



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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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, who proposes to take up a role with the International Centre for Advanced Materials.

Professor Gibson was the Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) at the MOD from 2 July 2012 to 29 June 2016.

Appointment details

Professor Gibson proposes to become an Executive Director at the BP International Centre for Advanced Materials (BP ICAM). This position is paid and part-time, with a time commitment of one day per week. Professor Gibson's role will be to provide strategic direction to BP ICAM.

The MOD's Business Appointment Panel had no concerns about this appointment, subject to the Committee imposing a ban on lobbying Government.

The Committee's consideration

When considering this application the Committee was mindful that the MOD has multiple high value contracts with BP for the supply of fuel. However, it considered that this appointment could not reasonably be perceived as a reward given that Professor Gibson had no involvement in these contracts and has confirmed that he had no official contact with his prospective employer whilst in office.

The Committee concluded that there is a low risk of affording BP and unfair advantage given that Professor Gibson has confirmed that it is unlikely that he will have contact with Government in this role and that over a year has passed since he left the MOD. The Committee also noted that he is already engaged by BP as a member of its Technology Advisory Council, having sought the Committee's advice on that appointment last year and that he was previously employed by BP before commencing a 4 year fixed term appointment as Chief Scientific Adviser in 2012.

The Defence Secretary accepted the Committee's advice that, in accordance with the Government's Business Appointment Rules, the appointment be subject to the following conditions:

- he should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of himself or the persons or organisations to which this advice refers) 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 the BP International Centre for Advanced Materials or BP PLC.

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 Professor Gibson takes up this position, 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 that 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