



**OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS**

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1. You approached the Committee about taking up an appointment as a Chair of the Advisory Group for Equinor.

The Committee's role and remit

2. It is the Committee's role to advise on the conditions that should apply to appointments or employment under the Government's Business Appointments Rules for Former Ministers (the Rules), which apply to former Ministers for two years after they leave office. The Rules seek to counter suspicion that:
  - a) the decisions and statements of a serving Minister might be influenced by the hope or expectation of future employment with a particular firm or organisation; or
  - b) an employer could make improper use of official information to which a former Minister has had access; or
  - c) there may be cause for concern about the appointment in some other particular respect.
3. When the Committee considers applications, it must have in mind that Government has judged that it is in the public interest that former Ministers with experience in Government should be able to move into business or into other areas of public life, and to be able to start a new career or resume a former one. It is equally important that when a former Minister takes up a particular appointment or employment, there should be no cause for any suspicion of impropriety.
4. It is not the Committee's role to pass judgment on whether an appointment is appropriate or suitable in any other regard.

Appointment Details

5. You sought the Committee's advice on taking up a paid part-time appointment for Equinor as the Chair of its Advisory Board. Equinor (formerly Statoil) is a Norwegian, state-owned, multinational, energy-company headquartered in Stavanger. It is

primarily a petroleum company however with some investments in renewables and other forms of energy production.

6. You stated your role as the Chair of the Advisory board, would involve analysis of global trends in energy, economics and politics and offering advice to the Chief Executive and Executive Board. It would also involve managing and leading the Advisory Board. You further said that it would not involve contacting or lobbying the UK Government at all.
7. You stated that you had no contact with Equinor whilst in office; that the DWP have no official relationship with Equinor; that you were not involved in policy developments or decisions that would have affected Equinor; and that you did not have access to any sensitive information about its competitors.
8. The DWP voiced no concerns as to your appointment; it had no record of any commercial involvement with Equinor in the last five years, nor any record of you meeting the organisation during your time as Secretary of State. The Department noted it was highly unlikely you would have made policy decisions or that you had access to information that would have had a material consequence for the energy sector, the individual organisation or its competitors.

#### The Committee's Consideration

9. When considering this application, the Committee<sup>1</sup> took into account this appointment has no direct connection with your most recent ministerial roles as Secretary of State for the DWP (or previously at the Home Office). It particularly noted that you had no dealings with Equinor whilst in office, and it is aware of no reason it might be perceived this appointment is a reward for decisions or actions taken or made in office.
10. The Committee assessed it is unlikely you are aware of any specific information that might unfairly assist Equinor given your role and responsibilities whilst in office were unrelated and the time that has lapsed (it has been approximately 9 months since you left ministerial office). The Committee was cognisant of your previous position as Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, though as this was a position you last held in July 2016, it judged this period of time significantly reduces any advantage you may offer from information held from your role. Further, the conditions below prevent you from drawing from any information.
11. As with any such appointment, as a former Secretary of State, there is a risk it could be perceived your contacts from the Government might assist Equinor unfairly. The Committee would draw your attention to the conditions below to make it clear that any use of your contacts gained in Government/Whitehall to Equinor's unfair advantage would be inappropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> This application for advice was considered by Sir Alex Allan; Jonathan Baume; Dr Susan Liataud; The Rt Hon the Lord Eric Pickles; Richard Thomas; Mike Weir; Lord Larry Whitty and John Wood.

12. Taking in to account these factors, in accordance with Government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises this appointment be subject to the following conditions:
- You should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the persons or organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to you as a Minister; and
  - for two years from your last day in Ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of Equinor (including parent companies, subsidiaries and partners). Nor should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your government and/or Ministerial contacts to influence policy, secure funding/business or otherwise unfairly benefit Equinor (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients).
  - for two years from your last day in office you should not advise Equinor or its partners or clients on the terms of, or with regard to the subject matter of, a bid or contract with, or relating directly to the work of the UK Government.
13. By 'privileged information' we mean official information to which a Minister or Crown servant has had access as a consequence of his or her office or employment and which has not been made publicly available. Applicants are also reminded that they may be subject to other duties of confidentiality, whether under the Official Secrets Act, the Ministerial Code/ Civil Service Code or otherwise.
14. The Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that the former Crown servant/Minister *"should not engage in communication with Government (Ministers, civil servants, including special advisers, and other relevant officials/public office holders) – wherever it takes place - with a view to influencing a Government decision, policy or contract award/grant in relation to their own interests or the interests of the organisation by which they are employed, or to whom they are contracted or with which they hold office."*
15. I should be grateful if you would inform us as soon as you take up this role, or if it is announced that you will do so, either by returning the enclosed form or by emailing the office at the above address. We shall otherwise not be able to deal with any enquiries since we do not release information about appointments that have not been taken up or announced. This could lead to a false assumption being made about whether you had complied with the Rules and the Ministerial Code.
16. Please also inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change the nature of your role as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for you to make a fresh application.
17. Once the appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website, and where appropriate, refer to it in the relevant annual report.

The Rt Hon Lord Eric Pickles

Amber Rudd