

**From:** [Chief Executive Office](#)  
**To:** [Burns, Anna](#); [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [Chief Executive Office](#)  
**Subject:** RE: SEEN Network  
**Date:** 10 November 2022 11:23:28  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Thanks [REDACTED] I already had this but it's good to keep sharing info just in case.  
We had a call with the LGBT+ network this morning and that went pretty well. James got two questions on this, one which was pretty angry that this network was allowed to exist. He answered diplomatically, stating that the network was allowed to exist as being gender critical is a protected characteristic and that was number 10's decision, and the most important thing we can do right now is look at how we can learn to understand and speak to each other respectfully. It went down pretty well, with the network even asking James for advice on how to engage with the SEEN network diplomatically. Following that call, I'm confident that if other staff challenge James on this over the coming weeks (including in the All Staff Call on 24<sup>th</sup> November) he is well equipped to respond in that way.

James asked me to pass on his thanks to all the good materials you've been providing us on this topic and to everyone's hard work in the background to try and deal with this as diplomatically as possible.

Best,

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] **to Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive**

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**Environment Agency** | Horizon House, Deanery Road, Bristol, BS1 5TL

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

Pronouns: [REDACTED] | Follow Sir James Bevan on [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [SharePoint](#)

[No need to thank me](#)

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

**Sent:** 10 November 2022 09:58

**To:** [REDACTED] <[@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Chief Executive Office <[Chief.Executive@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Chief.Executive@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: SEEN Network

Nicky has called a meeting this afternoon to discuss this and one of the outcomes I expect is for us to share an update and lines to take with Exec Directors to help them clarify the situation and support individuals as needed.

I will keep you updated

Thanks

Anna

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

**Sent:** 10 November 2022 09:57

**To:** Chief Executive Office <[Chief.Executive@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Chief.Executive@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Burns, Anna <[anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** FW: SEEN Network

Morning all,

Attached are the further lines to take from Defra.

[REDACTED], you may have seen this email as it's gone to James this morning but sending over in case you haven't.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk>

**Sent:** 10 November 2022 09:37

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

**Subject:** FW: SEEN Network

FYI – Some useful lines from [REDACTED] to Directors/CEOs – also helpful that she's set out Defra's position and said that her team are reviewing and moderating the Yammer comments and will take action as required.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@defra.gov.uk>

**Sent:** 10 November 2022 09:10

**To:** DL-DEFRA-PS3-SCS DIRECTORS <DL-PS3-SCSDIRECTORS@defra.gov.uk>; DL-DEFRA-PS3-SCS DIRECTORS GENERAL <DL-PS3-SCSDIRECTORSGENERAL@defra.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@vmd.gov.uk>; Bevan, James <James.Bevan@environment-agency.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]  
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**Subject:** SEEN Network

Dear DGs, CEOs and Directors,

I wanted to draw your attention to a new cross government diversity network that launched this week called SEEN (Sex Equality and Equity Network). This network has been established through the Civil Service Inclusion Practice Team in Cabinet Office and 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 as 'gender critical beliefs'. It will operate alongside all other diversity networks.

A factual yammer thread was posted in Defra on Tuesday announcing the upcoming launch that has subsequently provoked strong reactions from the LGBT+, ally and other communities. The new network is not seeking to challenge the existence, rights or beliefs of any colleagues and has stated it aims to encourage a "diversity of voices and open and respectful dialogue and tolerance between those with differing beliefs and experiences".

The Defra position is clear. We are a fair, inclusive, respectful and professional employer and expect staff to adhere to the standards of behaviour and conduct set out in the Civil Service Code or equivalent. There is no place for harassment, bullying or hatred in the workplace and we ask that everyone expresses their beliefs in an appropriate, respectful and lawful manner. We will not tolerate bullying or harassment of our trans colleagues, and neither will we tolerate bullying and harassment of colleagues who share the protected characteristic of holding gender critical beliefs.

As you'll be aware we have been consulting on a set of principles for how we communicate with

each other, including over social media, that make clear that all communications must be respectful, professional, and appropriate for the workplace. These will be published next week. We need to work together and respect differences of belief (that are protected in law), support open and respectful dialogue, listen to each other and understand each other's perspectives. We will take action when behaviours fall short of these principles. Given this, such was the tone and nature of comments on a subsequent Yammer thread yesterday that I exceptionally took the decision to pause it. Overnight my team have been reviewing and moderating the comments and will take follow up action where appropriate. I will also personally be posting a message on Yammer today to remind all staff of Defra's code of conduct position.

In the interim I have attached lines that should be helpful for engagement and to ensure consistency of approach and messaging on this issue across our group. These lines are to be drawn upon rather than to be circulated. We will be monitoring communications, social media and taking action on inappropriate behaviours from any party.

I hope this provides assurance, however, as ever I remain very happy to discuss.

Regards,

[Redacted] | Defra group HR | [Redacted]

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Mobile: [Redacted]

