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The Scottish Government tried to persuade auditors to water down a damning report – which was supposed to be independent – into the country’s NHS, it has been reported.

Correspondence obtained by *The Times* revealed various officials contacted Audit Scotland on a number of occasions in relation to drafts of the critical NHS in Scotland 2016 report.

The officials are said to have objected to the “alarmist” tone, and urged the organisation to reword the report.

It is the latest in a series of incidents casting doubt on the SNP government’s transparency and accountability.

The nationalists have been under constant fire for their failure to process Freedom of Information requests properly, and earlier this week it emerged spin doctors were being brought in when FoI queries were submitted by the media.

And other public sector bodies, most notably Police Scotland, have been blasted for their culture of secrecy under the SNP.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“This is the behaviour of a control freak SNP government rattled by its own shortcomings.

“If the SNP was as proud of its performance on the NHS as it claims, it would have let this report tell its own story.

“Instead, in dozens of instances, ministers tried to meddle and have things changed.

“That is utterly unacceptable, and shows the Scottish Government is uninterested in being accountable and transparent.”