From: [redacted] on behalf of Minister for Public Finance
To: [redacted]; Minister for Public Finance
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Finance & Local Government; DG Economy; Fiona Simpson; [redacted] cott Ferrie; [redacted] Communications Finance and Local Government; [redacted]
Subject: RE: CALLED IN PLANNING APPLICATION - CONSTRUCTION OF AN 18 HOLE GOLF COURSE, ETC, AT LAND 1700M NORTH WEST OF EMBO COMMUNITY CENTRE, EMBO (COUL LINKS) - NA/270/010
Date: 27 January 2026 11:14:14
Attachments: image001.png
image002.png
image003.png
image004.jpg
image005.png
image007.png
image008.png
image009.png
NA-270-010 - Submission - Coul Links - 23 Oct 2025.docx
image006.png

This email is for the official record and confirms a Ministerial Decision. This email must be placed in the official record (eRDM) by your team in line with SG records management policy.

Morning [redacted]

The Minister is grateful for officials' advice in the submission. [redacted]

Many thanks

[redacted]

[redacted] | Private Secretary to Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Public Finance | MinisterPF@gov.scot | St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG | [redacted]

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From: [redacted]
Sent: 23 October 2025 15:31
To: Minister for Public Finance <MinisterPF@gov.scot>
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Finance & Local Government <CabSecFLG@gov.scot>; DG Economy <DGEconomy@gov.scot>; Fiona Simpson <Fiona.Simpson@gov.scot>; [redacted]

[redacted] Scott Ferrie <Scott.Ferrie@gov.scot>; [redacted] Communications Finance and Local Government <CommunicationsFinanceandLocalGovernment@gov.scot>; [redacted]

Subject: CALLED IN PLANNING APPLICATION - CONSTRUCTION OF AN 18 HOLE GOLF COURSE, ETC, AT LAND 1700M NORTH WEST OF EMBO COMMUNITY CENTRE, EMBO (COUL LINKS) - NA/270/010

Minister for Public Finance

CONSTRUCTION OF AN 18 HOLE GOLF COURSE, PRACTICE AREA, ACCESS, PARKING, ANCILLARY INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE CHANGE OF USE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS TO FORM CLUBHOUSE, PRO SHOP, MAINTENANCE SHED AND ANCILLARY FACILITIES AT LAND 1700M NORTH WEST OF EMBO COMMUNITY CENTRE, EMBO (Planning Ref: 23/00580/FUL) (Our Ref: NA/270/010)

[redacted]

[redacted] | Senior Planner | Planning, Architecture and Regeneration Division | Scottish Government | [redacted]

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted] Fiona Simpson; DPEA; Director for Planning, Architecture and Regeneration; [redacted]
Cc: Communications Finance and Local Government; [redacted]; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs; [redacted]
Subject: RE: FOI lines, plus media query - coul links - BBC
Date: 09 September 2025 11:26:49
Attachments: image001.png
image002.png
image003.png
image012.png
image013.png
image014.png
image015.png

Hi [redacted]

For PARD, I am content with the previously agreed media lines highlighted below.

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Planning Decisions | Planning, Architecture and Regeneration Directorate | Scottish Government

---

From: [redacted]
Sent: 09 September 2025 11:20
To: [redacted] Fiona Simpson <Fiona.Simpson@gov.scot>; DPEA <DPEA@gov.scot>; Director for Planning, Architecture and Regeneration <DirectorPAR@gov.scot>; [redacted]
Cc: Communications Finance and Local Government <CommunicationsFinanceandLocalGovernment@gov.scot>; [redacted] Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [redacted]
Subject: RE: FOI lines, plus media query - coul links - BBC

Hi [redacted]

I don't believe we need a line for the cost, there is nothing else I'd be saying we can just reconfirm that is the cost if pushed and provide the part in quotations below, for example:

A Scottish Government Spokesperson said:

"The overall recorded cost for the Coul Links case is £79,390.67, this figure

includes reporter time, the press advert, hall hire for the oral process, car hire, reporter accommodation and travel and subsistence."

Any other questions about why it cost that, how it cost that isn't something we would comment on.

Will leave the BBC lines for PARD colleagues.

Thanks

[redacted] **Head of Delivery**

From: [redacted]
Sent: 09 September 2025 11:10
To: [redacted] Fiona Simpson <Fiona.Simpson@gov.scot>; DPEA <DPEA@gov.scot>; Director for Planning, Architecture and Regeneration <DirectorPAR@gov.scot>; [redacted]
Cc: Communications Finance and Local Government <CommunicationsFinanceandLocalGovernment@gov.scot>; [redacted] Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [redacted]
Subject: FOI lines, plus media query - coul links - BBC

Hello,

I'd be grateful for policy input on a couple of issues relating to Coul Links. Firstly, we have a query from the BBC today asking for an update, given that the reporter's report has been received.

We have existing lines, below, which I suspect can just be reissued – can you confirm that these continue to reflect our position?

Secondly, we have an FOI response due to issue today. In response to a request for *the total cost to Scot gov of the planning appeal / inquiry for the coul links golf course and the number of hours of staff time attached to this application,* we are confirming that: "the overall recorded cost for the Coul Links case is £79,390.67, this figure includes reporter time, the press advert, hall hire for the oral process, car hire, reporter accommodation and travel and subsistence." We are not detailing the number of hours involved as this information is not held.

I don't think this cost seems particularly high, and I'm not sure we will be asked about it, but if we were, would we have a short line we could give in response?

Regards,

[redacted]

Lines for BBC:

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:

> "On 29 August 2025, the Reporters submitted their report and recommendation to Scottish Ministers, who will make the final decision on the planning application.
>
> "Ministers are reviewing the Reporters' findings and will issue a decision as soon as possible.
>
> "As the application remains live, it would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage."

Media query:

From: [redacted]
Sent: *09 September 2025 10:12*
To: *DPEA <DPEA@gov.scot>*
Subject: *Coul Links*

Good morning,

My name's [redacted] *I'm a journalist with the BBC, hope you're well.*

Could I ask if a decision has been made/when a decision will be made on the proposed golf course at Coul Links in Sutherland? I understand the report is with ministers now.

https://www.dpea.scotland.gov.uk/CaseDetails.aspx?ID=124499

We are doing a short update on the story for our outlets this week and a timeframe would be helpful if possible.

Any help much appreciated!

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Cc: DPEA; [redacted] Communications Finance and Local Government; [redacted] Fiona Simpson; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs; [redacted] Director for Planning, Architecture and Regeneration; [redacted]
Subject: RE: Media query: The National: Coul Links recommendations
Date: 02 September 2025 13:32:00
Attachments: image001.png
image002.png
image003.png
image018.jpg
image019.png
image020.png
image021.png
image022.png
image008.png
image009.png
image011.png
image013.png
image015.png

Hi [redacted],

Minor edit to [redacted] lines:

> "On 29 August 2025, the Reporters submitted their report and recommendation to Scottish Ministers, who will make the final decision on the planning application.
>
> "Ministers are reviewing the Reporters' findings and will issue a decision as soon as possible.
>
> "As the application remains live, it would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage."

Thanks,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Planning Decisions | Planning, Architecture and Regeneration Directorate | Scottish Government

---

From: [redacted]
Sent: 02 September 2025 13:16
To: [redacted]
Cc: DPEA <DPEA@gov.scot>; [redacted] Communications Finance and Local Government <CommunicationsFinanceandLocalGovernment@gov.scot>; [redacted] Fiona Simpson <Fiona.Simpson@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [redacted] Director for Planning, Architecture and Regeneration <DirectorPAR@gov.scot>; [redacted]

Subject: RE: Media query: The National: Coul Links recommendations

Hi
Cc'd to

Yes, it is normal practice to publish the reporters report once a decision has been made.

The standard lines you have stated are correct.

I offer the below, I'll let others feed in if they wish to expand on these lines:

"The report dated 28 August 2025 has been received by Scottish Ministers."
"As this is a live planning application it would not be appropriate to comment."
"The decision will be announced in due course"

Thanks

| Directorate for Planning, Architecture & Regeneration | Environment, Net Zero & Planning Decisions | Scottish Government

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From:
Sent: 02 September 2025 12:34
To:
Cc: DPEA <DPEA@gov.scot>; Communications Finance and Local Government <CommunicationsFinanceandLocalGovernment@gov.scot>; Lucy Smith Fiona Simpson <Fiona.Simpson@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero, Energy and Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; Marie Ferguson Director for Planning, Architecture and Regeneration <DirectorPAR@gov.scot>; DPEA <DPEA@gov.scot>
Subject: Media query: The National: Coul Links recommendations

Hello,

We've been approached by the National for comment on the Coul Links planning application, as the journalist says he has been told that the reporter's

recommendations have now been received by ministers.

He is asking if these will be published, and if not whether he can have a statement confirming that they have been submitted and summarising what they say.

Is it normal practice that the reporter's report and recommendations are only published once ministers have made a decision? I would imagine our existing lines, as below, would remain our position at present, but I'd be grateful for policy input on this.

Would we want to say instead that the report has been received and ministers will make their decision in due course?

Thanks

[redacted]

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:
"As this is a live planning application it would not be appropriate to comment.
"The decision will be announced in due course."

MEDIA QUERY:

From: [redacted]
Sent: 02 September 2025 12:21
To: [redacted]
Subject: Coul Links recommendations

Hi [redacted]

We understand that the reporter's recommendations on Coul Links have been submitted to ministers (we are told on Friday gone). Unfortunately we don't have them! I wondered if the Scottish Government would be publishing these, as does happen beforehand in some cases, but might not in DPEA cases?

Do you think we could get sight of them or, if not, a statement summarising that the reporter has submitted their recommendations and what they say?

Can we hear by 5pm?

Thank you,

[redacted]
The National
[redacted]

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From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Objective Connect Workspace Closure
Date: 17 November 2025 11:19:09
Attachments: image001.jpg

Hi [redacted]

No problem, everything should be on CMS for both cases so no issues in closing.

Kind regards,
[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 17 November 2025 11:16
To: [redacted]
Subject: Objective Connect Workspace Closure

Hi [redacted]

[redacted]

Please also note that, unless there are any strong objections from the reporters, we intend to close the workspace for NA-270-010 given that the report was submitted to ministers in August.

Thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted]
Technical Support Manager
Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA)
Scottish Government

Ground Floor, Hadrian House, Callendar Business Park, Falkirk, FK1 1XR

Phone: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]
DPEA Website: www.dpea.scotland.gov.uk
DPEA Twitter: @DPEAScotland

We are moving our webcasting services to YouTube. Live and archived DPEA webcasts and guidance videos will be available to view on our YouTube channel -

DPEA - YouTube. Whilst we transition, the following cases will stream to our current Webcasting Site. : WIN-110-4; WIN-270-24; WIN-270-26