

*From the Chair*



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

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You asked for the Committee's advice about accepting an appointment with Message Matters, a public relations and public affairs company.

Your role will involve providing political analysis, writing a regular public blog hosted on the company website and promoting Message Matters to potential clients, both generally and through specific pitches. This is a part-time, paid position, amounting to around 24 days' work per year.

When considering your application the Committee took into account that the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government has no concerns about this appointment. Message Matters is not an organisation with which you had any contact whilst a Minister and it is not an organisation with a relationship with the Scottish Government.

The Committee noted that your academic background is communications related.

Taking into account the specific facts in this case, the Committee sees no reason why you should not take up the appointment, subject to the following conditions:

- That you should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the organisation to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to you from your time in ministerial office; and
- For two years from your last day in ministerial office you should not become personally involved in lobbying the Scottish Government on behalf of Message Matters, its partners or its clients or make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in Government and/or Crown Service to influence policy or secure business on behalf of Message Matters.

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

[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 would inform us as soon as you take up the appointment, 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 should be grateful if you would inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change your role with Message Matters as depending on the circumstances, it might 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.

The Baroness Browning

Mr Marco Biagi