

**Annex – FOI 202500446991**

**Doc 001**

From: Ewan Crawford <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>  
Sent: 14 January 2025 10:06  
To: Luke Mcbratney <Luke.Mcbratney@gov.scot>; Dominic Munro <Dominic.Munro@gov.scot>  
Cc: [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
Subject: RE: FM on BBC Scotland

Attached

Ewan Crawford  
Senior Special Adviser to the First Minister,  
EU affairs and the constitution.  
Tel: [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]  
Mobile [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

*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](http://www.lobbying.scot) for information.*

[Out of Scope]

Attachment 001:

Programme(s)	<b>BBC Radio Scotland The Sunday Show</b>
Date & time	<b>Sunday 12 January 2025 10.03</b>
Subject/Interviewee	<b>Interview – John Swinney</b>
Duration	<b>21:42</b>

[Out of Scope]

**MG:** Right, interesting. I'm not sure you'll necessarily be as quick to break bread with his sidekick, Elon Musk. You've had quite a lot to say about him in the recent past. He seems to have taken a very sudden and pretty extreme interest in the politics of the right. You were considering whether your government would withdraw from his social media platform, X, or Twitter or whatever. Are you going to?

**JS:** We're not taken any decisions about that.

**MG:** Another decision you've delayed.

**JS:** Well, actually, it's a kind of different matter, because what I'm interested in doing, I need to communicate with the wider public. So, X is a platform that enables me to communicate more widely with people in Scotland. People need to hear from their First Minister. And if people in Scotland are using that network, I think there's a benefit in doing that. But we've got to be careful about social media, and I've made a point about the importance of the role and the approach that we can take with the United Kingdom government to make sure that social media acts in a responsible way within our society. And I'm troubled by quite a bit of social media activity. I've met with parents of children who've taken their own lives because of the negative effects of social media. I'll be discussing these issues at a gathering about

youth violence tomorrow morning, which has been prompted by the concerns of young people. So, we've got to be clear that we get the regulation about social media giants correct to protect people in our society.

[Out of Scope]

## **Doc 002**

[Out of Scope]

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**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 5, 2025 7:53:39 AM  
**To:** David Hutchison  
**Cc:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] ; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] ; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] ; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** Draft running issues note for FM

Morning Davie,

Grateful for your views and any input you might have on the below running issues note for FM. To be sent up by 10am.

Thanks,

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

### **Broadcast headlines**

#### **BBC Radio Scotland**

*Scotland braced for yet more freezing weather*

*The leader of Reform, Nigel Farage, has defended Elon Musk after the tech billionaire made a series of inflammatory comments about British politicians.*

*The First Minister is to urge opposition parties to back his government's budget claiming it offers delivery and hope*

*Almost 40% of Scots registered with a dentist have not seen one in two years.*

[Out of Scope]

**[redacted – section 38(1)(b)] | Senior Media Manager**  
**Social Justice portfolio|Scottish Government**  
[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]gov.scot

## **Doc 003**

[Out of Scope]

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**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** Saturday, January 4, 2025 8:48:39 AM  
**To:** David Hutchison ; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] ; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] ; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]  
**Cc:** Communications Duty Box  
**Subject:** SPAD VIEW: FM Running Issues / Media Digest - January 3rd - by 9.45  
David  
**SPAD VIEWS BY 9.45AM PLEASE**

I'd be grateful for your views / amends to the running issues and media digest that I have compiled below as a summary of key coverage and media lines issued on January 3rd.

[Out of Scope]

- *Nigel Farage distances himself from Elon Musk* – X owner and Tesla founder Musk has joined calls asking for the release of far-right activist Tommy Robinson, who is serving a sentence for contempt of court.

[Out of Scope]

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

**News | Senior Media Manager**

**Communications Health and Social Care**

The Scottish Government, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh

Mobile: [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] Portfolio Media inquiries: [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

abcd

[www.gov.scot/news](http://www.gov.scot/news)



**Doc 004**

[Out of Scope]

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Gaelic

**Sent:** 07 January 2025 10:31

**To:** Kate Forbes

**Cc:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Gaelic

**Subject:** FW: For info - BID - DFM - Scotland Tonight (January 6th)

DFM,

Please see attached transcript, as requested.

