you think... how and why you think it's legal?*

First Minister

I think I've said today, in my opening remarks and in responses to several questions, what I intend to do there, and I've been very clear about the way in which I intend to set these things out. Look, Scotland is going to have its choice on independence. Not even Boris Johnson – probably especially not Boris Johnson, actually – can stand, ultimately, in the way of democracy, so Scotland is going to get its opportunity to cast its verdict on independence, so I think it is the right time and important to ensure that when that choice comes it is an informed choice, that we start to lay out as we're doing today the substantive case. Thank you all very much indeed.

*Glenn Campbell*

*First Minister, will there be a bill? A referendum bill?*

First Minister

I think I've addressed that issue on many... I think I've addressed the issue of what I'm going to do before recess many times.

*Glenn Campbell*

*You haven't, though.*

First Minister

Well, I can assure you, I have. Thank you very much indeed.

Patrick Harvie

Thanks, everyone.

**[END]**

**2. Transcription of First Minister Nicola Sturgeon opening speech and subsequent media Q&A. Press conference for launch of 'Building a New Scotland' paper, *Renewing Democracy through independence*. Bute House, Edinburgh. 14 July 2022**

**First Minister  
Building a New Scotland press conference  
14Jul22  
57m10s**

First Minister

Good morning. Welcome everybody. Thank you for coming along today.

Today we are launching second in the *Building a New Scotland* series of papers, refreshing the case for independence.

Just to recap, in the months ahead, we intend to cover currency, public finances and the economy, social security and pensions, defence and a range of other issues, that are all intended to fully inform the choice on independence.

Today's paper though focusses on democracy and democratic renewal.

It exposes the significant and increasing democratic deficit that Scotland suffers as part of the Union.

It shows that, far from being abstract, this deficit has real consequences for individuals, families and businesses - from the impact of austerity to the implications of a Brexit that Scotland did not vote for.

And it argues that only independence can strengthen and embed democracy in Scotland - and so provide a secure foundation from which to overcome challenges and fulfil our potential.

Now this discussion could not be more timely.

The democratic deficit that Scotland faces is, of course, not a new or a recent phenomenon.

But the evidence of it now is arguably starker than it has ever been.

A Prime Minister with no democratic endorsement whatsoever from Scotland will be replaced by another Prime Minister that Scotland hasn't voted for, indeed wouldn't vote for even if we were given the opportunity.

And the change of Tory leader seems virtually certain to be accompanied by a shift even further to the right.

And that means, of course, a shift even further away from the mainstream of Scottish opinion and values.

A race to the bottom on tax.

Cuts to public services and support for families.

More posturing over Brexit, hurting businesses and trade.

Abandonment of the fight against climate change.

And a toxic, indeed wholly manufactured 'culture war' putting equalities and human rights protections at risk.

We may be just a few days into this Tory leadership contest but it is already crystal clear that the issues Scotland is focussed on – tackling child poverty, supporting NHS recovery, building a fairer economy, and making a just transition to net zero - will be hindered, not helped, by whoever becomes Prime Minister in the weeks ahead.

And added to all of that, the principle, which is long accepted until now, that the UK is a voluntary union of nations, within which Scotland has the right to self-determination, is being torn to shreds.

Indeed, all Scotland hears from UK politicians these days is democracy denial.

They trade opinions on how many years it should be before Westminster might 'allow' us to make a democratic choice about our own future.

The fact that the Scottish people have repeatedly elected a majority in the Scottish Parliament committed to an independence referendum is treated as immaterial.

You don't have to be a supporter of Scottish independence to know that that is not democracy.

Now that attitude is not surprising from Tories.

And if it was just the Conservatives, it might matter less, given the political death spiral they appear to be in.

But, these days, where the Tories go, Labour seems obliged to follow.

So scared is Labour of Tory attacks from the right, and so obsessed with neutralizing rather than standing up to these attacks, that they are becoming being a pale imitation of the Tories, rather than a real alternative.

Now that has implications for the direction of the UK as a whole, and across the spectrum of social and economic policy.

But here's what it means for Scotland.

This is Labour's pitch to Scotland in a nutshell.

To help Labour win in England, Scotland must suck up what we did not vote for.

Brexit and all of its dire consequences must be accepted, with no possible route back into the EU or even the single market.

But what we did vote for - what we have repeatedly voted for - an independence referendum and the possibility of a better alternative, will be blocked by Labour in all circumstances and for all time.

Just as in 2014, they are teaming up with the Tories to frustrate the will of the Scottish people.

You know, earlier this week we even had the grotesque spectacle of a Labour MP actually bragging about councillors in Edinburgh being suspended for refusing to back the Tories over the SNP.

Labour's positions are nothing to do with the interests or the democratic wishes of Scotland.

They are cynical political calculations, based on, in my view, the deeply misguided belief that the way back to power is to adopt wholesale the policies of the Tory government they claim to oppose.

For Scotland this means, again, that our interests and democracy are to be sacrificed, sold out, on the altar of winning Tory votes.

It is perhaps history repeating itself.

Margaret Thatcher, after she had left office, was reportedly once asked what she thought her greatest achievement was, and she replied "Tony Blair and New Labour."

What she meant, obviously, was that she had forced Labour into adopting many of her policies in order to win power.

Now Boris Johnson's legacy will surely be defined by his manifest unfitness for office but forcing Keir Starmer to make the journey from champion of Remain to arch Brexiteer may be seen, in years to come, as one of his only achievements.

In short, what Scotland is hearing and seeing from Westminster parties encapsulates the democratic deficit that we face as part of the UK.

Parties and policies that we reject forced upon us.

But the democratic right to choose an alternative denied to us.

And it underlines this point: Scotland really doesn't need, nor does it want, a pale imitation of, or a temporary respite from, Tory government.

Scotland needs the real and the permanent alternative that only independence offers.

Because stark though it is now, the democratic deficit isn't new.

As today's paper sets out, it has existed over decades.

Devolution has helped mitigate it but it has not removed it.

And that links, of course, back to the key theme of the first paper in this series.

In that, we presented the extent to which, on a range of economic and social measures, neighbouring independent countries - similar in many ways to Scotland - are outperforming the UK.



And we highlighted the fact that Scotland as part of the UK is effectively locked into that under-performance - despite all of the advantages we enjoy in human and natural resources.

I firmly believe that it is only with the democratic powers to take the key decisions affecting our lives here that we can close that gap and reach our potential.

And that of course is a key point.

Independence is not separate from bread and butter issues. It is all about those issues.

Independence is about building a stronger and fairer economy.

It is about protecting the NHS and public services.

It is about tackling the cost of living; and ensuring that in this energy rich country, the costs of heating our homes does not plunge people into dire poverty.

It is about safeguarding the climate, human rights and our place in the world.

So in this paper, we set out where Scotland stands democratically - and how that impacts on our economy and society.

We show how out of sync Scotland's governance by Westminster is with our voting patterns and democratic choices - not just now but over the long term.

Not once in my entire lifetime have the Tories won a majority - or even plurality - of seats in Scotland.

And yet for around two thirds of my lifetime, Scotland has had to thole Tory Prime Ministers and policies.

That is not democracy. Nor is it abstract.

Austerity, Brexit, anti-immigration measures - these are all policies we didn't vote for in Scotland but which are damaging lives and living standards across our country.

Finally and fundamentally, this paper makes the case that the democratic deficit cannot be fixed within a system founded on the principle of Westminster sovereignty.

There is no constitutional reform in the UK that cannot be overturned or undermined on the whim of a Westminster majority.

And we have seen that very clearly since the Brexit vote in 2016.

Assertions of Westminster authority have become ever more pronounced, and the lack of institutional safeguards for devolution ever more obvious.

Key Westminster decisions – on Brexit, energy, social security, immigration and much more besides – are having profound and damaging effects on Scotland.

There are no constitutional safeguards to properly protect the people of Scotland from these decisions.

Even the Sewel Convention – which was, of course, designed to ensure that UK governments and UK Parliament did not legislate on devolved matters without the consent of the Scottish Parliament - has been completely and utterly trashed.

Prior to Brexit, the exercise of Westminster sovereignty to frustrate Scottish Parliament decisions tended to be by financial means only - the refusal to transfer funds in relation to free personal care, for example, in the earlier days of the Scottish Parliament.

But since 2016, Westminster has legislated against the express wishes of Holyrood not once or even twice – but on no fewer than seven occasions.

And so it is in this light, I think, that pledges of more devolution - or even a legal duty to co-operate as per the pathetically flimsy proposal put forward by Labour last week - must be seen.

Because even if the intention to deliver was in any way credible, it does not resolve the democratic deficit because ultimate power is retained by Westminster.

And that really is the fundamental problem. No UK government of any party has ever shown the appetite for the fundamental UK-wide reform required to guarantee self-government for Scotland within the UK - because that would require Westminster to accept that it is not sovereign on all issues, at all times.

And I simply cannot see that ever happening.

So in fact independence is not just the best route to renewing and securing democracy in Scotland; to ensuring that we get governments we vote for; that our democratically elected Parliament cannot be over-riden and undermined; and that we have a secure foundation on which to build the economic and social future that we want.

Independence is not just the best route to all of that. Independence is the only credible route to that.

Which is why offering Scotland the choice of independence, particularly in the context we are in today, is essential.

So I will end by reiterating my commitment to do exactly that, and so in doing, deliver on the mandate of the Scottish people.

The Lord Advocate has now referred to the Supreme Court the question of whether Scottish Parliament legislation providing for an independence referendum without a section 30 order relates to a reserved matter.

This is intended to put the lawfulness of a referendum beyond doubt.

It will also deny the Westminster establishment the ability to take refuge in endless arguments about process as a means of avoiding the substantive debate on independence.

Now I hope the Court's decision will clear the path to a referendum on 19 October next year.

That is what we are planning for.

Of course, we cannot preclude the possibility that Westminster will succeed in blocking the route to a referendum.

But that cannot, must not, and will not, mean that they succeed in blocking the right of the Scottish people to have our say on independence.

So while we hope and plan for a referendum, this should also be clear.

If a referendum is blocked by Westminster, we will put the choice to the people of Scotland in the general election.

Either way, Scotland will have a choice.

And not only will democracy then prevail - it will become the foundation stone on which we build a better nation.

Thank you very much indeed for listening. I am now going to take questions from the media here.

We've got a large number of attendees so I'm going to try and get through as many of these questions as possible.

I'm now going to take questions from the media here. We've got a large number of attendees. I'm going to try and get through as many of these questions as possible.

I'll start with Glenn Campbell from the BBC.

*Glenn Campbell*

*First Minister, is it fair for your opponents to question your commitment to democracy when you do not accept the outcome of the 2014 referendum or indeed the 2016 Brexit vote?*

First Minister

No, it's not fair, and neither of the things you've just put to me there are true. The outcome of the 2014 referendum was accepted. The evidence of that is Scotland is not independent. And the outcome of the Brexit vote in Scotland was that Scotland wanted to remain in the EU – that has not been honoured by UK parties and governments, because Scotland is out of the EU. My stance has been that the outcome of that referendum should be honoured because Scotland should have remained within the European Union. But the more fundamental point, I guess, in relation to an independence referendum is that while the outcome of 2014 has been honoured and respected, people in a democracy have the right to change their minds. And to change their minds, particularly, when circumstances change. And it's actually the interplay between the 2014 referendum and the 2016 Brexit referendum that presents one of the biggest changes in circumstances. You know, you covered the independence referendum closely, you know that one of the key planks of the No campaign was EU membership. It was said in terms to people in Scotland that if we voted for independence, our membership of the European Union would be at risk. In fact, they went further and said we would lose membership of the European Union – that has happened because we are not independent, and the UK as it existed in 2014 – a UK inside the European Union – is very different now because it is a UK outside of the European Union. There have been many other changes since 2014, which is getting close to a decade ago, not least the experience and the chaos of Boris Johnson as Prime Minister, a contest now to replace him as Prime Minister by somebody else

Scotland will not have voted for who's going to take the politics of the UK, I predict, even further to the right. So circumstances change, and we live in a democracy. Democracy is not a moment of time, nor can it ever be the prisoner of any politician, whether that is me, Boris Johnson, whoever comes after him, Keir Starmer, or anyone else. Scotland has a right to self-determination and a right to choose its own future.

Katie Hunter. Katie, sorry. Hi.

*Katie Hunter*

*Perhaps it's silly of me to ask you who you would like to be the next Prime Minister, the next Conservative Party leader, but from your point of view, who is the least worst option?*

First Minister

They all look pretty bad to me.

*Katie Hunter*

*You must have ranked them.*

First Minister

I don't... I don't... it's not for me to rank them. You know, there's a basic democratic point here, but it's particularly acute, perhaps, for Scotland because, as I said earlier on, and you know, I'm going to say this; I think without fear of contradiction, or serious contradiction, Scotland wouldn't elect any of them as Prime Minister. I think we can conclude that from Scotland voting patterns over a very long period of time, but even across the UK, hardly anybody is getting to vote at all on who succeeds Boris Johnson. What's the UK membership of the Conservative Party? A couple of hundred thousand or something, so, yeah, this is a deeply undemocratic process to elect a Prime Minister in the circumstances that the UK is in just now. I think all of them will move the Tories to the right and that is quite a big statement because the Tories are, certainly in terms of the Scottish mainstream, pretty right wing already, and none of them seem to have anything to offer Scotland except democracy denial. So I don't see any of them offering anything positive for Scotland at all, and that's the problem – Scotland is facing yet another Prime Minister, the fourth in my time as First Minister, that we haven't voted for, would not vote for and that will impose policies that we don't support. That is the argument, or one of the arguments, for independence in a nutshell.

Ewan Petrie from STV.

*Ewan Petrie*

*First Minister, I appreciate your preferred option is a referendum, but if it comes to a de facto referendum through a Westminster general election, how can you guarantee a 50 per cent share of the vote and that would lead to independence?*

First Minister

Well, look, I'll set out... If we add in this scenario, because you're right, Ewan, it's not my preferred scenario, I don't think it should be anybody's preferred scenario. We have precedent in Scotland that the way to decide the question of independence and the way to decide significant constitutional issues is through a referendum. I think, whether you support or oppose independence, I think there should be an acceptance that that is the correct, appropriate, legitimate democratic route. That's the route I want us to take. But others are seeking to block that route, and if they succeed – I hope they don't – but if they succeed in blocking that route, then the choice for me is to just accept that Scotland has no right to self-determination and doesn't have a say or to find another route through which the people of Scotland can express their views, and that will be a

general election because it is, in my view, unthinkable that we just don't get the opportunity to express our views. Now, if we are in that scenario, post the judgement of the Supreme Court, and I'm not going to second guess that, these are matters now for the court to decide, I will set out in detail exactly what the proposition we're going to put to the Scottish people will be, and what we would intend to do with that, should the Scottish people back us in that general election. And, you know, it comes down to this fundamental point here. I understand, sometimes, I appreciate, I may get a bit exasperated at these questions, but fundamentally, what do I do if Westminster continues to refuse to accept democratic decisions of the Scottish people? There must come a point where I'm not the one expected to answer these questions. These are questions that have to be pinned on the politicians that are refusing to accept democracy. So your question now is effectively saying even if more than 50 per cent of the people of Scotland vote for the proposition of independence, and Westminster refuses to accept it, what do I do? Well, I actually think if we end up in that position, that is really, really serious because, arguably, we're in position where we simply don't have democracy. So I will do everything I can to ensure that people get their say, that they get that say through a proper, democratic constitutional process, and that what people in Scotland vote for is honoured. But others, really, have to answer some of these questions. Those who are denying democracy are the ones that have to answer the questions about the implications and the consequences of that denial of democracy. Louise Scott. Is Louise here? No? Ciaran Jenkins from Channel Four.

*Ciaran Jenkins*

*First Minister, given your strong preference is to resolve this referendum issue with the UK Government, and there is going to be a new Prime Minister, will you welcome the new Prime Minister with an open mind? And in particular, are you willing to compromise on your plans for a referendum?*

First Minister

I don't know what you mean about compromise, so that's a genuine question.

