

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: draft stock replies re complaints re Yammer posts  
**Date:** 22 November 2022 12:16:00

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[REDACTED] said it was due to 'availability' – which I think means [REDACTED] couldn't do 10.30 so tried moving it, only to find [REDACTED] new time slot didn't work for me/[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] also can't make it tomorrow but sending some stuff by correspondence for consideration. [REDACTED] just told me [REDACTED] is planning to be there

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**From:** [REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 22 November 2022 11:59  
**To:** [REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: draft stock replies re complaints re Yammer posts

Do we know why the panel was cancelled [REDACTED]?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Deputy Director – People and Change**

Tel [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk

Horizon House, Deanery Road, Bristol, BS1 5AH

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

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**From:** [REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 22 November 2022 09:43  
**To:** [REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** draft stock replies re complaints re Yammer posts

[REDACTED] see chain below ahead of moderation panel today

You'll have seen [REDACTED] has just changed the timing- now clashes with the session [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] and I are meant to be running for EA-facing HR BPs....

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 22 November 2022 09:37  
**To:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@defra.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@defra.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: Complaints re Yammer posts

Thanks [REDACTED] (and [REDACTED]) - some suggestions below

One overarching question / issue- I expect we will continue to get challenges/ questions about who is making moderation decisions and on what basis... where the replies say 'we' – can we find a way of making transparent who 'we' are? Eg a reference document (a) the makeup of the panel and (b) appropriate routes for escalation... I know this was 'phase 2' but feels urgents

Just checking re panel meeting today- have seen the change of time, bit concerned how to cover as it now clashes with briefing session for HR BPs- any chance of moving it back to 10.30?

Thanks

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@defra.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 22 November 2022 09:14  
**To:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@defra.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: Complaints re Yammer posts

See suggestions below – thank you [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) | [REDACTED]

| EDI Talent and Capability | Defra Group [REDACTED]

**My usual working hours are between 8:30 and 4:30**

**Planned Absences**

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**From:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@defra.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 21 November 2022 15:09

**To:** [REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** FW: Complaints re Yammer posts

Hi both – just bringing this to the top of your inboxes by way of a gentle nudge!

Thanks

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | HR EDI Team | Defra  
group HR | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk

Lancaster House, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7YH

**Annual Leave:**

[<< OLE Object: Picture \(Device Independent Bitmap\) >>](#)

*For resources and information see* [EDI Sharepoint](#)

*To stay connected* [Defra Diversity Twitter](#)

*Please feedback any ideas for improvement to* [REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 18 November 2022 13:38  
**To:** [REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Complaints re Yammer posts

Hi both,

Draft text for responses to complaints – would welcome your views before

circulating to the wider moderation group. I'm conscious today is [REDACTED] non working day and this afternoon is [REDACTED] non working afternoon – but if you could get back to me on Monday it would be good to get it out to the group then.

I have not included a route for follow-up in the first, because I don't want to invite lengthy discussions as to whether or not the network has a right to exist and to promote itself; I have included the offer in the second because these are people whose complaint is that the tenor of the conversation has made them feel unsafe – so I think we should leave the door open for further conversation/reassurance.

### **Complaints that the SEEN network should not be promoted in Defra**

Thank you for your email of (date)

The Sex Equality & Equity Network (SEEN) is a new cross government network, recognised by the Civil Service Inclusive Practice Team, based in Cabinet Office. The network will focus on the protected characteristic of sex, and equality between men and women, from the perspective of the protected characteristic of what are often termed 'gender critical beliefs'. Defra organisations recognise the right of all groups of staff who share a protected belief to form networks.

Gender critical beliefs were recently found by an Employment Appeal Tribunal to fall into the protected characteristic of religion or belief under the Equality Act 2010. This means that people who hold gender critical beliefs are protected against discrimination, and that Defra's Public Sector Equality Duty applies to people who hold gender critical beliefs in the same way it applies to people who share other protected characteristics, including gender reassignment.

Defra organisations are committed to creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive working environment for all our staff. This includes valuing difference and diversity of thought. We are also committed to providing working environments which are safe for all our staff – this applies to trans staff and equally to staff who hold gender critical beliefs. The SEEN network has stated its aims "to encourage a diversity of voices and open and respectful dialogue and tolerance between those with differing beliefs and experiences". There is nothing to suggest that the network poses a threat to the safety of trans colleagues, and the network has not attacked trans colleagues. **not sure this is needed, as we have already specified we want to ensure a safe environment for**

all staff. I agree, suggest deleting the sentence- also think it will potentially antagonise those who **\*feel\*** threatened; also it implies a kind of scrutiny being applied differently to SEEN.

We have reviewed the post which provides information about the network and see no grounds to remove it, as it does not breach any current policy or guidance.

We will continue to work with all diversity networks to help fulfil our commitment to provide a safe and inclusive working environment for all.

Suggested rewording these last couple of sentences to more directly address the call for removal and how we've applied guidance; and alluding to ongoing work to foster good relations across protected groups eg through liaison with all networks....

### **Complaints about the tenor of the conversation on Yammer**

Thank you for your email of (date)

We are aware of the Yammer conversation to which you refer, and have removed some of the posts which clearly breach relevant codes for yammer use and codes of conduct. [Need to update first sentence if go ahead with removing entire thread] We have now issued Communications Principles to amplify and underline our expectation that communications in all Defra platforms should be conducted in a professional and respectful manner. A copy is attached for your information (*attach copy for relevant organisation group* [add link(s) – EA version now here [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Employee Networks - Principles of Communication EA Nov 2022- Final.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)]). Future moderation of yammer posts, and indeed all communications channels in Defra group, will be conducted against these principles.

Recognising that the subject matter of this conversation is emotive, our HR Director issued [this post](#) in an effort to remind staff that communications must be respectful, professional and appropriate for the workplace. However, the conversation on yammer continued to escalate and ~~so we closed down the thread~~ **the thread was** therefore **closed**. [*if relevant by the time the emails go out: Having reflected further, and in your light of the concerns raised by you and others, we have now decided to remove the entire thread*]

Please rest assured that all Defra organisations strive to create a diverse and inclusive workplace, that values difference and diversity of thought. We are committed to ensuring that all our staff feel safe in the workplace, and will continue our work to promote respect at work.

If you would like to discuss this further please do get in touch with me or alternatively contact (*escalation route*).

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | HR EDI Team | Defra  
group HR | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

[REDACTED] [@defra.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk)

Lancaster House, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7YH

**Annual Leave:**

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**Please feedback any ideas for improvement to** [REDACTED] [@defra.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk)

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