Thanks

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

**[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]**

**Private Secretary to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic – Kate Forbes MSP**

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)], Rùnaire Prìobhaideach dhan Leas-Phrìomh Mhinistear is do Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson na h-Eaconamaidh is Gàidhlig – Ceit Fhoirbeis BPA

The Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

**T:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] | **M:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] | **Email:**  
DFMCSEG@gov.scot

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

[Out of Scope]

**From:** Emily Mackintosh <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 06 January 2025 15:36

**To:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Gaelic <DFMCSEG@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications Deputy First Minister, Economy and Gaelic <DFMEG@gov.scot>; Communications First Minister <CommunicationsFirstMinister@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Ross Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; Sean McGivern <Sean.McGivern@gov.scot>; Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: For info - BID - DFM - Scotland Tonight (January 6th)

Scotland Tonight will ask about:

- Top priorities for 2025
- Budget
- Elon Musk

I will make DFM aware as we are both at Bute House.

Emily

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 06 January 2025 15:21

**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Gaelic <DFMCSEG@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications Deputy First Minister, Economy and Gaelic <DFMEG@gov.scot>; Communications First Minister <CommunicationsFirstMinister@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Emily Mackintosh <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Ross Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; Sean McGivern <Sean.McGivern@gov.scot>; Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: For info - BID - DFM - Scotland Tonight (January 6th)

PO

Please now see transcript of FM's media huddle.

He was asked about:

- Elon Musk, SG use of x as a platform,
- The Budget / risk of it not passing
- Efficiencies in public spending
- NHS waiting times and the use of AI in the NHS
- Elon Musk, external / international donations
- Social media regulation
- National Care Service
- University funding

Simon Johnson:

You made clear your concerns about the political influence of Elon Musk, but I saw that he did this in a speech which was being live streamed by Scottish Government on X and X obviously being the platform where he propagates all of these views, aren't you sort of helping to drive traffic towards this particular website where more people will see what Elon Musk is having to say on things.

FM:

I've got to get my message across, and I've got to use various means of communication to do so and to engage with people. And I think it's important that I take opportunities such as today to set up what are some of the real choices and challenges that face us, and at the heart of that today is if the budget passes, then I think people will see that the political system can work and act to address the real concerns that members of the public have in our society today. If the budget doesn't pass, then I think it runs the risk of fuelling the type of sentiments that have been put to me in the questions that I answered in the play fair library. So that's why I put so much emphasis on this point, and I've got to get that message across to people.

SJ:

Shouldn't be boycotting x if you're really not worried about his influence, well, I'm interested in getting my message across. I've got to reach people.

John Boothman:

Elena Whitham yesterday, condemned Elon Musk on his intervention Jess Phillips this morning, Kier Starmer talking about will be a poisonous influence and said he's crossed the line. Do you agree with that?

FM:

Well, I certainly think that the sort of what I heard and saw been said about Jess, Phillips, I thought, was completely and utterly reprehensible. So I very happy to associate myself with that criticism, and I think also there is a need for us all to be resolute about these issues. That's why I answer questions and we ask them, answer them today. I want

the political system to demonstrate people in our country that I think can work to address the issues about which people will definitely consider.

JB:

Are you worried if you go rolling in the mud with Elon Musk, you'll pick up a dirt and mud on the way yourself?

FM:

No, because I'm absolutely straight and candid about what I see different issues. I think that's probably something you've seen from me since I became First Minister. And I'll see it as it is, and I'm seeing the way.

[Out of Scope]

Gina Davidson:

First Minister, back to your remarks about Elon Musk. You said that you didn't want or believe there should be any difference in Scottish elections from anywhere outside of Scotland. How can you prevent that from happening when it comes to somebody like Musk, and what will you do, maybe, in hand in hand with the UK Government to try and subvert that?

