

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

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Cabinet Office

15 December 2025

Application to establish an independent consultancy under the Business Appointment Rules from Ms Stephanie Driver, former Director of Communications at the Prime Minister's Office.

Thank you for submitting an application for advice under the Business Appointment Rules (the Rules) to the Civil Service Commission (the Commission) on behalf of **Ms Stephanie Driver**, formerly Director of Communications at the Prime Minister's Office. The application is to establish an independent consultancy. Further detail on the content of the application is in the Annex. The Commission's advice is required as Ms Driver is a former special adviser at Special Adviser Pay Band 4. Her last day of service was 30 September 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 advice¹ is that this application should be subject to the following conditions:

1. Privileged information ban - Ms Driver should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of herself or the persons or organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to her from her time in the civil service.
2. Lobbying - For two years from her last day in office, until 30 September 2027, Ms Driver should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government or its arm's length bodies on behalf of her independent consultancy (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients). She should also not use, directly or indirectly, her contacts in the government and/or civil service to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise

¹ See [Advice under the Business Appointment Rules](#) for details applying to all advice issued by the Civil Service Commission.

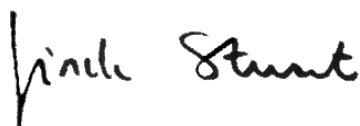
unfairly advantage her independent consultancy (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients).

3. Bids and contracts ban - For two years from her last day in the civil service, until 30 September 2027, Ms Driver should not provide advice to any company or organisation on behalf of her independent consultancy, on the terms of, or with regard to the subject matter of, a bid or contract with, or relating directly to the work of, the UK government or its arm's length bodies.
4. Independent consultancy - Given the scope of the consultancy set out by Ms Driver in her application, she does not need to return to the Commission for client work unless the proposed work, or a change to existing work, would alter this scope. If Ms Driver is uncertain, she should return to the Commission to seek advice. In particular, Ms Driver would need to seek further advice related to:
 - Any client or work where Ms Driver had direct involvement in related contractual, funding, or policy decisions while at the Prime Minister's Office.
 - Any client or work relating to matters she held specific responsibility for.
 - Any client or work requiring contact with the Cabinet Office or UK government for influencing purposes.

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

Ms Driver 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, the letter will be published on the Civil Service Commission's website.

Yours sincerely,



Gisela Stuart
First Civil Service Commissioner

Annex A: The application

Applicant assessment

1. Ms Driver wishes to establish an independent consultancy. She said she will provide corporate communications advice focused on PR and that this will focus on narrative, messaging, and media activation.
2. Ms Driver was the Director of Communications at the Prime Minister's Office between March and September 2025. This is the most senior political communications function within government. She was previously Deputy Director of Communications until March 2025.
3. Ms Driver has stated that her consulting work will be a return to her former career in public relations. She said her consulting work will not involve contact with, or lobbying of, the government.

Departmental assessment

4. The Cabinet Office confirmed the details provided by Ms Driver. The department stated this is a new consultancy established to leverage her skills and expertise within public relations and strategic communications, and noted her previous career in this area.
5. The department noted that Ms Driver held the most senior political communications role within government and would have had a wide array of contacts and knowledge of policy within government, some of which is likely to still be relevant considering she departed from her role recently. The department considered this risk limited, as her access to upcoming announcements was typically three weeks in advance, and she was not privy to long-term sensitive information. It said this was further mitigated as key political events, such as the Autumn Statement, have been made public before her consultancy is established.
6. The Cabinet Office recommended standard conditions.

CSC analysis

7. *Risk of reward.* As Ms Driver is establishing a new company, the Commission agreed with the department's view that the risk of this establishment being a reward for decisions or actions taken in office was low.
8. *Access to information.* As a former special adviser and the Director of Communications, Ms Driver would have had access to high-level information on government objectives and political communications strategy. However, the department said she was not privy to any specific information that

remained sensitive after her departure. Further, the conditions prevent Ms Driver from drawing on any privileged information. Given her description of the consultancy's scope and the department's assessment, this risk is limited by the standard conditions.

9. *Improper influence.* As a former special adviser, there is a risk that Ms Driver's network and influence may present an unfair advantage to clients of her consultancy. This is mitigated by the standard two-year lobbying ban and the condition that prevents her from providing advice on government bids or contracts. It is significant to note that Ms Driver stated she would not have contact with government as part of her consulting work.
10. *Independent consultancy.* This advice provides Ms Driver consent only to set up a consultancy, subject to a number of conditions. It grants her consent to accept client work without returning to the Commission, unless the work extends or alters the scope of corporate communications advice described in her original application. In such cases, such as those involving prior direct involvement with the Prime Minister's Office, matters she held specific responsibility for, or influencing the government before 30 September 2027, she must seek advice so the proposal can be assessed against the Rules.