



**From: The Permanent Secretary
Mr Will Haire**

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Dr Kevin Pelan
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10 March 2014

Dear Kevin

SDC INQUIRY – PHASE 1

I refer to your letter dated 27 February 2014 in which you advise that the Committee has requested oral evidence from me, in relation to Phase 1 of the above Inquiry, at the meeting to be held on 13 March 2014.

In advance of the meeting the Committee has requested a written briefing which is now attached at Annex A.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will Haire".

WILL HAIRE

WRITTEN BRIEFING PAPER FOR THE COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MEETING ON 13 MARCH 2014

Mr Haire is requested to provide a written briefing outlining what steps he took or instructed his officials to take in an effort to clarify the controversy surrounding the meeting of 16 April 2012. The Committee were particularly interested in the meeting of 28 June 2013 between the Minister and senior officials to discuss the Minister's response to the BBC on the allegations arising from the Spotlight programme. The Committee requested that Mr Haire provide clarification on what issues were discussed at this meeting, and confirmation as to whether the senior officials had advised the Minister that the meeting was with Turkington Holdings Ltd and not with the Glass and Glazing Federation.

What steps I took or instructed officials to take in an effort to clarify the controversy surrounding the meeting of 16 April 2012.

I did not attend the meeting on 16 April 2012 and, whilst I am copied into all submissions etc to the Minister, I do not read all in detail and I was not aware that there were any questions surrounding the meeting at that time.

As the Minister has made clear in his evidence, he made clear his understanding and position, in relation to this meeting, to departmental officials and his Private Office so that the note of the meeting of 16 April, subsequent related correspondence and Assembly Questions referred to the meeting as being with the Glass and Glazing Federation.

I was aware that, following the meeting, the key issue for departmental officials was reviewing with technical advisors the Glass and Glazing Federation Guidelines. Further the NIHE were rightly seen as the organisation which was responsible for decisions on these contracts. I was satisfied that these two issues were the right ones to ensure that any procurement was correct and value for money was being pursued appropriately.

The meeting on 16 April 2012 was also referred to in letters from and to BBC Spotlight in June 2013. However, the Minister still believed at this time that this meeting was with representatives of the Glass and Glazing Federation and officials were not aware of alternative evidence to indicate this was not the case. As the Minister has now advised the Committee in December, it was only recently that he moved from his belief that the representatives at the meeting were representing the interests of the Glass and Glazing Federation.

In relation to the meeting on 28 June 2013 clarification on what issues were discussed at this meeting.

During this period in June there were a series of letters received from BBC Spotlight in relation to the programme they were preparing for transmission. These were on 7th, 20th, 26th, and 27th June 2013. The Minister replied to these letters on 26th (two letters) and 28th June 2013. I believe that the issue of Spotlight's possible programme was discussed with the Minister on a number of occasions, in particular whether he should agree to an on camera interview, but I cannot recall the details of each discussion.

This meeting on 28 June 2013 is not recorded in my diary but I am aware of the copy of the Minister's diary that was forwarded to the Committee on 17 February 2014. I have also had sight of the papers that were forwarded to the Committee on 26 February 2014 in relation to this meeting which indicate to me that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss a response to the Spotlight letter received on 27 June 2013. The Minister's reply to the letter was issued on 28 June 2013 at 16.16 and represents the outcome of this meeting.

Confirmation as to whether the senior officials had advised the Minister that the meeting was with Turkington Holdings Ltd and not with the Glass and Glazing Federation.

The note of the meeting on 16 April 2012 was issued as an official record of this meeting as far back as June 2012. This recorded that the meeting was with representatives of the Glass and Glazing Federation. Subsequent correspondence and Assembly Questions also referred to the meeting as being with the Glass and Glazing Federation. The Minister's letters to Spotlight on 26 June also refer to the meeting as being with the Glass and Glazing Federation. This was clearly the Minister's position since the meeting in April 2012, and had been stated as such and, as the Minister explained to the Committee on 12 December 2013, he still believed at this time that this meeting was with representatives of the Glass and Glazing Federation.