FM:

I think there are issues that I'm going to look at about, what to look at this on a basis of agreement across political parties about some of the questions around about financial contributions, because my view the world today is that an electoral law prevents international or external donations. That's the view I vote just now I've read enough over the course of the last few weeks, it makes me think I wonder how robust that actually is so that's something I'm going to explore. But as I explore it, I will do that open with other political parties, because this should not be a sort of John Swinney SNP thing. This should be a political system, because the electoral law that we have in place has been pretty broadly legislated for in Westminster and in sort of parliament over the number of years. So I generally keep the view it commands confidence across the political system if there is something that or can be avoided in the current ranges, because I start that my response to your questions, you know, I start from the point of view of thinking, Well, I always thought that the system was robust and that external financing possible. But as I say, I've read enough in the course the last few weeks, maybe that's not quite as robust as I feel. So I'm keen to have a closer look at that.

GD:

And financing aside, obviously. He runs X, and we know about the bots that are on there, as reporting found recently, what can the government do about that?

FM:

Well, that's in the space of social media regulation, and I've made it quite clear that I want to, I think, on a whole variety of different fronts, not just about issues in relation to politics. I'm very concerned about issues in relation to social media activity as an American effect for children and other people. So that's a reserved responsibility, I have to say, engagement, in fact, with the United Kingdom Government Secretary

has been very briefly, very collaborative. So that's obviously something I'd love to pursue

JB:

In that respect to Tom's question, which was to say, in effect, do you concede that the thing that's driven support for populism and anti-politics parties is the fact that your Government has government today have failed to deliver?

FM:

No what I set out upstairs was, I think a combination of the financial cash, austerity is 14 Year response to that Brexit, which is the stupidest thing that's been undertaken in the United Kingdom in decades, the vision of Ukraine and the resulting spike in electricity prices has all fuelled the sense of difficulty that people face because they are facing cost of living challenges as our public services need investment. So you know, you would all make this comment up. Many of you would all listen to me, ad infinitum during the general election campaign, talking about the need for there to be a substantial injection in public finances because of the difficulties that was that was a call I made with good knowledge of challenges within the public finances. We've taken decisions to increase tax for higher earners, which causes challenges for people. I accept, but it's necessary to invest in public service. Poverty, service and public finances, and of course, the UK government has responded on many of these questions since the election in July. So I think all these factors contribute to the challenges. Lots of years where the government does deliver jobs. So for example, if you're a family living in poverty, their circumstances are better because the actions of my government. If you got children who are involved in early learning and childcare, then you get a better proposition than was the case before. If you're somebody who is going through the cancer pathway, then on the 31 day target, over 95% of patients are being or just about 95% of patients are being dealt with through that party. So there are many areas where government is delivered. We've delivered more affordable housing per head of population in Scotland than any other part in the United Kingdom over the course of our times. Administration an example of delivering. Yes, there will be challenges, John, of course, there are always challenges

[Out of Scope]

TG:

I mean, supposing the budget doesn't pass, in first instance, is Elon Musk going to button his lip? Is he going to stop being Elon Musk?

FM:

At no stage did I say anything of that type. What I said was that if the budget passes and the investment that we're making is able to be deployed, we have more chance of making of building confidence in the effectiveness of our political system. That's my key point.

[Out of Scope]

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 06 January 2025 15:03

**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Gaelic <DFMCSEG@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications Deputy First Minister, Economy and Gaelic <DFMEG@gov.scot>; Communications First Minister <CommunicationsFirstMinister@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Emily Mackintosh <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Ross Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; Sean McGivern <Sean.McGivern@gov.scot>; Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: For info - BID - DFM - Scotland Tonight (January 6th)

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)], PO

Please see running issues note as follows. To note the majority of these were running overnight.

DFM will be aware that the Budget and discussion on Elon Musk's involvement in UK politics are prominent in the current news cycle - FM Comms are finalising a transcript of FM's media huddle following the speech this morning, which I'll share as soon as possible.

