



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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6 September 2018

BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: DR ANDREW WRIGHT

The Committee has been asked to consider an application from Dr Andrew Wright, former Senior Partner Energy Systems at Ofgem.

His last day in the Civil service was 31 August 2018.

Appointment details

Dr Wright informed the Committee that he has been asked to become a Professor in Practice at Durham University, a role that is likely to involve between 5 and 10 days per year.

He said that Professor in Practice roles at Durham University are for individuals with a significant track record of professional experience and/ or public affairs who are prepared to use this experience to further the objectives of the University

In this role he will be supported jointly by the Engineering Department and Durham University Business School on behalf of the Durham Energy Institute (DEI). The DEI is a multi-disciplinary institute of the University, which provides leadership, and focus in relation to the University's energy related activities.

His role will involve engagement with staff and students, support in the development of course curricula and research proposals, and participation in the activities of the DEI.

The role is generally unpaid, but he stated that if he agrees to undertake more extensive teaching activities or participate in academic research activities, this could involve remuneration. It is difficult at this stage to determine the likelihood or the extent of such paid activities.

Dr Wright noted that Ofgem has a long-standing programme of engagement with academic institutions, including with the DEI. Dr Wright explained that he has been a member of the DEI advisory board for a number of years whilst a member of Ofgem. They are one of several university institutions that he has engaged with regularly as part of his normal course of business engagement with academics. He has occasionally contributed to conferences hosted by the DEI on aspects of energy and regulatory policy.

He said it is likely that Ofgem will choose to continue its engagement with DEI after he leaves.

Dr Wright said it is possible that he would have contact with Ofgem in his new role. However, this is likely to be purely in support of the University's academic and higher education objectives.

He said that he has had no access to commercially sensitive information about any competitors of his prospective employer.

He stated the offer of the role arose after he expressed an interest in furthering his engagement with Durham University after he leaves Ofgem. He is an alumnus of Durham University and he is keen to use his experience and capabilities to support its activities.

Dr Wright had more than 25 years of experience in the gas and electricity sector before joining Ofgem.

Dermot Nolan, Chief Executive of Ofgem has concluded that this appointment could not be seen as improper and has no reservations about Dr Wright taking on the role. He confirmed that Ofgem engages with Durham University as it does with other universities, but there is no contractual or regulatory relationship.

He also stated that Dr Wright would have had no influence in any decisions affecting Durham University and that Dr Wright has not had access to information relating to competitors that could be regarded as being commercially valuable or sensitive.

Committee's consideration

When considering this application, the Committee¹ took into account that Durham University is one of a number of academic institutions that Ofgem engages with. Dr Wright is currently a representative on the advisory board of the Durham Energy Institute, and he has explained that it is likely that Ofgem will continue its engagement after he leaves. Whilst there is a connection between Durham University and Ofgem, Mr Nolan has confirmed there is no contractual or regulatory relationship. The Committee therefore concluded that the risk that this appointment will be seen as a reward for decisions made in office is low.

Dr Wright's long-standing personal connection to Durham University and his career in the energy sector prior to joining Ofgem support this assessment. It is also of relevance that the position as Professor in Practice is unpaid, although Dr Wright notes that there is a possibility that he will in future be asked to undertake more extensive teaching activities or participate in academic research activities, which could involve remuneration.

As Dr Wright has said that it is difficult at this stage to determine the likelihood or the extent of such paid activities, this advice is limited to the role as he has described it to the Committee. He should approach the Committee to seek further advice should he be offered paid work, at the point at which the nature of such activities becomes clear.

Dr Wright has explained that it is possible that he would have contact with Ofgem in this role *'in support of the University's academic and higher education objectives.'* The Committee's view is that this would not be inappropriate providing he does not make use of his contacts in Government to seek to provide Durham University with an unfair advantage over other universities. The lobbying ban set out below precludes any use of his contacts to influence policy or secure funding or business for Durham University, while making clear that contact may take place on academic matters.

The Prime Minister accepted the Committee's advice that the appointment be subject to the following conditions:

¹ This application for advice was considered by Sir Alex Allan; Jonathan Baume; Baroness Angela Browning; Lord Michael German; Baroness Helen Liddell; Richard Thomas and John Wood. Terence Jagger and Dr Susan Liataud were unavailable.

- that he should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of himself or the 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 of service he should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government (including Ofgem) on behalf of Durham University. Nor should he make use, directly or indirectly, of his Government and/or Crown Service contacts to influence policy or secure funding or business on its behalf. This would not prevent him from having routine contact with the UK Government on academic matters.

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 Dr Wright takes up this appointment, 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 which 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 Dr Wright informs us if he proposes to expand or otherwise change the nature of this appointment as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for him to make a fresh application.

Once Dr Wright has announced or taken up this appointment, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website and, if appropriate, refer to it in the relevant annual report.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Richardson
Committee Secretariat

