

FW: Media briefing note

Clive McFarland

Sent: 19 January 2017 16:04

To: Deborah Armstrong

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From: Richard Bullick**Sent:** 19 January 2017 15:41**To:** Clive McFarland**Cc:** Timothy Johnston; [Nigel Dodds email redacted by the RHI Inquiry] Nigel Dodds**Subject:** Fwd: Media briefing note

Can u turn this into a press statement in Nigel's name?

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: David <

[David Gordon email redacted by the RHI Inquiry]

Date: 19 January 2017 at 10:04:02 GMT**To:** Richard Bullick [Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry]**Subject:** Media briefing note

Thanks to Dr Andrew McCormick's evidence to the PAC, the picture is now much clearer today. And it raises serious questions about why the Opposition parties and sections of the media sought to blame Arlene Foster for the RHI debacle. That campaign of vilification has had no basis in fact.

1) Dr McCormick made clear there is no evidence of wrongdoing by Arlene Foster, and that the failings in the design and operation of the RHI scheme were the responsibility of the civil service. Arlene Foster has made those points repeatedly and they have now been vindicated.

2) It is clear that only a public inquiry can establish the full facts behind the RHI debacle. Arlene Foster has been pushing for an inquiry since mid December. Those efforts have been repeatedly frustrated and it is clear that others preferred mud slinging and collapsing the institutions to

getting to the truth. The cost of this collapse will be felt in our health service and other vital public services for months and years to come

3) the disclosure that officials in the Department may have tipped off the industry that RHI cost controls were planned in 2015 is of the utmost seriousness and needs rigorous investigation. If true, this will undoubtedly have been a major contributory factor behind the spike in applications.

4) Dr McCormick has rebutted details of the account given to the media by Jonathan Bell. This comes on top of the rebuttals issued by the Department and given to the Assembly last month. We look forward to a detailed BBC "fact check" on the Bell allegations that it reported so prominently.

5) The reasons behind the 2015 spike in applications remain one of the key issues to be examined in an inquiry. Conflicting allegations have been made, but absolutely no evidence has been produced to support Jonathan Bell's claim he was overruled and forced to delay the introduction of cost controls against the advice of officials. In point of fact, he was the Minister, he took that decision. He has to live with being Minister for the Spike.

Arlene Foster stands over what she told the Assembly last month:

"The former Enterprise Minister claims that he made a decision to amend the RHI scheme but was overruled by special advisers. Since last week, I have specifically investigated this claim. The evidence is clear. The only decision taken by the Minister was in early September to amend the scheme in November. The Minister was not subsequently overruled by special advisers, and I am clear that whatever representations may have been made by anyone on this issue, it was not being done with the authority of the party."