[Out of Scope]

## **Doc 005**

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Gaelic

**Sent:** 07 January 2025 10:31

**To:** Kate Forbes <Kate.Forbes3@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Gaelic <DFMCSEG@gov.scot>

**Subject:** FW: For info - BID - DFM - Scotland Tonight (January 6th)

DFM,

Please see attached transcript, as requested.

Thanks

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

**Private Secretary to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic – Kate Forbes MSP**

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)] Rùnaire Priobhaideach dhan Leas-Phrìomh Mhinistear is do Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson na h-Eaconamaidh is Gàidhlig – Ceit Fhoirbeis  
BPA

The Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

**T:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] | **M:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] | **Email:** DFMCSEG@gov.scot

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[Out of Scope]

[Duplicate Doc 004]

Attachment 005:

Programme(s)	<b>STV Scotland Tonight</b>
Date & time	<b>Monday 06 January 2025 22.40</b>
Subject/Interviewee	<b>Discussion – Kate Forbes, Dame Jackie Baillie, and Craig Hoy</b>
Duration	<b>12:58</b>

[Out of Scope]

**John Swinney MSP, Scotland's First Minister:** I remain confident that we can secure the passage of the budget. Why? Because we've brought forward a budget that is set in the mainstream of Scottish public opinion. If the budget doesn't pass, then I think we're playing right into the hands of Elon Musk and to other populists. I think we're playing right into their hands because we're demonstrating, or the political system is demonstrating, that it can't address people's day-to-day concerns.

[Out of Scope]

**CM:** Given what we've heard today from Elon Musk, for example, and the First Minister calling him out and the Prime Minister calling him out on it, the First Minister was suggesting that if the budget doesn't get passed, that's a gift to Elon Musk today, Kate Forbes.

**KF:** Well, I think he's saying something a bit deeper than that, which is that populism flourishes when politicians or politics fail to deliver.

**CM:** Anas Sarwar says you're a populist party.

**KF:** Well, when politicians and politics fail to deliver. And I actually think that Jackie Baillie, Craig Hoy, and I have the same moral duty to ensure that we do stand against the extremes of populism and that we are ensuring that our politics works for

the people. Now, we know what the people's priorities are. They want the NHS to function well. They want to see the economy grow. They want to see us tackling climate change. And they want to do that through a well-resourced public sector.

[Out of Scope]

## **Doc 006**

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise

**Sent:** 07 January 2025 16:35

**To:** Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs 2024  
<CabSecforJHA@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise  
<MinisterCYPTP@gov.scot>

**Subject:** Topical on Grooming Gangs

Hi [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

Please see attached.

Kind regards

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

**Private Secretary to Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise –  
Natalie Don-Innes MSP**

The Scottish Government

St Andrews House | Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

Mobile: [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] | Email: MinisterCYPTP@gov.scot

Ms Don-Innes' Ministerial Preferences can be found here

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Attachment 006:

[Out of Scope]

[redacted – section 30(b)(i)]

[Out of Scope]

Attachment 007:

[Out of Scope]

**6 Jan:** Coverage of PM response to Elon Musk’s criticism of UKG approach to Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) and call for inquiry on ‘grooming gangs’ echoed by Conservative and Reform UK leadership. PM states Alexis Jay Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was “comprehensive”, that further review is not required, and “lies and misinformation” were being spread on grooming gangs. BBC report Conservatives continue to call for inquiry.

[Out of Scope]

**1 Jan:** GB News reports UKG Safeguarding Minister Jess Philips MP rejected Oldham Town Council request for Home Office-led public inquiry into historic CSAE in the borough, instead favouring a locally-led approach. Decision criticised by Conservative MPs and leads Elon Musk commentary on X (see 6 Jan).

[Out of Scope]

[Out of Scope]

## **Doc 007**

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture 2024

**Sent:** 06 January 2025 15:06

**To:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Ewan Crawford <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@fcdo.gov.uk>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@fcdo.gov.uk>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture 2024 <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: Note Verbale

Hi [redacted – section 38(1)(b)],

Thanks for that – both Mr Robertson and FM signed the book earlier (and Mr Robertson used your wording verbatim so hopefully there aren't two identical messages in there!)

