First Minister Questions

I am writing to advise you of the decisions I have taken in relation to the future management of First Minister’s Question Time.

There are two important principles that have underpinned my deliberations. Firstly, the prime purpose of First Minister’s Question Time is to hold the Scottish Government to account and I therefore intend to ensure that all of the parties represented on the Parliamentary Bureau are given the opportunity to do so. Secondly, I intend to ensure that backbench Members have a greater opportunity to ask questions of the First Minister, and more prominence when doing so during the half-hour weekly slot.

On that basis, the approach I will adopt is as follows:

- Questions 1 and 2 will follow the same format as in Session 3 (ie, allocated to the Labour Party and to the Conservative Party with four and two supplementary questions respectively).

- Question 3 will be allocated to the Liberal Democrat Party for two weeks out of three. For one week in three, I will select what I consider to be the best quality question from a backbench Member submitted that week, regardless of party.

- Question 4 will be allocated to the SNP and question 5 will be allocated to the Labour Party.
• Question 6 will be allocated equally between the Conservative Party and the SNP with the Green Party being selected from time to time on a roughly proportional basis.

Following the principle of giving backbenchers more scope and prominence, it is also my intention to take questions of a local nature after Question 2 rather than after Question 3 as has previously been the case.

I will, of course, reserve the right to alter the above on any week, depending on the topicality and suitability of the questions submitted.

First Minister’s Questions is, for many, the high point of the parliamentary week and I intend to do all I can to ensure that this session plays its part in holding the Government to account on the issues of the day.

Yours sincerely,

TRICIA MARWICK MSP
Presiding Officer