

Chapter 31 – Dr Crawford’s other communications

31.1 One issue of concern that came to light during the course of the Inquiry’s work was the propensity of Dr Crawford, SpAd in DETI and later DFP, to disseminate confidential Government documentation to third parties who were outside of Government and who ought not to have received it.

31.2 By way of example:

- On 6 July 2013, and as mentioned previously, Dr Crawford sent his cousin, Richard Crawford, what, at that time, was only the draft RHI Phase 2 Consultation document that Dr Crawford had received as an annex to Ms Hepper’s 26 June 2013 RHI submission to Minister Foster. The submission, as far as it related to the consultation document, was not cleared until 18 July 2013, after there had been some revisions to the consultation document.¹⁸³⁰ Dr Crawford accepted in his oral evidence to the Inquiry that he was wrong to have sent his cousin the draft consultation document, and apologised for so doing.¹⁸³¹
- On 10 February 2015 Dr Crawford forwarded to a PR company operated by Gareth Robinson, the son of the then First Minister, Peter Robinson, a privileged letter DETI had received from its legal adviser on 23 January 2015 arising from litigation in which DETI was engaged. Dr Crawford told the Inquiry he should not have forwarded the privileged letter, but considered it was unlikely he had consciously done so.¹⁸³²
- On 20 March 2015 Dr Crawford forwarded, again to Gareth Robinson, and for the attention of two of Mr Robinson’s commercial clients, a DECC consultation document that DETI had received a number of days in advance of its publication date.¹⁸³³ Dr Crawford told the Inquiry he should not have sent the consultation document out and he regretted doing it.¹⁸³⁴

31.3 A similar issue arose over the ministerial submission of 8 July 2015, which was an important document in the context of this Inquiry. As previously mentioned, Dr Crawford and Mr Brimstone had received the submission from Mr Cairns by email in the afternoon of 16 July 2015 for “info and input”.¹⁸³⁵ Dr Crawford was the SpAd in DFP at that time.

31.4 Despite the fact that the draft submission of 8 July 2015 was a confidential Government document, and had not been signed off by Minister Bell, Dr Crawford:

- forwarded it by email to his cousin, Richard Crawford, on the evening of 16 July 2015. Dr Crawford’s email to his cousin read “Submission for info”. At the time of receipt of the submission Richard Crawford already had biomass boilers accredited on the NI RHI scheme.¹⁸³⁶ About 15 minutes after sending it to his cousin, Dr Crawford also forwarded

1830 DFE 97307 to 97317; DFE 97366 to 97371; WIT 266013; IND 27257 to 27298; WIT 266010 to 266012

1831 TRA 08172 to 08182

1832 INQ 61110; TRA 09955 to TRA-09960

1833 INQ 61153; TRA-09986

1834 TRA 09994

1835 IND-27555

1836 WIT-266013 to WIT-266045

Mr Cairn’s email, containing the 8 July submission, to Timothy Johnston.¹⁸³⁷ Dr Crawford’s email to Timothy Johnston contained no message from Dr Crawford;¹⁸³⁸

- on 20 July 2015 sent Mr Cairns’ email, and its attachment, to Dr Crawford’s own private email address.¹⁸³⁹ Dr Crawford would later reply to Mr Cairns on 20 July 2015, after he had read the submission. The Inquiry has examined that reply previously;
- on 23 July 2015 forwarded Mr Cairns’ email, attaching the submission, to his sister Joan Gregg for the attention of her husband, Wallace, a farmer who was said to be considering getting a biomass boiler installed. Dr Crawford’s covering email said: “Might find this submission of interest”.¹⁸⁴⁰

31.5 The Inquiry notes that each time Dr Crawford sent the submission to his relatives, he did so by forwarding the email he had received from Mr Cairns. Mr Cairns had originally forwarded to Dr Crawford the email that Mr Cairns had been copied into by Mr Wightman when Mr Wightman lodged the submission with the DETI Private Office. Mr Wightman’s email to DETI Private Office contained the subject “Urgent Cost Control and administrative changes to the NI Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Schemes”, and the list of civil servants receiving the email and submission, in addition to the Private Office, was also visible. This meant that not only did individuals outside of Government receive a copy of a confidential ministerial submission and draft policy document, but they also received the internal Government email communication lodging the submission, which included the list of names of those civil servants who also received the submission.

31.6 Dr Crawford in his oral evidence to the Inquiry, as he had in respect of the 2013 RHI consultation document he sent his cousin, accepted that he should not have sent Richard Crawford the 8 July submission. He said he was wrong to have done so, and apologised for it.¹⁸⁴¹ Equally, Dr Crawford accepted that he should not have sent the submission to his sister for the attention of his brother-in-law, that it was inappropriate for him to have done so and he sincerely regretted having done it.¹⁸⁴²

1837 DOF-35520

1838 TRA-13064 to TRA-13065

1839 IND-27555

1840 DOF-35518

1841 TRA-13058

1842 WIT-21621 to WIT-21622

Findings

185. The Inquiry finds it totally unacceptable that Dr Crawford provided confidential information to external parties, including his family.

