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Civil Service Commission

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Civil Service Commission

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

22 October 2026

Paid appointment with Bind Research: Application under the Business Appointment Rules from Dr David Smith, current National Technology Adviser at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

The Civil Service Commission (the Commission) has considered an application for advice under the Business Appointment Rules (the Rules) from **Dr David Smith**, currently National Technology Adviser at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). The application is for a paid, part-time role as **Chair** of **Bind Research**. Further detail on the content of the application is in the Annex. The Commission's advice is required as Dr Smith is a civil servant at SCS Pay Band 3. His last day of service was 30 September 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 advice[1] is that the appointment with Bind Research should be made subject to the following conditions:

1. Privileged information – Dr Smith should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of himself or the persons or organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to him from his time in the Civil Service.
2. Lobbying – For two years from his last day in the Civil Service, until 30 September 2028, Dr Smith should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government or its arm's length bodies on behalf of Bind Research (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients). He should also not use, directly or indirectly, his contacts in the government and/or Civil Service to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly advantage Bind Research (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients).
3. Bids and contracts – For two years from his last day in the Civil Service, until 30 September 2028, Dr Smith should not provide advice to Bind Research on

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

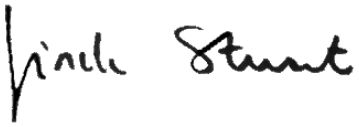
a bid or contract relating to the UK Government or its arm's length bodies.

Dr Smith and Bind Research confirmed to the Commission his intention to fully comply with the lobbying ban that applied to him, as well as their understanding of, and adherence to the remaining conditions that apply to Dr Smith's role.

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

Dr Smith must seek advice if he proposes to extend or otherwise change his 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

1. According to its website, Bind Research is an independent, non-profit Focused Research Organisation committed to improving patient outcomes by turning disordered proteins into viable drug targets.

Applicant assessment

2. As Chair, Dr Smith stated he will be responsible for:
    - completing the recruitment of the Board;
    - chairing Board meetings;
    - ensuring governance for Bind Research;
    - providing ad hoc advice to the management team who are all active researchers day to day, not professional executives; and
    - liaising with funders and engaging in further fund raising where necessary.

3. Dr Smith clarified that he would not be involved in grant bidding, as that is a role for executives.

4. Bind Research received a £12 million endowment from DSIT in March 2025. Dr Smith said he expects to liaise with the department to provide assurance of the company's technical progress and continued focus on the organisation's mission. Dr Smith noted that he views this as working with DSIT rather than lobbying for Bind Research. He added that there is no further expectation of income from government, although Bind Research could apply for UKRI grants were they eligible – currently they are not due to having been in existence for less than three years.

5. As National Technology Adviser, Dr Smith advised the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology and the Cabinet on the best approach to building and enhancing the UK's technology strengths. His role included working across government to champion the science and tech industries, in addition to building networks across industry to recruit into policy making.

6. Regarding the £12 million endowment to Bind Research from the Research Venture Catalyst Programme, Dr Smith stated that he chaired the independent judging panel and advised the policy team on programme and cost matters.

7. Dr Smith also noted that he had contact with Bind Research when he gave a keynote about research venture catalysts and focused research organisations at a launch event in London this year. He also visited Bind Research's lab in April of this year to see the technology. He added that he has no involvement

in the assessment of Bind Research, nor of relevant regulatory matters. Dr Smith noted that because Bind Research is a biotechnology organisation, whereas the remit of his role in office was in engineering and technology, he does not advise the teams dealing with these scientific areas. He claimed that Bind Research is seeking his prior experience in business rather than his scientific or government experience.

Correspondence with Bind Research

8. Bind Research confirmed its understanding of, and adherence to the Commission's advice and the conditions imposed on Dr Smith's appointment. Bind Research confirmed his role will not constitute lobbying.

Departmental assessment

9. DSIT confirmed that its relationship with Bind Research commenced after it awarded a competitive £12 million endowment in March 2025 through the Research Venture Catalyst Programme. In relation to the risk that the role was given as a reward for decisions made in office, the department noted that although Dr Smith chaired the independent judging panel that provided this award, it considered this risk to still be limited, highlighting that the process was not a commercial procurement exercise and did not involve the award of a contract for services.

