



## OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

Room G/8, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ

Telephone: 020 7271 0839

Email: [acoba@acoba.gov.uk](mailto:acoba@acoba.gov.uk)

Website: <http://www.gov.uk/acoba>

28 July 2016

### **BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: PROFESSOR VERNON GIBSON**

The Committee has been asked to consider an application from Professor Gibson, former Chief Scientific Adviser at the Ministry of Defence (MOD), who proposes to take up appointments with BP PLC and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

Professor Gibson was the Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) at the MOD from 2 July 2012 to 29 June 2016 (which was also his last day in Crown service). The CSA is the MOD's principal adviser on science and technology. The CSA reports to the Permanent Secretary, is a member of the Defence Council and the Investment Approvals Committee and is Deputy Chair of the Defence Research and Development Board.

Professor Gibson is seeking approval to become a paid member of the Technology Advisory Council at BP PLC. This role would involve providing advice to the company on technology of relevance to oil and gas exploration and production, refining and downstream chemicals production.

He also intends to become an unpaid non-residential Senior Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, contributing to projects addressing global energy challenges and biotechnologies.

When considering this application the Committee took into account that neither he nor those whom he was responsible for over the last 2 years of service have dealt with the receipt of tenders or awarding of contracts, nor administered or advised on contracts between either of his prospective employers and the MOD. He has had no official but non-contractual dealings with either organisation or been involved in any policy decisions that have affected or could affect his proposed employers or their competitors.

The Committee took into account that the MOD Business Appointments Panel expressed no concerns about Professor Gibson taking up these positions, subject to a 2-year lobbying ban. The Committee noted that neither of them would require him to advise on matters relating to defence or

to have any dealings with government. It is also of note that the position with BP will see him returning to the company he worked for before taking up the post of Chief Scientific Advisor at MOD.

The Secretary of State for Defence accepted the Committee's advice that there was no reason why Professor Gibson should not take up these appointments, subject to the following conditions:

- He should not draw on any privileged information available to him from his time in Crown service; and
- For two years from his last day in service, he should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of BP PLC or its subsidiaries or the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

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.

The Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that the former Crown servant/Minister "should not engage in communication with Government - including Ministers, special advisers and officials - with a view to influencing a Government decision or policy [including applications for awards or grants] in relation to their own interests, or the interests of the organisation by which they are employed, or to whom they are contracted".

I should be grateful if you could ensure that we are informed as soon as Professor Gibson takes up these positions, or if it is announced that he will do so (I enclose a form for this purpose). We shall otherwise not be able to deal with any enquiries, since we do not release information about appointments which have not been taken up or announced, and this could lead to a false assumption being made about whether he had complied with the rules.

I should also be grateful if you would ask that Professor Gibson informs us if he proposes to extend or otherwise change the nature of his role as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for him to make a fresh application.

Once the appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website and include the main details of the application, together with the Advisory Committee's advice, in the regularly updated consolidated list on our website and in the next annual report.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Richardson  
Committee Secretariat