

From the Chair



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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You asked for the Committee's advice about becoming Chair of the advisory board of Creative Fuse North East (CFNE).

CFNE is a research project, launched this year to explore how the creative, digital and IT (CDIT) sector in the North East can be developed in order to play a leading role in the region's economy. It is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and five universities (Newcastle, Northumbria, Durham, Sunderland and Teesside).

The Committee noted that this is an unpaid, part-time role.

When considering your application the Committee was mindful that as Culture Minister you had considerable engagement and involvement with the creative, digital and IT sector, including frequent trips to the North East to meet technology businesses and universities. It took into account that you had no contact with Newcastle University (lead institution for CFNE) while in office and that, while the Department for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is the sponsor department for the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which funds CFNE, you had no role in the decision to award funding to the project.

The Committee also took into consideration that you expect to be involved with communicating the findings of the report produced by CFNE to Government, but that the research will be freely and publically available to other researchers and projects.

The Committee consulted DCMS and BEIS, which had no concerns about you taking up this role.

Taking into account these factors, in accordance with the Government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises the 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;

- For two years from your last day in service, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of Creative Fuse North East or its partner organisations. This is not intended to prevent you reporting to Government on the activities of Creative Fuse North East but it would prevent you from making use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in Government and/or Crown service to influence policy or secure funding on their behalf.

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 or otherwise.

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 employment with this organisation, 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.

Once this 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

Rt Hon Ed Vaizey MP