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Iain Wright MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1 0AA.

21 May 2016

Dear Mr. Wright,

Comments by Peter Kyle

BIS Committee

I write to express my disappointment and astonishment at the comments made by your Committee member Mr Peter Kyle that were reported in the Financial Times on Tuesday evening (a copy of the article is attached for convenience).

My letter to you dated 16 May 2016 was carefully written. It sought perfectly reasonable clarifications from you about various questions I had raised that had been ignored. It also offered again a visit to Shirebrook, so that the Committee can see the exact physical conditions and related practice changes that have already been made that are a significant part of what you have said you are interested in. I have even tried to make that easier by offering use of the helicopter - the swiftest available form of transport.

I have yet to receive a reply to that letter but in the meantime in response Mr Kyle has apparently seen fit to make defamatory comments about me alleging for example "*cowardice*". He also uses unprofessional language that appears intended to intimidate - saying that it is about me "*getting [his] backside on a chair in a room with elected members of parliament and let's take it from there.*". These are a prime example of the aggressive media circus that I have referred to previously. It is not apparent as to whether the comments were made with the approval of the rest of the Committee or not. Please would you confirm?

In addition, he is quoted as saying that the group often travel outside London on fact-finding visits and "*We take up almost every offer that comes our way, ...*" implying that they will not do so now because I have required the Committee to see the Shirebrook premises first.

Yet in your correspondence to me on 3 March 2016 you had already stated "*The Committee noted your invitation to attend a meeting at the company's premises at Shirebrook. It is normal practice for the BIS Committee to meet in public at Westminster and we agreed to adhere to this practice on this occasion.*" So it cannot in reality be any supposed "condition" of attendance at Shirebrook that justifies the stance now, when you had already adopted that position months before. The two statements are inconsistent and disingenuous. Perhaps you could now explain why it was that you were originally not prepared to visit Shirebrook?

Ultimately Mr Kyle's statements demonstrate the heavy handed way that some of these Committees can behave at times and evidence once again that there is very little or no chance of any interview being conducted fairly.

Consequently I would request that Mr Kyle should now do the right thing and have the integrity to stand down or alternatively be removed from this Committee.

In the meantime I must reserve my position to make any appropriate complaints.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Mike Ashley