*Ciaran Jenkins*

*Will you compromise on the plans you've set out already? There's a new person you'll be dealing with.*

First Minister

So let me try and take that question... I'll obviously take the question in good faith, but let me try to answer that and direct it to whoever, I don't know who's going to be the next Prime Minister, but direct it to them in good faith, and do that, I suppose, by going back in time when we had the agreement in principle with David Cameron, that we would have a Section 30 order to put beyond doubt the ability of the Scottish Parliament to legislate. We had a negotiation and, you know, we didn't get everything we wanted out of that negotiation, nor did David Cameron's government. So, I suppose, you know, I have been part of a process where compromise has actually been at its heart, so in principle, yes, in terms of the detail, I will be open to a negotiation, and in any negotiation, you have to be prepared to compromise. What I will not compromise on is the principle of people in Scotland getting the opportunity to cast their votes and make their views known on independence. So in answer to your question, to whoever the new Prime Minister is, as I said, as recently as two weeks ago to Boris Johnson, I'm not going to, in the face of refusal of democracy by a UK Government, to continue to beat my head off that wall. That's why I've set out a path that does not depend on that. But that's not me closing my mind to that path, it's still the best option to have two governments opposed on the substance coming together to agree the process. So if the new Prime Minister is open to that, I will be open to sitting down and in a spirit of compromise, seeking to come to an agreement. I notice

in the media this morning, comments of Rishi Sunak from some time ago saying that Scotland should have the right to referendum after Brexit. Well, it's after Brexit, so maybe, if he is to hold to what he said before, there may be some room for discussions there if he emerges as the winner, which based on events over the past 24 hours, I don't think is in any way certain. So, yes, I will be happy to sit down with the new Prime Minister if there is a willingness to do that. I'm not going to allow Scottish democracy to be the prisoner of a UK Prime Minister, and that is the point of principle.

Alan Smith from Bauer.

*Alan Smith*

*Thank you, First Minister. You spoke at length about Labour's position on the Constitution and we have heard Keir Starmer in recent months repeatedly ruled out any potential deal or pact with the SNP at a future general election. I wondered if that's something that's ever been even discussed within the SNP about reaching a potential agreement with Labour a future election?*

First Minister

No, and I'll come on to coalition's and the sort of SNPs ambitions or perhaps lack of ambitions in terms of Westminster government. But on Labour's position, first of all, I mean, I understand Labour doesn't like the SNP, you know that's democracy. But the fact of the matter is whether Labour likes it or not the SNP has won overwhelmingly won every election Scotland in the past decade. So the SNP is Scotland's chosen government, Scotland's party of choice. So when you have Labour saying that they will never work with the SNP, or the SNP is somehow beyond the pale. Whether or not they want to acknowledge that what they're doing is just disrespecting Scotland's democratic choices. That effectively in the pursuit of votes from the Tories in England, effectively given the proverbial, you know, two fingers to Scotland. Well that's Labour's choice, but they should not be surprised if the people of Scotland continue to take a really dim view of that, Labour's message to Scotland appears to be we don't really care about you. You're just lobby fodder. And if you're not prepared to, you know, vote for us your votes don't matter. Well, you know, I think Labour should understand by now that that is not a view that goes down particularly well in Scotland. So that's their choice, but they shouldn't be surprised if that kind of attitude keeps delivering them at the kind of election results that they've seen in the past 15 years or so now. On the issue of coalitions, I mean, this really shouldn't come as a surprise to anybody, the SNP's ambition is not to be in a Westminster government. It's not about Westminster coalitions. What I've said in the three general elections that have now led the SNP in, and I will see again today, while the SNP is in Westminster, we will always behave, operate and vote in a way that bops the Tories out of office if we possibly can. We will always be part of as progressive as we can find analyse against the Tories. So, you know, that is always going to be, certainly for as long as I'm leader, the stance of the SNP. But our objective is not to somehow be in a Westminster government, our objective is to get out of Westminster and to offer Scotland a route out of the lack of democracy from Westminster governance and offer Scotland the choice of independence. So that's what we're focused on, and that is what everything I'm talking about today is very much about.

We have next Jack Foster from Global

*Jack Foster*

*Hi, First Minister. Assuming that you managed to overcome the hurdles, and you can hold a referendum next October on independence, and let's also assume that you were successful. What would there be to stop your opponents wanting to call another referendum, say a year and a half, two years, three years, four years after that given*

*that precedent has been set by yourself. Bearing in mind that the prospect of Brexit referendum was known in 2014, and the prospect that that would be a UK wide referendum in the event of a no vote was also known?*

First Minister

Well, firstly, the precedent hasn't been set in Scotland of having another referendum a year, a year and a half after the last one. We are now, what, eight after...

*Jack Foster*

*... [CROSSTALK] [INAUDIBLE]...*

First Minister

...well, no, actually, in point of fact, that is not true. And you go back to the 2015 general election campaign and read what I said, you know, then. So circumstances have changed. Democracy is not a moment in time. But again, it's a bit like my answer to Ciaran, I'm afraid if you want to, understandably, get answers to questions about what happens when Westminster politicians just refused point blank to accept democracy in Scotland, then go and ask the Westminster politicians. I'm trying to pursue a democratic path to give people in Scotland the opportunity to choose their own future. And democracy is never just a moment in time. People in Scotland have to democracy and self-determination has to mean anything must have that at, at all times. The second point I would make though, is again, I suppose challenging some of the premise of the question. You go back to, I saw on social media a few days ago actually, a clip from a debate I did with Alistair Carmichael in the run up to 2014. Apart from, sort of, you know, appalled of hairstyles and stuff back then showing how long ago it is. You know, it was Alistair Carmichael in that clip, who was, you know, saying that there wouldn't be any threat to the membership of the EU if Scotland voted no, that threat would come with Yes. And I think he was making the point that, you know, David Cameron and the leader of his party and the leader the labour were all against Brexit. So it wasn't the case that people voted in 2014 knowing that Brexit was going to happen, that actually is the polar opposite of what was put to the people of Scotland in that referendum. So look, circumstances change. I think people should have the right to change their minds when circumstances change. But the last point here is people can agree or disagree with me on the question of independence. And as we know, public opinion in Scotland is, is, is finely balanced on that question. What I believe the most people would agree with is that these are matters that can only be resolved democratically. I am seeking to find a democratic route to allow people in Scotland to choose their own future. And you're right, I've faced hurdles along the way because I'm up against politicians who are determined to frustrate a democratic process. They clearly don't feel confident about putting their arguments in a democratic process. So just want to block it, and that is not acceptable. And I'm not going to allow if I can possibly avoid it, Scotland's choice to be frustrated in that way. I next have PA. Hannah Carmichael

*Hannah Carmichael*

*Thank you, First Minister. Do you believe there should be a snap general election held to give the new Tory leader a mandate, and if so how would that impact your intentions for it to become the de facto referendum?*

First Minister

Look, I believe in the circumstances that exist in the UK just now. You have utter chaos at Westminster, a paralysis of government at a time when the need for active decisive government couldn't be greater, you know, what's the cost of living cases for example? So yes, I would relish and welcome a general election. If that happens, and I am not in control of that, I will set out exactly what the proposition from the SNP will be. You

can absolutely take it as read independence will be front and centre of that. If you're asking my opinion on what will happen, I don't think that is going to be a snap general election. I assume whoever emerges from the Tory leadership contest is going to want some time to establish themselves to try to recover some of the Conservative standing. If the kind of whether that will be possible is another question. So I don't think there is going to be a snap general election. But if it is, I will relish it. It will be the fourth general election I have fought in my less than eight years as SNP leader, which in itself says something about the state of UK politics and I will set out at that point how the SNP will fight it and exactly the proposition will put forward. But at the moment I'm going to continue to focus on the situation as it is and pursue the path that I have set out.

Right, we are on now to print journalist, Libby Brooks, Guardian.

*Libby Brooks*

*Thanks First Minister. You've been talking about the rights of people to change their mind, particularly post Brexit. But polling would certainly suggest there hasn't been a significant change of mind on the essential independence question. And we also know from polling that only a third of people are keen to have a referendum in the next year. And I just wonder what your message is to them about their democratic wishes?*

First Minister

Em, look, polls. I'm not disputing the broad thrust of your question around polls there. I think opinion has changed since 2014. Most, the vast majority, virtually all polls have shown a higher support for independence than was expressed on polling day in 2014. And we've seen since I made a statement around the process in Parliament a couple of weeks ago, we've seen I think we saw a poll in the Sunday Times, if memory serves me correctly, after that showing an increase in those people supporting the timescale I'd set out. We've seen polls before that showing that certainly, your support for the referendum within this term of Parliament is 50 per cent, or thereabout. So polls, you know, are not unimportant, and you know, a politician that regularly cites polls, so I'm not going to rubbish opinion polls that perhaps don't show what I want. But what I know from my experience in the run up to 2014. It's only really when you're in the debate for real around independence that people engage properly in it and begin to absorb the information and make up their minds. That is the period we're going into now, I hope in the run up to a referendum in October next year, failing that a general election. So, you know, I look forward to getting really stuck in, as we are doing, to the substance of this debate to putting forward, as we're doing today, one theme, the positive case for independence. And also taking on some of the more challenging questions that people have about the process of independence, the transition to independence. That's the kind of substantive debate we should be having. We certainly intend to have it and I will challenge anti-independence politicians to make their case on substance for why Scotland should remain within the current Westminster chaos. Paul Hutcheon from the Record.

*Paul Hutcheon*

*Thank you. I'm just to flip Jack Foster's question on his head. If there is a second referendum and the Yes lose it, can you give the Scottish people categorical assurance that there will not be a third referendum?*

First Minister

At risk of, sort of, generating poor headlines that I think I managed the last time I sort of answered a question of this nature, that you know, headlines about my resignation, which I can tell you is not coming anytime soon. All it is I suspect that wouldn't be a matter for me in the future. Look, democracy is never just a simple moment in time. I can't, even if I wanted to, I can't stand here and bind future incumbents of this office.



And, you know, people who will be in Butte House after me. These will be decisions that go in line with, with Scottish democracy. So I'll focus on the path that I have set out and seek to pursue that democratic route to independence. The final thing I would say is, it is a question obviously, based on a hypothetical. I believe very, very firmly and I hope that this will be put to the test in October next year, but I believe very, very firmly that at the next time of asking Scotland will vote yes for independence.

*Paul Hutcheon*

*Do you believe this Referendum will settle the issue once and for all?*

First Minister

That is my intention to settle in favour of Scottish independence. Yes. Andy Phillip from the Courier.

*Andy Phillip*

*Hi. There's already a strong Conservative voters base in parts of Scotland, the borders Aberdeenshire, places like that, who presumably think that they already have a democratic say in electing the current UK government. These people will still be around, still be a fairly strong right of centre, Conservative voters based in Scotland. And what do you say to them the people that you need to convince that this they are suffering a democratic deficit right now?*

First Minister

Well, that's like me saying the in the days when the SNP, you know, when I was first in politics when the SNP only won, you know, a very small number of seats in particular pockets of the country, that that should somehow override the majority decisions across, across the country. Democracy, and a parliamentary democracy, parties that win a majority of - party or parties that win a majority of seats, win the election. That is the, you know, I don't know what other conversion of democracy we're meant to follow. But what I would say to people in any part of Scotland, and every part of Scotland matters, and everybody in every part of Scotland matters. But independence is about ensuring that we get the governments we vote for, that the party or parties that win elections govern us, not the opposite of that. And if the Conservatives in an independent Scotland can put forward a proposition that persuades people to vote for it and deliver a parliamentary majority, then the Conservatives will be in government. If Labour manages that Labour will be in government. If my party manages that we will be in government. That is the whole democratic case for independence, that we get the governments we vote for, rather than now where we have and have had, as I said earlier on for the vast bulk of my lifetime, we've had prime ministers that Scotland have rejected, that's not democracy. So it's about having a normal, vibrant democracy in Scotland that delivers the outcomes that people choose.

Abbi Garton-Crosbie from The National

*Abbi Garton-Crosbie*

*Thanks First Minister. I just want to ask, we had a little bit of drama at the beginning of PMQs yesterday where two Alba MPs were escorted out. So you know, you talked about compromise from the Tories. We don't know who the next leader is going to be. If there is no compromise, will it get to a point where you tell your SNP MPs to boycott Westminster and ask them to leave and I was going to ask as well. Do you know when the next paper is going to be coming?*

First Minister

No, I don't support a boycott. While Scotland is part of the UK it is really important that we have MPs standing up for Scotland's interests in the best way, and to the best extent possible. Now Westminster and the you know, the asymmetrical nature of

Westminster and the democratic deficit means that it's really hard to have Scotland's interests properly represented at Westminster, but people have elected SNP MPs where we're part of the UK to do a job and I think it's important that our MPs do that and they do, do that, and they do that well. The next paper will be, I don't have the date for it yet. It will be later in the summer, probably round about given the, the summer holiday period and you know other things like the Edinburgh Festival kicking in, probably around the time that Parliament is going back after the summer. But there is no firm date for that yet.

Alistair Grant from Scotsman

*Alistair Grant*

*Hi, First Minister, thanks very much. Court papers show the Lord Advocate was clear that she didn't have the necessary degree of competence to sign off on the Indyref2 legislation. If the Supreme Court throws out the current case on the basis that it's premature, as the UK Government wants, would you consider introducing it through a backbench MSP, just so it doesn't need Lord Advocate's sign off just to ensure that that kind of legal issue is at least settled. Can I also just double check on Kieran's question earlier is a date for a referendum next year up for negotiation with the next prime minister?*

First Minister

Look, I've set out the path I want to take. That is a path I'm going to pursue. So I'm not going to start to speculate on the views of a prime minister I don't even know the identity of yet. That's the path I have set out. If somebody wants to come to me and say look, we all have a Section 30 Order and here's the negotiation we will want to have, of course I will listen to that, but I'll set out the path. On the first part of your question. Well, firstly, I'm not going to because I don't have the ability to speak for the Lord Advocate, and you also know the constraints that are on me in terms of talking about legal advice, but I do think just in point of fact, there perhaps has been a bit of a mischaracterisation of some of what was in the referral that was, was published. In point of fact, you know, I made a positive decision not to introduce a bill at the stage and instead to ask the Lord Advocate to refer the matter to the Supreme Court. So what that means is the pre legislative processes that you would go through to introduce a bill were not triggered, let alone concluded. So I think it's important just to be clear on that point. And the reason for making that decision is that this is a contested and genuinely unresolved area of law. So nobody can have confidence that it is either within or out with the powers of the Scottish Parliament. That's what we are asking the court to determine. And had we introduced a bill, just hypothetically, all of those people, political opponents who are, you know, seeking to show about the supposedly views of the Lord Advocate, wouldn't have accepted the lawfulness based on that pre-legislative certification process. They would continue to cast doubt on the lawfulness and it would have gone to court eventually, may have taken a long winded route through the court starting in the court session and going all the way to the Supreme Court. So this in my view is the better route, because more quickly, it gives us the legal certainty. I think everybody including parliament, when it comes to legislate, it has a right to have, and it does that in a way that means politicians no longer need to argue about legality and process because the highest court in the lands is literally being asked to determine that question. So politicians can and should get on with the task of debating the substance. That's what we are going to do. And I think every day and week that passes with the absence of any positive case for the Union will speak louder and louder to the Scottish people about what that means.

Right, who is next? Lukanyo from the Financial Times?

*Lukanyo Mnyanda*

*Good afternoon First Minister. I was actually going to ask more or less the same question based on what the UK Government said this week about you asking a hypothetical question to the Supreme Court and whether then, if they agreed, you would go ahead with the legislation or whether their thoughts mean the process basically waits until 2024.*

First Minister

I'm not going to get into that, because I think it's for the court to determine these matters now. I don't think it's a hypothetical question, there is a bill that we are wanting to introduce. It's a very real question, and also the power that the Lord Advocate is exercising is a very express one under the Scotland Act. So it's not like, you know, if we go back to the case, the so called Keating case, when a member of the public asked a genuinely hypothetical question of the court. It's a different set of circumstances. These are matters that are not for me to determine. They are matters to be argued before and ultimately decided by the Supreme Court. And I think I'm going to, I don't think I know I'm going to respect the right of the court to do that.

David Bol from The Herald.