[redacted – section 32(1)(a)(i)]

If any more feedback is helpful then happy to have a chat, but they didn't go into depth on anything.

Thanks,  
[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

### **Private Secretary**

Office of Angus Robertson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture CabSecCEAC@gov.scot

[Out of Scope]

### **Doc 008**

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 05 January 2025 10:01

**To:** Media Digest <DLSEAPMD@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Shirley-Anne.Somerville2@parliament.scot; Jenny.Gilruth.msp@parliament.scot; mairi.mcallan.msp@parliament.scot

**Subject:** Press Summary - Sunday January 5

[Out of Scope]

The Sunday Times (Scotland) 6 **Funding cuts, election losses and death of Alex Salmond: can Alba survive? Salmond: can Alba survive?** Albeit from a low base, electoral support appears to have doubled in the past year, suggesting disillusionment with SNP leadership policies before John Swinney took over from Humza Yousaf in May. Can Alba broaden its support through the proindependence route? Alex Neil, the former SNP cabinet secretary, says it is premature to dismiss Alba's chances yet as it could flourish on a rising tide of support for separation from the rest of the UK. "Her recent invitation to Elon Musk to build [a Tesla factory] in Scotland was a huge misjudgment." Whoever wins has the unenviable task of replacing Salmond, the formidable former SNP first minister, who died suddenly on a political trip to North Macedonia. Even under his control, Alba, founded in 2021, has yet to have an electoral day in the sun,

[Out of Scope]

The Sunday Times (Scotland) 6 **Funding cuts, election losses and death of Alex Salmond: can Alba survive?** Albeit from a low base, electoral support appears to have doubled in the past year, suggesting disillusionment with SNP leadership policies before John Swinney took over from Humza Yousaf in May. Can Alba broaden its support through the proindependence route? Alex Neil, the former SNP cabinet secretary, says it is premature to dismiss Alba's chances yet as it could

flourish on a rising tide of support for separation from the rest of the UK."Her recent invitation to Elon Musk to build [a Tesla factory] in Scotland was a huge misjudgment." Whoever wins has the unenviable task of replacing Salmond, the formidable former SNP first minister, who died suddenly on a political trip to North Macedonia. Even under his control, Alba, founded in 2021, has yet to have an electoral day in the sun,

[Out of Scope]

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]  
Senior Media Manager | [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]  
The Scottish Government | [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

### **Doc 009**

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 02 January 2025 10:00  
**To:** Media Digest <DLSEAPMD@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** 'Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP (Shirley-Anne.somerville2@parliament.scot)' <Shirley-Anne.Somerville2@parliament.scot>; 'Jenny.Gilruth.msp@parliament.scot' <Jenny.Gilruth.msp@parliament.scot>; 'mairi.mcallan.msp@parliament.scot' <mairi.mcallan.msp@parliament.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Media Digest - Thursday 2 January 2025

[Out of Scope]

The Daily Telegraph (Scotland) 1 **Scotland needs 'MacMusk' to cut public sector waste, says Findlay** Scotland needs a "MacMusk" to cut the huge amount of SNP "waste and incompetence" in the country's bloated public sector, the Scottish Tory leader has argued. Russell Findlay said John Swinney should follow the example of US President-elect Donald Trump's decision to bring Elon Musk into his government to cut state bureaucracy and inefficiency.

[Out of Scope]

The Sun (Scotland) 10 **That's rich** John Swinney's opposition to Elon Musk bankrolling Reform UK's pitch to Scottish voters at the 2026 Holyrood election is baked in hypocrisy. No-one was happier than pro-independence politicians when the millionaire couple Colin and Chris Weir chose to pour £1million to help with the Yes campaign in 2014. The risks of foreign interference in our elections are obvious and clearly not something anyone who wants a strong democracy would wish to see.