10. DSIT stated that the award was a competitive funding process designed to identify organisations capable of delivering the programme's objectives. They also said that applications for the endowment were assessed through a structured process involving departmental officials, subject matter expertise and the independent assessment panel that he chaired. They noted that as an independent panel member, Dr Smith facilitated discussions, ensured applications were assessed consistently against the published criteria and provided advice to the departmental officials on programme and cost considerations. DSIT added that while Dr Smith did contribute to the panel's recommendations, the final funding decision was taken through the department's established governance and approvals processes rather than by Dr Smith personally.

11. Moreover, DSIT confirmed that Dr Smith's official involvement was strictly confined to this initial assessment and recommendation stage. Dr Smith held no subsequent role in monitoring, regulating, overseeing, or making future funding decisions regarding Bind Research following the award. Bind Research does not currently hold commercial contracts with DSIT.

12. DSIT noted that Dr Smith has since had further contact with Bind Research, having delivered a keynote speech at their lab opening event in March 2026 and visited their lab in April 2026 to view the technology. However, they added that the proposed appointment is with a not-for-profit research organisation, focused on board governance and stewardship rather than commercial growth or business development. Consequently, DSIT concluded that although there is a perception risk arising from Dr Smith's participation in the panel that recommended the endowment, the appointment does not constitute a reward for past decisions and that any identified risks can be appropriately mitigated.

13. DSIT does not consider Dr Smith to possess commercially sensitive information about competitors, noting his background is in engineering and technology rather than biotechnology or regulatory affairs. They added that they do not expect any of his remaining work in office to relate to the work of Blind Research.

14. DSIT reiterated that Dr Smith anticipates limited future contact with DSIT in his capacity as Chair, primarily to provide assurance on technical progress and delivery against the original mission, and to demonstrate value for money to HMT. They added that he explicitly states this would be collaborative and assurance-focused, not lobbying activity. DSIT highlighted that Bind Research may apply for UKRI funding in future, though it is currently ineligible due to it being established less than three years ago.

15. DSIT recommended the standard conditions in addition to a restriction on involvement in any future funding discussions or decisions with government.

The Commission's analysis

16. *Risk of reward.* Given that Dr Smith chaired the independent judging panel, there is a heightened perception of a risk of reward for decisions made in office. However, the Commission did not consider the risk significant, noting the mitigating factors provided by DSIT, which includes Dr Smith's lack of unilateral authority and the structured nature of the competitive decision process. Therefore, the Commission considered that the risk the appointment was offered as a reward for decisions made in post to be limited.

17. *Access to information.* As the former National Technology Adviser, Dr Smith had access to high-level strategic policy insights across government technology initiatives. While Bind Research is an independent, non-profit Focused Research Organisation, Dr Smith noted that it may well apply for UKRI grants if it became eligible (having received the endowment from DSIT previously). As such, his access to thinking at DSIT may provide a strategic advantage over other research bodies. While this creates a general risk

regarding privileged insight, DSIT confirmed that Dr Smith held no specific commercially sensitive or regulatory information concerning Bind Research's sector or competitors, noting his lack of technical overlap with the new role. Furthermore, any risk around his privileged insight is significantly limited by the fact that Bind Research's primary output is an open-source database created for public scientific benefit. The Commission therefore considered the risk relating to his access to information to be limited, with any remaining risk appropriately managed by the standard privileged information ban.

18. *Improper influence.* As the former National Technology Adviser, Dr Smith may have contacts in government that could offer Bind Research an unfair advantage. Dr Smith noted his role would involve contact with DSIT to provide assurance on technical progress under the endowment, which could create a risk of improper influence. The Rules allow for communication as a routine part of a role where such activity would not be improper. However, the lobbying ban makes clear that Dr Smith must not use his contacts to influence policy, secure funding, or advocate on behalf of the organisation.

19. Dr Smith confirmed that he would not be involved in bidding for grants or contracts, and that this is handled by others in the organisation. Furthermore, although Bind Research may become eligible for UKRI grants in the future, Dr Smith confirmed that his role will remain strictly limited to strategic guidance and governance oversight. To ensure this structural separation is maintained, the Commission sought assurance from both Dr Smith and Bind Research, and considered it significant that both confirmed their intention to fully comply with the lobbying ban that applies to him. The Commission also noted that Bind Research is a non-profit organisation focused on creating open-source public data assets for scientific research, rather than a commercial enterprise seeking private profit. The Commission therefore agreed that the standard conditions are sufficient to mitigate the risk of improper influence.