

An Fhìor Urr Ailig Salmond BPA
Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP
Am Prìomh Mhinistear
First Minister of Scotland

Taigh Naomh Anndrais, Rathad Regent, Dùn Èideann EH1 3DG
St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
F/T: 0845 774 1741

Patrick Harvie MSP
Co-Convenor of the Scottish Green Party
Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP



132 December 2012

Dear Patrick,

I was grateful to you and other party leaders for meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs and me last week to discuss the taking forward in Scotland of the report by Lord Justice Leveson on *An Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press*.

We agreed on the establishment of an expert group to look at the implications of the report for Scots law and I was grateful for party leaders' subsequent suggestions for membership: the need for a relatively small, focused group with an appropriate diversity of professional and other backgrounds meant that we could not reflect all of the suggestions but I am glad that the expert group does have members reflecting that process, including the chair, the Rt Hon Lord McCluskey of Church Hill.

I attach a news release that the Scottish Government is issuing, which sets out the group's membership and terms of reference.

ALEX SALMOND

Yours faithfully,
Alex

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Ruth Davidson MSP
Leader of the Scottish Conservatives
Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP



13th December 2012

Dear Ruth,

I was grateful to you and other party leaders for meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs and me last week to discuss the taking forward in Scotland of the report by Lord Justice Leveson on *An Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press*.

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This expert group will tell us how things could be done in Scots law and practice. Whether they should be done is, of course, entirely a matter for the Parliament itself.

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ALEX SALMOND

Yours faithfully,
Alex

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Willie Rennie MSP
Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats
Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP



13h December 2012

Dear Willie,

I was grateful to you and other party leaders for meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs and me last week to discuss the taking forward in Scotland of the report by Lord Justice Leveson on *An Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press*.

We agreed on the establishment of an expert group to look at the implications of the report for Scots law and I was grateful for party leaders' subsequent suggestions for membership: the need for a relatively small, focused group with an appropriate diversity of professional and other backgrounds meant that we could not reflect all of the suggestions but I am glad that the expert group does have members reflecting that process, including the chair, the Rt Hon Lord McCluskey of Church Hill.

I attach a news release that the Scottish Government is issuing, which sets out the group's membership and terms of reference.

Yours for Scotland,
Alex

ALEX SALMOND

ps Mark decided, on reflection, that
he had too many doubts about
Leveson to serve.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP
Office of the First Minister
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

13 December 2012

Dear First Minister,

Leveson findings – expert panel

I am writing to you with reference to the Scottish Government's announcement today of the appointment of a five-person panel to consider the recommendations of the Leveson Report in Scotland.

On 4 December, you set out in the clearest possible terms that you would be seeking political consensus in bringing forward a response to Leveson's findings, emphasising that this should be achieved on a cross-party basis. You said: "I am sufficiently optimistic to believe we can seize an opportunity to take a serious, consensual, cross-party approach here at Holyrood to rise to the challenge laid down by Leveson."

More specifically, in regard to the work of the expert panel, you stated: "I am proposing the establishment of an independent implementation group, chaired by a recent Court of Session judge. I can confirm that all parties here at Holyrood are welcome to suggest non-practising political representatives as potential members of that implementation group."

I willingly agreed to enter the process that you proposed. I viewed it as an issue on which party politics should be set aside and an opportunity to do all we could do to make sure that the press has freedom to operate, while also ensuring that victims of the press would have proper recourse in the future.

Johann Lamont MSP
Scottish Labour Leader

Room M1.03, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

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While I expected to have no veto on membership, I did not expect to be told of the membership of the panel by press release and I thought that at the very least you would pay the Scottish Labour Party the courtesy of explaining why our nominee has been rejected.

The manner of the announcement today on the membership of the panel is totally unacceptable – it falls far short of the spirit of consensus that you sought. This should not be misconstrued as a comment on the quality of the individuals selected to serve on the panel: they are all individuals of the highest standard, who have made a significant contribution to public life.

Rather, I wish to express, in the strongest possible terms, my complete dismay at the way you have handled the selection process. I regard it as a grave discourtesy and would urge you even at this late stage to reconsider your exclusion of our nominee.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Joh', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Johann Lamont MSP

LEADER OF THE SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY

Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP
First Minister of Scotland

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
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Ms Johann Lamont MSP
Scottish Labour Leader
Room M1.03
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP



13a December 2012

Dear Johann,

Thank you for your letter sent today concerning the appointment of the expert panel that will consider the findings and certain recommendations made by Lord Justice Leveson.

I welcome your comment that the panel selected are "all individuals of the highest standard, who have made a significant contribution to public life" and add that I believe those words apply equally to the candidate you suggested.

Far from being informed of the panel's membership by press release, you in common with other party leaders had advance notice of my decision.

In putting together the panel I had to operate within the constraints of the need for a relatively small, focused panel with an appropriate diversity of professional and other backgrounds and, importantly, to strike an appropriate balance of expertise. The selected panel includes a former Court of Session judge in the chair (one who happens to be a former Labour Government Minister); an academic expert in constitutional law; a solicitor advocate with a substantial background in media law; a distinguished journalist with experience on the editorial staff of a number of Scottish newspapers; and someone currently working in victim support but with press experience including as a former President of the National Union of Journalists.

I believe the appointed panel achieves an appropriate balance of expertise. The addition of another practising lawyer could have unbalanced the panel and, therefore, I opted for the candidate with the greatest experience in defamation. This decision was in no way made on political grounds and I trust you will understand my reasoning and accept my decision.

ALEX SALMOND

Alex Salmond
Ms Johann Lamont