[Out of Scope]

The Sun (Scotland) 2 **SWINNEY HITS OUT AT MUSK 'INTERFERENCE'** John Swinney last night called for Elon Musk to stay out of UK politics - amid speculation

he could bankroll Reform's Holyrood campaign. The First Minister called for laws banning foreign political donations to be tightened to block the South African tech billionaire's "interference" in elections. His blast came after Mr Musk met with Reform UK leader Nigel Farage and treasurer Nick Candy at Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, amid reports the X tycoon could hand them £100million. Former First Minister Humza Yousaf previously ranked Mr Musk among the "most dangerous men on the planet". Asked if he agreed, the SNP leader accused the businessman of creating "enormous disruption and damage in the world".

[Out of Scope]

The Daily Telegraph (Scotland) 1 **Scotland needs 'MacMusk' to cut public sector waste, says Findlay** Scotland needs a "MacMusk" to cut the huge amount of SNP "waste and incompetence" in the country's bloated public sector, the Scottish Tory leader has argued. Russell Findlay said John Swinney should follow the example of US

President-elect Donald Trump's decision to bring Elon Musk into his government to cut state bureaucracy and inefficiency.

[Out of Scope]

[Duplicate]

[Out of Scope]

[Duplicate]

[Out of Scope]

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

Senior Media Manager

Justice and Home Affairs

Desk: [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

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## **Doc 010**

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 06 January 2025 15:19

**To:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** FM print huddle - 06/01 - Transcript

Hi all,

Please find a readout of FM's print huddle this morning below.

He was asked about:

- Elon Musk, SG use of x as a platform,
- The Budget / risk of it not passing
- Efficiencies in public spending
- NHS waiting times and the use of AI in the NHS
- Elon Musk, external / international donations
- Social media regulation
- National Care Service
- University funding

Thanks,

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

[Duplicate Doc 004]

### **Doc 011**

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 06 January 2025 17:28

**To:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: FM print huddle - 06/01 - Transcript

Hi everyone,

Also attaching FM's Q&A with Broadcast media for awareness.

Many thanks,

[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

[Out of Scope]

[Duplicate Doc 004]

Attachment 008:

## **FM Broadcast Q&A – Budget Speech Mon 6 Jan 2025**

[Out of Scope]

Glenn Campbell(BBC)

*Thank you, First Minister, you've talked about the forces of anti-politics and populism. Who are these forces, and if they include Elon Musk, how big a threat do you think he poses to democracy in Scotland and the UK?*

**FM**

I think the forces of populism are pretty well advertised around our country today. I think we can see them all visibly contributing to the debate. The choice that I'm putting to people today is the that we don't have to feel obliged to fuel that populism. We can act in a way that delivers through our political system for the needs of the public, delivering the investment that comes from the budget and the passing of the budget, which heralds the investment into our health services, boosting our economy and tackling child poverty and ensuring that we can invest in the just transition to net zero. So there's a choice for all of us in addressing the question that you put to me Glenn, which is about whether we act to fuel that sense of the political system not delivering for people, or we can fuel the political system by passing a budget to demonstrate the political system can deliver for People in Scotland by delivering the improvements and the opportunities that lie at the heart of the contents of the budget, and that's very much the political debate that we will take forward in the weeks that lie ahead.

### **FM's answer to follow-up**

Well, I think it's pretty obvious who the Populists are. We hear from them on a daily basis, but my point is that we have to focus on using the political system to deliver for the people of our country, to deliver on their expectations, and that's what our budget does, and that's why I want to make sure that it's successful.

**Laura Alderman, STV**

*Thank you, First Minister, given that he called your predecessor a racist, how are you planning on dealing with Elon Musk when he's about to become a member of the Trump administration in just a few weeks time? And do you think that Prime Minister Keir Starmer is being tough enough on him?*

