

From: [Hunt, Lucy](#)
To: [Lawton, Nicola](#)
Subject: FW: ANNA TO CLEAR - STAFF NETWORK, MEDIA HANDLING
Date: 04 November 2022 15:24:57

Nicky, FYI

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From: [REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk>
Sent: 04 November 2022 15:20
To: Burns, Anna <anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk>
Subject: ANNA TO CLEAR - STAFF NETWORK, MEDIA HANDLING

Hi Anna,

Hope you're doing well. Please see below for media handling around the SEEN network. I understand Sir James would like to see the media handling too, so we would like to share with him early next week if possible.

Thanks again for putting us in touch with [REDACTED] and others to find out more on this.

Any questions please let me know.

Cc'ing others for awareness too.

Many thanks,

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To: Anna Burns

Deadline: Monday 7 Nov (if possible)

Issue: A new civil service wide staff network called [Sex Equality and Equity Network \(SEEN\)](#) has been established. The network aims to promote and support sex equality and equity between men and women in the workplace. The network say their focus is “on challenging sex discrimination and upholding rights and protections that relate to sex”.

The network holds the protected belief (covered by the protected characteristic of religion and belief in the Equality Act 2010) that biological sex is binary and immutable.

Some members of Environment Agency staff are founding members of the network and plan to publish an item on the Defra Yammer channel to publicise the network during w/c 7 November.

Media handling: The staff network has already been launched and we have not seen any media pick up. Although it is possible this could enter the public domain and attract some media interest, particularly in outlets such as the Daily Mail or trade press like Civil Service World. Overall, this would be a Cabinet Office lead as the network is civil service wide and they would handle queries reactively. If we receive any approaches on the network which are not specific about the EA we will direct to the Cabinet Office in the first instance.

It is unlikely the EA would feature in media coverage as potential coverage would like discuss the network as a whole and potentially link it to ministerial and government positions on related issues. However, if any coverage does pick up on EA involvement we have prepared the below reactive lines. These lines make clear that the EA is committed to creating an inclusive workplace. The lines also explain factually that the staff network has been recognised by the Cabinet Office and is civil service wide, rather than just in the EA.

Separately, Defra group and EA internal comms are aware and are working on internal comms handling.

Are you content with this media handling approach?

Background information:

- The wellbeing of all staff is a top priority for the Environment Agency.
- The EA is a public service, place based organisation so it is crucial we are an inclusive organisation and representative of the communities we serve.
- We are working to promote inclusion for all staff and to tackle discrimination through a range of actions – including mandatory Respect at Work training for all employees, refreshed grievance, dispute and resolution policies, and ongoing collaboration with our diversity networks.
- The cross-government Sex Equality and Equity Network (SEEN) is recognised by the Cabinet Office and is open to staff across government.

Already cleared by: [REDACTED] (Acting Head of News)

Planning & Corporate | Defra Group Press Office

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