

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [Burns, Anna](#); [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Yammer changes - Legal input needed  
**Date:** 05 December 2022 14:30:05  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)

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Hi [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Anna Burns (our DD – Governance & Engagement, who has internal comms oversight) has been working with [REDACTED] to progress options re turning Yammer All Company into broadcast-only. See note below- they are working to arrange a meeting and it's been flagged we need Legal input to the decision-making. Please can you explore whether [REDACTED] would (a) be the right person to advise and (b) how to establish his availability?

(note Rob is on leave this week)

Thanks

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Burns, Anna <[anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 05 December 2022 13:47  
**To:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Sutton, Rob <[rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Lawton, Nicola <[nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: sensitive responses re SEEN

Thanks [REDACTED]

I have spoken to [REDACTED] this morning.

1. I have made the recommendation that we want to make *All Company yammer* a broadcast channel only pending a more detailed review by [REDACTED] on how we manage it going forward;
2. This is a DEFRA all group channel we cannot do this unilaterally and would need to get agreement from across the group
3. A meeting has been set up on 16 December but I have agreed with [REDACTED] that this is too late and she is seeking to set something up this week so we can act more quickly.
4. I have also suggested that it would be good to have some legal advice at that meeting, Rob: do you have a recommendation of who we could invite?

Thanks to [REDACTED] for her advice and prompt support. I hope we will be able to action this week pending a more detailed review of options.

Thanks

Anna

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**From:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 05 December 2022 11:13  
**To:** Burns, Anna <[anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Sutton, Rob <[rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Lawton, Nicola <[nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: sensitive responses re SEEN

Hi Anna- the moderation panel group see this as very urgent- specifically getting a 'crisis management' decision on the first option, which should be attainable short-term and could be

reversed if needed, after a full examination of options. Thanks!

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**From:** Burns, Anna <[anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** 02 December 2022 09:18

**To:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Sutton, Rob <[rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Lawton, Nicola <[nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>

**Subject:** RE: sensitive responses re SEEN

Thanks [REDACTED] and Rob

I can confirm that I have reached out to [REDACTED] about how we revise our approach to Yammer. If we were to close down Yammer I understand it would be fairly straightforward to do so. However there is a wider discussion ongoing across DEFRA because of the need to update the software and because it is a DEFRA wide channel I do think we need to agree an approach across the group. I attach a presentation that has been put together by [REDACTED] on behalf of [REDACTED]. Essentially he is proposing two options:

1. Retain Yammer but have it managed by internal comms as a broadcast tool with posts being managed.
2. Disable Yammer

My understanding from [REDACTED] is that [REDACTED] prefers options 1 with provision for additional resource to manage the channel. [REDACTED] has asked for a meeting and nominated myself and you Rob. I also wonder whether it would be helpful to involve a lawyer given some of the complexities of the content.

Given the need for the DEFRA wide approach I don't think the action will be quick, therefore I wonder whether we might want to suspend the channel temporarily, citing the rollout of new software, to give us some breathing space if we think things are getting too heated and based on any legal advice. We would need to manage comms thoughtfully and with a clear narrative. This would of course suspend those channels that are aligned to work based discussion groups as well.

[REDACTED] isn't working today but I will pick this up as a matter of urgency on Monday. Any advice on the urgency of this welcome.

Anna

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**From:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>

**Sent:** 01 December 2022 09:08

**To:** Sutton, Rob <[rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Lawton, Nicola <[nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Burns, Anna <[anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: sensitive responses re SEEN

Thanks very much Rob

Those of us closest to the 'eye of the storm' have a strong sense that the 'whack a mole' feel of inappropriate Yammer escalations is going to carry on – new threads are having to be moderated fairly constantly. It's very resource intensive (not to mention emotional drain and impact on the individuals reporting posts of concern and having their posts reported, and line managers having to take follow-up action)

One thing I would welcome your further intervention around-- In discussions yesterday with moderation panel members we returned to the idea of turning All Company into a broadcast-only channel owned by Comms (so, for example, posts would be submitted in advance and curated in a similar way to Weekly Buzz articles), with commenting turned off. There seems to be

very broad support for this approach. [REDACTED] (DDTS) confirmed on Tuesday that we now have the option to change All Company to 'restricted', a setting which would mean only those with admin rights would be able to start a conversation (ie make an initial post). My suspicion is the main hurdle to doing this would be Comms capacity to take it on— but [REDACTED] is much closer to the detail re future of Yammer (and I suspect Anna you are too)? In any case I know [REDACTED] supportive of this approach.

Restricting All Company would not affect the private channels set up, for example, by individual networks for their communities.

Meanwhile- we've agreed some actions to strengthen the messages 'pinned' at the top of All Company, eg sharing the Principles of Communication front and centre --- HR EDI team are drafting the language so that [REDACTED] can post it asap

Thanks

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**From:** Sutton, Rob <[rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** 01 December 2022 07:15

**To:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Lawton, Nicola <[nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Burns, Anna <[anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** FW: sensitive responses re SEEN

[REDACTED] Firstly, thank you from all of us for picking up these issues. I am very mindful that this is really difficult, emotive and complex and I want to reassure you that if you need more support from Nicky or I please ask. Most important is your health and wellbeing and we will do all we can to support you.

Nicky/ Anna – The email attachments here demonstrate just how difficult this is (if we didn't need any reminding) and that it is not calming. Government/ Defra Legal have advised not to remove whole threads. However, the use of Yammer as a vehicle is at the heart of this and I feel we need our own legal advice re the removal of Yammer. If we took this action based on legal advice we would need to be mindful of wider consequences given Yammer's popularity across Defra Group (and who the ultimate decision maker is).

However, the scale of this is escalating, people are going off sick and the business time absorbed by this (both with people posting comments and us responding and acting) is growing.

Rob

**Rob Sutton**

**Deputy Director – People and Change**

Tel: [REDACTED]

Email: [rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Horizon House, Deanery Road, Bristol, BS1 5AH

(PA: [REDACTED] : [REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk tel: [REDACTED])

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**From:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>

**Sent:** 30 November 2022 15:51

**To:** Sutton, Rob <[rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Lawton, Nicola <[nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** sensitive responses re SEEN

Hi both

Have sent off the attached replies

These may be escalated further so wanted you to be sighted.

James has also just sent on a query he's asked me to respond to on his/Lucy's behalf- attached

Thanks

[REDACTED]

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Manager – [redacted]

People & Change – Strategy, Planning & People – Chief Operating Officer's Directorate




Mobile: [redacted]

Email: [redacted] [@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:[redacted]@environment-agency.gov.uk)


Location: Brampton, Cambridgeshire (working from home for foreseeable future)

**Please note** I work a flexible schedule, with longer hours Mon-Thurs and shorter Fridays (details in my Outlook calendar / out of office message )

Pronouns: [redacted] ([why is this here?](#))

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<b>How to pronounce my name</b> ( <a href="#">phonetic spelling</a> ) <a href="#">Why is this here?</a>	[redacted] [redacted]
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