



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: The Rt Hon George Eustice MP, former Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), paid commission with Alpine Fire Engineers Ltd (Alpine Fire) under his independent consultancy.

1. You sought advice from the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (the Committee) under the government's Business Appointments Rules for Former Ministers (the Rules) on taking up a role with Alpine Fire under your independent consultancy.
2. The purpose of the Rules is to protect the integrity of the government. Under the Rules, the Committee's remit is to consider the risks associated with the actions and decisions you made during your time in office, alongside the information and influence you may offer Alpine Fire. The material information taken into consideration by the Committee is set out in the annex.
3. The Committee has advised that a number of conditions be imposed to mitigate the potential risks to the government associated with this commission under the Rules. The Committee's advice is not an endorsement of this work in any other respect.
4. The Ministerial Code sets out that ministers must abide by the Committee's advice. It is an applicant's personal responsibility to manage the propriety of any appointment. Former ministers of the Crown, and Members of Parliament, are expected to uphold the highest standards of propriety and act in accordance with the 7 Principles of Public Life.

The Committee's Consideration

5. The Committee¹ considered this commission to be consistent with the description of your consultancy- providing strategic advice on policy affecting the environmental sectors; developing business models; and implementing/complying with regulatory frameworks.
6. As Secretary of State, you made decisions pertaining to resource efficiency, including water. Defra confirmed these decisions were not specific to Alpine Fire. Defra confirmed that you did not meet with Alpine Fire while in office nor does the department have a relationship with the company. Therefore, the Committee considered the risk this commission could reasonably be perceived as a reward for decisions made in office is low.
7. There is a broad overlap with your time as Secretary of State for Defra and the policy area of resource efficiency. However, the Committee agreed with your former department that the risk associated with your access to information is significantly limited because:
 - Defra has demonstrated that information relating to your policy involvement is now in the public domain, including decisions that have been made by your successors since you left office; and
 - you have been out of office for 14 months during which there have also been significant changes in the administration - reducing the likelihood your access to information is sufficiently up to date.
8. There are risks associated with your influence and network which could offer unfair access to government. The Committee noted this is especially relevant here as the organisation operates in a regulated sector and will have interactions with the government.

The Committee's Advice

9. There are limited risks associated with your general access to sensitive information. There are greater risks attached to your potential access and influence within government as a former Secretary of State. The Committee considered it would be difficult to manage the risk that any contact with government would be perceived as a former Cabinet Minister seeking to influence government and therefore contrary to the lobbying ban. The exception to that would be if your attendance was requested by the

¹ This application for advice was considered by The Rt Hon Lord Pickles; Mike Weir; Andrew Cumpsty; The Baroness Jones of Whitchurch; Sarah de Gay; and Isabel Doverty.

government. It is significant that your role as described is consistent and had no planned contact with government.

10. The Committee determined the conditions attached to your consultancy appropriately mitigate the risks.

11. In accordance with the government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises this commission with Alpine Fire Engineers Ltd, should be subject to the same conditions applied to your independent consultancy:

- 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 from your time in ministerial office;
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK government or any of its arm's length bodies on behalf of Alpine Fire Engineers Ltd (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients); nor should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in the government and/or Crown service contacts to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly advantage Alpine Fire Engineers Ltd (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients);
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not provide advice to on behalf of Alpine Fire Engineers Ltd (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients) on the terms of, or with regard to the subject matter of, a bid with, or contract relating directly to the work of the UK government or any of its arm's length bodies;
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying contacts you developed during your time in office in other governments and organisations for the purpose of securing business for Alpine Fire Engineers Ltd; and
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, before accepting any commissions for your independent consultancy and or/before extending or otherwise changing the nature of your commissions, you should seek advice from the Committee. The Committee will decide whether each commission is consistent with the terms of the consultancy and consider any relevant factors under the Business Appointment Rules.

12. The advice and the conditions under the government's Business Appointment Rules relate to your previous role in government only; they are separate rules administered by other bodies such as the Office of the Registrar of Consultant

Lobbyists, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and the Registrar of Lords' Interests². You are reminded that as a Member of Parliament you have a separate ban on paid lobbying under the Parliamentary Code of Conduct. It is an applicant's personal responsibility to understand any other rules and regulations they may be subject to in parallel with this Committee's advice.

13. 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.
14. 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.*"
15. You must inform us as soon as your commission is live or is announced. You must also inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change the nature of your consultancy as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for you to make a fresh application.
16. Once the appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website, and where appropriate, refer to it in the relevant annual report.

The Rt Hon Lord Pickles

² All Peers and Members of Parliament are prevented from paid lobbying under the the House of Commons Code of Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords. Advice on your obligations under the Code can be sought from the Parliamentary Commissioners for Standards, in the case of MPs, or the Registrar of Lords' Interests, in the case of peers

Annex - Material information

Commission with Alpine Fire

1. You said Alpine Fire is a market leader in commercial fire suppression or sprinkler systems for commercial offices, factories, retailers and other large buildings. You said the company manufactures, installs, maintains and manages the systems under its contracts to its commercial customers.
2. As a consultant to Alpine Fire, you said you will be responsible for:
 - meeting with existing and potential corporate clients to articulate the benefits of the new technology and calculate savings to be reflected in their environmental, social and corporate governance metrics.
 - providing advice on regulatory frameworks surrounding water use efficiency measures and understanding any conflicts with the regulations arising from this.
3. You said that you made Alpine Fire aware that you are unable and unwilling to lobby government officials or ministers.

Dealings in office

4. You said you had responsibility for resource efficiency, including water. Including:
 - involvement in a consultation titled 'Water conservation: measure to reduce personal water use', which ran from July to October 2019. The subsequent analysis and summary of the consultation was published in July 2021.³
 - following the consultation the department announced a package of policy measures via a ministerial statement titled 'Reducing demand for water' which outlined the government's vision and covered issues like leakage; business water use, water metres, and water efficient homes.⁴
 - introducing parts of the Environment Act 2021 that created regulatory powers to improve resources including water efficiency⁵ - reducing personal water use and subsequent proposals for mandatory water efficiency labelling on domestic appliances.

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/water-conservation-measures-to-reduce-personal-water-use>

⁴ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-07-01/hcws140>

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>

5. You said you had no involvement in policy development or decisions regarding commercial fire suppression systems as this is principally regulated by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the industrial sector with the Department for Business and Trade.
6. You said you had no involvement in contractual or commercial decisions related to Alpine Fire.

Department assessment

7. Defra confirmed the details you provided. It added that since you left office relevant policy areas have moved on and decisions have been made by your successors:
 - the mandatory water efficiency labelling consultation⁶ concluded in November 2022.
 - Following the consultation, a policy position titled '*Our integrated plan for delivering clean and plentiful water*' was reached and published⁷ in April 2023.
8. Defra said while you were Secretary of State a large number of decisions were taken on resource efficiency, including water. However, these decisions were not specific to Alpine Fire but affected the entire sector on the need to comply with regulations.
9. Defra said you did not meet with Alpine Fire nor is there a relationship between Defra and Alpine Fire
10. Defra said that you would not have been involved in any funding or contractual decisions relevant to Alpine Fire.
11. Defra recommended standard conditions and that you should not engage with any clients of Alpine Fire with whom you may have had contact with during your time in office.

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https://consult.defra.gov.uk/water-efficiency-labelling/water-efficiency-labelling/supporting_documents/Water%20efficiency%20labelling%20consultation.pdf

⁷https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1164375/plan_for_water.pdf

