

# Action needed to avoid politicisation of civil service

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Scottish Conservatives have called for action to be taken to ensure that the Scottish civil service remains impartial.

Scottish Conservative MSP Donald Cameron has written to the Permanent Secretary, Leslie Evans, calling for an end to the 'slow erosion of robust attitudes to impartiality and objectivity'.

It comes after it was revealed this week that John Swinney personally intervened in the content of FOI releases, and that Special Advisers routinely screen Freedom of Information requests for political content.

There have been a number of other incidents where the lines between politicians and civil servants have become blurred over the past eighteen months.

These include civil servants working under Swinney contacting witnesses ahead of appearances at a committee of the Scottish Parliament, and graphics being tweeted by Scottish Government accounts which used the SNP's party political language on Brexit.

**In his letter, Highlands & Islands MSP Donald Cameron writes:**

"I do not doubt the commitment of individual civil servants to public service.

"But the cumulative impression of these instances is enough to doubt the culture and leadership of the civil service.

"They paint a picture of creeping laxness, and the slow erosion of robust attitudes to impartiality and objectivity.

"The civil service must not just act above party politics; it must avoid even the impression of politicisation.

"It is hard to see how that impression can currently be maintained.

"As the head of the Scottish Civil service, I look to you for a response – and reassurance that action will be taken to address this situation."