

From: [Redacted] on behalf of [First Minister](#)
To: [Redacted]; [First Minister](#); [Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs 2024](#)
Cc: [Redacted]; [Ashleigh Gray](#)
Subject: RE: FOI FOI 202400435388 - Ministerial clearance
Date: 05 November 2024 07:32:12

[Redacted],
The First Minister is content.

Many thanks,

[Redacted]

Deputy Private Secretary
Office of the First Minister

5th Floor | St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | [Redacted]
[Redacted]

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

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

From: [Redacted]@gov.scot>

Sent: Monday, November 4, 2024 2:51 PM

To: First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs 2024 <CabSecforJHA@gov.scot>

Cc: [Redacted]@gov.scot>; Ashleigh Gray <Ashleigh.Gray@gov.scot>

Subject: FOI FOI 202400435388 - Ministerial clearance

PS/ First Minister

PS Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs

Purpose

1. The First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs are invited to agree the attached draft response to an information request made under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA). This FOI is due to be issued on **4th November 2024**.
2. This FOI review relates to Police Scotland's investigation known as "Operation Branchform".

Priority

3. **Immediate.**

Background

4. This FOI requested by [Redacted]. In his request, [Redacted] asks:
 1. All WhatsApp and emails mentioning the terms 'branchform', 'Murrell', 'Sturgeon' and 'Beattie' between any Scottish Ministers and Special Advisers between 2 August 2024 and 9 August 2024 inclusive.
 2. When the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and/or the First Minister were first made aware that Police Scotland had passed on a report presenting their findings of Operation Branchform to the Crown Office which occurred on 9 August 2024.
 3. Whether any Scottish Minister, special adviser or Scottish Government official at Director General level or above has met with anyone responsible for investigating Operation Branchform for Police Scotland or their senior leadership team regarding the investigation and if so please state when these meetings have occurred, the minutes of these meetings and the

attendees of those meetings.

5. In response to questions 1 and 3, having conducted appropriate and proportionate searches for information in line with the requests, the Scottish Government holds no recorded correspondence within the scope of the request.
6. In response to question 2, we intend to confirm that you were not aware that a report had been handed to the Crown Office until you became aware via media reports after the event.

Special Adviser Comments

7. Special Advisers have been provided with the attached FOI response and have recommended that it be shared with the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs for clearance.

Recommendation

8. The First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs are invited to clear the attached draft response for issue.

Many thanks,

[Redacted]

Propriety and Ethics Team

1W.10, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

From: [John Swinney](#)
To: [First Minister](#)
Subject: RE: FOI FOI 202400435388 - Ministerial clearance
Date: 05 November 2024 07:05:00

Approved.
FM

From: [Redacted]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** First Minister
Sent: Monday, November 4, 2024 3:14 PM
To: [Redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: Fw: FOI FOI 202400435388 - Ministerial clearance
FM - content with the attached response to this FOI request?

From: [Redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: Monday, November 4, 2024 2:51:19 PM
To: First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs 2024 <CabSecforJHA@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redacted]@gov.scot>; Ashleigh Gray <Ashleigh.Gray@gov.scot>
Subject: FOI FOI 202400435388 - Ministerial clearance

PS/ First Minister
PS Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs

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Propriety and Ethics Team

1W.10, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG