

Email Chain 1

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Subject: TRANSCRIPT // FM on BBC Political Thinking with Nick Robinson, rec. 2/10/24

Hi all,

Please see transcript of FM interview on Political Thinking from today. I have gone through and checked the otter ai transcript for mishears.

Thanks,
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From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2024 6:26 PM
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Subject: TRANSCRIPT // FM on BBC Political Thinking with Nick Robinson, rec. 2/10/24

FM interview with Nick Robinson for BBC's *Political Thinking* podcast.

Recorded 2/10/24 in London.

Air date tbc – most likely Friday 4/10 but BBC may publish podcast on 3/10 if they feel there is a strong enough newsline.

Nick Robinson

John Swinney, welcome to political thinking. It has been something for roller coaster six months, hasn't it? You retire from frontline politics, then the First Minister of Scotland is forced from office, and you decide to come back into frontline politics, come to your party's rescue. Then Rishi Sunak calls a surprise early election in the summer. Then you have a bit of a kicking in the general election, the Westminster election. Has it all been very stomach churning?

First Minister John Swinney

It's been absolutely a whirlwind. I think it's the best way to describe it, because I, quite literally, in the days before Humza Yousaf resigned as First Minister, was making further plans about what would be my gentle scaling down of political activity, and I was actually - on the day that he resigned - giving a reflective speech about 25 years of devolution in Scotland, down here in London, and that was an opportunity for me to perhaps reflect a little bit from my experience of being a member of the Scottish Parliament since its foundation, and also the only member of the Scottish Parliament that remains who actually voted for the Scotland Act, which established the Scottish Parliament. So I had a really particularly strong vantage point to reflect on all of that. And then the world turned on its axis, and I find myself back into frenetic political leadership.

NR

We're going to talk about some of the things that you've been confronting. But have there ever been moments where he thought "that decision to retire from the front line of politics was quite a good one. I should have stuck to that."?

FM

Obviously, it's a very frenetic piece that I'm now operating at, but I'm loving it, and so in that respect, I'm looking back in the last few months thinking, Well, I'm glad I stepped into this role. It's a huge privilege to be the leader of my party and the First Minister of Scotland. I didn't think I would ever be the First Minister of Scotland, so it's an element of absolutely joyful surprise about all of that too. But it's obviously... the quiet days are few and far between.

NR

Few and far between, not least because the world is a very turbulent place now. The First Minister of Scotland is not responsible at the moment for foreign affairs or for defense. Much as you would like it to be in an independent Scotland. But as you watch what is happening in our world now, and particularly what's happening in the Middle East, are you frustrated that you cannot play more of a role in that.

FM

My overriding concern is that I am deeply alarmed, incredibly alarmed by the situation that we face, because the level of risk to international peace and stability is enormous in the current situation. So the necessity of us securing stable peace in the Middle East through an immediate ceasefire is an absolute, pressing necessity now, because the situation is so grave,

NR

Do you worry that what you are hearing from the Prime Minister from Keir Starmer, is somewhat different to the tone you have struck?

FM

I think all of the efforts of everybody need to be concentrated on de-escalating the situation and to securing a ceasefire in the Middle East. I think if there is what we have seen in the past few days, it just gives us the taste of what escalation looks like, and it looks absolutely awful to me. So therefore all of the efforts of the

international community, all forces of goodwill, must be concentrated on trying to secure a de escalation, and that is achieved through a ceasefire, because without that, I think the steps and the sequence that we could go into looks potentially as if we will go into that sort of an escalation of the conflict has catastrophic implications for all of us.

NR

Was the Prime Minister wrong to come out instantly and say, We - the UK - supports Israel operating its right to self defense.

FM

Everybody has got to make their judgements about these circumstances. I think the most important thing to do is for all of us to concentrate our efforts on securing a ceasefire. That is the solution. And of course, if we go back a number of months, the pressure for a ceasefire in Gaza some months ago - and we were calling for that the best part of 10 months ago - was so critical to avoid further escalation. And here we are in further escalation, so we can see what escalation looks like, and it is terrifying at this moment.

NR

Now, you said you had been reflecting just before you became First Minister on being one of the very few members of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 when it was created, still in it, and now there as First Minister, and you've just marked the 25th anniversary of the parliament. The King came to Edinburgh to mark that occasion. How do you reflect on - as it were, how far it's come, you've come, and how much further you think you've still got to go?

FM

I think the Scottish Parliament has been an unrivaled success. I think it's changed lives for the better. That's what I said in my speech to parliament on Saturday, and that is my overriding reflection. I think that Parliament has done a lot of good as a whole across all political traditions. We stood in solidarity to say that we want a Scotland that is cohesive and inclusive, that does not tolerate racism and bigotry, and that has been the overriding message of all members of parliament over the last 25 years. We have also legislated to do some big and bold things within Scotland that have changed lives for the better. So I think the Scottish Parliament, in a very short space of time in the 800 year history of Scotland, has established itself right at the very heart of the nation, and it's the gathering place for the country, and we should be proud of that.

NR

Now, you've been involved in government for almost the whole of the 17 years in which the SNP have been running the government in Scotland. You were finance secretary under Alex Salmond. You were Deputy First Minister to Nicola Sturgeon. How different was it getting the job itself? You've seen it at first hand, but when you walked in and they called you first minister for the first time, how different was that?

FM

I think that that's one of the things that's really surprised me, because you're absolutely right. I worked closely with first two First Ministers. I saw them at close

quarters. I thought I understood what the job involved, and it was really quite a difference when I actually got in there, because you find a number of things.

You find that decisions ultimately come to you, and things don't really move until you said, this is what is going to happen. And in a sense that that did surprise me a bit, because I thought there were, I thought in the past, I was probably taking a lot more decisions along the way, but that's where we are.

NR

You suddenly realize you hadn't been in charge.. [crosstalk]

FM

Well, it's perhaps a bit like that. And there is also a necessity to be constantly focused on where the government is going, what the government is trying to achieve, what you're trying to do on different issues and different questions. And that is a constant demand to make sure the government's agenda is moving forward.

NR

Now beyond them calling you First Minister, is there a moment? Because if you talk to someone who becomes the Prime Minister of the UK, they will often refer to that moment they're told by the Cabinet Secretary they've got to write a letter to the commanders of the UK's nuclear submarines, and it's a deeply personal moment, as well as a reminder of the huge significance of the job. They've now got a letter that effectively says, you know, you might be under orders to launch a nuclear attack. Scotland doesn't have that control in its government at the moment. What's the equivalent? Was there anything you heard or were told on the first day that made you go, wow, I really am the First Minister.

FM

Now, I suppose there are those two things. One, one thing is deeply operational and significant, and one is a ceremonial and significant. The deeply operational is arriving in St Andrew's house the day before I become SNP leader, and the day before, I became First Minister to get a briefing from the civil servant, the leading civil servant, about the state of the public finances. And although I had been close to those issues up until a year beforehand, the challenges of inflation and pay demands and various other factors were obviously creating a much more challenging circumstance, which we reflected on during the general election campaign when we discussed these questions in Edinburgh. So that was deeply significant, because I realized I've got a big challenge to face here that's perhaps greater than what I anticipated, and we've now addressed that by the reductions of public spending that we made in September.

NR

But you're saying it was a shock, because we'll talk more about the choices you face, because you've got a draft budget coming up in December. But you're saying that moment was a kind of "ooh, wow!".

FM

That was the operational moment where I thought, oh my goodness, this is different. And then the ceremonial moment was when I walked into the Court of Session, the

highest court in the land in Scotland, to have my oath of office read out by the principal clerk in the presence of the Lord president of the court of session and the senior judges in Scotland, in which the king issued his commands as to what was to happen. And the language, of course, is very formal. It's... it's, in some respects, quite opaque, but it conveys the significance of the moment that is about to... that's about to happen to you. And that was a moment which I felt was deeply significant, because it's a moment rooted in the history of my country, because at the heart of it is the office that I hold, which is the First Minister of Scotland, the keeper of the Great Seal of Scotland. It's a deeply significant historical office that I hold. And for me, as somebody who loves his country and loves the identity and the character of my country, was deeply, deeply significant.

NR

And it's a history you want to rewrite. Of course, you're a believer in Independence for your country. That's your life's work, if you like. We'll talk about why in just a second. And you've got another of those moments that haven't you. This afternoon, we're talking here in London. You're about to get sworn into the Privy Council, as it's called, the sort of Council of Advisers to His Majesty the King. Do you take an oath today?

FM

I think I'm going to take an oath. Yes,

NR

You do swear by Almighty God to be a true and faithful servant unto the king's majesty as one of His Majesty's Privy Council I think is part of what you'll have to read.

FM

Well, I'll find out what I've got to read this afternoon.

NR

How does that feel?

FM

Well, it's obviously this is a role which allows me to carry out my office as First Minister, because as a privy councilor, you are able to conduct business at a particular level of dialogue within the United Kingdom, and that's important so that I can properly, fully exercise my responsibilities as First Minister.

NR

Is there any better view that hesitates because, for perfectly understandable reasons, there have always been some who believe the logic of an independent Scotland is you should have your own head of state. You shouldn't have the monarch of another country. You're gonna have to say this afternoon that you will to your uttermost bear faith and allegiance to the king's majesty. So help you, God. Now, no, it's not the policy of the party to change the system towards a republic. But is there a bit of you... would the young John Swinney have gone "Not sure. I want to say that."?

FM

I think I view as just part of the role I've got to perform to enable me to be the First Minister of Scotland and to exercise my responsibilities fully and comprehensively. This is part of it, and it's got to be done

NR

Would the young John Swinney being comfortable with those words.

FM

The young John Swinney would have been absolutely stunned that this was happening, absolutely stunned that John Swinney had become the First Minister of Scotland, I can tell you that.

NR

Well, let's talk about the young John Swinney and why someone coming from a pretty apolitical family, as far as I can tell, your dad is a garage owner. Still with us. Your mum not but a medical receptionist. Not very political. Was politics, nevertheless discussed at the kitchen table over tea?

FM

Certainly, I think my recollection of my upbringing in childhood was that my mum, on political questions, was absolutely passionate about education. She was of a generation who, as was my dad, who, when they got to their mid-teens, they were out to work. My mum was working when she was 14. My dad at 15, and they were, they were into the world of work. My mum did not have the opportunity to pursue formal education beyond the age of 14 and I think she actually undertook some open university education later on her life, and was tremendously fulfilled by that. So she was very, very keen to make sure that there was a deep understanding in the house of the power and the significance of Education had to be taken deadly seriously.

nr

Was she saying, in effect, I want for my son, for John, to have chances I didn't have

FM

absolutely, absolutely and and I and I felt that, and I felt that in her example to me and her encouragement to me. So, so that was the only bit of politics in the house.

I think the thing that turned by my head to the idea of Scottish self government and Scottish independence was witnessing the enthusiasm and the energy around about the debate around about the Scottish assembly in 1979 and there was a hopefulness in Scotland that things were going to change.

NR

Let's remind people. There was a referendum then, which did not pass under the then rules that you had to get 40% of the vote. But there was a big national debate.

FM

Well, there was a big upsurge in SNP support in 1974 and I can remember the carnival atmosphere. It was everywhere in Scotland. It touched every community, a real upswing of optimism and hope and energy within Scotland. It was largely driven

by that aspiration about a better future for the country, and that... there was then a disappointment in 1979 when that didn't translate, despite there being more votes in favour than against. As you say, it didn't pass the post. So there was a disappointment, a lost opportunity sense, and I felt to myself, "Well, look, if you're interested this. If you think fundamentally that the people who live, who choose to live in this country are best placed to decide its future, you better go and do something about it." And I joined the SNP.

NR

joined at the age of 15 in 1979 but he said, Is this true that one of the roots of your belief in an independent Scotland was watching the coverage of the Commonwealth Games the year before and shouting at the telly?

FM

Well, not really, because I think I probably would have Telly I've done a bit of that my time. But the, what I think that colleague referred to was the fact that a Scottish success could often be presented as a British success, but if it was a Scottish failure, it was a Scottish failure...

Nr

in particular David Wilkie, though the Scottish swimmer

FM

so but, but that didn't form part of my view. My view is fundamentally that the people who choose to live in Scotland and those who were born like me, who live in Scotland are the best place to decide the country's future. And that was the foundation of my view.

NR

Was that the view of your dad then. Is it his view? Now, do you know what his view?

FM

I don't know what his view is it like he's been absolutely steadfast throughout his life of basically saying to me, I'm not telling you how I'm voting. And I can remember going to a polling station with him when I was very young, and you know, you can't, you can't come to the booth with me. That's me and the ballot box, and I was kind of ushered to the side while he cast his ballot. And we don't... we talk about politics. Of course, he's fascinated by what I'm doing. I'm so, I'm so glad that my dad has lived long enough to see me as the First Minister. Sadly, my mum didn't see that moment, but she saw lots of other significant moments in my political life, which I'm really blessed that she shared that. But it's still, it's still a secret, no matter, no matter how much probing I give him, he's just not for telling

NR

you don't know whether he votes. SNP, you don't know whether he's in favor of independence.

Fm

No idea

[crosstalk, laughter]

FM

He's a closed book on that.

NR

Yeah, and yet, some of your school friends were in no doubt about it. Some of your college friends... I'm intrigued by this story. Why did a punk band called "nocturnal vermin" - Now there's a name to come to - write a song called John Swinney, we salute you?

FM

Well, they must have thought that I had something to give to political life, and maybe punk commentary. But punk was the order of the day in those days. And, and this band of guys in Edinburgh, and they just conjured up these lyrics and, and, of course, over time, these, these things never disappear. So there has been a resurgence of this, I don't think it's quite got into, it's not got into kind of popular culture, but it certainly pops up every so often.

NR

At the time as a 15 year old, you decide you get to join the Scottish National Party, you got, pretty active, pretty quickly. Did you dad? Did your mum think that was a good way of spending your time? Or did they think, you know, rather, John, was in a punk band really?

FM

I suppose they were a bit mystified by it, because it had just come along almost from nowhere, but I suppose what had motivated me was the idea of Scottish self government. So I wasn't, I wasn't joining a political party for a political career because, you know, in 1979 the SNP had absolutely nae chance whatsoever, we'd just had a hammering in the election campaign. We were doing really badly. The prospects of Scottish self-governance were very, very low. But, you know, I wasn't just joining a political party so I could have a political career. I was joining a political party to advance an idea that I believed in passionately and wanted to make happen. Of course, as I look back over my political life, I'm so... I'm so thrilled at the progress that we have managed to make.

NR

Well, that's interesting. I wanted to come to that because, you know, here is a quote from John Swinney, *never before have the prospects for Scottish nationalism been as bright as they are today*. Now that wasn't what you said when you became First Minister. It wasn't what you said when you became leader of the SNP, which you did 20 years ago, before standing down for the job. You said it in 1990 when you were national secretary. It's an awfully long time it's taking, isn't it?

FM

Well, I wouldn't say that, because if [inaudible], those will be accurate comments from 1990. By 1997 I was a member of the House of Commons. Now, again, if you've said to me in 1979 within 18 years, you'll be a member of the House of Commons, I would have said not a chance, because the prospects were so poor. So

that comment in 1990 reflected, I think, a stage, a milestone in the journey that we're on. And we've gone from being literally a fringe political party to, well, by 2007 the government of Scotland, and have been continuously the government of Scotland since then.

NR

What's fascinating about that is I think what you're saying in effect is... *see things in the long run*. Be patient. Because friends of John Swinney, but critics too, say, *he's a bit slow about this stuff. We want the fireworks of an alex salmond, we want the charisma of Nicola Sturgeon. He takes it very steadily*. Now, you like to run don't you?

FM

I do.

NR

Your predecessor, Humza Yousaf, compared this with a marathon, and it's always the last couple of miles that are the toughest. Are you saying to people, *just be patient fellas? I've lived this all my life. We'll get there slowly?*

FM

What I would say to people is that we have made enormous progress. The Scottish Parliament that exists today is a more powerful Parliament than the one that was legislated for in 1998 in the Scotland Act. Why? Because the pressure from people like me to strengthen its powers, and we've accomplished that. We're now able to have a fairer tax and welfare system in Scotland because of reforms that people like me delivered to strengthen the powers in the Scottish Parliament. We haven't yet completed the journey to Scottish independence. I accept that, but I think we've got to... we've got to build on the foundations that we've achieved. I want to do it as quickly as possible. Of course, I want to do as quickly as possible, but I've also got to recognize the importance of taking people with us, building that support to convince people of the merits of our argument, because there's no shortcut to Scottish independence.

NR

It's interesting you say that because you said in a speech to your party recently, We'll never be able to win independence unless there is, and I quote, "compelling and demonstrable evidence of the support in place for independence". I think what you were saying is you can't rush it. You can't sue the Westminster Government again. We've tried that. You can't say, well, because we win this or that election, the general election, you weigh off that, of course, but there was some thought that you might at one stage or the Holyrood. Well, that's it. That's the mandate you need to win. The argument is that what you're telling?

FM

That's correct. I think the emphasis I place on that quote that you read out to me is on the word compelling. I think that's comparable the words compelling and demonstrable. That's that's what we've got to do. We've got to have a compelling argument with the public, demonstrable public support. And what I'm now doing in my leadership of the SNP is taking that case to the country by making the arguments

for independence based on the opportunities that independence presents to the people of Scotland.

NR

But does that mean also that you need to embrace some of the arguments that your critics want to put to you always about, well, what happens to the pound? They often says. We touched on the monarchy. What happens to the split between resources of the British Treasury in Scotland? Do you, in a sense, have to have all those conversations long before a referendum? Well, you've proved that you've got the answers.

FM

You've got to you've got to engage with, with with the public, and you've got to win public confidence. So if you go... again, going back over my life span, I don't think up until 2014, I don't think support for Scottish independence had ever been much above 32 or 33 per cent. But in the end, in the referendum in 2014 independence support was sitting at 45 per cent, and at various stages in the intervening decade, it's gone up higher than that. So that indicates to me that there is an... there's an audience out there in Scotland there to be persuaded about the arguments for independence, and my job is to do that.

NR

Haven't you blown your best chance? Because many people would say, look, the script was written for you. A conservative government in Westminster that had been there for years, a prime minister out of the SNP central class in playbook, an old Etonian called Boris Johnson, who talked like this. They're in charge, and then they take Scotland out of the EU against Scotland's will., it's never going to be better, goes the theory. You can't possibly have better conditions than that. It's over.

FM

Well have a wee look at what's now happened. We've now got a Labor government which is carrying on with austerity, which is removing winter heating payments from pensioners the length and breadth of the United Kingdom, particularly acutely challenging and difficult for pensioners in Scotland who are living in a colder climate. So people are beginning to look, and look at the... what's happened to the reputation of the Labor government already with this very short space and time they've been in office, people in Scotland are looking at them thinking, What on earth did we vote for? Because we thought this was going to be different, and actually it's just more the same. And that makes my point, which I was making in the speech I gave to my party just a few weeks ago, that whether it's a Conservative government or a Labor government in Westminster the problem for Scotland is Westminster Government and the choices that Westminster Government makes.

NR

Now the other question people raise is whether you really want this job at all, because here you are as First Minister, you offered to leave Nicola Sturgeon's government after the elections in 2016 and 21. A few years back, you said, there's not a bone in my body that would make me think I want to do that job? Do you really want to be? Who were you just helping the party out during a crisis?

FM

Yes, obviously, I did big jobs in government. I had 16 years of continuous senior office in government, and I felt, after 16 years, you know, it's really time to make way for other people. And in the streets every year, my party faced difficulties, and my party basically lined up in front of me every shade of opinion saying to me, we need you to come in and to lead our party, and we want you to lead our party. And as somebody who's really deeply connected to my party, emotionally, politically and the relationships I've got with people the length and breadth of the country. I felt I had to do that. And when it comes, when push comes to shove, I come down to the point that why on earth would I not want to be the First Minister of my country? Why would I not want to serve the country I love? And that's the foundation of why I decided to stand for Office. So, yes, I'd done a long shift. I thought it was time to make way for other people. But I love Scotland, and I want to give my best to Scotland.

NR

You also said I want to make space for a new political generation. Do you still want to make space for a new generation? Maybe, maybe ahead of the next Holyrood, Scottish Parliament election?

FM

No, no, I'm in here for the long haul. And there'll be a time, there'll be a time at some stage in the future, when I step down. But, it's not it's not anytime soon, and it's certainly not before the 2026, Holyrood elections.

NR

But to be clear, you will be accounted for. First Minister at those next elections. Well that's interesting to to understand. Your first challenge though was not those Holyrood elections, but the general election. Pretty grim for your party, down from 48 to nine seats, down from 45% in the polls to 30%. Did you know - that day in Edinburgh, when I interviewed you for panorama on BBC one - did you deep down think *I know it's gonna be bruising. I know it's coming.*

FM

I knew it was gonna be tough. Yeah, of course I did, because I can read read opinion polls pretty well. I've been around around the box for a while in these questions. So yes, I knew it was gonna be tough. But at that stage, we still had several weeks to go in the campaign, so I was trying to strengthen our position. I think, in actual fact, I probably did strengthen our position during the election campaign. I think it could have been worse, yes, I do. I think it could. Well, let me remind you what happened to the Labor Party in 2015 they went down to one seat. So, you know, that's what happened to them in Scotland, and they lost. Whether they lose, I can't even, remember, it was about 50 seats. I think they lost something like that. So I think it could have been a lot more. So I think I stabilized the situation.

NR

Do you remember when you heard the exit poll confirming your worst fears?

FM

Yes, I was home, and I was considering the implications of all of that, and obviously realized that we were in a, you know, a very difficult situation, and it has been a difficult election. I think it's a product of perhaps two things. I think. There was a hunger to change the United Kingdom Government, and that message rather overwhelmed us. Secondly, my party was not without its troubles, which is why I was back in the leadership and a particularly long enough period to do very much about addressing the situation, but we're getting on with doing that now.

NR

Part of your party's problems was that both the First Ministers you served, Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon, found themselves in scandals. Now this is not the time and place to go into the detail of this. Alex Salmond was cleared of charges of sexual assault. Nicola Sturgeon has not been charged, but the investigation into the SNP's finances go on now. What's the lesson you've learned from the plight of both of them about how you should do the job, of how the party should conduct itself?

FM

I just intend to go through this. I think, I think even my worst critics would recognize this about me, that I'm going about this job of exercising my responsibilities as First Minister of Scotland and leader of the Scottish National Party as John Swinney so I'm just going to be myself, and I'm completely and utterly at ease with myself, and I'm just going to... and my party has lined up and said to me, Look, we want you to lead our party, and they must see what... they can see what I'm about, how I go about my business, and that's just what I'm going to do.

NR

Nicola Sturgeon once said, *you were the most important person in my adult life outside my husband and family*. Are you still as close as you were? Do you still get her advice?

FM

Of course we're close friends and colleagues. And the job I've got to do, I've got to do as John Swinney and that's what I intend to do.

NR

And you believe in her.

FM

yes.

NR

Now another reason you have had difficulties you alluded to at the beginning of this interview is you got to make cuts - something you don't like doing. You like announcing things that are better in Scotland because you give more money to adult social care, for example, or free tuition fees. If you can't get this budget, you've got to get through with the Scottish Parliament, through would that be a trigger for an election?

FM

It depends on the actions of other political parties but we'll put forward a budget that will be sustainable, and that will do an important factor which our budget has to do. It has to live within the resources we've got available. We can't, we can't overspend. We've got to live within the budget that we set. That's the law requires us to do that. So we'll put forward a budget in that respect. We'll engage in a lot of dialogue, because we don't have a parliamentary majority. So I've had a fair amount of experience in this. For the first four years of SNP government, we were very much in a minority, much less so than we are just now.

NR

For people who don't know it, it means deal by deal, doesn't it?

FM

Yes, So you've got to, you see, you've got to work with other parties to get enough votes. You need 65 votes to pass a budget, we don't have that number of votes in our party. So we've got to get others to vote for us. And so we'll work to, to create a set of propositions that-that will command support, but that puts as much emphasis on other political parties and what they are prepared to support.

I don't think the public in Scotland... I don't think the public in Scotland want to go to any extra election than they're scheduled to have. The public know there's an election coming in May 2026. They can make their judgements at that particular time. But what I think they expect politicians do in the interim is to get on with taking the decisions to govern. And that's what we will do, certainly, and we will work hard with other parties to secure agreement.

NR

Is that, in particular, a message to the Greens who triggered the fall of your predecessor, Humza Yousaf, who made sure that the SNP were in a minority government.

FM

I think, I think it's a message to everybody, because every political... there's no, there's no kind of hiding place for any political party... we've got to. If we don't have a budget in place on the first of April, hospitals can't get their budget, schools can't get their budgets, taxes, benefits can't be paid. All sorts of things like that, you know. So all of these things follow from a budget that doesn't pass.

NR

Now we talked about your previous reluctance to take on the top job, and it took you time to decide to do it. Now, not least because your wife is unwell, and you had to decide with her, no doubt, whether this was something that you as a family could do, wanted to do. How much of a challenge has it proved to be?

FM

Elizabeth has multiple sclerosis, and she actually, she does phenomenally well. She's an incredibly strong and resilient person, but the realities of MS are that some of the things that she would love to do she can do. She often jokes with, with her friends that this MS has stopped me running a marathon alongside John. But I think

in all, in all reality, I don't think she was that keen to do the marathon under any circumstances, MS or not, but, but there are things that that are difficult, and she often needs her husband to be around. So I had to think very carefully and discuss with Elizabeth, would we manage? We've also, we have a son who's about to be 14. He's got a very active life. We want to make sure he can have an active life. He's really active in various sports. He's got lots of places to go that he needs to be taken. So we had to think all that through to see if it would work for us. So we've been helped enormously with friends who take our son to different sporting things, and I take him to sporting things when I can. Indeed, it's actually one of the joys of a day where I maybe don't have so much government business on I can go and just watch him play hockey or watch him play cricket, and it's lovely. It's tremendously good for me to do that.

NR

And have you tried to have rules? Do they work? Keir Starmer said before he came to power that, you know, Friday nights, that was the big thing for him, the family dinner on a Friday night. And I think he's already discovered it was incredibly difficult to actually have many of those Friday night dinners. Have you tried?

FM

We've not tried, because I think that's a recipe for not managing to deliver. So what we try to do is just work our way through the week where we're able to spend as much time together as we possibly can. But it is difficult because things happen, and I don't say that to complain about that, I knew what I was getting myself into. My family knew that - my wife's an experienced journalist, former political journalist. She knows the world of politics extraordinarily well, and so we knew what it all involves, and accept that, but we just, but it just needs a bit careful planning. And there's a there's a wall planner in the kitchen, which tries to keep an eye on where everybody is, and what's going on and who's taking who, where, and all this sort of stuff, and we work our way through that.

NR

Does that also mean that Elizabeth, given her knowledge of politics, is she sometimes the voice of wisdom? Is she sometimes the voice who says, *Come on, John, that's not the right way to do it.*

FM

Well we talk a lot, we are, we are husband and wife. We are inseparable. We are a complete and utter twosome. So we, we talk things through all the time and it's... that is so important, of having a place of safety and reassurance to have these conversations.

NR

I remember you telling me when we met during the election campaign that running, you've just mentioned the marathon, was something you had taken up - that was your personal space. Have you needed to take a lot of runs since you've become First Minister, to give yourself that mental space to work out what's going on?

FM

Despite all the long days and all the time that's involved in being First Minister, I'm still running, and I'm managing to do about three runs a week, normally, three, 5K's a week. It's absolutely essential, utterly essential.

NR

People in Edinburgh will sometimes see you?

FM

I run around about Edinburgh, and there's a guy who I've seen a few times who's got his work in the morning, and I saw him the first day I ran past him, he's obviously at the same time going out to his work. I ran past him one day, and I could see him looking about askance. And then the second time I ran past him, he was slightly more, slightly clearer. And the third time, we're now on... we're nodding acquaintances as he goes to his work and I complete my run. So it's really quite funny how these connections all build up now.

NR

There's an old cliché about politics that you'll know very well. All political careers end in the failure it's often said. What's the end of John Swinney's race? You've done everything now.

FM

Obviously I thought that I had completed my public.. I said this to Parliament when I became First Minister, I thought I'd completed my public service when I stood down as Deputy First Minister, and I stood down with a very... with a very easy heart about it. But obviously I've now got this new challenge and this enormous privilege to be the First Minister of Scotland. What I want to do is I want to serve my country well. That is what I promised - that I would be here to serve Scotland. I want to, I want to give the leadership the country needs at some really difficult and troubled times. And I want to achieve Scottish independence. And that's what I want to do

NR

John Swinney, First Minister of Scotland, thank you for joining me on political thinking.

Email Chain 2

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** First Minister
Sent: 02 October 2024 09:28
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>
Cc: Emily Mackintosh <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; Ross Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; Colin McAllister <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications First Minister <CommunicationsFirstMinister@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: For clearance: Comms handling for London trip, 2 Oct

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

FM is content.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)] | Office of the First Minister | [redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 01 October 2024 09:45
To: First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>
Cc: Emily Mackintosh <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; Ross Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; Colin McAllister <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: For clearance: Comms handling for London trip, 2 Oct

FMPO,

Please find an overview of proposed comms handling for FM’s trip to London. This has been agreed with policy and SPADs.

I have also reattached **[redacted – s38(1)(b)]** email from last week with the news release covering the medical supplies announcement.

Grateful if FM can consider and clear if content.

Many thanks

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

COMMS HANDLING – London trip	
WHAT	The First Minister will travel to London for a day of engagements on Wednesday 2 October. The focus of the trip will be the BBC Political Thinking interview and [Redacted – out of scope]
WHEN	Wednesday 2 October
COMMS HANDLING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Redacted – out of scope] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ [redacted – s38(1)(b)] will then secure footage of FM at the BBC Political Thinking recording, [Redacted – out of scope] • [Redacted – out of scope] • [Redacted – out of scope] • [Redacted – out of scope] • [Redacted – out of scope]
Overview of BBC Political Thinking Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The First Minister will be interviewed by Nick Robinson for the Political Thinking podcast/programme. • This will be a 35-minute audio and video recording at BBC Broadcasting House. • The podcast will be released on Thursday if they feel there is a pressing news line that comes out of the discussion, or Friday, which is their normal release date. This will be confirmed with [redacted – s38(1)(b)] after the recording. It will then be broadcast on Saturday on BBC Radio 4 and the BBC News channel. • The interview will cover a mix of political and personal issues, with the BBC flagging the following topics they intend to ask questions around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relations with the UKGov ○ Independence – has there been a shift in position/tone recently? ○ The general election campaign ○ Who are you and what are your priorities? Are you the great survivor of Scottish politics? Are you a reluctant leader? ○ Work/life balance and caring responsibilities

SOCIAL MEDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• [Redacted – out of scope]• [Redacted – out of scope]
COMMS SUPPORT	[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

News | [redacted – s38(1)(b)]

The Scottish Government, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh

Mobile: **[redacted – s38(1)(b)]** | Portfolio Media inquiries: 0300 244 9029

www.gov.scot/news

Email Chain 3

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]<[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Sent: 01 October 2024 12:48

To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>

Cc: Shona Riach <Shona.Riach@gov.scot>; Donna MacKinnon

<Donna.MacKinnon@gov.scot>; John Primrose <John.Primrose@gov.scot>;

[redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]

<[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted –

s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Jack Middleton

<Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted –

s38(1)(b)]@fcdo.gov.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted –

s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted –

s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted

– s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted –

s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Visits and Events

<VisitsandEvents@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted –

s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted –

s38(1)(b)]@scotland.police.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted –

s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted –

s38(1)(b)]< [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted

– s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Lisa Baird <Lisa.Baird@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]<

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]< [redacted –

s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: First Minister briefing pack - visit to London 2nd October

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Thanks for this. I've made some small edits, just to standardise formatting, and have also included an "achievements" brief for FM's reference in advance of the Political Thinking recording.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)] | Office of the First Minister | [redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <Sarah.Crompton-Donnelly@gov.scot>

Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 11:36 AM

To: First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>

Cc: Shona Riach <Shona.Riach@gov.scot>; Donna MacKinnon

<Donna.MacKinnon@gov.scot>; John Primrose <John.Primrose@gov.scot>;

[redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]

Email Chain 4

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 2:57 PM
To: Emily Mackintosh <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; Ross Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; Colin McAllister <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications First Minister <CommunicationsFirstMinister@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: For SpAd Views: FM Bid - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Hi Emily,

In previous discussions with Jack, we had discussed potentially offering some proactive newlines for the interview and Jack was going to have a think.

Grateful for thoughts on whether there are any subjects, attached to the London trip or otherwise, we'd like to invite Nick Robinson to raise with FM on Wednesday.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: Emily Mackintosh <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>
Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 2:05 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; Ross Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; Colin McAllister <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications First Minister <CommunicationsFirstMinister@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: For SpAd Views: FM Bid - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

What am I being asked to comment on?

Thanks,
Emily

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 1:33 PM
To: Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; Emily Mackintosh <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Ross Ingebrigtsen <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; Colin McAllister <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications First Minister <CommunicationsFirstMinister@gov.scot>

Subject: For SpAd Views: FM Bid - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Hello SpAds,

As discussed elsewhere, the First Minister will be interviewed by Nick Robinson for the Political Thinking podcast/programme during his visit to London on Wednesday. This will be a 35-minute audio and video recording.

The podcast will be released on Thursday if they feel there is a pressing news line that comes out of the discussion, or Friday, which is their normal release date. This will be confirmed with Taylor after the recording. It will then be broadcast on Saturday on BBC Radio 4 and the BBC News channel.

FM should arrive at the main entrance to Broadcasting House for 12:15 where he will be met by producer [redacted – s38(1)(b)] and taken to the studio.

The interview will cover a mix of political and personal issues including:

- Relations with the UKG
- Independence – has there been a shift in position/tone recently?
- The general election campaign
- Who he is and his priorities
- Is he the great survivor of Scottish politics?
- Is he a reluctant leader?
- Work/life balance and caring for his wife

They are also open to raising issues at our request.

