Dear Damian,

Confirmatory appointments of senior public positions

Thank you for your letter of 9 January outlining your concerns over the current recruitment processes for DCMS appointments. I understand that following on from recent pre-appointment hearings that the Select Committee have undertaken, you have concerns around how DCMS advertises public appointment roles, including the processes in place to ensure we attract a diverse range of applicants.

I would like to reassure you that DCMS takes its responsibilities around public appointments extremely seriously, especially in how we ensure that we reach out and attract a wide range of diverse applicants. I firmly believe that an inclusive and diverse public board is more effective, not only because of the ability to give fresh perspectives, vigorous challenge and broad experience, but also the ability to represent the wide range of sectors and societies that our public boards serve.

Over the past two years DCMS have put in place a number of actions to ensure greater diversity in public appointments, including:

- **Hosting outreach events:** DCMS have held several events to promote public appointments and reach out to new candidates. The events have been an opportunity for current board members to speak about their experiences and share information on the appointments process. These events are well attended and have enabled the department to make new connections with individuals who go on to be appointable candidates. For example, a Diversity event held at the V&A and attended by DCMS Ministers plus 100 guests in October 2017, focused on opportunities for people from BAME backgrounds in DCMS public appointments. In 2016 we held an event at Tower of London, aimed at identifying and reaching out to new female talent. Over 110 people attended the event, many of whom have since applied for DCMS appointments, and 4 of whom have so far been deemed appointable.
● **Bespoke advertising plans** are now created for each appointment campaign, targeting under-represented groups as appropriate. We expect all ALBs to participate in promoting opportunities widely via their communications and stakeholder channels in order to actively seek out prospective candidates. We place in sector-relevant newsletters and trade publications, wherever this can be achieved at low/no cost to the public purse. We also make targeted approaches to suitable names from our ‘near-miss’ list compiled from previous campaigns where similar expertise are required on a board.

● **Diversity information** on current ALB boards is included in all public appointments submissions to highlight when we are on schedule to hit/miss our targets; demographic information on all boards is instantly available.

● **Improved candidate care** of our ‘near miss’ candidates to ensure those candidates with potential are engaged and encouraged to apply for other suitable roles.

Our work on advertising, outreach and diversity has contributed to the fact that in 2016/17, 50 per cent of new DCMS appointments were made to women, and 12 per cent were made to BAME candidates. In comparison to the Whitehall average of 43 per cent for women, and 10 per cent for BAME candidates, DCMS are doing well. A recent letter from the Commissioner of Public Appointments praised DCMS on our efforts to increase gender equality and increase the diversity of our boards.

The DCMS public appointments team are always working to find ways to attract a wider pool of talent. However, I recognise that there is always more that can be done to improve the reach of our campaigns and the diversity of our candidates, especially as we work towards reaching the new targets set by the Cabinet Office that by 2022, 50 percent of public appointees should be female, and 14 percent should be from ethnic minorities.

You will have seen that the Cabinet Office recently introduced a new diversity strategy, in which DCMS was highlighted for our work on diversity, and the regular events held to promote public appointments and reach out to new candidates. Over the coming months we will ensure that DCMS works closely with the Cabinet Office to implement this strategy, as well as continuing to expand both our methods of advertising and opportunities for outreach.

We will also look to revise guidance to advisory assessment panels to ensure it highlights importance of diversity in appointments and need to consider unconscious bias, while also ensuring panels are clear no positive discrimination is allowed. We will also ensure that where head-hunters are used for campaigns, which is rare due to the cost to the public purse, they use a process built around diversity and inclusion.

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
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Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State
Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament St, Westminster, London SW1A 2BQ

9 January 2018

Dear Mr Hancock,

Confirmatory appointments of senior public positions

Following the recent pre-appointment hearings held by the DCMS Committee we wanted to convey to you our concern about recruitment processes for public positions, which have come under the ambit of Department.

It is regrettable that, in general, candidates apparently continue to be drawn from a narrow group of establishment figures. It is essential that the availability of public opportunities such as these is promulgated as widely as possible. Simply advertising a role on the Centre for Public Appointments website, and using head-hunters to make targeted approaches, do not go far enough in promoting it beyond ‘the usual suspects’.

For future appointments we would expect to see proactive steps taken to advertise the role widely. These steps should include: advertising on a range of websites and in different parts of the media; ensuring that recruitment agencies use a process built around diversity and inclusion; and carrying out a full equality analysis of the recruitment process ahead of time.

I look forward to hearing your response.

[Signature]

DAMIAN COLLINS MP
CHAIR, DCMS COMMITTEE