

Scottish Government

2 December 2025

Unpaid appointment with the British Council: Application under the Business Appointment Rules from Louise Macdonald OBE, former Director General Communities at the Scottish Government.

Thank you for submitting an application for advice under the Business Appointment Rules¹ (the Rules) to the Civil Service Commission (the Commission) on behalf of **Louise Macdonald OBE**, formerly Director General Communities at the Scottish Government. The application is for an unpaid role as a Chair of the Scotland Advisory Committee at the **British Council**. Further detail on the content of the application is in the Annex. The Commission's advice is required as Ms Macdonald is a former civil servant at SCS Pay Band 3. Her last day of service was 3 October 2025.

The purpose of the Rules is to protect the integrity of the government. They aim to avoid any reasonable concerns that: a civil servant may be influenced in their official duties by the risk of reward; a civil servant may improperly exploit access to information; and an organisation may gain an improper influence through the employment of a civil servant.

The Commission's advice is that the appointment should be made subject to the following conditions:

1. Privileged information – Ms Macdonald should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of herself or the persons or organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information² available to her from her time in civil service.
2. Lobbying – For two years from her last day in the civil service, until 3 October 2027, Ms Macdonald should not become personally involved in lobbying³ the Scottish Government or its arm's length bodies on behalf of the British Council (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients). She should also not use, directly or indirectly, her contacts in government and/or civil service to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly

¹ See the [Business appointment rules for Crown servants](#).

² Meaning official information to which a civil servant has had access as a consequence of his or her office or employment and which has not been made publicly available.

³ As defined in the rules.

**Baroness Stuart of Edgbaston
First Civil Service Commissioner
Civil Service Commission**

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advantage the British Council (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients).

3. Bids and contracts – For two years from her last day in the civil service, until 3 October 2027, Ms Macdonald should not provide advice to the British Council on a bid or contract relating to the UK government or its arm's length bodies.

The Rules set out that civil servants must abide by the Commission's advice. It is Ms Macdonald's personal responsibility to manage the propriety of any appointment and to understand any other rules and regulations they may be subject to in parallel with the Commission's advice.

Ms Macdonald must seek advice if she proposes to extend or otherwise change her role with the organisation. Once this appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, Ms Macdonald is obliged under the Rules to inform the Commission who will publish this letter on its website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gisela Stuart".

Gisela Stuart
First Civil Service Commissioner

Annex A: The application

Applicant assessment

1. According to its website, the British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It is a registered charity incorporated and governed by a Royal Charter. The British Council Scotland is the arm of the British Council that works specifically within Scotland. To guide this work, the Scotland Advisory Committee functions as a non-executive, advisory body that provides guidance on its overall strategy.
2. Ms Macdonald explained that as Chair of the Scotland Advisory Committee her responsibilities will be to:
 - Lead the group to fulfil its purpose and objectives as outlined in the terms of reference;
 - Chair group meetings, normally three a year;
 - Advise on the development of the Scotland strategy;
 - Act as an advocate for the British Council's work; and
 - Attend two annual Board of Trustees meetings to discuss strategy and ensure the global organisation reflects the UK's four nations.
3. Ms Macdonald was Director General Communities at the Scottish Government between March 2023 and October 2025. In this role she said she was responsible for tackling child poverty, housing, planning, relationships with Local Government and the third sector, public service reform, equality, inclusion and human rights, social security, refugees, and asylum seeking and displaced people.
4. Ms Macdonald said she was not responsible for regulatory, funding or any other decisions affecting the British Council at any time in her last two years in the civil service.

CSC analysis

5. *Application level:* As a Level 1 application for an unpaid role, the Commission's analysis applies the principle that this category of appointment is generally recognised as posing a lower risk to government integrity.
6. *Risk of reward:* Ms Macdonald said she was not responsible for regulatory, funding or any other decisions affecting the British Council during her time at the Scottish Government. The role is unpaid, so is unlikely to have been offered as a reward for decisions made in office.

7. *Access to information:* As Director General Communities, Ms Macdonald would have had access to a range of policy information and likely retain some privileged knowledge about how government functions. The Scottish Government did not note any specific information she holds that would present an unfair advantage to her proposed employer. Further, her former roles did not include responsibility for the Scottish Government Culture Directorate, which carries out some partnership work with the British Council. The standard conditions would appropriately mitigate any remaining risk.
8. *Influence:* As Director General Communities, Ms Macdonald would retain contacts to civil servants that are still in post that could provide an unfair advantage to the British Council. It is significant that the role is part-time, unpaid, and advisory. The risk of the perception of lobbying the government in order to influence policy changes is mitigated by the standard conditions.