*David Bol*

*Thank you, First Minister, following on from Alistair's question about the Supreme Court. Do you see any merit in the fact that the UK Government is arguing that the court action should happen at the end of the parliamentary process? Obviously your bill could get amended, it could look very different. So do you see any merit in that argument that maybe the court action will still inevitably happen at the end of the process?*

First Minister

No, I mean, presumably you've looked at the draft bill we passed, you know, you might conclude that we have been planning a route through this for some time. So we passed the framework bill for referendums, what? 2020 or before that, actually, I can't remember but well before the last Scottish election. So all of the detail about the conduct of referendums is already on the statute book. This is a very short bill. And in terms of the substance of it, you know, there's not that much scope for substantive amendments. So I don't think that is a particularly valid argument, but it's not for me to decide. That that is for the Supreme Court to decide and I'm not going to stray further into that. The other thing I would say, coming back to the political sphere I suppose is, you know, we know that the UK Government and Unionist parties are running scared of the substantive debate on independence. All I'd say is looking at the initial response to the Supreme Court action, it looks as if they're running scared of even making a substantive argument on the process. So yeah, I think all of that speaks volumes. But on these issues, it's now for the Court to decide and they will do that in the way that they consider appropriate and I will respect the outcome of the Court whatever it is.

Kieran Andrews from the Times.

*Kieran Andrews*

*Thanks, First Minister. You have used Brexit as a central plank in this argument. In the paper today, there's a section on EU membership. I just wondered how long you think an independent Scotland will take to get into the EU or the EU single market and how long it will be that an independent Scotland would be out of the UK single market and not in the EU single market?*

First Minister

Well, we will set out – so I'm not... attempting not to answer your questions here today. We will set out a paper in full, one of the series of papers on the process of regaining EU membership. We will also cover, you know, transitional arrangements, both the

transition period from a vote for independence, Scotland becoming independent and the process so we will set all of that out and these are issues that we are continuing to develop and work on at the moment. What I will say at this stage is there will be a process for Scotland to go through to be back in the EU. You know that is absolutely the case. As others have said from the European side, there is nothing to say that that would necessarily be a very lengthy process because Scotland has been in the European Union and you know, complies with the *acquis* and of course, we are seeking to keep pace with European legislation on for example, environmental protections right now. But there will be a process and we will respect that process which is why we will set that out in detail. But I think the more fundamental point is whatever the detail of that is in terms of the progress of Scotland back into the EU, independence is actually the only way now of getting back into the EU and the single market and having the ability to trade in that single market that is, what, eight times the size of the UK, while also protecting our trade across the UK. And of course one of the other papers we will set out will be around trade and border issues that arise from Brexit. So in all this debate, I don't want to escape or elide any of these issues. Some of these issues have genuinely complex questions attached to them. That is why this process we are going through is so important, because when Scotland does come to vote on this, it is important that that vote is informed and that people take a rounded view of the challenges of independence but also, as I would argue, the opportunities which vastly outweigh those challenges.

Right. Sorry, I'm losing track here, Chris Green from The i.

*Chris Green*

*Thanks very much, First Minister. Just to go back to Abbi's question on the Alba protest yesterday.*

*Do you think that helped or hindered the independence cause? And if an SNP MP were to do similar, would you support them?*

First Minister

I didn't pay that much attention to it so I'm not going to focus on that. Protest always has a place. SNP MPs, I mean, Ian Blackford was ejected from the House of Commons not that long ago. I can understand... I've never been a Member of the House of Commons as you know, but I can understand for Scottish MPs how deeply frustrating that environment must be, but I'm focused on not protest here. I'm focused on giving Scotland a path to choosing independence. And I think that is much, much more important. I'm not... I'm First Minister. I'm not... my job is not to indulge in gesture politics. My job is to find ways forward on this and on other issues and that's what I'll focus on doing.

Simon Johnson from the Telegraph.

*Simon Johnson*

*Thank you, First Minister. Just going back to Alistair's question. It did say in the referral that the Lord Advocate does not have the necessary degree of confidence that a referendum bill would be within Holyrood's powers. So how is it possible that you could be confident that you could introduce such a bill given that was the assessment in the referral? And secondly, if I may just ask about something else briefly, you said in March that you'd be willing to take in a Ukrainian refugee into your home if needed. Well, we saw the super sponsor scheme suspended earlier this week because of a shortage of accommodation and I just wondered if you'd be now taking that step? Thank you.*

First Minister

And on the first question, I was simply... which I know will always be always important to the Daily Telegraph, I was simply stating a fact. I'm not speaking for the Lord Advocate nor am I trying to sort of negate anything that is in the referral. I'm simply

stating, in fact, because I think some of the reporting was that I had been blocked from introducing a bill. We didn't go through the legislative... the pre-introduction processes. I took a decision not to go down that path, but to go down the path of asking the Lord Advocate so that's just a statement of fact.

Simon Johnson

**[INAUDIBLE]**

First Minister

Well, I don't speak for the Lord Advocate. Neither do you. And therefore I think it's probably important that I just –

Simon Johnson

**[INAUDIBLE]**

First Minister

I'm not I'm not entirely sure why you don't understand this. There is a set out process for the pre-introduction period of a bill. We haven't gone through that. That is just a simple statement of fact.

Simon Johnson

**[INAUDIBLE]**

First Minister

But the other point – well, no, it's not. I've set out why. Because I think this is a better route. But the other point is, and perhaps people just need to move their arguments on with kind of reality now. This idea... the question that you've put to me, is based on, certainly when it comes from opposition politicians, this notion that I'm somehow trying to avoid legal reality. I have literally asked the Lord Advocate to get a determination on the law from the highest court in the land so I'm not trying to escape whatever turns out to be legal reality here. I'm actually trying for the benefit of all of Scotland to get clarity on that. So I think some of these arguments are perhaps a little bit dated given the developments we've seen in the past couple of weeks. On your second question, I've always said and say again, if that is an appropriate thing to do, I will always play my part. I think I've also said, you know, I'm not sure that living with the First Minister for somebody seeking refuge given the scrutiny and the publicity around that would be something people would want to do. But that is something that I will continue to consider on an ongoing basis. My job as First Minister, though, is to make sure that we are not just giving refuge to one person from Ukraine, but that we're able to give refuge to thousands of people from Ukraine. Regrettably, we've paused the scheme, hopefully temporarily, in order to ensure that those already here and those who have visas and have the right to come here are supported into permanent accommodation, not just temporary accommodation. But that actually has come from the fact that, you know, there are 7,000 Ukrainians, around about 7,000 already in Scotland. That is more than double the 3,000 that we initially indicated we thought we would be able to support and of all of the visas granted in the UK, not all of these have arrived yet of course, but of all of the visas, you know, Scotland with eight per cent of the UK population, 20 per cent of all visas are for people who want to come to Scotland. So Scotland is more than playing our part within the UK and I think it's really important that we continue to do so but that means ensuring that we support people from temporary accommodation into permanent accommodation. The pause will allow us to do that and then hopefully, in months to come, give refuge to even more people. Rachel Watson from the Sun.

*Rachel Watson*

*Thank you, First Minister. You've criticised the Conservatives for concentrating on internal battles while there's a cost of living crisis impacting families across the UK at the moment, but is that not a bit hypocritical when you're here talking about independence, how you're going to get a referendum and have your government working on these documents? And also, you've turned a lot of your political attack lines on Labour today and in recent days – are you concerned about a Labour Government and what that could mean for your independence push?*

First Minister

No, I'm not particularly concerned about Labour, I'm just trying to, sort of, make sure my views are known across the range, but I think it's... Well, people of Scotland will make their views known on Labour, and Labour seems intent on pursuing a position in relation to Scotland that has relegated it to, you know, third place in Scottish politics. It's entirely up to Labour if they want to continue repeating the mistakes of the past, be my guest, but I don't think it is going to go down well in Scotland. And on the first part of your question, no, I don't accept that. You know, some internal Tory leadership contest that has arisen out of utter chaos and is paralysing the UK Government and the UK at a time of such need across the country is a world away from having a democratic debate about how Scotland equips itself with the resources, the powers and the levers to better address challenges like the cost of living. Independence is not abstract; independence is about how we build a good economy; it's about how we protect public services; it's about how we ensure our place in the world and trade across the single market. So it is about how we stop a situation, or move on from a situation where Scottish governments so often are trying to address these issues with one hand tied behind our back at best and equip the Scottish Parliament with the powers we need to properly address all of these issues.

Michael Blackley. Michael. Yeah.

*Michael Blackley*

*Thank you. If I could just return to the issue of the Supreme Court; you're making clear today that you need the legal clarity from the Supreme Court before introducing and progressing independence referendum legislation, so what does happen, just to be clear, if the Supreme Court agrees with the UK Government that it would be premature to make a ruling at this stage? Will you really progress legislation without that legal clarity from the Supreme Court?*

First Minister

Well, firstly, I'm not just making that clear today, I made that clear two weeks ago. I'm sorry if it's taken a little bit of time for the Daily Mail to catch up with it, but there we have it. And, look, I'm going to let the court decide these issues now. I'm the one who is not just seeking a democratic path forward for Scotland, but a democratic path that is undeniably and indisputably lawful, and, therefore, I'm going to let the court decide and I will respond to, you know, whatever the outcomes of that are at appropriate moments, but I think having asked the Lord Advocate to ask the highest court in the land for a determination, it's important and appropriate to allow the Supreme Court to do its work. Right, I think that now concludes questions, in which case can I thank you all very much for your attendance.

**[END]**

3. Two emails from Comms staff with notes of initial media coverage of press conference to launch 'Building a New Scotland' paper, *Renewing Democracy through independence*. 14 July 2022

From: [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>  
Sent: Thursday, July 14, 2022 3:01 PM  
To: [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans <CabSecJV@gov.scot>  
Cc: [REDACTED – s.38(1)]gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; Brian Dornan <Brian.Dornan@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; James Hynd <James.Hynd@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@socialsecurity.gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; Communications MMU <CommunicationsMMU@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; Lloyd E (Elizabeth) <Elizabeth.Lloyd@gov.scot>; Emily Mackintosh <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Ross Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; Kate Higgins <Kate.Higgins@gov.scot>; Communications First Minister <CommunicationsFirstMinister@gov.scot>  
Subject: RE: Media monitoring copylist - paper 2 launch

To update:

BBC Reporting Scotland Lunchtime news: [BBC iPlayer - Reporting Scotland - Lunchtime News: 14/07/2022](#)

Nicola Sturgeon said Scotland faces stark democratic deficit, as she set out her latest paper for independence (00:37 – 02:55)

BBC News at One: [BBC iPlayer - BBC News at One - 14/07/2022](#)

FM has criticised refusal by the Westminster Government to allow another independence referendum. Nicola Sturgeon said Scotland is facing significant and increasing democratic deficit. She spoke as she launched the second paper in a series aimed at making a refreshed case for independence (20:53 – 21:43)

Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Donald Cameron said the first minister "knows the vast majority of people in Scotland don't want another divisive independence referendum next year".

He added: "They want her government focused on tackling the global cost-of-living crisis, helping our NHS to get through the ever-increasing backlogs in treatment and supporting our post-pandemic recovery.

"Yet, instead of getting on with the job at hand, she is using her official residence to spout SNP propaganda, which will only paralyse Scotland with years of bitter division and distraction.

"The nationalists are typically only interested in standing up for the democratic rights of those who agree with them."

Scottish Labour MSP Sarah Boyack said the first minister's "increasingly desperate attacks" on Labour were a "tell-tale sign that her worst fear is a Labour government booting out the Tories out of office and building a better UK for everyone".

Ms Boyack said: "When people across Scotland are crying out for help with the cost of living crisis, precious government time and energy is being poured into the SNP's endless attempts to whip up division.

"The last paper was nothing but fantasy economics and baseless promises of jam tomorrow, without a shred of clarity on the unanswered questions plaguing the SNP's reckless plans or any attempt to use the powers they have now."

From: **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>

Sent: 14 July 2022 12:46

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans <CabSecJV@gov.scot>

Cc: **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]gov.scot**>; **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>; Brian Dornan <Brian.Dornan@gov.scot>; **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>; **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>; **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>; **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>; **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>; James Hynd <James.Hynd@gov.scot>;



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[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED –  
s.38(1)]@socialsecurity.gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>;  
[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>;  
[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; Communications MMU  
<CommunicationsMMU@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>;  
[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>;  
[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; Lloyd E (Elizabeth)  
<Elizabeth.Lloyd@gov.scot>; Emily Mackintosh <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Ross  
Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>;  
[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; Kate Higgins <Kate.Higgins@gov.scot>;  
Communications First Minister CommunicationsFirstMinister@gov.scot  
Subject: Media monitoring copylist - paper 2 launch

Good afternoon all,

Starting off a thread monitoring media response to this morning's press conference. Latest PA copy at time of writing attached, with summary of other content seen and reaction below.

- BBC News and Scotland channels did not take the feed live on TV, though BBC Network has since run a 3 minute (approx.) clip at 1233.
- BBC online has a live stream of the press conference and live blog running, taking the paper as it appeared on the website and covering the FM's statement and following question and answer session. [Next PM will shift further to the right - Nicola Sturgeon - BBC News](#)
- STV live streamed FM's statement on their web coverage [Watch LIVE: Nicola Sturgeon sets out 'democratic case' for Scottish independence | STV News](#)
- *Record* online coverage takes Lib Dem an Scotland in Union comments, at foot of email... [Nicola Sturgeon insists Scots have 'right to change their minds' on independence following 2014 referendum - Daily Record](#)
- [Nicola Sturgeon: Next PM will shift further to the right says First Minister as she launches indyref2 paper | Edinburgh News \(scotsman.com\)](#)
- [Sturgeon: Independence is 'essential' as UK faces shift to right under new PM \(yahoo.com\)](#)
- [Nicola Sturgeon launches second independence paper on 'renewal' | The National](#)

Wendy Chamberlain, Scottish Lib Dem deputy leader, said: "It's strange to read a document that declares that 'devolution has been good for Scotland' and then announces its author's intention to throw away the benefits of pooling and sharing that we get from being part of the wider UK.

"Rather than spending taxpayers' money on a series of vanity publishing exercises, the Scottish Government should be putting every penny to work to help people with the cost-of-living crisis."

Pamela Nash, chief executive of Scotland in Union, said: "Nicola Sturgeon has absolutely nothing new to say when it comes to her plot to break up the UK.

"The Scottish public will have looked at this stunt and concluded it was a complete waste of time and resources. This announcement was merely a run-out of all the usual grievances aimed at stoking up resentment and division."

Many thanks,

**[REDACTED – s.38(1)]**

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**[REDACTED – s.38(1)]**

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Senior Media Manager: FM, DFM & COVID Recovery

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This inbox is not always monitored during the evening, over weekends or on public holidays

Out of hours press queries: 0300 244 4000 |

**4. Transcription of First Minister Nicola Sturgeon opening speech. Press conference for launch of 'Building a New Scotland' paper, *A stronger economy with independence*. Bute House, Edinburgh. 17 October 2022**

**INTRO**

Good afternoon.

Thank you very much for joining me today. Before I turn to the substance of today's publication I will comment very briefly on the Chancellor's statement.

Firstly. And perhaps most importantly I very much hope for the sake of people's mortgages and living standards, the statement from the Chancellor earlier will deliver some stability in the markets. However to say that this is now a UK Government and Prime Minister without a shred of credibility is an understatement. Indeed it is perhaps a sign of how badly broken UK politics is that the Prime Minister's resignations had not already been tendered.

I also reflect as first minister that if I had given into demands made by Tories and indeed some commentators on the day of the mini budget to match the UK Government's tax plans, I too today would be dealing with something of a financial disaster. It should, I think be a relief to everyone across Scotland that the Scottish Government did not act so rashly.

It will also be galling, I think, that the one measure that the Prime minister has repeatedly cited to effectively justify the market turmoil of recent weeks – the energy price cap – has also now been curtailed, leaving many people and possibly many businesses – without the support with energy bills that they were before today expecting. There's no doubt this is a self-inflicted crisis for Liz Truss and it is humiliating in a quite unprecedented way in terms of the climb-down. I think the sooner this prime minister and indeed this entire Government departs office, the better that will be for everyone.

Let me turn now to something that I hope is more optimistic in laying out an alternative for Scotland.