**FM**

I think it's important that we all take the actions that we can to address the issues that members of the public are concerned about. That's what's the whole theme of my speech today is about the importance of addressing the issues that are relevant in people's lives today and to provide the solutions. And those solutions are not always straightforward, and they're certainly not as glib as populists like Elon Musk would suggest they are. And what we've got to do is to work hard bring people together in a sense of unified purpose, to make sure that we improve the lives of people in Scotland as a consequence of our actions, and the first step for doing that in Scotland in 2025 will be about the passing of the budget. If the budget doesn't

pass, then I think we're playing right into the hands of Elon Musk and to other populists. I think we're playing right into their hands because we're demonstrating, or the political system is demonstrating that it can't address people's day to day concerns. And our budget, we've listened - My Finance Secretary, Shona Robison, Ivan McKee, the Public Finance Minister, have spent a huge amount of time engaging with a variety of opinions in Scotland at my request to produce what I would characterize as a unifying budget. A budget that brings Scotland together. And that, to me, is the best way of delivering the response to populists. Because that's a solution to the challenges that people face, and we can, we can deliver that and demonstrate the political system is working at its best in the process. And that's the approach that we intend to take.

[Out of Scope]

**James Cook(BBC Network)**

*Happy New Year to you, First Minister. I want to come back to Elon Musk and perhaps explain why we're asking about him. Because, you know, this isn't just some random business person. This is the richest person in the world, a close advisor to the US President, as you know, someone who's going to have an actual role in the next US government and one of the world's most powerful publishers. So with all that in mind, when you hear Elon Musk use that megaphone, he has to directly involve himself in Scottish and UK politics. How much of a danger to our politics do you think he poses?*

**FM**

What we've got to do in these circumstances is we've got to use the tools available to us. We are not powerless. All of what you said is true in characterizing Elon Musk and the influence and the power that he can experience. But it's up to the rest of us to decide what our response is going to be to that. We're not powerless. We've got Parliament that's sitting just down the road, it will be tomorrow, and that Parliament's got the ability to decisively and emphatically back a unifying provision in the budget from the Scottish Government, which is about improving the lives of people in Scotland, and that would make a sizeable impact in Scotland and responding to the very issues that you put to me, because people would see a difference in their lives as a consequence, I accept that people are feeling frustrated and angry with the current circumstances. I've taught you've probably been at all of the major speeches I've delivered where I've reflected on the conditions and the pressures that people are facing as a consequence of the financial crash. The Deputy First Minister set down the whole sequence the financial crash, Brexit, COVID, austerity, the invasion of Ukraine, the spike in energy prices. All of this has had a real effect on the living standards of individuals. I happen to believe the most negative impact on living standards in Scotland has been as a consequence of the folly of Brexit. It's done untold damage. That damage is now being clearly seen by people. So we've got to have a response. And our response, to me, is to take the actions that we can take to improve people's lives and to give them confidence in our political system. And the best way we can do that in the short term, in the course of the next the first two months of 2025 is to pass the Scottish Government's budget, which has been constructed quite deliberately to bring people together in Scotland. That was the direction I gave to the finance Secretary about the composition of the budget. It had to bring people together. And I think it succeeded in doing that. It just needs to get

the last bit of the jigsaw put together, which is bring Parliament together. And that's my plea. That's my plea. Is about today. Well, it's, it's all about how we respond to that, James, it's my point, and how we respond to is by taking actions as elected politicians to make a difference in people's lives, because we've got a choice in the Scottish Parliament. I've rehearsed that's why I've set out what I've set out to your today, if we pass a budget which is a unifying budget, which is addressed addressing the real needs and concerns of people within Scotland, I think we will help to give people greater confidence in our political system, which is an antidote to the forces of populism that you've talked about. If we don't do that, then I'm warning that we risk fuelling that sentiment, and that will be very dangerous for our democratic traditions in Scotland.

#### **Catherine Sampson (Channel 4)**

*Do you believe Elon Musk might attempt to influence next year's Hollywood vote as a test run for the next general election? And if so, what specifically do you plan to do about it? And since everyone's doing a few questions today, can I also say, as you talk about making progress. How does it feel to enter yet another year without a conclusion to Operation Branchform?*

FM

On the last point, I am not going to comment on live investigations. That is not a good idea for the First Minister. In relation to the first part of your question, Catherine, I think the honest answer is, I don't know what Elon Musk will try to do. I don't, just for clarity, I don't have a direct line, and I'm not seeking a direct line, just in case anyone's asking if that's the follow up question. So I don't know is that is the honest answer to the question, but what I do know is that our electoral law and our whole approach to our politics is based on the fact that there should be no external interference. And I don't like external interference in Scottish politics, whether it comes from London or the United States or anywhere or Russia or wherever else. I just would like, I believe that the politics of our country should be determined by the people who choose to live in this country from wherever they've come from. If they choose to make this country their home, then they're entitled to shape its future. That's the absolute foundation of my politics, and I don't want to see external influence in that process.

