



**OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS**

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Website: [www.gov.uk/acoba](http://www.gov.uk/acoba)

Sir Marcus Jones  
By email

31 March 2025

Dear Marcus,

**Re: Application for advice on the role of Business Consultant, Amathus Strategy/E-PPL Group**

Thank you for your reply of 19 February 2025 in respect of your work with E-PPL Group and the operation of your independent consultancy, Amathus Strategy – both of which you commenced prior to receiving ACOBA's advice. The previous correspondence on this matter is annexed below.

The purpose of the Rules is to protect the integrity of government by considering the real and perceived risks associated with former ministers joining outside organisations. This has not been possible here. I note your difficult personal circumstances, but the government's Rules do not allow for applicants to decide to proceed to take up a role without first seeking and receiving advice. Failing to await advice before taking up this work is an unambiguous breach of the government's Rules and the requirements of the ministerial code.

ACOBA will not provide advice in these circumstances, in line with its established practice where there has been a breach.

**Next steps**

The Rules apply for two years on leaving office and you remain obligated to seek advice for work that you take up. Therefore, you must seek ACOBA's advice in all future endeavours.

Please find enclosed the correspondence reporting of this matter to the government, as the owners of the Rules. In line with ACOBA's commitment to transparency, all correspondence will be published on the website.



The Rt Hon Lord Pickles

Copied to:

The Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations;

The Rt Hon Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office;

Darren Tierney Director General, Propriety and Ethics, Cabinet Office.

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**Enclosure:**

- ACOBA's letter to the Cabinet Office

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**Annex**

**1. Letter of 19 February 2025 from Sir Marcus Jones to The Rt Hon Lord Pickles**

Dear Lord Pickles,

Thank you for your letter of the 6<sup>th</sup> February received by email.

I would like to assure you that I made the applications referenced in your letter in good faith, and in the firm knowledge that neither application would put me in a position where I would intentionally or unintentionally breach the substantive rules for former Ministers.

I fully accept and agree that former Ministers should abide by the rules set out by the Cabinet Office. The Ministerial role that attracts the requirement to seek advice from ACOBA was that of Deputy Chief Whip. In this role I was not involved as a Departmental Minister making policy or having any involvement in such matters as letting contracts or handling sensitive information that would now give me an advantage. As I am sure you are aware the Deputy Chief Whip manages the Whips team on a day to day basis under the management of the Chief Whip. The main role of the Whips team is to manage Government business and secure that business in the House of Commons.

Shortly after submitting my first application to ACOBA at the start of December, I contacted the ACOBA secretariat by phone and was told that the secretariat was handling a significant number of applications with a small number of officials in the secretariat team. I was clearly told that I could not be given any indication of when

advice would be given on my application. I asked at the time how I was supposed to make a living and it was made clear that this was not the problem of ACOBA. I was also told that I needed to register my Limited Company if I was to advertise a consultancy service. I then proceeded to make an application for advice regarding my Limited Company.

In good faith I waited nearly six weeks and had not received anything more than initial acknowledgement from the secretariat. My employment opportunities will become jeopardised, as I am sure you will appreciate, perspective supporters will not wait indefinitely for a job offer to be accepted. As you will know many MPs and Ministers do not have significant personal wealth to enable them to cease taking paid work indefinitely.

I had not worked for six months and for the personal wellbeing of my family and myself, I came to the point where I was not able to continue to wait indefinitely for the advice when there was no guarantee when it would be received. I therefore took the view to post the LinkedIn advertisement on 16th January. I have also taken up the role referenced in the first application, which has no reference or relevance to my previous Ministerial duties.

Yours sincerely,

Marcus

Sir Marcus Jones

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## 2. Letter from The Rt Hon Lord Pickles to Sir Marcus Jones, 6 February 2025



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Sir Marcus Jones  
By email

6 February 2025

Dear Marcus,

**Re: Application for advice on the role of Business Consultant, Amathus Strategy Limited**

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACOBA). I have been alerted to the announcement on your LinkedIn.com profile on 16 January 2024<sup>1</sup> about the formation of your independent consultancy, Amathus Strategy Limited and your role as 'Business Consultant'<sup>2</sup>. This announcement was made before receiving ACOBA's advice on the appointment.

The requirement to seek and abide by ACOBA's advice is set out clearly in the Ministerial Code<sup>3</sup>, including specifically that former ministers '*...must ensure that no new appointments are announced, or taken up, before the Committee has been able to provide its advice*'. The government's Business Appointment Rules (the Rules) exist to protect the integrity of government. Applicants have a personal responsibility to understand and comply with the Rules and to manage the propriety of appointments taken up after leaving government service.

In this case, I understand that you had been advised by the ACOBA secretariat that ACOBA's advice is required when creating an independent consultancy before advertising its services through a website, LinkedIn or other means. ACOBA therefore requires an explanation of your failure to wait for ACOBA's advice. Before the Committee provides advice on separate, related, applications you have submitted, please confirm that you have not yet taken this up. Provided you have not, the Committee can provide that advice in due course.

It is ACOBA's policy to report breaches of the Rules to government, and in line with our policy of transparency, we will publish our correspondence in due course. I would be grateful for a reply to this letter before 21 February 2025. Your reply, or any failure to respond, will be included in our publication.

I would also take this opportunity to remind you to seek and await final advice for any new appointment or employment you plan to take up within two years of leaving office.



The Rt Hon Lord Pickles

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<sup>1</sup> [Rt. Hon. Sir Marcus Jones: Announcement re Amathus Strategy Ltd \(LinkedIn\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Rt. Hon. Sir Marcus Jones: LinkedIn Profile](#)

<sup>3</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministerial-code/ministerial-code](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministerial-code/ministerial-code)