Now, I have a lot of detail that I want to cover today so I would ask people, particularly the journalists in the room to bear with me. Once I have finished

speaking however I will give every journalist in the room who wants to the opportunity to ask a question.

In today's paper, we make the economic case for independence.

Fundamentally, we argue in this paper that a stronger, fairer, more sustainable economy is more possible for Scotland with independence, than it ever will be with continued Westminster control.

By combining Scotland's many economic strengths and abundant resources - particularly our vast renewable energy potential - with the policy levers that come with independence;

An economic model built on social partnership;

And good, stable governance;

We can build a wellbeing economy that works for all.

We also address in this paper key questions on currency, fiscal sustainability and trade, and I will say more on these topics shortly.

In 2014, the choice before the Scottish people was framed by Westminster parties as the strength and stability of the UK on the one hand, and the uncertainty of independence on the other.

The reality in the years since has been very different.

It is glaringly obvious now that the UK does not offer economic strength and stability, or financial security.

On top of an already crippling cost of living crisis, calamitous decisions – In recent weeks- taken by a government Scotland did not vote for have sent mortgage rates through the roof and brought pension funds to the brink of collapse.

It is now very clear that we also now face another round of austerity cuts that will damage our public services - perhaps existentially; push more people into poverty; and further shred the safety net that is so essential to any decent society.

So that is the so-called 'certainty' that continued Westminster governance now offers us.

And while recent events have brought this into sharper focus, this is a crisis long in the making.

And it is not a temporary phenomenon.

The UK economy is in long term decline.

The UK economic model is failing – and failing badly.

The facts speak for themselves.

The UK is poorer than many of its international comparators.

Indeed, as the first paper in this series demonstrated, it is substantially poorer than independent European countries comparable to Scotland.

It has lower national income per head.

Wider inequality.

Higher rates of child and pensioner poverty.

And lower productivity.

More and more the UK looks like an outlier in economic policies, performance and social outcomes.

Brexit of course has turbo-charged these trends.

Over time - and compared with EU membership - Brexit will wipe billions of pounds from the Scottish economy and the tax revenues that support public services.

Yet - inexplicably - all the main Westminster parties now back it.

There is no route for Scotland - as part of the UK - back to the EU, or to the single market or customs union.

If we stay as we are as part of the Westminster system, the outlook for Scotland is this -

Austerity.

Low growth.

Wages and living standards stagnant - at best.

High - and growing - inequality.

Rising rates of poverty.

Economic damage, reduced trade and narrowed horizons as a result of Brexit.

All of it exacerbated by increasingly dysfunctional Westminster decision-making.

The price of this for people across Scotland will be heavy.

However, I know that there are many people who, even though they agree with that analysis, still have big - and fair - questions about independence.

Questions like -

Why now, in these tough times?

Is a stronger, fairer economy really possible with independence?

What currency will we use? How will we deal with any debt and deficit we inherit?

How can we protect trade across the UK if we are back in the EU?

This paper addresses these questions.

Openly and frankly.

First, why now?

There is an understandable human instinct to hunker down in the face of a storm and hope for calmer times.

But for the UK this is not just a passing storm.

The UK economy is fundamentally on the wrong path.

And there is no real alternative on offer within the Westminster system.

The establishment consensus on Brexit - despite the harm it is causing - illustrates that.

For Scotland, not being independent means we are being dragged down the wrong path too: a path people here did not vote for.

To build a more stable, sustainable economy - with fairness and human wellbeing at heart - independence is essential.

And that's the fundamental point we make in this paper.

Independence is not an abstract argument separate from people's daily lives.

It has at its heart the ambition - and crucially, it equips us with the essential tools - to build a fairer, wealthier, greener, happier country.

I know, however, that it's not enough to show that the UK economic model is failing. Even though it demonstrably is.

We must demonstrate that independence offers a better alternative.

Independence is not a miracle cure.

There are no guarantees of economic success for any country.

For Scotland - like every other independent nation - our success will depend on the quality of the decisions we take.

It will be hard work.

But this paper sets out the reasons for believing that we can succeed.

After all, we know that for other independent countries of our size, or smaller, independence already works.

Why would it not for Scotland?

Especially as we have so many economic strengths that many of them don't.

Vast renewable energy resources.

Internationally competitive industries: from food and drink, to technology, from tourism to life sciences and the space sector.

More world class universities, proportionately than almost any other country on the planet.

A creative, skilled and highly educated population.

The policy tools we get with independence will allow us to make the most of these strengths.

As in any democracy, different governments will make different choices.

But in this paper, we set out some of the opportunities that the economic powers of independence will open for us.



For example, with powers to reform the energy market, we could ensure that our renewable resources deliver security of supply and lower costs - while also tackling the climate emergency.

We could ensure fairer work.

European style labour market policies, in place of Westminster anti-trade union laws, can bring government, business and trade unions together in a social partnership, underpinned by greater worker involvement and stronger collective bargaining.

This is the kind of approach increasingly championed by organisations like the OECD as the best route to high wage, productive economies that are sustainable and more inclusive.

With employment law powers, we could do more to tackle the gender pay gap and age discrimination - ensuring, for example, that young people receive the same minimum wage rate as everyone else.

It is an approach based on human wellbeing - lifting people up so that they can contribute fully, not waiting for wealth to trickle down while the inequality gap grows.

With independence, we can re-join the EU and be back inside the world's biggest trading block.

As an EU member state in our own right we would, for the first time, be in a position not just to benefit from EU trade deals, but help shape them.

We would have an immigration policy tailored to our needs.

And we would have the stability of knowing that the governments making the decisions that shape our economy have actually been elected by us.

These are just some of the opportunities independence would open up.

Another - overarching - question I know people have though is this one.

How do we get from here to there?

In this paper, we take that head on.

As the events of recent weeks have indeed underlined - whether we like it or not - fiscal credibility and market confidence are essential to the wellbeing and living standards of all of us. That understanding is central to the approaches we set out.

Firstly, we describe in this paper the new financial institutions that will be required to help ensure such credibility and confidence.

On that, it is worth noting that we are so much more advanced than in 2014.

Back then, Scotland didn't have its own tax or social security agencies.

We do now.

Indeed, there have surely been few, if any, nations in history better prepared for independence than we are.

To add to those institutions already in place, we would create an independent Scottish Central Bank, a Debt Management Office, and significantly strengthen the Scottish Fiscal Commission so that it effectively replicates the Office for Budget Responsibility.

These institutions would operate independently of government and help ensure financial stability, transparent economic forecasting and performance monitoring, and a responsible, purposeful and efficient use of borrowing powers.

Second, we address the issue of currency.

We confirm that the policy of the Scottish Government is to establish a Scottish pound.

We would seek to do this as soon as practicable.

The precise timing would be determined not by a fixed timetable, but by a set of objective requirements and criteria, guided by advice from the central bank, and subject to a decision by Parliament in the overall interests of the country.

This paper sets out in detail a careful and responsible phased approach, as well as the arrangements necessary to support a new currency and, in the shorter term, our continued use of sterling.

The paper also sets out the approach we would take to securing fiscal sustainability.

Again, this recognises the vital importance of confidence and credibility in public finances.

The deficit and debt an independent Scotland will start out with will be derived from and influenced by the overall UK position.

In the case of debt, it will also be determined by negotiations that follow a vote for independence.

As was established in 2014, Scotland would not have legal responsibility for UK debt.

We do, however, in my view, bear a moral responsibility.

In light of that, and our desire for strong future partnership between Scottish and UK governments, we would seek a fair settlement on both debt and assets.

Now given the turmoil engulfing the UK's finances at this time, it is not possible to make an estimate of our starting fiscal position - though the IFS has suggested that in 2022/23, Scotland's deficit is likely to be similar to or lower than the UK's.

We do confirm that we would set clear fiscal rules to put and keep public finances on a sustainable path.

We would intend these to align with the broad principles of the European Growth & Stability Pact, which is currently being reformed.

We intend to have fiscal rules that keep day to day spending within sustainable limits and debt on a sustainable path, but still permit governments to properly support public services and borrow to invest.

We reject austerity as both morally wrong and economically counter-productive.

Further, we do not accept that austerity is necessary in a country as wealthy as Scotland, and with our abundance of resources.

It is, ultimately, the creation of a sustainable, inclusive economy that delivers fiscal sustainability.

Neither austerity nor tax cuts for the wealthiest will deliver that. It will come instead from investment in people and infrastructure.

That is why we propose in this paper the Building a New Scotland Fund.

Oil and gas is a declining asset, and our obligation to the planet means that we must move away from fossil fuels as quickly as possible.

But oil and gas can't be switched off overnight, so Scotland could benefit from these revenues for some time yet.

If we invest remaining oil revenues - and use our new borrowing powers responsibly and for a purpose - we can invest up to £20 billion in the first decade of independence.

This investment will help accelerate the transition to net zero and transform communities.

And crucially, it will help kick start the inclusive growth that will help get our newly independent nation on a fiscally sustainable path, while building the fair society we all want.

Lastly, the paper considers the issue of borders and trade.

Although we will publish a further paper later in this series specifically on European issues.

There are two important points to underline at the outset.

Firstly, independence opens the door to Scotland rejoining the EU and the single market.

That will allow us to grow and diversify our trade in the way Ireland did after joining the EU.

Trade across the UK is important, but that must not be the limit of our ambition - not when we have a market seven times the size of the UK on our doorstep.

Second, Scotland will remain in the Common Travel Area with the rest of the UK and Ireland.

That means any talk of passports to visit relatives in England is utter nonsense.

Free movement of people across our islands will continue as before.

An independent Scotland though back in the EU will also regain free movement across 27 other countries too.

What Brexit does mean, though, when Scotland returns to the EU, is that border arrangements will be required to ensure continued trade in goods and services across the UK.

None of this, none of this is insurmountable - but it does require proper planning.

Most of Scotland's trade with the rest of the UK is in services and we set out the arrangements that will need to be in place to ensure that continues.

As far as manufactured goods are concerned the things that actually physically cross borders, we actually export more to the rest of the world than to the rest of the UK.

Nevertheless, we set out here the mechanisms by which necessary checks can be carried out in a way that allows smooth trade to continue - and makes clear that we would provide support to traders to adapt.

It is important to note that for the purposes of this paper we assume that the UK/EU relationship will be governed in the longer term by the current Trade & Co-operation Agreement.

However, over time it is possible that economic reality - if not common sense - will lead the UK to greater alignment with the single market and to agreements that reduce the requirement for checks.

Now in the time available to me today, and thank you for bearing with me, I've only been able to summarise this paper.

I encourage everyone with an interest to read it in full. It can be accessed at [gov.scot/newscotland](http://gov.scot/newscotland).

In the coming weeks and months, we will publish further papers on EU membership, energy, pensions and social security for example.

Today, though, marks a milestone in the conversation about how we can build a better Scotland. And that kind of optimism I think is very necessary at this time.

There can't be many - if any - who look at Westminster right now and think that this is as good as it gets.

But in relation to an independent Scotland, people want to know – indeed people have a right to know - this:

Can we do better? Do we know how to do it? And will it be worth it?

I believe, with the right vision and a lot of hard work, the emphatic answer to all these questions is yes.

And his paper sets out how and why.

Thank you very much for listening.

[And with that I will now take questions]

**[ENDS]**

5. Transcription of First Minister Nicola Sturgeon Q&A with media. Press conference for launch of 'Building a New Scotland' paper, *A stronger economy with independence*. Bute House, Edinburgh. 17 October 2022

**First Minister**

**Economic case for independence - press conference Q&A**

**17Oct22**

**49m15s**

First Minister

Thank you all very much indeed for listening. I will now go to questions. What I'm going to do is just go through the list of journalists I have in front of me here right now. I'm not trying to put anybody on the spot, though, so anybody who doesn't want to ask a question, feel free to say so. But I will go through everybody on the list so that everybody gets the opportunity, and I will start with Lynsey Bews from the BBC. Lynsey.

*Lynsey Bews*

*Thanks, First Minister. You've obviously set out some of the detail of your economic proposals for independence today in this paper, but do you accept that for voters looking at this document, there's still a great deal of uncertainty because a lot of this would be subject to negotiations? For example, EU membership requires the agreement of the EU, and a trade border with the rest of the UK would be subject to negotiations with the rest of the UK.*

First Minister

No, I do accept that we will have a requirement to continue to provide information and to update information as circumstances change. In some respects, circumstances over which we have no control, the turmoil in the UK right now as we progress towards a choice on independence, and we will seek to do that as fully as we possibly can. Just as we did in 2014, we will endeavour, and I think it's really important that we set out as much information as we possibly can, and that's what the series of papers is seeking to do. And, you know, if you take Europe for example, there will be a paper, as I said, I think, a moment ago, dedicated to issues around European membership. Yes, there will be a process of negotiation that is required there, but nobody with any credibility seriously suggests that Scotland would not be welcomed back into the European Union. And while there would be a process of negotiation, most people who know what they're talking about on this issue are very clear that that would not be a particularly lengthy process. But these are issues that we will continue to update and inform people on. The last thing I would say, though, is we will also be candid with people that there is an inherent uncertainty in the future for everybody; for every individual, family, business and country. There are some questions that no country can answer definitively, because it depends on circumstances and the decisions that are taken, and that comes back to an essential point here; this is not a choice, as it was often framed as in 2014, between certainty



on the one hand and uncertainty on the other hand – the future is inherently uncertain. The question for Scotland is how do we best navigate that uncertainty? And I think that's with governments that we vote for, rather than governments that we don't vote for, pursuing an economic policy based on the values of the majority in our country and harnessing the power of our abundant resources. Independence is not a guarantee of success, as I've said, for any country, but having the powers, the levers, the decision making in your own hands, whether you're an individual or a nation, better equips you to face up to challenges than allowing other people to take decisions for you. James Cook.

*James Cook*

*Thank you, First Minister. Clearly, your argument is that the current situation with the Scottish economy is unsustainable and you want to transform the economy in an independent Scotland. But the current situation, as your paper accepts, involves a huge gap between tax revenue and public spending, nearly £24 billion – much, much higher than the UK average. If you're honest with the voters, as I'm sure you'll want to be, is it not simply a fact that the first years, perhaps even the first decades of an independent Scotland, would require tax rises, spending cuts, vast and expensive borrowing, or a combination of all of those?*

First Minister

Let me seek to answer that question candidly, and I did reference the need for borrowing, in the early years certainly, but most governments in developed countries borrow all of the time for investment and also to cover gaps in... between their revenues and their expenditure and most countries in the developed world have deficits. Now, in terms of Scotland's position, and Scotland's current position, of course, is a reflection of Westminster Government; it's not a reflection of life in an independent Scotland, but nevertheless, the position we inherit is the one we will have to manage. One of the points I made in my opening address is that although we are not seeking, given the turmoil in UK finances right now, to estimate at this stage what the opening position would be, and we will potentially update on that, should it be possible in the months to come, but the current estimate of the Institute for Fiscal Studies is that the next GERS publication, which will cover this financial year, will actually show Scotland's deficit similar to or potentially lower than the UK's... **[CROSSTALK]**

*James Cook*

*You and I know that is oil. That is the current high oil price, and wasn't that a mistake you made in 2014 was looking at that?*

First Minister

I think if you had not interrupted me, you would have found that was actually going to be the next words out of my mouth. Sometimes not interrupting gets you further than interrupting, James. So, that is to do with the oil revenues. But therein lies the choice, because of that, what we're describing here is a windfall. Oil and gas, as we

have learned in previous years, is a volatile asset, and as we look ahead, put aside the price of oil, there are other factors, not least the maturity of the North Sea Basin that means that is a declining resource. So if we take that windfall opportunity to invest in infrastructure, not only can we accelerate the transition to net zero, but we can kickstart the kind of growth that helps us much more than making cuts or increasing taxes would do to grow the economy, and over the medium term, get our finances on to a sustainable path.

*James Cook*

*But that's the point, First Minister, isn't it? You can't have it both ways. You can't invest those... that money in an oil fund... [CROSSTALK]*

First Minister

I'm not trying to.

*James Cook*

*..in the long term, and also say that there won't be tax rises or spending cuts... [CROSSTALK]*

First Minister

I'm not trying to.

