Permanent Secretary
Joe Griffin

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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Graham Simpson MSP
Reform UK
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

8th January 2026

Dear Mr Simpson,

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS, MAY 2026

With effect from 14 January 2026, the First Minister has authorised me to conduct discussions with the Leaders of opposition parties at Holyrood. These discussions will be on the basis of the established pre-election arrangements and will enable us to discuss any questions you may have on the way the Scottish Government is currently organised and to obtain factual information to assist in the formation of policies. I cannot of course advise you on the policies themselves. I attach a note that outlines the ground rules that will govern any discussions that take place.

I am sending this correspondence to you in the first instance as the member of Reform UK serving as an elected representative in the Scottish Parliament but should you wish to take up this offer of engagement, I would be grateful for confirmation that you are the correct person to engage with on behalf of your party.

Subject to the above, the next step would be for me to have an initial discussion with your party's representative to agree how best to support the process from your point of view. Please contact my office on the email address above to agree a mutually convenient time for us to meet. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

JOE GRIFFIN

INFORMATION ABOUT PRE-ELECTION ACCESS TO THE CIVIL SERVICE

1. The period of pre-election engagement, authorised by the First Minister, is primarily an opportunity for opposition parties to seek information about the way the Scottish Government is organised and to obtain factual information to assist them with the formulation of policies.

2. It also provides an opportunity for opposition parties to inform the Civil Service of their plans for government.

3. The pre-election engagement period runs from 14 January 2026 until Polling Day on 7 May 2026.

4. Lead Senior Civil Servants (at Director level) have been identified for each party which wishes to use the pre-election access arrangements to request factual information from the Civil Service.

5. Reform UK's lead contact is **Richard Rollison,** the Scottish Government's Director for International Trade and Investment.

6. The key ground rules, which are consistent with the Civil Service Code and Cabinet Office guidance[5], are as follows:

    q) Only factual information can be provided. This could include information on the practicalities of proposals – for example implementation timescales, legislation requirements, machinery of government implications;

    r) The Civil Service will be able to respond to requests concerning specific policy proposals but cannot offer views on general policy areas or offer advice on the development of policies, nor suggest alternatives;

    s) The Civil Service can direct opposition parties to sources of published information to allow them to cost their policies themselves but the Civil Service cannot cost policies or verify estimates; and

    t) The Civil Service can offer information about possible legislative requirements to deliver new policies, but cannot offer legal advice, nor verify legal advice provided by a third party.

7. Requests made under these arrangements will be given a high priority within Government in order to provide as rapid a response as is possible.

8. If you plan to submit questions under this process, it would be helpful if you could discuss handling with Richard Rollison in advance.

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[5] Directory of Civil Service Guidance, Volume 2, pages 18 and 23:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60997/guide-civil-service-guidance-volume-2_0.pdf

9. Engagement under the pre-election access arrangements between opposition parties and the Civil Service should be conducted in confidence. The Civil Service will not disclose the content of discussions to Ministers or Special Advisers, or other opposition parties.

10. The Senior Civil Servants appointed as lead contacts for each party will not share the content of their contact with each other, nor will they have access to the requests for factual information being handled by the other lead contacts.

11. The information provided under these arrangements could be subject to Freedom of Information requests. Any such requests will be considered on their merits including the application of appropriate exemptions, for example section 30 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs). However, in the event of an appeal the final decision on the release of information under these arrangements will be for the Scottish Information Commissioner.

12. Opposition parties continue to have access to other channels, including Freedom of Information requests, Parliamentary Questions, and correspondence to Ministers.

Scottish Government