[Out of Scope]

#### **Doc 012**

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 07 January 2025 09:51

**To:** Julie Grant <Julie.Grant@gov.scot>; Ross Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: Post cabinet media briefing

Morning Julie, [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

Attaching transcript of DFM's appearance on Scotland Tonight, in case helpful. Heavy focus on Budget with a short bit on Elon Musk towards the end.

Thanks  
[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

[Out of Scope]

Attachment: [Duplicate Doc 005]

### **Doc 013**

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 01 January 2025 09:58  
**To:** First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** Colin McAllister <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)] [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications Duty Box <CommunicationsDutyBox@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FM Running Issues note - 1 Jan

FMPO

#### **For awareness**

Private Office, Duty Comms has prepared a running-issues note, including a summary of key coverage and media lines issued over the Hogmanay duty period.

[Out of Scope]

#### **Telegraph – Public spending controls**

QUERY: The paper flagged it has conducted an interview with Russell Findlay about public spending controls. Mr Findlay has indicated Scotland could benefit from having an Elon Musk style figure to control reform and spending. The quotes for the article provided by the journalist copied below for FM's completeness.

RESPONSE:

Public Finance Minister Ivan McKee said:

“Through our Public Service Reform programmes, the Scottish Government has already delivered savings of more than £200 million over the past two years. We have also delivered reductions in core Scottish Government staff levels of 3% in the past year. This work will continue. In addition, to ensure public services are sustainable, efficient and effective, and subject to the passage of the Budget, we will deliver an Invest to Save fund in 2025-26 backed by up to £30 million to drive efficiencies across public services, improve productivity and ensure longer term sustainability. Coming from a business background myself I am seized of the need to deliver excellent public services in the most effective and efficient manner.

“The Scottish Government has made improving public services a key priority, alongside eradicating child poverty, building prosperity and protecting the planet. We have more frontline public sector workers than other parts of the UK, and pay them more, demonstrating the value we place on workforce, skills, quality, and fairness.”

[Out of Scope]

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**[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]**

**News | Senior Media Manager (Duty)**

The Scottish Government | St Andrew's House, Edinburgh

Mobile: [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]

gov.scot/news



## **Doc 014**

**From:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 05 January 2025 09:20

**To:** First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Communications First Minister <CommunicationsFirstMinister@gov.scot>; Communications Duty Box <CommunicationsDutyBox@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Ross Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; Colin McAllister <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Sean McGivern <Sean.McGivern@gov.scot>; Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; Olaf Stando <Olaf.Stando@gov.scot>; Julie Grant <Julie.Grant@gov.scot>; First Minister FMQs <FirstMinisterFMQs@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Press Transport Scotland <media@transport.gov.scot>; David Hutchison <David.Hutchison@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** Running issues note for FM

**FMPO ,**

Please see below a note on running issues in the press this morning and SG lines issued yesterday.

Please get in touch if you require anything further.

Many thanks Scott

**Broadcast headlines**

**BBC Radio Scotland**

*Scotland braced for yet more freezing weather.*

*The leader of Reform, Nigel Farage, has defended Elon Musk after the tech billionaire made a series of inflammatory comments about British politicians.*

*The First Minister is to urge opposition parties to back his government's budget claiming it offers delivery and hope.*

*Almost 40% of Scots registered with a dentist have not seen one in two years.*

[Out of Scope]

**[redacted – section 38(1)(b)] | Senior Media Manager  
Social Justice portfolio|Scottish Government  
[redacted – section 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot**