

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] on behalf of Minister for Parliamentary Business  
**Sent:** 29 October 2023 12:34  
**To:** George Adam  
**Subject:** Fwd: Lines to clear - Covid 19 inquiry WhatsApp messages - Various

Content to clear below press lines for your interests?

I was told that they would be making a final decision on a statement tomorrow, but looks like this will speed up that decision making. I'll be in touch separately about the scheduling of the statement.

Thanks

[REDACTED]  
Private Secretary to the Minister for Parliamentary Business  
Email: ministerforPB@gov.scot

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

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, October 29, 2023 12:27:38 PM  
**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance <DFMCSF@gov.scot>; Minister for Parliamentary Business <MinisterforPB@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED];  
[REDACTED];  
Caroline Beattie <Caroline.Beattie@gov.scot>; [REDACTED];  
[REDACTED] Ruaraidh Macniven  
<Ruaraidh.Macniven@gov.scot>; Colin Troup <Colin.Troup@gov.scot>; Michael Chalmers  
<Michael.Chalmers2@gov.scot>; Geoff Huggins <Geoff.Huggins@gov.scot>; Nicola Richards  
<Nicola.Richards@gov.scot>; Anna Kynaston <Anna.Kynaston@gov.scot>; Judith Mackinnon  
<Judith.Mackinnon@gov.scot>; Andrew Bruce <Andrew.Bruce@gov.scot>; [REDACTED];  
[REDACTED];  
[REDACTED] Lesley Fraser <Lesley.Fraser@gov.scot>; DG Corporate  
<dgcorporate@gov.scot>; [REDACTED];  
[REDACTED] Permanent Secretary <PermanentSecretary@gov.scot>; [REDACTED];  
[REDACTED]

**Subject:** Lines to clear - Covid 19 inquiry WhatsApp messages - Various

**DFM PO**  
**Minister for Parliamentary Business PO**  
**Cc FMPO for awareness**

We have been asked by a number of broadcast and print outlets to respond to reporting in the Sunday Mail about FFM's whatsapp messages and calls from [REDACTED] for the SG to provide more information about how messages are handled. More details in the email below. Following discussion with policy colleagues, head of news and SpAds, we propose to reissue yesterday's statement with the addition of a line indicating plans for the DFM to make a statement to parliament, subject to agreement of bureau.

Are DFM and Mr Adam content to clear for their interests? STV are looking for a response by 1.30 so I'd be grateful if ministers could consider in the next hour. Please let me know if that's unlikely to be possible.

Many thanks

[REDACTED]

**A Scottish Government spokesperson said:**

“As the First Minister has made clear, the Scottish Government is wholly committed to co-operating fully with the COVID-19 inquiries. This includes providing any requested material that we hold.

“More than 13,000 documents from the official record have been sent to the UK Inquiry from the Scottish Government, in addition to the corporate and personal statements requested. Providing the formal decision-making record has been our priority.

“The UK Inquiry has subsequently asked for WhatsApp messages relating to logistics and day-to-day communication, which we are working to provide.

“Given the interest in this specific request from the UK Covid-19 Inquiry, subject to approval from the Parliamentary Bureau, the Deputy First Minister will seek to make a statement to parliament on the issue early next week.”

**Background**

While it is not the culture within Scottish Government to use WhatsApp for decision-making, our records management policy states clearly that government decisions, however they are made, should be recorded in the official record.

Beyond responding to the specific matter from the Inquiry hearing, raised in Parliament this week, it is not for the Scottish Government to disclose details of evidence requested by, and submitted to the Inquiries. Both inquiries are issuing their requests for information in confidence.

It is entirely open to – and wholly a matter for – the independent inquiry chairs to determine how they consider and, where appropriate, publish such material. Ministers fully support both independent inquiries in making such decisions as part of their work to explore the handling of the pandemic and to identify the vital lessons that must be learned.

[Redacted] Communications Team Leader  
Social Justice portfolio | Scottish Government

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**From:** [Redacted]  
**To:** [Redacted] Permanent Secretary <[PermanentSecretary@gov.scot](mailto:PermanentSecretary@gov.scot)>; DG Corporate <[dgcorporate@gov.scot](mailto:dgcorporate@gov.scot)>; Lesley Fraser <[Lesley.Fraser@gov.scot](mailto:Lesley.Fraser@gov.scot)>; Ruairaidh Macniven <[Ruairaidh.Macniven@gov.scot](mailto:Ruairaidh.Macniven@gov.scot)>; Colin Troup <[Colin.Troup@gov.scot](mailto:Colin.Troup@gov.scot)>; Caroline Beattie <[Caroline.Beattie@gov.scot](mailto:Caroline.Beattie@gov.scot)>; Michael Chalmers <[Michael.Chalmers2@gov.scot](mailto:Michael.Chalmers2@gov.scot)>; Geoff Huggins <[Geoff.Huggins@gov.scot](mailto:Geoff.Huggins@gov.scot)>; Nicola Richards <[Nicola.Richards@gov.scot](mailto:Nicola.Richards@gov.scot)>; Anna Kynaston <[Anna.Kynaston@gov.scot](mailto:Anna.Kynaston@gov.scot)>; Judith Mackinnon <[Judith.Mackinnon@gov.scot](mailto:Judith.Mackinnon@gov.scot)>; Andrew Bruce <[Andrew.Bruce@gov.scot](mailto:Andrew.Bruce@gov.scot)>; [Redacted]

**Cc:** [Redacted]  
**Subject:** FOR POLICY VIEW - Covid 19 inquiry WhatsApp messages - Scotsman/BBC

Colleagues,  
We’ve been approached by the Scotsman and the BBC seeking a Scottish Government response to claims in Sunday Mail that the FFM, former DFM and Professor Leitch deleted WhatsApp messages relating to Covid-19 decision making.

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/nicola-sturgeon-under-fire-over-31305142>

There’s quite a bit of focus now on use of “auto-delete” function to clear messages. For awareness, [Redacted] (quoted in the Sunday mail story) has been on the BBC Sunday show today repeating claims that SG ministers deleted messages. Here’s an excerpt of what he said:

*“The SG, as was stated publicly at the preliminary of the UK inquiry, as stated by our council and by council for the inquiry that 137 WhatsApp groups, up to 70 senior Government ministers and senior civil servants have been involved in not retaining and manually deleting – or in the question (sic.) of auto deleting their WhatsApp messages.*

*“What exactly do they think they were doing in these WhatsApp groups. We’re not buttoned up the back.”*

[REDACTED]

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**From:** George Adam  
**Sent:** 29 October 2023 12:52  
**To:** Minister for Parliamentary Business  
**Subject:** Re: Lines to clear - Covid 19 inquiry WhatsApp messages - Various

Hi [REDACTED]

I'm happy with that and equally happy to be involved with any potential Parliamentary Statement should DFM want me to do so.

Thanks

Geo

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**From:** [REDACTED] on behalf of Minister for Parliamentary Business  
<MinisterforPB@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** Sunday, October 29, 2023 12:33:30 PM  
**To:** George Adam <George.Adam@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Lines to clear - Covid 19 inquiry WhatsApp messages - Various  
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<dgcorporate@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Permanent Secretary <PermanentSecretary@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

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**DFM PO**

## Minister for Parliamentary Business PO

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[REDACTED] Communications Team Leader  
Social Justice portfolio | Scottish Government

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