

# Conservatives call for Health Secretary's iPad to be checked

The Scottish Conservatives have called for Michael Matheson to hand over his iPad to parliamentary authorities so that its record of use can be “independently verified”.

The Health Secretary lodged an expenses claim of almost £11,000 for data roaming charges incurred during his holiday in Morocco, but has since agreed to pay the charges himself. At first he had allocated £3,000 to his expenses budget. Mr Matheson said the usage was all due to parliamentary and constituency business.

The First Minister defended his Health Secretary saying that he did not need to pay the sum personally as it was a “legitimate parliamentary expense”.

Mr Matheson said earlier: “As the parliament has also stated very clearly, the network provider didn't provide information around the costs that were being incurred as well.

“So it was something that was unknown to me, and as the parliament have also confirmed, the parliamentary equipment was used for constituency and parliamentary purposes.”

Scottish Conservative chairman, Craig Hoy, has written to Mr Matheson, requesting clarification.

1. The letter asks: "Can you confirm that you are still in possession of the iPad in question and what steps are being taken to ensure its security and that of the data stored within?"
2. "Can you publish all correspondence with the Scottish Parliament on the expensing of the roaming charges and regarding the need to upgrade the iPad's sim card?"
3. "Can you outline what steps you have taken throughout this situation to protect public money and keep costs low in line with the value for money requirements set out in the official expenses policy?"
4. "Will you make a statement to the Scottish Parliament this week on this matter and take questions?"

Mr Hoy said that any failure to answer these questions will prove that the Health Secretary "has something to hide".

Mr Hoy said: "When Michael Matheson was belatedly shamed into repaying the staggering sum that he had the audacity to expect the taxpayer to foot, he told us that his integrity matters.

"Therefore, he must immediately hand over his iPad so that parliament authorities can verify his claim that he only incurred roaming charges related to parliamentary business during his Moroccan holiday.

"Mr Matheson has many serious unanswered questions to address, which is why I have written to him requesting that he make a statement at Holyrood this week so that we can get to the bottom of this scandal.

"A failure to answer these questions will further add to the

public's suspicion that Michael Matheson has something to hide over this scandal."



Health Secretary Michael Matheson, the First Minister and CEO of Thistle Foundation Mark Hoolahan in September 2023 PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter