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First Civil Service Commissioner
Civil Service Commission

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Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

8 May 2026

Paid appointment with UK Music: Application under the Business Appointment Rules from Catriona Laing CB, former Senior Responsible Officer Soft Power at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development 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 Catriona Laing CB**, formerly Senior Responsible Officer Soft Power. The application is for a paid, part-time role as **Chair of UK Music**. Further detail on the content of the application is in the Annex. The Commission's advice is required as Ms Laing is a former civil servant at SCS Pay Band 3. Her last day of service will be 31 March 2026.

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 the appointment with UK Music should be made subject to the following conditions:

1. Privileged information – Ms Laing 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 31 March 2028, Ms Laing should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government or its arm's length bodies on behalf of UK Music (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 unfairly advantage UK Music (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients).
3. Bids and contracts – For two years from her last day in the civil service, until 31 March 2028, Ms Laing should not provide advice to UK Music on a bid or

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

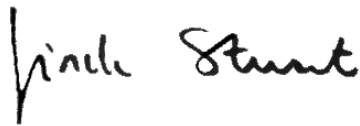
contract relating to the UK Government or its arm's length bodies.

Ms Laing and UK Music confirmed to the Commission her intention to fully comply with the lobbying ban that applied to her. UK Music also confirmed its understanding of, and adherence to the remaining conditions that apply to Ms Laing's role.

The Rules set out that civil servants must abide by the Commission's advice. It is Ms Laing'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 Laing 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gisela Stuart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gisela Stuart

First Civil Service Commissioner

Annex A: The application

1. According to its website, UK Music is the industry-funded umbrella body representing the collective interests of the UK's commercial music industry. It acts as the primary voice for artists, record labels, songwriters, publishers, and managers. It lobbies the government on issues such as AI, copyright protection, and sector growth, and works to promote the music industry as a key national asset.

Applicant assessment

2. As Chair of UK Music, Ms Laing will lead the UK Music Board. Her role will be primarily non-executive and focused on internal governance and board leadership. She will be supporting the Chief Executive in implementing the organisation's strategic plan. Ms Laing will oversee the Board's composition, financial procedures, and relationships with member organisations to ensure effective decision-making and sector-wide collaboration.
3. Ms Laing stated that her role will not involve contact or dealings with government. She said that any lobbying of government will be conducted by Tom Kiehl, the CEO of UK Music. Her role as Chair would be to advise on how best to constructively engage with the government to achieve the organisation's objectives.
4. Ms Laing applied for this position through an advertised process.
5. As Senior Responsible Officer Soft Power, Ms Laing provided support to the Soft Power Council, which includes UK Music, and oversaw the development and publication of a new UK Government soft power strategy. This included acting as the central coordination point for soft power across government and for external partners, as well as supporting the FCDO network in delivering soft power impact. Prior to this, she was UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and British High Commissioner to the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
6. Ms Laing has engaged with Mr Kiehl in his capacity as a member of the Soft Power Council. The Council has met four times in the last year, and Mr Kiehl was present at two of these meetings. In addition, Ms Laing:
 - chaired a panel discussion on the Soft Power Council at Brand Finance's Global Soft Power Index in February 2025, which featured Mr Kiehl as one of the panel members;
 - participated in a Wilton Park roundtable discussion which included the topic of soft power in December 2025; and

- attended the Brit Awards in March 2025 and the UK Music-hosted summer party in June 2025.
7. Ms Laing stated she has not been responsible for any policy, regulatory or commercial decisions specific to UK Music at any time in her last two years in the civil service.

Correspondence with UK Music

8. UK Music confirmed its understanding of, and adherence to, the Commission's advice and the conditions imposed on Ms Laing's appointment. The company confirmed her role will not constitute lobbying and that contact with the government on behalf of the organisation is undertaken by the executive team, not the Chair.

Departmental assessment

9. The FCDO confirmed that Ms Laing did not have direct engagement with UK Music during her time in office, but was involved in events where the CEO of UK Music was present.
10. They noted that UK Music is not a business in itself and does not seek contracts.
11. The FCDO did not raise any concerns around Ms Laing's access to information or engagement with competitors of UK Music.

CSC analysis

12. *Risk of reward.* Although Ms Laing had contact with the CEO and other representatives of UK Music through the Soft Power Council and various events, the FCDO confirmed she was not involved in any regulatory, funding, or contractual decisions that specifically affected the organisation. Further, she applied for this role through an advertised process. The Commission therefore agreed with the department that the risk of this appointment being perceived as a reward is low.
13. *Access to information.* As a former Senior Responsible Officer, Ms Laing had access to high-level strategic information regarding the government's international Soft Power positioning. While this creates a potential risk of unfair advantage, the lead policy responsibility for the music industry sits with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) rather than the FCDO. Given that the FCDO raised no concerns regarding her access to specific commercially sensitive or competitor information, the Commission determined

that the standard condition preventing the use of privileged information is sufficient to mitigate this risk.

14. *Improper influence.* The Commission noted that UK Music is a representative body that lobbies government. Further, given Ms Laing's seniority and extensive network of high-level contacts across the FCDO and wider government, especially through her team's role as secretariat for the Soft Power Council, there is an inherent risk that she could be perceived as providing the organisation with an unfair advantage. However, the role is a non-executive, part-time Chair position focused predominantly on internal board governance. The CEO of UK Music will lead all engagement with government, with Ms Laing's role will be limited to providing advice to the CEO on how to effectively engage with the government. The Commission considered it significant that Ms Laing stated that her role will not involve lobbying, and that she and UK Music confirmed to the Commission her intention to fully comply with the lobbying ban that applies to her. The Commission considered that the standard condition mitigates any remaining risk.