*James Cook*

*..borrowing. Well, I'm just asking you, will there not be those things in the short to medium term?*

First Minister

You'll find if I'm able to speak, you'll get better answers than if you just keep talking over me. I am not trying to say we will do both. So, as we use oil revenues to invest, to kickstart growth, which increases the revenues in our economy, day to day public spending will operate within the fiscal rules we set. And these fiscal rules, as they are with any country, is not about delivering budget balance immediately; it's about delivering budget balance over a period of time. And if you grow revenues, that gets you to that, I think, in a better and more sustainable way and in a way that is better for society than the alternatives you talk about. So, for any country, it is about that balance. We are setting out here how we think we can achieve that balance in a better way.

And, incidentally, because this goes to the heart of your question that I would have got to quicker had you not interrupted me twice... I'm only teasing. I'm only teasing. But we've got lots of questions. I am accountable, which is why I'm going to stand here until every journalist in this room has got the chance to answer a question,

unlike some. But the treatment of oil revenues in that way, so taking them out of day to day spending. is actually better for overall sustainability, because you're not allowing your day to day spending to be dependent on a volatile resource. Is this an easy path – for any country right now, and deficits have grown across most countries because of the pandemic – is this an easy path for any country? No, but it is one that we are able, doing it this way, to guide through a sensible approach consistent with our values. Right now, we are facing another period of a UK Government trying to balance the books on the back of the poorest in society through austerity cuts that the Chancellor has just said this morning are coming down the track. So, these are about choices, you're absolutely right about that, but we are making different choices, and independence is essential to allow us to implement very different choices. Anyway, thank you for that interaction. Ewan Petrie from STV.

*Ewan Petrie*

*Thank you, First Minister. I know you said you'd say more on pensions at a later date, but I wonder, it's a big, big issue for a lot of businesses and a lot of individuals, so at this stage, can you tell us who will take on the liability for paying those pensions and how that would work?*

First Minister

The Scottish Government. We said that in 2014. I have said that in recent months in the context of another choice on independence. The Scottish Government will be responsible for paying the pensions of those with state pensions in an independent Scotland, either those who have that when we become independent and for those who become entitled to a pension later on. As with all sorts of things, there will be a negotiation about accumulated assets and debt that will take account of, you know, the sort of funding of pensions over the past, but the responsibility for pensions will be the Scottish Government's. Incidentally, and GERS, which I know everybody's very fond of the GERS publication, it bears this out; even if you exclude oil revenues from Scotland's balance sheet, the revenue that we currently raise in Scotland is already sufficient to cover all day to day devolved expenditure, all social security expenditure, including the state pension. So, we will set out more detail on pensions which will cover the state pension but also the arrangements for private pensions later in this series. The last point I would make on this, though, is, you know, we hear and heard in 2014 a lot of scare stories about a lot of things, and pensions was one of those. It is not because Scotland has been independent that pension funds in the last two weeks have been brought to the brink of collapse; that has been entirely down to a UK Government taking calamitous decisions, and actually getting away from UK Governments we don't vote for taking calamitous decisions is actually one of the arguments for Scotland being independent. Amelia Jenne from Channel Four. Amelia. Hi.

*Amelia Jenne*

*Hi. First Minister, if, as you say, you were to rejoin the EU, do you accept that means a customs border with the rest of the UK? And that will inevitably cause massive disruption to Scottish trade.*

First Minister

So, I accept the premise of the first part of your question, I don't accept the second part, and actually I set that out in summary in my opening remarks, and it's set out in more detail in this paper. Firstly, if Scotland rejoins the EU, of course, we are regaining access to the single market, which is seven times the size of the UK market, and we are regaining access to customs free trade across the entirety of the customs union. That is a massive advantage. And if you look at, and I'm not suggesting that Scotland would automatically emulate the experience of any other country; we have to take our own decisions and earn our own success, but just as an illustration, if you look at the experience of the Republic of Ireland, when it joined the EU back in the '70s, it massively diversified its trade away from what at that time was substantial reliance on the UK market towards the European Union. So, there's an opportunity for us to diversify trade.

What I set out in my remarks, and what is covered in detail in the paper, is that the decision of the UK to be out of the European Union if Scotland is back in it does mean that is a requirement for arrangements to be put in place to ensure the continued trade between Scotland and the rest of the UK, which is important. We look separately at services and goods in this paper. Most of Scotland's trade with the rest of the UK is in services. Some service sectors are not subject to UK or EU regulation, so would continue as is; business training, management consultancy, for example. Other parts of the service sector, we would require under current arrangements allow individual EU states to have bilateral arrangements with the UK, and we would seek to do that. With goods, manufactured goods, we actually export more to the rest of the world than to the UK, which is why getting back into that single market is important. But we would learn from international best practice that, right now, if you look at Norway, Sweden, for example, the use of technology to ensure that these arrangements were implemented in a way that did not disrupt trade between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Again, I'm not standing here saying all of that is without challenge or all of it is always straightforward and easy, but it is not... these challenges are not insurmountable if we do the proper thinking, analysis and planning, which is what we kick off with this paper today. Peter Smith from ITV. Oh, no, sorry, my apologies Peter. Ivor Bennett from Sky, I've just missed one.

*Ivor Bennett*

*Thank you, First Minister. Despite the details of this, these proposals, as you say, they are just proposals. So you'd still be asking voters to take a huge gamble in the event of another independence referendum. So why do you think they would do so and back independence given that the economic outlook now is so much more uncertain than it was back in 2014 and the last vote?*

First Minister

Look, I accept, I have always accepted that the job for those of us who believe that independence is the better future for Scotland is to persuade people of that. We've come a long way in that task but I accept we're not there yet. That's why we are furnishing people, and we'll continue to furnish people, with as much detail as possible and be candid about the areas where either because of the inherent

uncertainty of life we cannot give definite answers, or where certain matters depend on negotiation as will be the case for many countries in many different circumstances. In my view, and I think this is a view probably held by an increasing number of people given not just recent events, but the longer term trends of the UK economy, is the gamble for Scotland is not becoming independent. The gamble for Scotland would be staying part of a Westminster system that is engulfing all of us in financial turmoil right now, is seeing mortgage rates go up and harming people's living standards, but the long term trends are negative as well. So this is about how we equip ourselves with the tools that independence would give us in order to make more of our massive resources. Independence works for countries across the world. Many of the most successful independent countries in the world don't have the kind of resources Scotland has. That doesn't miraculously mean it will suddenly be a success, but it should give all of us confidence that there's no inherent reason why Scotland can't make a success of being an independent country. And now as billed, Peter... sorry, I was about to go to Peter MacMahon. Peter Smith from ITV News.

*Peter Smith*

*That would have been really, really bad for me. First question - not against you, Peter.*

First Minister

I couldn't possibly comment. I'm staying out of that one.

*Peter Smith*

*No, just being prepared so much and then let down. But the proposal, your idea of proposing to continue to use the pound is the point at which an independent Scotland would be most vulnerable. It's been described as like living in a brand new house with no house insurance. You have no control over your interest rates. And interestingly, much of your economic case is built on the opportunities when you rejoin the EU, but you can't do that while you're using the currency of a non-member state. There are responsibilities on new members to fall in line with fiscal and economic policies of the EU and you wouldn't be able to do that if you don't have either the euro or your own currency and control over those aspects and those levers. So what I'm interested in asking, First Minister, is how long would Scotland continue to operate in that vulnerable position using the currency of another country?*

First Minister

So firstly, I would never knowingly let you down, Peter. So I just want to make that clear. And I'll move on to your questions. In terms of... just an aside, it's an important aside but I don't want to get side-tracked, on the EU point where, you know, the point you're making is a legitimate one, but there is nothing that would stop an independent Scotland, or any country, applying to join or re-join in our case the EU before we have our own currency. Clearly, the negotiation around rejoining and the process of establishing our own currency would be processes that we would want to align. But the idea that we would have to have our own currency before we

start that process of re-entry to the EU is not the case. In terms of the more substantive

*Peter Smith*

*It's control over the levers which are part of your currency.*

First Minister

Yeah, but we can get that process underway and then we have a process in which we would be re-establishing membership of the European Union while we were going through the process that I'm going to come on to. Look, you need to... if I was to say anything else, you would rightly say that I was being unrealistic. If I was to say, and there are people on my own side of this debate who would love me to stand up and say on day one of independence, we will suddenly have our own currency. That is not possible. We need to make a transition from where we are to having our own currency and that is what we set out. Now, during that period when we continue to use sterling which we are free to do because it's an internationally traded currency, it doesn't depend on agreement with the UK, we would be in a position of our monetary policy still being governed by the Bank of England. Now that for a transitional period is necessary. But we do not consider that that is a sensible position longer term which is why we are steering the policy of moving to a separate currency as soon as practicable. Now, why don't we put a particular timescale on that? Because we consider that that would be not responsible because one of the criteria for the exact time at which that move is made would be the overall economic conditions and therefore if you tie yourself into a specific timescale, you could end up trying to do it at a time that would not be optimal. So instead, and I appreciate you haven't had the chance to look at this in detail, we set out requirements and criteria that would guide that process together with advice from the central bank and ultimately a decision of the Scottish Parliament. Because of what you have outlined there in terms of that period where we'd be using sterling, we would want that period to be as short as practicable.

*Peter Smith*

*First Minister, I'm just trying to get the... you know, people want information and they want this. You've spent a long time building up to this publication, and you still can't say are we talking two years, five years, 10 years, realistically? Also, I just would like to ask you First Minister, people will... I mean the independence case in 2014 was, many people say, won and lost on the independence case for the economics of an independent Scotland. People can now see what your plan would be for the economics of an independent Scotland and you are determined to let the people of Scotland have their say either in a referendum or a de facto referendum. If they reject it, will you concede defeat on this point? And would you resign?*

First Minister

Look, I'm, I think, reasonably standing here putting a proposition forward and as you rightly say, allowing people to look at the detail and come to a view. I think that is the

fair and reasonable way to proceed. I've already been asked and made comment on, you know, what happens to me. This is not about me but I'm not predicating this on failure. I'm predicating this on successfully making a case to the people of Scotland, particularly, not entirely, but particularly given the alternative of continuing part of a dysfunctional UK economy that we make the positive choice to be independent. And, you know, I am confident that at the next time of asking, the people of Scotland will choose that. And if the alternative turns out to be the case, then you'll have the opportunity to ask me about that at the time. And now Peter MacMahon from ITV border.

*Peter MacMahon*

*You can never have too many Peters, First Minister.*

First Minister

Well, I should probably say there can never be too many Peters and there are those who understand why I say that.

*Peter MacMahon*

*First Minister, you said that you want an independent Scotland to rejoin the EU. You've also assumed in this paper that it's likely the rest of the United Kingdom will not be in the EU and therefore you've conceded there will be trade borders. Now your paper says here. Any actual physical checks would likely be only undertaken on the two main trunk roads between England and Scotland or at rail freight terminals. Could you say what those main roads are? The M60, the A1, I presume? And also given that someone like Professor Nicola McEwen has identified there's 154 kilometres of border, 25 crossing routes roughly, mostly minor routes but crossing routes nonetheless, how would you avoid, if there are trade barriers, people avoiding trade and effectively smuggling across the border?*

First Minister

Before I go into that I just want to amend one of my previous asides to you. There is actually only one Peter that matters to me which I think is the important thing to say. Look, we - well, not to try and dodge your question but I've said we will publish further detail around European Union issues. So some of these issues we will develop further from what is in this paper. So in terms about road you talk about, yes. And we are being candid here about the implications of Scotland being back in the EU when the rest of the UK, wrongly in my view, is out. That is a feature of Brexit and the benefits Scotland gets from that, in my view, outweigh the challenges that we would face. We would, and the paper goes into some of the detail on this, we would as many other countries already do, I've used the example of Norway and Sweden, increasingly use technology to do this. And you know, these are, are these challenges that we wish we didn't have? Yes, but that is... if we want to be back in the EU with all of the benefits, many benefits that come from that, we have to overcome these challenges. It is possible to do, in my view, with proper planning and being open and candid with people as we will be.

*Peter MacMahon*

*But there will be border checks on the England Scotland border?*

First Minister

We will have to have arrangements in place for the transport of goods. I've already set out the difference between services and physical, manufactured goods. But let's not lose sight of the two things. Firstly, with proper planning, the ability to do that in a way that doesn't disrupt trade. Trade between Scotland and England is important. Trade between England and Scotland is important to England. But that should not be the limit of our ambitions. We have a market seven times the size of the UK on our doorstep and we should be seeking to put arrangements in place that allow trade across that. That is the first point to make. So these arrangements, I believe, can be done in a way that doesn't disrupt trade but the benefits we get from that, I think, outweigh the challenges that will come from it. Alan Zycinski from Global.

*Alan Zycinski*

*One on pay deals from me. So NHS workers for example, your ministers have in recent times spoke about wanting to go further with offers, offer more, but they're constrained because of Westminster's handling of finances. They say they don't have the economic levers. In theory your independence plan would change that. So could you commit now to offering these workers more if you get independence?*

First Minister

Well, I mean, obviously individual pay negotiations, you know, and it would be actually going against the spirit of pay negotiations to sort of look, you know, a year, two, three years ahead and say what we would be having on the table then. But the sort of principle of your question is right. So right now what is the constraint on the Scottish Government? We have effectively a fixed budget. That budget has been eroded by inflation since we set it. We don't have the ability to increase income tax mid year so we can't even if we wanted to get extra revenue through that, and we don't have the power to borrow for day to day expenditure. So our hands are tied. We have to fund pay deals from within the fixed, and in terms of value, declining budget that we have. With independence, we will be in a way as previous questions have covered, in a way that will pose its own challenges, but we will have access to all the normal economic and financial levers that other independent countries have. We will still have to make choices about, you know, do we think this area is more important to spend money on for the purposes of this question, public sector pay deals versus another area we could spend money on. So the difficulty of the choices is still there but we have the levers to make those choices at our own hand rather than being constrained by decisions that are taken elsewhere. Craig Paton from PA.

*Craig Paton*



*Thanks First Minister. Just to come back to the issue of currency. It says here one of the criteria for moving to the Scottish pound is that Scotland is fiscally sustainable. What does fiscally sustainable look like in terms of this and what measures can be put in place to make sure that this transition period doesn't go on and on?*

First Minister

Well, as I said, I think, in response to James or Peter. I can't remember which one. Fiscal sustainability is not about an overnight balancing of the budget for any country. It is about you know assessed by the institutions that we've spoken about here, a central bank, the beefed up Scottish fiscal commission, you know, assessed by them that we are on a medium path to fiscal sustainability, both in terms of deficit and the path of debt. And that would be, these would be judgments that would be informed for Parliament who would take the ultimate decision by the independent assessments of these institutions. The point we're making in this paper is that for any country, being fiscally sustainable is, particularly in the times we live in right now, challenging. But as we've learned in the UK in recent weeks, it is also essential. How you achieve fiscal sustainability is the key choice that you have to make. We are setting out here the way in which, or the levers we would have to use borrowing responsibly, but also use the windfall of oil and gas with our responsible borrowing powers to invest over the first decade to kick-start the growth that grows the revenues to help us on that path to fiscal sustainability. Kieran Andrews from the Times.

*Kieran Andrews*

*Thanks First Minister. Just to come back to Peter MacMahon's point just so we don't get too confused. I wondered... you talked about technology and the paper mentions technology, improvements in technology as being the key to solving the goods crossing the border. I just wondered what kind of technology because it was an argument we heard an awful lot from the Leave campaign in 2016 that unspecified technology would lead to border crossings and I think everyone can agree that hasn't happened.*

First Minister

So, we're not asking anybody to take unspecified things. We've set out the initial analysis of what would be required in this paper. As I've said before, we will supplement that in future papers. But if you look at a trend across the world right now, and the European Union itself is looking at this, the single trade window model; Norway and Sweden, as I've used that a few times, not because it's the only example, but it's perhaps one, you know, close, relatively close to home – it uses technology. So, we will detail more of this. I think you put your finger, I think, on a key point of distinction between what we are seeking to do and how those who prosecuted the Brexit argument went about things. You know, we've already, in these three papers, probably published infinitely more detail than was published in the entirety of the Brexit referendum. We are intent on setting out as much detail as we possibly can to inform these decisions. Ultimately, there will be... it will be a decision for people in Scotland to weigh up and take, but the process we're going through right now is intended to fully inform it.

*Kieran Andrews*

*Sorry, but there's no detail here, it just says technology,*

First Minister

What I've said is we have set... we're setting out here, so we've done in this paper the analysis of Scotland's trade flows, the services and goods distinction that I have talked about. With goods, we've got trading goods from Scotland to England. There's also, which is set out here, the additional issue of goods that are intended from Scotland to the international market that transit through England; we set out the broad approaches that other countries take, and we are in a process of looking at that international best practice as we design how this would work for Scotland. And that will be detailed, it will be set out in more depth in a future paper in the series. Alistair Grant from the Scotsman.

*Alistair Grant*

*Hi, First Minister, thanks very much. Just on the issue of borders again, and these... the kind of, the claim that any actual physical checks can be limited, likely limited, to these two main trunk roads; does that mean that there wouldn't be, as far as you're concerned, any other physical checks on those remaining 20 something routes into Scotland? And how would you manage things like queues and backlogs on those two routes?*

First Minister

That is what we're saying in this paper. You know, I don't want to just repeat myself of what I've already said. We're setting out in this paper the broad approach that we would take, which we will supplement with more detail on exactly these points you're talking about later in the series. Chris McCall from the Daily Record,

*Chris McCall*

*Hi, First Minister, thanks very much. Events of recent weeks have shown how important it is for a country to have access to a central bank to protect things like pension funds. Do you accept that Scotland would be at risk of market volatility for however long it relied on the Bank of England to set monetary policy?*

First Minister

I'm not sure market volatility will be a particularly effective scare tactic for the no campaign in any future referendum, but that's just an aside before I come on to the detail. The period in which we use sterling, monetary policy will continue to be governed by the Bank of England. If that monetary policy is out of sync with Scotland's interest, then that will be one of the factors, as you see in the requirements and criteria we set out that will determine the timetable for moving to a

separate currency. In the period where we use sterling, the bank, the central bank of Scotland will have lender of last resort functions for the financial sector. It will build up its remit as we move into a separate currency, so even in that first phase, it will require to hold sterling reserves, not foreign exchange reserves; that would come later on. Sev Carrell from the Guardian.

Severin Carrell

*Thank you. Thanks, First Minister. Just actually following on from the central bank question; so, your paper is very clear that the central bank will be in operation, functional from day one of independence. But obviously in the run-up to independence, Scotland will still be part of the UK; you've already spoken about the need for the bank to be the lender of last resort for Scotland's financial sector. It'll also have to be a funder of the Scottish Government if things go wrong, and you're also saying it's going to be covering all Scottish current account guarantees to the level of £85,000. So, I have a question, two questions which are linked; firstly, how are you going to amass all the reserves the Scottish central bank needs in the period after independence? What is the estimate for how much money you're going to need to cover all of these liabilities and guarantees you're offering? And there is actually a third, sorry; do you know, as of today, what the cost of guaranteeing all Scottish current account bank holdings would be, to the tune of £85,000?*

First Minister

Okay, on the third question, I want to come back to the third question because I will talk about the detail underpinning that, I probably can't give you an exact number, but I'll come back to that if we can later. On the issue... So, in, as you see in the paper, we set out two phases towards establishing a Scottish currency. In phase one, when we are using sterling, the central bank will not require foreign exchange reserves, but it will require sterling reserves to smooth the payment system, short term liquidity, the lender of last resort for financial institutions, and that will bring me back to your third question shortly. Scotland's starting share of... the population share of UK reserves would be, on current sterling-dollar exchange rates, would be about £12.5 billion, which is roughly approximate to seven per cent of Scotland's GDP, which I think – I'll be corrected if I'm wrong on this point – I think it is slightly higher a percentage of GDP than the UK currently holds in reserves. So, that would give the central bank in that initial phase a sterling reserve stock. As we move into a Scottish pound, the bank would also require foreign exchange reserves. I think the Institute for Government, indeed the paper sets out some of the detail on this, there is no internationally standard rule of thumb for the level of reserves that is required. Different countries hold different value of reserves as a proportion of their overall economy. But in that phase one, a central bank would build up its levels of reserve. And that would be one of the requirements that would determine the timing of a shift from sterling to a Scottish pound.

Severin Carrell

**[INAUDIBLE]**

First Minister

Yes, when we become independent, and you set the central... we would start to establish the central bank after a vote for independence, so effectively in the transition period, so that it was operational on day one of independence. Your third question, which, I think the paper goes into a little bit of detail about this; obviously the size of the Scottish banking sector is actually different it was in 2014 because of some of the restructuring in banks that have happened. So, Scotland has a smaller domestic banking sector now than we did then; our banks tend to be part of bigger international groups. Also, the international regulations for the capital that banks need to hold to mitigate themselves against any financial distress that they get into, the Basel II regulations, which we would require banks here to deal with. So, effectively what I'm saying is I don't necessarily think it is the right way of looking at this to say that a central bank in any country would need reserves for the totality of the value of its banking sector, but that level of reserves would require to be proportionate to that. If we are able to give you a figure for the precise question there, we'll get back to you later on. But I think it is a bit more complex, as the paper sets out, than just that, you know, key number Tom Gordon from The Herald.

*Tom Gordon*

*Thank you, First Minister. Just a little bit more clarity on timescales, please. I know you can't give us an exact day in the calendar when we might move to a Scottish currency, but it seems you might well be able to give us a reasonable minimum estimate, given you have a lot of the preconditions set out here in terms of creating and establishing institutional infrastructure, establishing market credibility, fiscal sustainability; that sounds the work of several years. What's a reasonable minimum?*

First Minister

I'm not going to put a number of years on it for the very reason I think it would undermine the careful managed phase process we're setting out here and one that is overall governed by the interests of the country and the economy... **[CROSSTALK]**

*Tom Gordon*

*But do you know? Have you worked it out?*

First Minister

But that's precisely my point. If we were able to work that out, then we would take a completely different approach to the one we're setting out, which is it will be guided by requirement and also criteria advised by the central bank as we go. For reasons that, you know, I've covered in response to other questions, and the imperfection, if I can use that word, of the period when we'd continue to use sterling, we would want that period to be as short as practicable. So, we want to move to a Scottish currency as soon as is practicable. But by definition, if you're saying that is to be guided by objective requirements and criteria, and then you tried to put a number of months or

years on that, then you undermine that approach. So we will follow the process set out in this paper, which makes sense for the country.

*Tom Gordon*

*Well, there's an obvious follow-up question to that; as Peter Smith was pointing out, you have to have an independent currency before you can join the EU, and you would need several years to establish the credibility of an independent currency. Now, one of the big ticket items in this prospectus is "vote for us and you can rejoin the EU". But if you can't tell us the timescale for the currency, you can't tell us the timescale for rejoining the EU either. Don't you owe voters a reasonable timeframe?*

First Minister

I owe voters what I'm giving them; it's a candid assessment of the challenges and how we would go about overcoming these challenges. Clearly, as I said to Peter, making sure that these timetables were aligned and, you know, people with a lot of credibility on European matters have spoken before about, not the immaterial nature of that process, but the fact that that needn't be a lengthy process. So, yes, of course, we would want to ensure, and part of the reason the paper goes into such detail about the way in which we would establish the central bank, because one of the requirements is the... not just the existence but the credibility of the central bank. So, all of these things, you're absolutely right, are interlinked and that's why it's important that we set out these processes in detail. I appreciate we're setting out the detail today on currency; we will set out in people coming in the not too distant future some of this detail on the process for rejoining the European Union.

*Tom Gordon*

*But despite the centrality of rejoining the EU to your case for independence, you cannot give us a timeframe; you can't say if it's five years, ten years, 20 years.*

First Minister

I hope it would be shorter than all of that, but if... **[CROSSTALK]**

*Tom Gordon*

*Give us a number, then.*

First Minister

No, I'm not, for the reasons I've set out...

*Tom Gordon*

*A minimum number.*

First Minister

It's not my... It's not my responsibility to write your headlines. That's probably not your responsibility either... **[CROSSTALK]**

*Tom Gordon*

*Well, it's your responsibility to put the facts in front of voters – you're not doing that, are you?*

First Minister

And I'm putting facts in front of voters, I'm setting out a responsible process that which we would go through to meet that objective of Scotland back in the European Union. And, remember, independence is the only route for Scotland back into the European Union. Michael Blackley from the Daily Mail.

*Michael Blackley*

*Thank you. You spent quite a lot of time in the 2014 independence campaign arguing against exactly the currency policies that you've set out today; so, why were you wrong then and right now? And is it still the case, as you said then, that businesses are going to face quite considerable extra cost in England and Scotland as a result of having a different currency from our biggest trading partner?*

First Minister

I don't think we were wrong in 2014. I think a currency union would have been a perfectly legitimate, valid and I think it would have turned out to be an effective currency option for Scotland to have pursued. But if you recall, not just the UK Government, but all of the main parties effectively vetoed it in the 2014 referendum, I think at the time, if memory serves me correctly, probably supported by the Daily Mail. So, we're not going to put Scotland's future position into a place where it can be vetoed by a Westminster establishment, so we are setting out a sensible process for establishing a currency and, you know, if you listen sometimes to people in the opposition, they would have you believe that Scotland is the only country in the face of the planet that can't have a currency arrangement that works effectively, which is, you know, patent nonsense.

*Michael Blackley*

*And I think you did say £500 million a year of costs for businesses in 2014. Is that still the case?*

First Minister

I would never want to suggest that the Daily Mail would misquote me, and I'm not suggesting you are, but I'm not sure what you're quoting. If you'd send that to me later on, I'm happy to give you a response to it. Chris Green from The i.

*Chris Green*

*Thank you, First Minister. Given how much of this depends on sort of negotiations with the UK Government post a yes vote, and the EU, would it not be a sensible thing to do to commit to a confirmatory vote on the terms of the deal afterwards, so voters would know exactly not just what you're proposing now, but what is actually agreed after that period?*

First Minister

No, we're going to, you know, stick to the precedent from 2014, the way, you know, these things in terms of constitutional referendums are normally done. I will leave it to others who think an alternative approach would be appropriate to argue that. I think this is the right way to proceed, to ask people in Scotland whether they want to be independent or not, and to furnish them with the information to underpin that choice, and that is what we're seeking to do. Dan Sanderson from The Telegraph.

*Daniel Sanderson*

*Thanks very much, First Minister. Just a follow-up on what Tom was saying, given you've accepted that Scotland couldn't rejoin the EU until it had its own currency, do you accept that that means that Scotland would face an undefined period, potentially a decade or more, outside of both the UK and the EU? And also, given the difficulties with all this, why, and you're clearly a big believer in the EU, why not just join the euro? What is it about that that you don't like? Thank you.*

First Minister

I don't think - put aside my preferences for a minute. I don't think Scotland would qualify automatically to join the euro. So that is... but I don't think it is the right option for Scotland. I think if I may say so I think in your question there that you took an enormous leap of logic. I set out why in terms of currency as we will set out on European Union with respect to the negotiation process, we're not going to put at this stage definitive timelines on that. But that does not take you to what you said there in terms of a timeline. We want these processes to be as short as possible for obvious reasons and you know, have confidence that they can be short periods of time. And I would repeat a point I've already made, there is no other route back into the EU other than Scotland being independent. So yes, there will be a process that we have to go through to achieve that. But that is compared to the alternative of a permanent existence outside the EU, which is what we will have if we remain part of the UK.

*Dan Sanderson*

*Sorry, just to follow up on that, just so I'm clear. If Scotland was using a foreign country's currency, it wouldn't be - it might be able to apply to join the EU but it wouldn't be able to formally join it? Do you accept that?*

First Minister

We want to establish a Scottish currency. Incidentally sterling is not a foreign currency. Sterling is Scotland's currency. It is as much our currency as it is any other part of the UK's. This is not, would not be Scotland using another country's currency. It would be Scotland continuing to use our own currency, an internationally traded currency into the bargain. But for all the reasons I set out including the issues that have been raised around the European Union, we want as soon as practicable to move to a Scottish pound because we think that would be in the overall interests of the economy. Rachel Watson from the Sun.

*Rachel Watson*

*Just again on currency, it says here that the Scottish pound would be Scotland's legal currency, but people would be able to use sterling or other currencies after making that change. How would that work and what other currencies are you talking about here?*

First Minister

That's just a statement of fact, what people can do right now. I don't believe that when Scotland has its own pound people would choose that but people can choose to trade in different currencies right now. So that's no more than just a statement of fact and reality. Hamish Morrison from the National.

*Hamish Morrison*

*Quite a lot this document seems to be kind of predicated on what you've called a positive and respectful working relationship with Westminster during a negotiation period. What are your reasons for optimism for that?*

First Minister

That's a good question actually. I think when Scotland is independent and we have a relationship of equals, as I said, in my speech to the SNP conference last week, I do think that transforms the relationship both in spirit and in detail. And, you know, certainly, as is the case right now, notwithstanding political differences is the way we try to approach our relationship with the UK Government. I think the whole basis of that will be different when Scotland is independent in that partnership of equals but you're right. Any relationship, it takes two to make it work and I hope when Scotland is independent, we have a UK government that is much more conducive to good, positive partnership working. And lastly, I think unless there is any journalist that hasn't had the chance to ask a question, Kirsteen Paterson from Holyrood.



*Kirsteen Paterson*

*Thanks, First Minister. Can I ask if the Supreme Court comes back and says no, it does not agree with the Scottish Government's case are you still committed to fighting the next general election as a de facto independence referendum?*

First Minister

The position I set out to Parliament in June, I think it was, hasn't changed. So let me be clear on that. That said, you know, the Supreme Court is currently considering its judgement following the hearing last week. I don't think there is any point and it's probably not even appropriate for me to speculate on the outcome of the Supreme Court. I think it is fair to say once we have the Supreme Court's judgement, and I hope it will be positive, but I don't know. Once we have the Supreme Court's judgement, I'm pretty certain I'll be standing here answering all of these questions in some detail at that point.

*Male speaker*

*First Minister, what does a general election pose?*

First Minister

I will deal with that eventuality. I'm not in control of that. I hope there's a general election very soon because I want this rotten shower of a government, I hope, out of office. But I am not in control of that. And I will deal with these things as and when they happen. Part of the challenge but part of the responsibility in government and in politics generally is to deal with situations as they develop. So again, if and when that happens, no doubt, I'll be back here, or maybe not in here if it's an election, answering those questions in detail. Did I miss anybody? This is not an invitation for second goes or third goes or fourth goes in some cases. Naming no names. Thank you all very much indeed.

**[END]**

6. Email from media manager with note summarising questions asked of and responses given by First Minister at press conference for publication of 'Building a New Scotland' paper, *Creating a Modern Constitution for an independent Scotland*. 19 June 2023

From: **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>  
Sent: Monday, June 19, 2023 11:00 AM  
To: **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>; Communications MMU  
<CommunicationsMMU@gov.scot>  
Cc: **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>; **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>;  
**[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>; **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>;  
**[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>; **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>;  
**[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>; **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>;  
**[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>  
Subject: RE: Questions from press conference

With thanks to **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]** for help in preparing, here is a readout of the Q&A. I have a full recording in case required.

Many thanks,

**[REDACTED – s.38(1)]**

BANS Q&A, Monday 19 June

1. Colin Mackay, STV

How do we actually get to an independent Scotland?

FM

The preferred option is a legally mandated referendum through the UKG granting a Section 30 Order.

Westminster has continued to block this, so the only way to break this logjam is through building public support.

2. David Lockhart, BBC

Mortgage rates are sky high, the party doesn't feel independence is imminent and faces internal problems – is it not a bit indulgent to be talking about the intricacies of an independent Scotland at the moment? (Also asked Q on Boris Johnson)

FM

It is really important that politicians make good on the promises they are elected on, and continuing to call for Independence was in the 2021 manifesto. We have continued working on an independence prospectus for a number of years.

The Cost of Living crisis is a priority for me and the people of Scotland. There has been over a decade of Westminster imposed austerity, a hard Brexit and a disastrous mini budget not passed by our Parliament. This all caused economic strife.

We don't have these economic powers and fiscal levers in our hands. This is why a written constitution defends cost of living, not abstract. A written constitution will be fundamental to people's rights.

