



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

G/08, Ground Floor, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ

Tel: 020 7271 0839

Email: acoba@acoba.gov.uk

Web: <http://acoba.independent.gov.uk>

Ref: 1516C/3M

September 2015

Dear Ms Swinson

INDEPENDENT CONSULTANCY – NEW COMMISSION

The Committee has considered your request to take up a commission with DBA Speakers.

DBA Speakers is a speaking agency for keynote, motivational and after dinner speakers. It deals with corporate, industrial and public sector events. You contacted DBA Speakers about the possibility of ad hoc speaking engagements; talking primarily on empowering women in the workplace, but also, with the additional option to talk on wider topics such as consumer issues, wellbeing, technology and the Scottish independence referendum.

When considering the commission with DBA Speakers the Committee noted that you had no official dealings with the agency in your time as a Minister and that you were not aware of any relationship, either contractual or non-contractual between it and your former departments.

The Committee agrees that this commission is permissible within the terms of your independent consultancy.

The conditions that apply to your independent consultancy are:

- you should not draw on [disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the organisations or persons to which this advice refers] any privileged information available to you from your time in Government.
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of your employer or, in your capacity as an independent consultant, on behalf of your clients or those you advise;
- once you have received approval to set up as an independent consultant, you must seek confirmation from the **Committee directly** that each subsequent individual commission is permissible under the terms of your consultancy before taking it up. If, after enquiry, the Committee takes the view that a commission is, or may be, outside the terms of the consultancy you will be expected to submit a fresh application.

By 'privileged information' we mean official information to which a minister 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 Civil Service Code or otherwise.

As you know, the Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that former Ministers "should not engage in communication with Government – including Ministers, special advisers and officials – with a view to influencing a Government decision or policy in relation to their own interests, or the interests of the organisation by which they are employed, or to whom they are contracted".

I would be grateful if you would inform us as soon as you take up the commission, 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 Ministerial Code. Similarly, I would be grateful if you would inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change your role with DBA as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for you to seek fresh advice.

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

Alex Newton

Committee Secretariat