



17 Polwarth Grove,
Edinburgh,
EH11 1LY

To:

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP,
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London,
SW1A 2AA.

January 20, 2020.

Dear Prime Minister,

I write as director of the Scottish Newspaper Society, the trade association which represents the Scottish newspaper industry, in support of the recent letter sent to you by the Society of Editors about changes to the system of briefings for members of the Parliamentary Lobby.

As a former editor of The Scotsman (and indeed a former director of communications for the Scottish Conservative Party), I know only too well how important Lobby briefings are to Scottish newspapers, but also know how difficult the correspondents' jobs will become if they have to split their time at the busiest part of the day between the House and Downing Street, as the recently publicised changes propose.

The Scottish editors understand and appreciate the goal of improving access to advisors and other government staff, but the changes in the afternoon in particular pose significant problems for the members of the Scottish Lobby, most of whom work alone. Beyond Fleet Street, with reporters from the Scotsman, Herald, Courier, Press & Journal and Daily Record, the Scottish Press is the best-represented group of publications in the Lobby and they will have to make their way from the Commons to Downing Street, get through the security gate and into Number 9, and then have to dash back across Whitehall to catch whatever business is going on in the House.

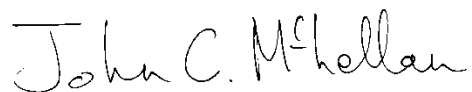
This contrasts with large London-based news organisations and according to the most up-to-date Lobby register there are 90 representatives from the BBC alone, 15 from the Guardian and eight from The Sun. Even your old magazine the Spectator has three. They are much better placed to adapt to the proposed new arrangements in ways which Scottish Lobby correspondents cannot.

I understand a compromise has been mooted whereby the morning briefing takes place in Downing Street but the afternoon meeting is held in the Lobby as at present, which seems eminently reasonable and sensible to me.

As the Society of Editors and the News Media Association have requested, we too would respectfully suggest that further consultation is held with the industry through the Lobby Committee to ensure the laudable desire to improve communications does not have the opposite effect and hampers Scottish correspondents' abilities to cover daily parliamentary business.

I'm sure a mutually beneficial solution can be found and we thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. McLellan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John McLellan