Grateful for views on that last point, and the arrangements in general before sharing this update with FMPO. Finally, for the purposes of discussing FM's background, the producer has asked for confirmation of his mother's name. They have found two different names while researching. Let me know your views on most appropriate way to share that information.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)] | News - First Minister

The Scottish Government

m: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]

Email Chain 5

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: 03 October 2024 09:04
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

Subject: Re: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October Morning.

In case you're not aware,

The Middle East clip ran on News Channel, was top of Radio Scotland bulletins, and put out on socials last night:

<https://x.com/BBCPolitics/status/1841570851071914467>

Thanks a lot,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]
Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2024 4:51:59 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Just a heads up: clip will run on the BBC News Channel after 1700

Then social clip on BBC Politics twitter later

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: 02 October 2024 14:43
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Hey [redacted – s38(1)(b)] – we also thought it was really good.

Clip should be out on social media and potentially BBC News Channel later today – will keep you in the loop

Podcast release not decided yet. Given we're putting out the Israel line/clip, there's less of a reason to bring forward release of the full podcast from our usual Thursday night/Friday morning slot.

Will keep you up to date

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2024 2:28 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted –

s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

Subject: Re: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

External: Think before clicking

Hi **[redacted – s38(1)(b)]**,

Thanks for your time today. FM really enjoyed the interview so thank you for arranging.

If you were able to get the clip out tonight and the podcast tomorrow that would be great.

Thanks again,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: **[redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>**

Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2024 1:07:50 PM

To: **[redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>**

Subject: Re: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

If you don't do another int, we can try and get a clip out by end of today and pod out first thing tomorrow

From: **[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>**

Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2024 12:02:42 PM

To: **[redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>**

Subject: Re: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

External: Think before clicking

[redacted – s38(1)(b)], one further thing to flag. FM keen to speak about the worsening situation in the middle East and suspect that may be the strongest / most topical point he will raise from a news perspective.

From: **[redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>**

Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2024 10:50:42 AM

To: **[redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>**

Subject: Re: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Thanks **[redacted – s38(1)(b)]**. That's all absolutely fine with us.

See you this afternoon.

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2024 10:41:15 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]>
Subject: RE: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Hey [redacted – s38(1)(b)] – no problem for pre-interview and end. Might be tricky for while we're recording, because it's an enclosed radio studio space.

Hope that's ok.

While we're on the subject, it's possible we'll have a photographer at the same time to make sure we have a good shot for promo on BBC Iplayer (see Wes Streeting example below – but not as serious!). We can take it in the studio so won't add any time.

Hope that's ok.

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2024 10:32 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: Re: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

External: Think before clicking
Morning [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Looking forward to meeting you later. One question I meant to ask, would you have any objections to our videographer filming some b-roll of FM and Nick in the margins of the interview? When they meet, a section of the interview and at the end? We obviously would not want to interfere with your filming and would ensure we stayed out of shot.

If not possible, no problem.

Thanks
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 3:47:36 PM
To: Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: Re: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Thanks

From: Jack.Middleton@gov.scot <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 3:43:52 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

External: Think before clicking
His father is and lives in [redacted – s38(1)(b)].

Jack Middleton
Special Adviser to the First Minister
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]
jack.middleton@gov.scot

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.

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 3:43 PM
To: Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Thanks Jack –
All helpful.
Are either of his parents still alive?
I ask because we'll refer to them, and it's helpful to know.
Cheers
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: Jack.Middleton@gov.scot <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 3:39 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

External: Think before clicking
[redacted – s38(1)(b)],

John Swinney's keynote address to Conference #SNP24 — Scottish National Party

Some good flavour about joining the party here – the line about 'I went to the pub' would be entertaining to flesh out.

There's also this – a song written by someone he went to college with - Fife indie music history includes 1982 punk tribute to John Swinney (thecourier.co.uk)

Obviously, the FM is also a carer for his wife Elizabeth Quigley who has MS and is a former BBC political correspondent. His son Matthew [redacted – s38(1)(b)]. These issues would be interesting to explore to learn more his family commitments.

Given we are ten years on from 2014 referendum reflection on that would also be appropriate.

I will flag with the FM about what's it like line. And I will flag a line or two that he hopes to get out of the interview tomorrow morning too [redacted – s38(1)(b)].

Drop me a text on [redacted – s38(1)(b)] if you need anything else from me.

Cheers
Jack

Jack Middleton

Special Adviser to the First Minister
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]
jack.middleton@gov.scot

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.

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 3:18 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Thanks [redacted – s38(1)(b)]. Adding the First Minister's Political Advisor @Jack Middleton who may be best placed providing you with some further detail.

One of us will come back to you or call on the number you have provided below.

Thanks,
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]
News | [redacted – s38(1)(b)]
The Scottish Government, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh
Mobile: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] | Portfolio Media inquiries: 0300 244 9029
www.gov.scot/news

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 12:56 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted –

s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: Re: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Hi both,

Having spoken to Nick this morning, we're keen to make sure we have enough engaging stories from recent and less recent times in the FM's career.

Are you able to give me a heads up on any?

E.g. why he actually joined the SNP at 15.

Also, we plan on opening with a "what's it like?" Conversation. So any behind-the-scenes insight into what it's like to run a country always works well.

Thanks a lot

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>

Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 8:25:14 AM

To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@scotland.police.uk <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@scotland.police.uk>

Subject: Re: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

Thanks [redacted – s38(1)(b)] and Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

It's possible the meet and greet will be [redacted – s38(1)(b)].

[Redacted – out of scope]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)] - I'm working from home today, but feel free to give me a call if helpful.

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 4:32 PM

To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@scotland.police.uk <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@scotland.police.uk>

Subject: First Minister Interview - Political Thinking - Wednesday 2 October

External: Think before clicking

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Many thanks for your time on the phone earlier. As discussed, I'm putting you in touch with my colleague [redacted – s38(1)(b)] who will be with the First Minister on

Wednesday. He will be down in London tomorrow if you think it might be helpful for him to come to Broadcasting House. For awareness, I'm also copying **[redacted – s38(1)(b)]** who has been discussing security arrangements separately.

We discussed that you would meet the First Minister on arrival at the main entrance to Broadcasting House at 12:15. If that changes between now and Wednesday, grateful if you can share the name and contact details (email, phone) of the colleague taking your place.

We also discussed likely publication dates for the podcast episode. Grateful if you can confirm thinking with **[redacted – s38(1)(b)]** after the recording on Wednesday.

Let us know if there's anything else we can do to help with arrangements.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

[redacted – s38(1)(b)] | News - First Minister

The Scottish Government

m: **[redacted – s38(1)(b)]**

Email Chain 6

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 30 September 2024 10:58
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Yes no problem. My number is below for ease if you want to call in an hour or so.

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 10:56 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Could we speak at noon?