3. Peter Smith, ITV

Question on FFM and polling

4. James Cheyne, BBC Network

Are you being outflanked by Labour on climate change policy?

In Scotland we walk the walk, we don't just talk the talk.

That's why we have things like Scotwind, have created tens of thousands of jobs, and our Just Transition Fund.

The Scottish Government doesn't believe in unlimited extraction, and Scotland's future is in renewables.

5. Alan Zycinski, Global

How does the banning of nuclear weapons square with ambitions of joining Nato?

Our wording is very careful in around how we would remove nuclear weapons from Scotland, which is they will be removed in a way that is safe and expeditious.

We will look to join Nato in the same way that Finland has recently. Which is they have been very clear in its opposition to basing and hosting nuclear weapons.

We will do this in a way that is safe as a global department, through discussions with Nato, its allies and the UK Government.

**7. Email from Media Monitoring with transcriptions of broadcast excerpts of First Minister's responses to TV/radio interviewers' questions about 'Building a New Scotland' paper, *Citizenship in an independent Scotland*. 27 July 2023**

From: [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>  
Sent: Thursday, July 27, 2023 2:20 PM  
To: [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>;  
[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>;  
[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot>  
Cc: Communications MMU <CommunicationsMMU@gov.scot>  
Subject: TRANSCRIPT – First Minister – Scottish citizenship plan – Various – 27Jul23

Good afternoon,

Please see below for transcripts of the First Minister this lunchtime.

TRANSCRIPT – First Minister – Scottish citizenship plan – Radio Scotland – 27Jul23

What crucially, of course, has changed post 2014 is the UK's exit from the European Union. What we're saying is we would, of course, like to rejoin the EU as an independent nation and if you're a Scottish citizen that's part of an independent Scotland that's rejoined the European Union, those rights, those European Union rights are then conferred upon you so you're able to travel, work, live, study in the European Union.

TRANSCRIPT – First Minister – Scottish citizenship plan – Radio Scotland, Rep Scotland – 27Jul23

I was really pleased today to host a roundtable with people who had either been born in Scotland, many who had come to Scotland from other countries, many who'd come to Scotland from the rest of the UK and they all told me that there were far too many barriers put in the way to citizenship for those that weren't British citizens. And we want to create a model that is far more inclusive and welcoming, partly because I think morally it's the right thing to do but also economically because we know one of the biggest challenges we face it is, of course, our demographics, that working age population declining. So we have to make sure if we're an independent Scotland and we have these powers in our own hands, we have an inclusive, welcoming citizenship model that works for our economy too.

TRANSCRIPT – First Minister – Scottish citizenship plan – STV News – 27Jul23

You know, one of the biggest challenges we face is that demographic challenge and therefore welcoming more people into Scotland, giving them citizenship so they can work and contribute, pay tax here, I think, is really important.

TRANSCRIPT – First Minister – Scottish citizenship plan – Clyde One – 27Jul23

We need to do that partly because I think there's a moral imperative but secondly, we have to do it for our economy.

TRANSCRIPT – First Minister – Scottish citizenship plan – Clyde One – 27Jul23

Instead what they're trying to do is shut down any debate on independence, a positive case for independence, and I think that speaks volumes.

Best wishes,

**[REDACTED – s.38(1)]**

**[REDACTED – s.38(1)]**

Media Monitor | Media Monitoring Unit

Scottish Government, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

e: **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**

**8. Email from Media Monitoring with transcriptions of broadcast excerpts of Cabinet Secretary Angus Robertson's responses to radio interviewers' questions about 'Building a New Scotland' paper, *An independent Scotland in the EU*. 17 November 2023**

From: **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**>  
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 2:07 PM  
To: Communications MMU <CommunicationsMMU@gov.scot>  
Subject: TRANSCRIPT – Angus Robertson MSP – BANS EU paper - Various – 17Nov23

TRANSCRIPT – Angus Robertson MSP – BANS EU paper - Forth One, Moray Firth Radio – 17Nov23

We have to be aware that there is another option. We don't need to go on with this self-harm. The only way, though, that we can find a way back into the biggest single market in the world, of restoring our citizenship rights, is to rejoin, and the only way we're going to be able to do that is as an independent country.

TRANSCRIPT – Angus Robertson MSP – BANS EU paper – Kingdom FM, Original 106 – 17Nov23

We know we'd be welcome. We know how we can do it; the big question for us in Scotland is do we want to make that happen. We know we have a majority in the parliament that are in favour of a referendum that's being blocked by the UK Government. I think a referendum will come.

TRANSCRIPT – Angus Robertson MSP – BANS EU paper – Drivetime – 17Nov23

Not only are there significant benefits for people living in Scotland, there are also significant benefits for the European Union. We'd be a net contributor. We'd be able to contribute in so many positive ways, including as a significant renewable energy producer. So, not only is the case strong for Scotland to be an independent EU member state in its own right, it's also about the contribution that we could make to the EU, and I think that would be hugely beneficial.

TRANSCRIPT – Angus Robertson MSP – BANS EU paper – Kingdom FM, Original 106 – 17Nov23

The Scottish Government's plans are to begin as a sovereign state using sterling, and when we're in a position to do so, as quickly as we are able to do so, that we will have our own currency here in Scotland, and we don't have any plans to go beyond that.

**[REDACTED – s.38(1)]**

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Scottish Government, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG  
e: **[REDACTED – s.38(1)]@gov.scot**

**9. Transcription of Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs & Culture Angus Robertson Q&A with journalists at off-camera briefing for publication of 'Building a New Scotland' paper, *An independent Scotland's place in the world*. 4 March 2024**

**The National**

It says as an independent country go directly in the state party, treaties, conventions agreements are signed, ratified. It's my understanding before today that the SNPs position was that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will be signed by an independent Scotland but I don't see this mentioned.

**Cab Sec**

So we're absolutely committed to signing the Non Proliferation Treaty which I'm right in saying I think it was about 50 years old and the NPT commits all member states, including the United Kingdom to work towards nuclear disarmament, we'd be committed to doing absolutely, that.

In this case, you're talking about inheriting treaty obligations. And that's exactly what we would do. So not only would we be upholding what the NPT is there to guarantee but we would be making a statement that together with other northern European countries, most notably Finland and Sweden, who have just been going through a membership process, that we will be a country that does not host and does not have nuclear weapons.

I think it's really important to on the one hand was talking about this as an issue, not overlook the importance of conventional defence at the present time. I don't know how many of you are aware of this, but the United Kingdom doesn't have a single ocean-going capable conventional naval craft based in Scotland, which is an absolutely extraordinary and unsustainable position.

Just at a time when we're aware of the risks that there have been from bad actors where we've seen sub-sea architecture attacked in the Baltic and North Sea.

It's absolutely critical for us to have the essential conventional naval craft based in Scotland, and that is something that the United Kingdom does not do. So we're absolutely committed to doing that. And we're also committed to having the appropriate land and air capabilities based in Scotland, which are relevant for all of our Northern European neighbours and I think drawing attention to our geostrategic location with the North Atlantic to our west, the Iceland Gap to our north and the North Sea to our east, underlines how important Scotland is and for us to have that conventional capacity to do what all of our Northern European neighbours do. And the UK currently does not do.

## **The National**

Sorry, not the 50-year old one on proliferation, the five year one on the prohibition, the UN treaty.

## **Cab Sec**

Well, as a member states of the United Nations, one will be working with all UN partners and countries. And we look forward to signing a broad range of treaties. I mean, in the paper, we haven't listed all of the international treaties because it would be double the length of the document but the SNPs position on nuclear weapons is long established. And our commitment to not having nuclear weapons in Scotland is also well known and understood and as a UN member state, we would be a signatory. We would inherit those obligations for the Non Proliferation Treaty and we would work with others and ourselves on making sure that we don't have nuclear weapons basically.

## **STV**

What would be the timescale for that?

## **Cab Sec**

I think I mean, as soon and as safely as possible as the is the aim that we have, obviously, we want to work closely with our friends and allies foremost amongst them United Kingdom. And I fully expect them to want to retain their nuclear capability so it's going to be a matter for discussion and negotiation one wants to do that.

## **STV**

Do you have any kind of starting point?

## **Cab Sec**

Well, I mean, my expectation is the UK government would seek to move their submarines as a matter of absolute priority.

If you look at if you look at previous examples of nuclear states, who have nuclear assets and other countries, they sought to repatriate them as a matter of some priority.

So I mean, I know some people have written about there being potentially a desire by others to see things for a long time stationed in Scotland. I don't agree to that. If something is such an important weapon system, I'm sure you'd wish to operate that environment where it was 100% sovereign and operational control, that would not be



the case in a base, in which, if you look at the document we're committed, as being joint forces headquarters for Scotland, we require a significant naval base for the conventional craft that we will need to operate in Scotland and so I would fully expect the United Kingdom to move its nuclear submarines as a priority.

We want to do that by agreement, because it's going to be part of a wider process of establishing an independent Scotland and our own defence forces but I am certain that the UK Government will agree with us that once the decision has been made - I totally understand that an advancement, they would rather didn't happen. They don't want to make changes. They'd rather keep things as they are. If they want to change and people have voted for it and we want to be good partners and neighbours. They will understand that this needs to happen.

And so I'm sure that there will be agreement that this is something that needs to be discussed as a matter of priority, and it's something that needs to be proceeded with as the paper points out, safely and speedily and I'm sure that this is what partners in London will do

## **STV**

But you don't have a specific ambition.

## **Cab Sec**

Well, the sooner, the sooner and the safest, the better. I'm not going to be drawn on any specific timescales when it comes to you know with that, or the membership of NATO or have other questions like that understand why people want to ask the question I get that.

You know, on questions like that, I will draw people's attention to how long it has taken Finland and Sweden to join NATO in the last two years. So these things need not take an extended period. And I'm sure that that's exactly what will happen when it comes to changes that need to happen around nuclear submarines.

But you know, there are there are parallel questions that go with that – the operation of important military bases elsewhere in Scotland. Scotland now only has one operational airbase, one airbase and the footprint for the armed forces has been reducing considerably over recent years.

All of these are things that will need to be discussed with the UK Government and it is in the UK government's interest that an independent that Scotland is capable, is able to do what it can and should be able to do as a Northern European neighbour with a land border to the rest of the UK and we want to be that trusted and capable partner working together with the UK Government and other NATO allies.

So all of this new data will be the subject of discussion, and it will lead to agreement and it's in everybody's interest and that should happen as quickly as possible.

### **Herald**

If not Faslane / Coulpourt, where?

### **Cab Sec**

So this is a Scottish Government prospectus for Scotland as an independent, independent country, that where Scotland's defence assets will be and the scale of those assets, and the ultimate shape of the armed forces is something that will be the responsibility of a Defence and Security Review. That's what happens in normal countries.

How the United Kingdom Government will decide on its priorities after Scotland becomes a sovereign state is with the greatest of respect, and I mean that genuinely for the United Kingdom Government. There are options whenever the United Kingdom Government will continue to operate bases elsewhere along the coastline of the rest of the United Kingdom and it will be our responsibility to make sure that we take the defence of the northern third of these islands and our territorial waters very seriously.

### **Herald**

You talk about it happening the speedily and safely but you will be aware that there's no equivalent to the twin sites at Faslane and the weapon store at Coulpourt. So how can you see is it's gonna happen expeditiously? There is no alternative berth right now.

### **Cab Sec**

Well if you speak to defence experts they will say there is a difference between berths and storage and these are two different issues that they will be able to speak to at some length about

### **Herald**

But the twin facilities-

### **Cab Sec**

I understand that but I'm making the point that they are there are two challenges around that for the United Kingdom Government.

But I was just making the first point, I think in all of us is understand the geostrategic priorities of the United Kingdom Government in all of this and I have given that both of the Conservative Party and Labour Party share the same position of wanting to retain nuclear weapons. I'm sure that notwithstanding the obvious fact that they would far rather not have to deal with the moving of defence assets in this case nuclear submarines and the storage of nuclear weapons, no doubt they would rather not have to do that.

But in these circumstances, they would have to do that. And that's what we would work with the United Kingdom Government to do so quickly and safely, but I underline the point again, they will wish to retain 100% operational security over the nuclear deterrent and that is not something that they will be able to do post-Scottish independence. So it's in their interest to work out how best to do that. And we will work with them.

### **Herald**

Given there are three nuclear members in NATO, and the UK is one of them, can you give an example of another NATO country or aspirant NATO country which has proposed disrupting the nuclear ability of one of its fellow members? Would NATO embrace that?

### **Cab Sec**

So there's a number of aspects to this. I have already pointed out I'm sure you took notes at the time that the policy of Denmark, of Norway, of Sweden and Finland, all of these countries is not to host nuclear weapons so we will be a no different to all of them.

### **Herald**

None of those countries has disrupted the ability of the UK, France or the States

### **Cab Sec**

So I'm underlining the point that none of our Northern European nations have nuclear weapons stationed on their soil. I've also made the point that if the United Kingdom Government believes that it wishes to maintain the nuclear capacity of the Royal Navy that it will do so and it's one basis, there is no constant in defence policy more than the change that is constantly going through.

The UK is constantly having to consider basing changes we don't need to tell you what's happening in defence infrastructure across Scotland. Changes happen all the time.

I understand the UK Government would not have to do this. But one of the advantages of being sovereign and independent countries you can actually make decisions for yourself. So rather than somebody making decisions on your behalf that you would rather not happen, kind of makes the obvious point, given we have a majority of the Scottish Parliament who would rather not have nuclear weapons here.

We have a majority of MPs at Westminster, who also don't want nuclear weapons to be here. In a normal country that would then lead to us not having nuclear weapons in our country. And that's not currently the case. UK government's not listening to that democratic voice. The only way in which we're going to be able to do that as a sovereign state.

### **Herald**

My question is also about NATO, given the UK as the founder member. Why should NATO embrace an aspirant Scottish member, who is proposing to live tougher for the UK.

### **Cab Sec**

Look at the map is the answer. The idea that NATO would not be keen to embrace the Northern European nation given its geostrategic location, I mean, point point to you recently the efforts which have been gone to, to seek the membership of Sweden and Finland because of how important it is given the geostrategic situation that currently is in Europe.

The idea that NATO would not wish to welcome a country that wanted to participate, was prepared to to deliver on the 2% spending that is required to be a NATO member state, doing so when the North Atlantic is to our west, the Iceland gap is to our north and the North Sea is to our east just doesn't stand up to any serious scrutiny whatsoever. And we look forward to working together with NATO neighbours and allies, and the answer to your question is the map.

### **BBC**

Isn't the point that it's slightly disingenuous to say I'm going to come and stand under this umbrella, which I'm currently holding. We are holding the nuclear umbrella, we Scotland are holding the umbrella, but want to come and stand under it but actually, we don't want to hold it anymore. Why wouldn't - I understand your point about the map, but you're at the very least, going to it's extremely it's extremely annoying for them. I mean, there might be members who would say, Well screw you to be able to put it bluntly.

### **Cab Sec**

Well, given that our position was shared by one of the former British ambassadors to NATO, Dame Mariot Leslie, it would underline the point that our position is not one that is irresponsible, is not one that has not been thought about.

This has been thought out. This is the norm for other normal Northern European nations. And as I've said, whilst the UK government clearly would rather not want to make changes, in these circumstances it will.

It might have served them better to have made the right decision in the first place - it didn't. So we have the situation that we're in now. The answer to questions one I've given a number of times already, this is the norm for Northern European and nations we want to do nothing more and nothing less than be the first alliance partners, which all of our neighbours are.

### **BBC**

So that would be fine if the world were peaceful and everything was going well. What's your geostrategic assessment of how Vladimir Putin would react to the removal or very least disruption to Trident, would that not embolden his revanchist agenda?

### **Cab Sec**

So I think actually, having a Northern European neighbour that understands the geostrategic situation of Scotland and has the priority of our immediate Northern European neighbour as a priority which the United Kingdom does not is one that I think anybody including Vladimir Putin or anybody else who's prepared to be involved in practices, which are detrimental to our treaty allies, would take very seriously.

I draw attention to the fact, I've made the point already, the United Kingdom does not have a single conventional naval craft that's ocean-going based in Scotland.

Have a look at the United Kingdom's record in northern air policing, which is operated by NATO out of Reykjavik airport, have a look at how little the United Kingdom has taken part in that. Have a look at how the UK deals with incoming Russian vessels, which happens with great regularity they have to dispatch vessels from the south coast of England.

That's not dealing with these challenges as seriously as they should be taken. If you look at what our northern neighbours such as Norway do in relation to this sort of thing, they take these questions very seriously. And that is why the Scottish Government would do exactly the same. We do have to understand what the challenges are. We do need to acknowledge that there are real threats. We do need

to acknowledge that there are bad actors, that is when you are required to have a capacity to deal with them. The United Kingdom does not.

## **BBC**

Just to quickly follow up. There are mutterings about Putin, he might in some circumstances, for example, be prepared to use tactical battlefield nuclear weapons.

That are mutterings to his you know, and goodness knows if you were in the Baltic states you might be concerned about where he's going to go after Ukraine.

Isn't the whole point about weakening NATO by disrupting or removing trident? That it would embolden him to think well, maybe I will use tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield, for example.

## **Cab Sec**

I don't think so. Just again, I draw attention to the real world reality what's been happening in recent months. And what has been happening in Northern Europe is that smaller, medium sized Northern European nations have been joining NATO have been underscoring how keen that they all want to work together.

And I think Scotland should be a part of that rather than subcontracting others, in this case, the UK Government to make decisions about our defence and security in a way which doesn't take the nature of the challenges that we face seriously enough, it's we who say we need better Northern European security. It's not the UK government's doing that. It's record is not good.

I've evidenced that – I've evidenced, have a look at what's happened to the defence footprint in Scotland, have a look at the absence of ocean-going conventional capable craft, have a look at what the UK Government has done in relation to northern air policing, which is where one provides fast jets for interdiction operating from Iceland, have a look at how few times the UK Government has done that.

We need to we need to take this a lot more seriously. And we will be able to do that as a Northern European country in the size of Scotland, which is the same size as Denmark, and same size as Finland and just a bit smaller than either Sweden or Norway.

## **Scotsman**

It's just two questions just following up on what was being discussed. Firstly, do you accept there is a category difference between countries like Finland which doesn't

possess nuclear weapons, and a country like Scotland which would be removing him from them from its territory.

Those are two very different things, you can't really compare them and who NATO would react to them.

And secondly, just on Xander's point about the treaty and the prohibition of nuclear weapons, which is obviously separate from the NPT. I think Nicola Sturgeon did express a wish to sign this previously, NATO has explicitly said that it's at odds with your position.

### **Cab Sec**

You can ask whichever questions you want, we're going round the houses on the position of both of those things,

### **Scotsman**

Would you sign?

### **Cab Sec**

We will inherit our treaty obligations as part of the Non Proliferation Treaty. And then of course, all other treaties are matters for the for the government of the day.

What I have said, repeatedly now, is that we actually want to live up to our commitments, which the United Kingdom shares, which is for nuclear disarmament, working with the international community to do that. And that's exactly what we will do when we are in this position.

I'm saying that we will do exactly what we will do in relation to the treaties we inherit. And all of the treaties are ones which need to be underscored and underlined as a new member state, we need to be a new member state to be able to do that.

### **Scotsman**

Right. So no commitment to sign.

### **Cab Sec**

I've given an absolute commitment that we'll be signing the Non Proliferation Treaty - I'm making the distinction, I assume you understand the point that I'm making about the difference between inheriting treaty obligations and entering new treaty obligations.

There is a long, long list of treaties that no doubt Scotland will wish to sign up to as a new member state, that we will be inheriting obligations under the NPT.

On the other point, we'll say it again and again, and again. What we're proposing to do is to operate in exactly the same way as all of our neighbouring Northern European states, none of them operate nuclear weapons on their soil. All for may have made it absolutely clear that they don't want to do that. And NATO has welcomed them with open arms.

### **Times**

Thanks, can I ask about the EU – there's no timescale for joining the EU in this paper so any, any way you could enlighten us on that would be great, but also can we take from the paper and the way you talk about signing up to the values of particularly the EU that that means you accept you need at some point to A: sign up to the Euro, B: adopt the Common Fisheries Policy, and C: start paying for European students tuition fees.

### **Cab Sec**

So it would've been great to see you at the EU paper launch at Queen Margaret, we went through all of these things at some length, including the length of time EU membership has taken, I think the average is between two and five years, think that was the newsline PA ran with at the time.

And the other questions were raised and answered at that point, happy to point out all of those things from the previous paper that we're not launching today. But yes, we do want to be a member state of the European Union. Yes, that means we will inherit all the obligations around the common policies that the European Union operates. Our plan on currency was underlined in that paper as well. So that's all clear as well.

Yeah, we're talking about with all of these things, trying to segue into today's paper, there is an acknowledgment in this, that there is transition involved in all of this. And that is quite right and quite proper, things do not change overnight.

I would wish that Scotland is immediately independent. That we have our seat at the United Nations, that we have a seat at the top table in the European Union, that we're able to proceed as quickly as possible.



Unfortunately, democracy is being blocked in Scotland at the present time, notwithstanding the fact that a majority of our MSPs and our MPs have been elected with a mandate that we should have a vote on all of these things.

The public will determine when we start that process. And then in terms of the relationship that we will have with the rest of the United Kingdom, and then the other multilateral organisations that we seek to join - the European Union, NATO, the United Nations being foremost amongst them, yes, this will take some time.

But I think given that we have these examples of NATO membership, of European Union membership, and then since the establishment of the United Nations, I think I'm right in saying membership has gone up from just over 50 to the present time. 193. This is not an unusual state of affairs, it has become the norm internationally.

And all we would be seeking to do is do what all other countries have done.

### **Times**

And when you're speaking to all these different partners, not just EU, that we've mentioned, do you think they'll see a Scottish Government lead by the SNP as a reliable party when it's deputy leader talks about stopping out of democratic institutions because it doesn't like that it gets outvoted.

### **Cab Sec**

So on the first point, I think Keith Brown has said it's vital the SNP is represented at Westminster but beyond that, to make a serious point about reliability, the UK Government was not long ago making the virtue of being prepared to break international law.

### **Times**

You think the UK Government is a bad partner and Scotland's going to be a better partner.

### **Cab Sec**

I'm speaking about our approach to things and our approach is that we want to uphold international law and the international rules based order, that's quite important.

I'm just making the point that the United Kingdom in recent years has been prepared to put under threat. And in terms of representation of Westminster and being a strong

voice for Scotland. That is the position of the SNP and when we look back at what Keith Brown was saying last night, and the word that he was using was vital, and I agree with him and say we wouldn't expect another former elected leader of the SNP or Westminster group leader to say otherwise.

However, I think it is fair to say the recent examples of what has happened at Westminster necessitates the thinking of how does one stand up for Scotland's interests, on important issues.

Gaza was one of those where we saw the UK Labour Party and the UK Conservative Party in different ways, conspiring to block a vote on a subject which included wording which they said was controversial - wording that has been used by the United Nations Secretary General since January on the collective punishment of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

So when it comes to standing up and making the point for what is right, ironically, is the SNP that is doing that not just in Scotland's name for actually for a lot of people in the rest of the UK.

[political]

### **Daily Record**

You mentioned obviously Scotland not having a single ocean-going vessel based off of what Scotland does have right now, is two BAE yards on the Clyde with order books that are filled to the 2040s, not at least a Type 26 Frigate programme

So on shipyards do you realistically expect the UK government to continue placing naval ship orders in an independent Scotland and secondly, you talk about in the paper Scotland creating a [???] capability. Can you give me any figures on what exactly that involve?

### **Cab Sec**

So the first answer to your question is yes. And part of the reason why I say yes is because Scotland will be seeking to procure defence equipment from the rest of the United Kingdom.

So it's important that we work together and Glasgow and the shipyards in Glasgow will have tremendous capability not just incidentally building craft to design as required for the United Kingdom but also for other countries as well.

So I think the prize for the yard is to win additional orders and that will include Scotland because as I've already said, we did not have conventional ocean-going vessels in Scotland and we wish that to be the case.

I can see no better place for that to take place than Glasgow. So yes, we absolutely require naval capacity in Scotland and we also require to have those built and I wish that to happen in Scotland.

In terms of the exact shape of capabilities that are required. So yes, maybe there has to have a maritime focus going to where we are and what one needs to do. We've made a commitment. This is this is exactly the kind of thing

[Transcript interrupted]

looked at by defensive security review. That's what the incoming governments do in countries and that's what an incoming, independent Scottish Government would do. But between this paper and the 2014 independence white paper, there's significant details have been given on the shape of that.

We think all that however, needs to go through a Defence and Security Review, given the change there are capabilities if you think a lot about the changes between now and 2014 in remote vehicles and that is subsea as well as, there has been significant change in technology. And so given the fast changing nature of defence capability, that's something that we're going to have to reflect on in Scotland.

### **Daily Record**

Can I just ask as well in the paper talks about national security, intelligence and establishment of a single Scottish security and intelligence agency. It goes on to say, all aspects of independent Scotland's national security will be delivered in line with Scotland's values, could you expand on what exactly spying for Scotland's values means?

### **Cab Sec**

Well, what happens in normal democratic countries is that there is a structure is introduced so that there was democratic oversight of the armed forces, and also intelligence and security services and we will be no different than wanting to do that in exactly the right way.

It is a reflection of the times that we live in that having a capacity which crucially now involves expertise in cyber, where there is a threat internationally as well as domestically, we are required to have that capacity.

The good news is there are many people who have an experience of this and Scotland, what we don't have is a dedicated agency to do that here. That's something that we will require. And because of the sensitive nature of some of this, yes, absolutely. It's something that needs to be on the democratic oversight.

Both of the government but also the parliament and the committee [???].

## **Guardian**

You talked about needing a defense security review. Does that mean that at this stage, you're able to actually specify the type of posture that a Scottish independent defence force would have?

Presumably you're not going to want to fight in Sub-Saharan Africa you're not going to want to have [???] on the South China Sea, but you would want some warfare aircraft, would you want to have a nuclear powered submarine? Would you want to have, I don't know, a tank regiment? Where have you got to? Do you know the specifics? And also, would you imagine that the Scottish Defence Forces want to be a specialist Defence Force fitting in with the UK's specialisms and NATO's specialisms rather than assume you're going to build for every kind of warfare with a single Scottish force

## **Cab Sec**

First of all defence posture, that is absolutely there is conventionally armed non-nuclear, with the primary responsibility for defence and security of the homeland, our immediate neighbourhood, which includes our friends and neighbours, in the Home Nations, and with a particular focus on our geostrategic location, so that will require capable maritime, land, sea and air forces.

That's something that was outlined at some length in the 2014 white paper. I would draw your attention to that. Because it went into all of that in some detail.

What has changed since then, though, is, as I've already outlined, there have been significant changes in terms of the threats but also capability that countries are needing to provide and that's why we're saying in this paper that we think it will require a defense and security review.

At the time off mean for for one thing, which is an obvious point the Scottish Government does not have a defence department defences reserved and that's why we will need to be working with our colleagues in the rest of the United Kingdom to make sure that we have complementary conventional forces because it will be in the interest of the United Kingdom Government, that the government with responsibility for the wider northern region takes defence and security seriously and we are absolutely committed to doing that.

That we will not be seeking to replicate the United Kingdom Armed Forces is, is also a given. But that is something that, all of this is something that needs to be looked at in the round by the Defence and Security Review, which will advise not only on the inheriting of our immovable assets, and those are significant, in terms of fact that we have a we have a significant naval base on the west coast, we have an operating Air Force Base in the RAF Lossiemouth, we have facilities that work Air Force bases have now been changed in in Moray but also in Fife, but we have a reducing conventional army defence footprint in Scotland.

These are also things that need to be put into the into the mix to be considered and discussed and you've got the transition issue as Scotland scales up and the United Kingdom then no longer has responsibilities for defence and security here.

### **Guardian**

No Astute-class submarines, you're not going to take a share of those or seem to have your own submarine force at all.

### **Cab Sec**

So all of the matters about specific capabilities are subject to a Defence and Security Review which is which is, there will be no room for a conventionally armed or powered capability in Scotland. So that answers your question.

### **Guardian**

So when you take on the role of policing the Iceland, Greenland, Norway gap. You have to have submarine assets, or will you use the UK's.

### **Cab Sec**

You don't. So if you look back at our 2014 white paper, I draw your attention to the commitments around maritime patrol aircraft. Maritime patrol aircraft plays a key role in ensruing and I'm sure you know how they operate in terms of the buoys, in terms of having sonar devices to do what it is that they do.

And that's something that was explicitly committed to in 2014. And any maritime nation that wishes to take its offense requirements seriously will be operating on its own patrol aircraft. There's a range of different aircraft that can be used, but we will be taking [???],

### **Guardian**

Final point, this question we did go over in 2014, would the independent Scottish government accept nuclear-powered submarines in Scottish naval bases.

**Cab Sec**

So I mean, firstly, just to point out under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea there is a rite of passage for all vessels bases. So firstly, all types of vessels are able to transit in national international national waters. Secondly, on the basis of nuclear vessels, like our other neighbours, foremost amongst them Denmark and Norway, neither of whom have nuclear vessels based at them, what we are proposing to do exactly the same as a northern European nation.

**Guardian**

But could they visit?

**Cab Sec**

I don't think that they do.

**Guardian**

But could they?

**Cab Sec**

The way it operates is nuclear capable countries choose not to.

**Guardian**

Okay.

**EFE**

So Scotland has ambitions to become a European leader in the space sector, so what is it's plan to ensure space technology is secure from external risks?

**Cab Sec:**

That's a really good and timely question. Scotland is a very significant nation when it comes to the development in, especially of small satellite technology, something of which we could and should be able to read and learn some more of that because it really is very impressive.

And we're about to see the beginnings of drone launch satellite technology from Scotland, again, something which I think is hugely impressive. And given the high tech part of the Scottish economy, I think, has a great future.

But you're absolutely right to highlight that this does have a security element to it. And that's why having a capability in Scotland that can advise the private sector that's developing this technology. That's why it's important. It's also why working together with other allies, I would say foremost amongst them in NATO, the likes of Estonia, who have a real experience when it comes to when it comes to cyber, and in fact we have I think we have the NATO, the NATO cyber security centre is actually based in Estonia.

I think working with them is going to be very important, but it's a reminder of why defence and security really matters. And as a reminder, why normal countries, even though smaller Northern European nations, are the countries that have that capacity have that capability. They're able to do it and there's no reason why we can't.

## **EFE**

So the approach about feminist and gender equality in the paper, can you tell me more about that?

## **Cab Sec**

So we're currently involved because we're trying to help that inform our external affairs which the Scottish Government does exercise. And we've been doing that with a range of NGOs. I'll be happy to get one of my colleagues to provide you the information of what we've been doing already and where we are, as to how we'd be able to help that influence what we would do as a sovereign state that would then amongst other things, have a more significant international development aid programme.

So a policy like that would inform that approach is something that a lot of other, particularly Northern European nations have also been pursuing. We see ourselves very much within the mainstream of that. So we're already doing what we can do within devolved powers. But when we would become a sovereign state and have international affairs, international relations as part of our responsibility, it would help inform our policy in a way that other countries have done but we're very keen to be playing a positive role in that.

## **The National**

Can I ask – I mean this is a lot, you're setting up the SSIA, you're buying tanks galore, planes galore, boats galore. It says you're comparing to Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, defensive spending ranges from about 1 million to 8 million. But

that's for maintaining the armies, isn't it? I mean, setting all of this up, have you looked at costing of that at all?

### **Cab Sec**

So that's why we've committed to the Defence and Security Review, we've completely committed to the costing, which is the NATO 2% target so we asked them to do that.

### **The National**

Again so that's maintaining, so setting a new one up, is it fair to say you currently don't know?

### **Cab Sec**

So it wouldn't be for us to tell people to take part in an independent Defence and Security Review by telling them exactly what they need to do, the whole way through the process.

We've said we want to join NATO, we've said that we want to fulfil our obligation. So that's 2% and spend, about the speed and subject of transitions, as a matter of both for the Defence and Security Review, but also the negotiations will take place with the UK Government.