



Briefing Paper for S34(1) Crown Office S34(1)
S34(1)

FOR INFORMATION			
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Date Created	07/06/2021	Telephone	S30(c)
Attachments:			

OPERATION BRANCHFORM – S34(1), S30(b)(i)&(ii)


1. Purpose

S30(b)(i)&(ii), S34(1)
Operation BRANCHFORM S30(b)(i)&(ii), S34(1)

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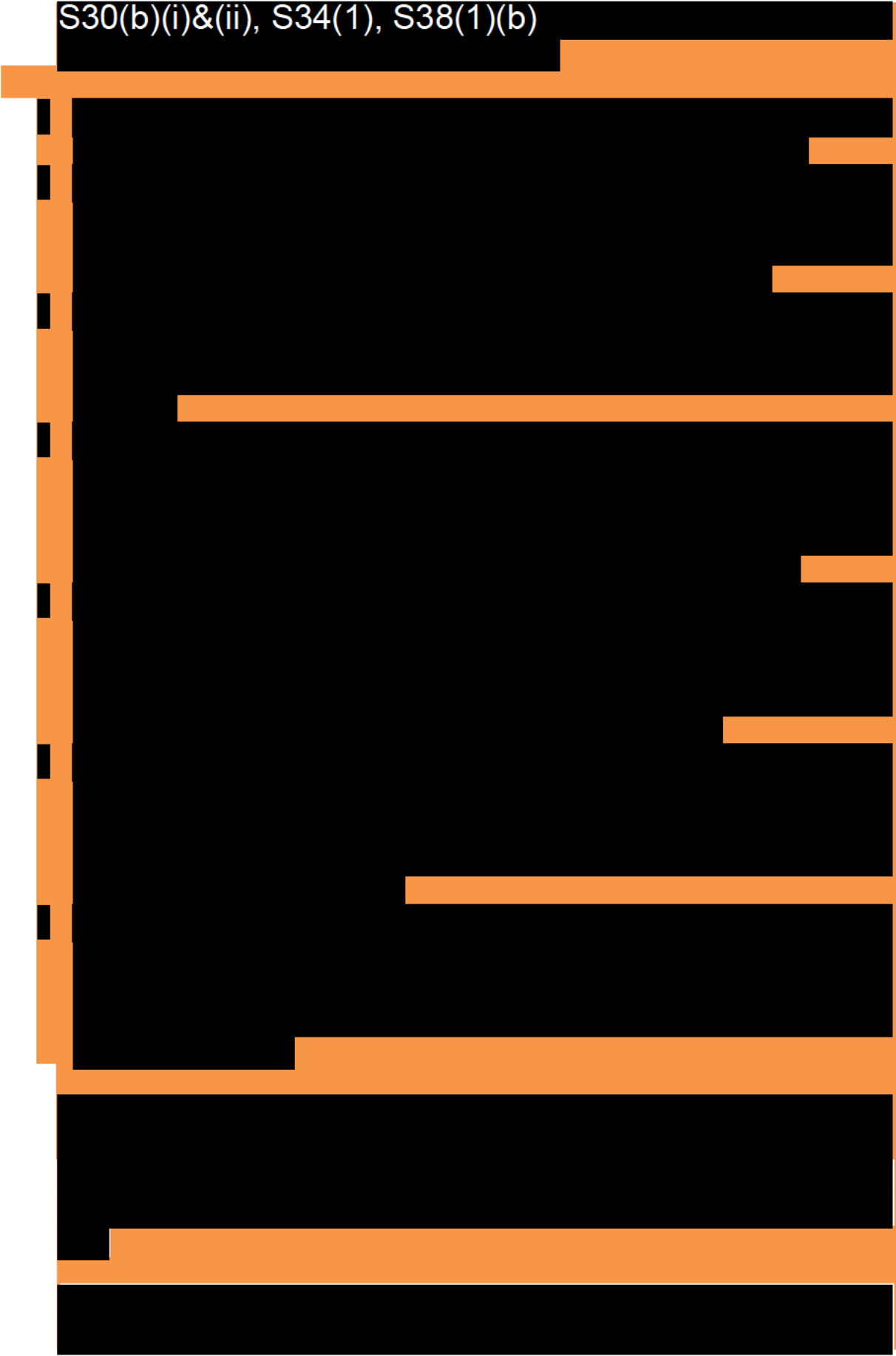
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S34(1), S30(b)(i)&(ii)

6. Media

There has been significant media reporting in respect of the SNP fundraising for another Independence Referendum since the fundraising efforts were announced in 2017. However, the first that the police were contacted by the media in respect of this was on 7 April 2021. This period was very busy with a number of political stories running in the lead up to the Scottish Parliamentary Elections and the media asks at that time included the IndyRef 2 monies, COVID grant monies apparently incorrectly applied for and the split in the SNP leading to the inception of the Alba party.

At that time S34(1) from Comms were engaged and an 'if asked' statement in respect of the Independence Fund queries was compiled. This read as follows:

"The complaint is still being assessed to determine if an investigation is required."

This media statement was shared with COPFS and also the SNP for their awareness. This media line was maintained throughout most of the police activity as we moved through the Scottish Parliamentary Elections period.

The media have continued to show significant interest in this story and this has been exacerbated recently through high profile resignations from the SNP such as S38(1)(b) and S38(1)(b) S38(1)(b) sighting 'a lack of transparency' within the Party.

On 1 June 2021, Police Scotland were again contacted by a number of media outlets looking for updates on this story. In particular The Herald highlighted that they were aware of specifics in regards to police activity in that they knew the name of the officer making enquiries, DI S38(1)(b) that police had contacted the SNP's Auditors – Johnson Carmichael and that we were noting statements from three people who recently left the SNP's Audit Committee – S38(1)(b)

In response to this media enquiry further discussion took place and the 'if asked' media line was amended to:

"We continue to assess a complaint of alleged financial irregularity. During this initial work further information has been received which also requires to be assessed to determine if an investigation is required."

Again, this amended line was shared with COPFS and the SNP.

As we finalise our initial assessments a wider Comms Strategy will require to be finalised. We continue to liaise with Comms S34(1) in regards to this.

7. S34(1), S30(b)(i)&(ii)

S30(b)(i)&(ii), S34(1)