Thanks a lot,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 10:30 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

External: Think before clicking

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Free for most of today if you want to let me know when suits you for a call.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <Alasdair.Mckillop@gov.scot>
Sent: Friday, September 27, 2024 4:57 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)], happy to arrange a call on Monday at some point. In the meantime, enjoy your weekend.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Friday, September 27, 2024 11:36 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <Alasdair.Mckillop@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: Re: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Brilliant news

Thanks for making that work.

Would be helpful to catch up with one of you on Monday to discuss what he might want to talk about.

What's he in London for? I'm guessing it's not a coincidence that the Welsh FM is here the same day?

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Friday, September 27, 2024 9:05:39 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: Re: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

External: Think before clicking
Morning [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

FM can do Broadcasting House at 12.15.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Friday, September 27, 2024 7:53:09 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: Re: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Do you know when we might get an answer on whether the FM can make it to BH?

Sorry for chasing - but it looks like we will lose the option for Millbank.

Cheers

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]

Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 1:34:39 PM

To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Ok thanks,

Let me know once you know. The sooner the better, of course, so that I can ensure we have the studio and staffing required.

If Broadcasting House, might be easier at 1300.

Given it's a 35-min interview, we'll hope to cover a lot of ground.

It'll be a mix of the political – why the General Election results were disappointing, what he can do to turn things around etc – and the personal: what from his background informs the way he approaches politics today.

And we're happy to be guided to a certain extent if there's something in particular he wants to talk about.

If we record on the 2nd, the podcast will be released on 3rd or 4th and it broadcasts on Radio 4 and BBC News Channel on the 5th

Cheers

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 12:43 PM

To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

External: Think before clicking

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Just confirming that FM will be happy to speak to you at 12:15 on the 2nd. Discussions are still ongoing about the best location for his wider programme, so very grateful if both options can be kept open.

Are you able to give us an indication at this stage what issues might be raised? No problem if it's very high level or tentative. And when will the episode go live if recorded on the 2nd?

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>

Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 10:56 AM

To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Thanks [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Due to availability of visualised studios, we may end up in a position where we can only do it in BH.

But I'm trying to make sure that both options are open.

Will wait to hear from you.

All the best,
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 10:52 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

External: Think before clicking

Thanks [redacted – s38(1)(b)]. Just waiting for views from colleagues on whether Broadcasting House or Millbank works better for the FM's schedule.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 9:39 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

In fact, if he is willing to go to Broadcasting House, that would be easier and smoother all round.

(Sorry about the multiple emails)

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 9:29 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

It's actually possible to do it later than 1215 if the FM is willing to come to New Broadcasting House instead.
I'm assuming Millbank is a bit closer though.

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Wednesday, September 25, 2024 5:47 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

External: Think before clicking
Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Excellent! Let me just check with FM's office that he can definitely make it to Millbank for 12:15. I'll aim to confirm asap tomorrow morning.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, September 25, 2024 5:44 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

This will work – just trying to work out whether it's 1215 or 1300 because we need to move a couple of other recordings for Nick that day.

1215 much easier for us. Can we put that in the diary for Millbank please?

Cheers

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Wednesday, September 25, 2024 9:37 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

External: Think before clicking
Thanks [redacted – s38(1)(b)]. Confirming we can do Millbank if needed.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, September 25, 2024 9:01 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Thanks [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

In case it helps with decision on Millbank: we usually record for around 40 mins.

Cheers,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Wednesday, September 25, 2024 8:59 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

External: Think before clicking

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Let me know what Nick can manage and I'll check on possibility of doing Millbank.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, September 25, 2024 6:46 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Thanks for this – I'd like to make it work. Can I give you an answer by the end of today?

It depends on Nick's movements next week and to what extent he can rearrange.

Also – is there any chance we'd be able to persuade him to make the short hop to our studio in Millbank?

Makes the whole process a lot smoother if that's possible.

Thanks a lot

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Tuesday, September 24, 2024 1:19 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

External: Think before clicking
Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

FM is going to be in London on Wednesday 2 October. He will have some time for media at Scotland House between approximately 12:15 and 14:00.

I think you might've said previously you tend to record on a Thursday, which would be in line with the latest proposed dates you sent us, but wonder if you have any flexibility? Appreciate also that proposed date will overlap with final day Conservative conference and parliamentary recess.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Friday, September 20, 2024 11:54 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: Re: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Thanks [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Would of course love to do it while he is in London.

If it's helpful in making the case for PT over other opportunities, the reach is particularly wide compared to other podcasts, given its combination of podcast, radio 4 and News Channel broadcast, with a combined audience of up to a million, as well as social and digital coverage.

All the best,
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Friday, September 20, 2024 11:49 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

External: Think before clicking
Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Sorry for lack of communication from us on this. Yes, still being considered. Confidentially, FM will be in London a couple of times in October but schedule for those visits still being finalised, so not sure what will be possible in terms of media opportunities on both occasions.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Friday, September 20, 2024 11:42 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: Re: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)] and [redacted – s38(1)(b)],
Just checking in before the weekend that this is still be considered for October?
Cheers
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]
Sent: Tuesday, September 17, 2024 9:59 AM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)] – me again! Could you check in again for 24th October please?
Thanks a lot,
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: Monday, September 9, 2024 1:57 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>; [redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

External: Think before clicking
Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Very sorry this is taking so long to resolve. I'm hoping to have clarity over the course of today or tomorrow if you can give us just a little longer.

Thanks,

[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@bbc.co.uk>
Sent: Monday, September 9, 2024 1:55 PM
To: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted – s38(1)(b)] <[redacted – s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BBC Political Thinking John Swinney

Hi [redacted – s38(1)(b)],

Is this still of interest for the FM?

17th or 24th October would be really good for us if so.

All the best,
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]

BRIEFING PACK FOR THE FIRST MINISTER'S VISIT TO LONDON

2ND OCTOBER 2024

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5. [Redacted - out of scope]	19
6. [Redacted - out of scope]	37

NB – Separately, you will also receive a comms plan from FM Comms, a logistics note from FMPO [Redacted - out of scope].

1. PROGRAMME

TIME	ACTIVITY	VENUE	SUPPORT	NOTES	OBJECTIVES
[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]			
11:38-12:15	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]			
12:15-13:00	Political Thinking Podcast recording	Broadcasting House	Comms/SpAd / PS		
[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]		[Redacted - out of scope]
[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]			
[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]		[Redacted - out of scope]
[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]			[Redacted - out of scope]
[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]
[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]		[Redacted - out of scope]	
[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	• [Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]
[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]			

[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]			
[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]	[Redacted - out of scope]			

KEY CONTACTS

Contact	Contact Number
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]	[redacted – s38(1)(b)]
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]	[redacted – s38(1)(b)]
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]	[redacted – s38(1)(b)]
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]	[redacted – s38(1)(b)]
John Webster – PPS to FM	[redacted – s38(1)(b)]
Jack Middleton - SpAd	[redacted – s38(1)(b)]
[redacted – s38(1)(b)]	[redacted – s38(1)(b)]
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2. BRIEFING FOR POLITICAL THINKING PODCAST

ACHIEVEMENTS BRIEF

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The choices of this Government over the last 17 years have been taken to ensure all children have the best possible start in life.

For a child growing up in Scotland today:

- They will receive a baby box at birth, giving them essential items like clothes, bedding, books, and a thermometer.
- Their parents can benefit from the Family Nurse Partnership – offered to young first-time parents – supporting them to build the confidence and skills they need to provide the right support for their baby and give them the best start in life.
- They could also benefit from the Best Start Grant – a package of three Scottish benefits to help parents and carers on low incomes with the costs of having a child in the family.
- If eligible for the Scottish Child Payment, their family will receive £26.70 per week, per child – a payment unavailable anywhere else in the UK and which modelling suggests **will keep 60,000 children out of relative poverty** in 2024-25. This payment is not available anywhere else in the UK – and exists because we are prioritising lifting children out of poverty.
- They benefit from 1,140 hours a year of funded early learning and childcare, available to all 3 and 4-year-olds and eligible 2-year-olds regardless of their parents' working status.
- They will enter an education system where the poverty-related attainment gap has reduced by 60% since 2009 for people leaving school and going on to a positive destination.
- They will learn in a country that has the most teachers-per-pupil in the UK, and where school education spend per person is higher than in England and Wales.
- They might study in one of the more than 1,000 school building projects that have been completed during the last 15 years, giving them a better environment for their learning.
- And of course, on leaving school, this Government's commitment to free tuition means that unlike elsewhere in the UK, a Scottish student studying in Scotland will not incur additional debt of up to £27,750.

PUBLIC SERVICES

I am committed that Scotland's public services be the best that they can be – for the people who work in them and for the communities they serve.

For a person engaging with our Health service today:

- They may see a medical or dental consultant – of which there are 68% more than before the SNP became the government.
- If they need dental work, they will have more dentists to choose from than in England or Wales – with 57 per 100,000 of the population in Scotland compared to 42 in England and 46 in Wales.
- They may be seen by one of our over 66,700 nursing and midwifery staff –17.5% more under this Government than before.

An NHS Agenda for Change member of staff in Scotland today:

- Has an offer of a 5.5% pay uplift for 2024/25 on the table. They would continue to have the best reward package in the UK.
It is significantly above inflation, and means that over the last two years we have invested over £1 billion in NHS Agenda for Change pay to reward our staff for their incredible hard work.

People in Scotland are safer today than when this Government took office, with recorded crime having fallen significantly under this administration - down 40% since the SNP became the government.

If you are a police officer in Scotland:

- You are the best paid in the UK, at the minimum and maximum of each rank, because we recognise the hard work and valuable contribution they make daily.

If you work in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:

- You are part of a service that has received year-on-year increases in funding since 2017-18 – in recognition of the vital work you do.
- You are part of a service that has more firefighters per 10,000 of population than in England or Wales. *(At 31 March 2023, 11.4 firefighters per 10,000 population in Scotland, 6.1 In England, and 10.1 in Wales.)*

If you are a classroom teacher in Scotland:

- You are more paid more than your counterparts in the England and Wales. After finishing probation, a teacher in Scotland will earn £38,655, compared to £31,650 in England (outside London), and £30,743 in Wales.

ECONOMY

Brexit has been estimated to have left the UK economy at least £69 billion worse off compared with EU membership.

In the face of this challenge:

- Since 2007, Scotland's economy has grown faster than the UK as a whole, after accounting for population growth, and productivity has grown twice as quickly.
- Median earnings growth over the last year in Scotland has been faster than the UK average (6.4% compared to 6.1%).
- The Claimant Count unemployment rate for Scotland was 3.9% in July 2024, below the rate for the UK as a whole (4.7%).
- This is helping contribute to record income tax receipts, with Scottish Income Tax alone now forecast to raise around £18.8bn in 2024-25 to help fund public services.
- The Small Business Bonus Scheme is the most generous scheme of its kind in the UK and offers up to 100% relief from non-domestic rates.

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

This Government has overseen a significant drop in emissions – and we continue to be ahead of the UK as a whole in delivering long-term emissions reductions.

- Between 1990 and 2022 our emissions halved while the economy grew by 67%, demonstrating that a thriving economy and falling emissions are not just compatible, but can support each other.
- But we also know that the second half of our journey will be even more challenging. Scotland, like all other countries, will need to ensure a just transition in areas like agriculture, transport and heat in buildings to meet our net zero goals.

In the last five years, the people of Scotland can be proud to live in a country where:

- We have created around 75% of all new woodlands throughout the UK, with these woodlands tackling the effects of climate change through sequestration, flood mitigation and the timber being used to lock up carbon.
- We launched the world's largest floating offshore wind leasing round through ScotWind.
- We continue to offer some of the most generous grants and loans in the UK to support the move to clean heating.

LOWER TAXES & CHARGES	Scotland	England	Wales
Average Household Water Bill 2024-25	£446	£473	
Average Band D Council Tax 2023-24	£1,417	£2,065	£1,879
Tuition Fees for first full time degree	<u>£0</u>	<u>£9,250</u>	<u>£9,000</u>
Prescription Charges	£0	£9.90	£0
Costs for an Eye Examination	<u>£0</u>	£25	£25
Maximum Road or Bridge Toll/Charge for a Car	<u>£0</u>	£8.90	£0.00
MORE INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC SERVICES PER PERSON	Scotland	England	Wales
Health spending pp	£3,106	£3,064	£3,337
Education spending pp	£1,848	£1,543	£1,672
Transport spending pp	£876	£642	£502
Police, public order & safety spending pp	£656	£569	£604
Housing & community amenity spending pp	£510	£216	£383
Environmental protection spending pp	£276	£190	£241
Agriculture, fisheries and forestry spending pp	£156	£81	£176
Enterprise and economic development pp	£1,045	£921	£907
MORE PUBLIC SERVANTS PROVIDING SERVICES PER HEAD	SG	England	Wales
Police officers per 100,000 people	298	245	
Staff working inside prisons per 100,000 people	62.7	60.1	
Firefighters per 100,000 people	114	61	101
GPs per 100,000 people (headcount)	81	62	65
Dentists per 100,000 people (headcount)	57	42.3	45.8
Teachers per 100,000 pupils	7,559	5,713	5,585
Schools per 100,000 pupils	348	264	335
BETTER PUBLIC STARTING SALARIES	SG	England	Wales
Starting Salary for Qualified Teachers (at Jan 24)	£38,655	£31,350-£36,745 (Lond/surround) £30,000	£30,742
Starting Salary for Nurse	£30,229	£28,407	£28,834
Starting Salary for New Constables	£30,039	£29,907	£29,907
BEST PERFORMING ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY SERVICE	SG	England	Wales
2022/23, 4 hour in core/major A&Es.	65.6%	56.70%	57.3%
2022-23, 12 hour in core/major A&Es.	95.3%	89.30%	84.2%
MORE HIGHER EDUCATION	SG	England	Wales
25-64 year old population with Tertiary Education, 2023	56.1%	NA	46.1%

[Redacted – out of scope]