



**Business and Trade
Committee**

Tuesday, 8 September 2026

Rt Hon Jonathan Reynolds MP
Secretary of State
Department of Business, Innovation, Science and Trade

Dear Secretary of State,

Subject: Resignation of Matt Clifford as Chair of ARIA

I write to seek urgent information on the Government's response to the recent controversy around the former Chair of the Advanced Research & Invention Agency (ARIA), Matt Clifford.

Following Mr Clifford's resignation¹, there remain concerns about the Government's reported initial decision to allow Mr Clifford to remain in post² as Chair of ARIA whilst also being appointed to a global lobbying role with Anthropic. Anthropic told the media that an "arrangement" had been reached with BIST on Mr Clifford's relationship with the company.

Notwithstanding Mr Clifford's resignation, this incident raises questions about whether existing governance frameworks are sufficiently rigorous to identify, assess and prevent actual, or perceived, conflicts of interest before appointments are approved. There is a strong public interest in understanding how such a situation arose and what lessons the Government intends to learn from it.

I would be grateful, therefore if you could provide the following information:

1. When did Mr Clifford inform you of his intention to take up a role at Anthropic?
2. Upon announcing his take up of the role at Anthropic, Clifford's new employer said he would "recuse himself from any Anthropic-related business at Aria"³ through an arrangement agreed with BIST. What were the details of this arrangement and what, if any, safeguards did it include to protect against conflict of interest?

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2026/sep/07/architect-uk-ai-policy-quits-anthropic-conflict-of-interest-concerns>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2026/sep/02/architect-of-uks-ai-strategy-joins-anthropic>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2026/sep/07/architect-uk-ai-policy-quits-anthropic-conflict-of-interest-concerns>



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3. What conflict of interest assessment was undertaken by the Department before approval was given for Mr Clifford to combine a senior position at Anthropic with his ongoing role as Chair of ARIA? What criteria were applied in determining that any risks could be adequately mitigated by the Department?
4. What, if any, consideration was given by the Department to the appearance of conflict of interest to Parliament and the public, particularly given Anthropic's significant commercial interests in artificial intelligence?
5. Will the Government publish the relevant assessments, advice and mitigation measures, so that Parliament and the public can understand how the decision was reached?
6. Does the Government intend to review its rules concerning movement between senior public policy roles and major technology companies, especially in strategically important sectors such as artificial intelligence?

It is also disappointing that, as the Select Committee tasked with scrutinising the Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade, we were not informed directly by the Department of Mr Clifford's resignation. I therefore seek your assurance that the Committee will be kept closely updated on the process to appoint the new Chair of ARIA.

I would be grateful for a response **by Friday 11 September**.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP
Chair of the Business and Trade Committee