



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: CATHERINE BROWN

The Committee has been asked to consider an application from Catherine Brown, former Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency, who proposes to take up appointments with: the Wellcome Trust; Airport Coordination Ltd and Hubbub UK.

Application

The Wellcome Trust

Ms Brown proposes to become a member of the Advisory Board on Diversity and Inclusion at The Wellcome Trust (Wellcome), a global charitable foundation that funds science and research to improve public health. She described her role as advising on strategy and implementation, and getting involved with potential collaborations with other organisations with a commitment to improving diversity in science, as well as some governance work on ensuring that funds are deployed effectively to achieve their objectives.

Ms Brown explained this is a paid role, involving 10 days per year. She said that while it is possible that Wellcome could work with those Government departments with a shared interest in science education or diversity, it is unlikely that she would have personal involvement in meetings with the departments.

Ms Brown also informed the Committee she has attended stakeholder events where Wellcome personnel have been speaking, as there is an overlap of interest in the food system and in anti-microbial resistance.

Hubbub UK

Hubbub UK (Hubbub) is a charity that exists to engage a mainstream audience in environmental issues and encourage behaviour change that benefits the environment. As a Trustee of the charity Ms Brown said she would be responsible, alongside other trustees, for its governance, ensuring it remains within its remit, applies resources to its charitable purpose etc. She will also contribute to strategy development and monitoring performance. This is an unpaid, trustee position. She confirmed it is unlikely to involve contact with Government.

Ms Brown confirmed she had no official contact with Hubbub while in office. However, she noted that Hubbub personnel may have attended events at which she spoke about the impact of the food system on the environment and the importance of empowering people to make positive behavioural changes to benefit their health and the environment.

Airport Coordination Ltd

ACL is the co-ordinator for 39 airports, co-ordinating 3.8m flights per year. Ms Brown has been offered the role of Board Member and member of the Remuneration Committee of Airport Coordination Ltd (ACL), having applied for the position in an open recruitment process.

As a Board Member Ms Brown describes her role as ensuring that appropriate risk management and controls are in place, that strategy is sound, that legal obligations are met and that stakeholder relations are maintained, and to provide support and challenge to the Chief Executive. The appointment is paid and will involve 10 days per year.

Ms Brown has confirmed that the role will not involve contact with her old department, as there will be no overlap with food. She explained to the Committee that ACL has a relationship with the Department for Transport and will contribute to the consultation on their air transport strategy for the UK. As a Board Member, Ms Brown notes she will be involved in discussions about how ACL should seek to contribute to that and other consultation processes.

The Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency confirmed the information provided by Ms Brown and has no reservations about any of these appointments.

The Committee's consideration

When considering these appointments the Committee noted the connection between the roles at Wellcome and Hubbub UK and Ms Brown's career prior to becoming a civil servant. She has worked in health in the private and public sector and has a history of involvement in the third sector before (and during) her employment with the civil service.

When considering these applications the Committee noted that there is a crossover in subject matter between the work of the Food Standards Agency and the roles with Wellcome and Hubbub - in relation to the impact of the food system on the environment and public health. The Committee did not consider this to present any particular propriety concerns given Ms Brown had no official contact with any of the organisations while in office (although she attended some events at which Hubbub and Wellcome personnel may have been present); nor was she involved in any policy decisions or in the award of grants or regulatory work affecting these employers. For these reasons, the Committee considered it could not reasonably be perceived that these appointments are a reward for decisions made while in office.

As Ms Brown and her department have confirmed she had no access to information whilst in office that would offer an unfair advantage to these employers, the risk here is low. However, the extended lobbying ban set out below will help to mitigate the potential for any concern that these organisations could gain an unfair advantage by virtue of Ms Brown's contacts in Government.

The Prime Minister accepted the Committee's advice that, under the Government's Business Appointment Rules, Ms Brown's appointments with Wellcome; Hubbub and ACL should be subject to the following conditions;

- she should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of herself or the organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to her from her time in Crown Service; and
- for two years from her last day in service, she should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of The Wellcome Trust; Hubbub UK and Airport Coordination Ltd, or make use, directly or indirectly, of her 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 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 Civil Service Code, or otherwise.

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.

I should be grateful if you would ensure that we are informed as soon as Ms Brown takes up these appointments, or if it is announced that she 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 she had complied with the Rules.

I should also be grateful if you would ask that Ms Brown informs us if she proposes to extend or otherwise change the nature of his roles as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for her to make a fresh application.

Once this appointments 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