



Rt Hon. Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Deputy Prime Minister and
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS

Rt Hon. Lord Pickles
Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACoBA) Chair
Office of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments
G/08 Ground Floor, 1 Horse Guards Road
SW1A 2HQ

15 September 2023

Dear Lord Pickles,

Thank you for your letter of 27 June relating to an apparent breach of the Business Appointment Rules by Mr McNeil. I apologise for the delay in responding to you, but I wanted to be in a position to discuss the work the Government has been undertaking with regard to reforming the Business Appointment Rules which was announced to Parliament on 20 July.

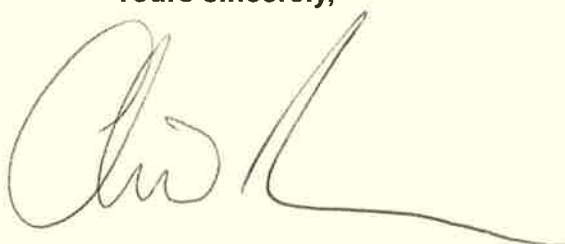
From the correspondence you enclosed in your letter, I understand that you consider Mr McNeil to have breached the Business Appointment Rules by sending letters to a number of ministers and senior officials in various departments on behalf of Storm Energia (and Lincoln Storm Group more widely). I accept that Mr McNeil may have considered that his actions were permitted under the Rules and the conditions imposed on his employment. However, applicants under the Business Appointment Rules have a personal responsibility to manage their compliance with the Rules, and Mr McNeil was informed of what actions would be impermissible under the Rules. I therefore agree with the Committee's assessment that Mr McNeil failed to follow the Committee's advice in this case, and I will write to Mr McNeil to make this clear and remind him of his responsibilities under the Rules. I will also explain that this breach will be taken into account when considering any future honour or public appointment.

I share your concerns that a former senior civil servant misunderstood his obligations under the Rules, and we are working to increase awareness of the Rules across all departments. My officials have already delivered training to departments responsible for approximately 50% of the Civil Service workforce, and they will continue to work with your office on the support we can offer departments.

As you know, the Government published its response to the reports from the Committee on Standards in Public Life, Mr Boardman, and the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on Thursday 20 July. The response outlines proposals for a package of reform to the Business Appointment Rules focusing on improved enforcement of the Rules via staff contracts and a ministerial deed. This work must also continue to support the Government's ongoing aim of improving porosity between government and other sectors. I look forward to continuing to work with you and your committee in this work to improve the system and protect the integrity of government.

I would like to thank the Committee for your ongoing work on these matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'O Dowden', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Rt Hon. Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Deputy Prime Minister**