



House of Commons  
Public Administration Select  
Committee

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# The Honours System

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## Second Report of Session 2012–13

*Volume I: Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence*

*Additional written evidence is contained in Volume II, available on the Committee website at [www.parliament.uk/pasc](http://www.parliament.uk/pasc)*

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## The Public Administration Select Committee (PASC)

The Public Administration Select Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioner for England, which are laid before this House, and matters in connection therewith, and to consider matters relating to the quality and standards of administration provided by civil service departments, and other matters relating to the civil service.

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## Summary

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The award of honours is intended to recognise exceptional achievement and service. While this recognition is greatly valued by the people who receive honours, concerns about the number of people who are honoured for simply “doing the day job”, and the perception that honours are linked to political donations, have threatened the credibility of the system as a whole.

We believe reform is needed in order to increase transparency and public confidence in the honours system.

We believe that no-one should be honoured for simply “doing the day job”, no matter what that job is. Honours should be awarded only for exceptional service above and beyond the call of duty. This would result in a far higher proportion of honours being awarded to people who devote their time to the local community, instead of to politicians, civil servants, and celebrities. There should be no special privileges or quotas for groups of society or certain professions: instead the honours system should be fair and open to all.

We are concerned at the perception that political considerations influence who receives an honour. We recommend that, to ensure public trust, there should be no political direction over and involvement in the award of honours. Instead an independent Honours Commission should be established to select recipients using clear criteria which set out the circumstances in which honours should be awarded. The system should be quicker and more transparent, with set timescales for considering nominations and feedback on unsuccessful nominations.

We also considered the recommendation of the Honours Forfeiture Committee to strip Fred Goodwin, the former Chief Executive of Royal Bank of Scotland, of the knighthood he had been awarded in 2004 for services to banking.

We also recommend that the criteria for forfeiture should be much clearer. The current charge of “bringing the honours system into disrepute” is subjective and should be clarified by a list of actions or behaviour which meet this test.

In the same way that politicians should not be able to influence the award of honours, they should not have any say in decisions to strip people of honours they have already received. The honours forfeiture committee should be replaced by an Independent Forfeiture Committee, chaired by a figure of independent standing, such as a retired high court judge, to consider proposals for forfeiture, acting on evidence and according to clear and expanded criteria including damage to the industry or sector the individual was deemed to have exceptionally served.

These changes would help restore the credibility of the honours system. They would

make it easier to understand why honours are awarded and remove political influence over the process. In this way, we would have an open and independent system which honours those who truly deserve recognition.

# 1 Introduction

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1. The award of an honour is intended to recognise exceptional service to the nation and/or exceptional achievement. In our inquiry we considered why honours are awarded, and the purpose of the system. We took evidence on the levels of public support for, and trust in, the honours system, and considered proposals for reform to increase public understanding and trust.

2. Our inquiry took place in the light of a number of developments in the honours system in recent months.

a) In October 2011 the Prime Minister announced the reintroduction of the British Empire Medal (BEM), to reward “local volunteers who make a real difference to their communities”.<sup>1</sup> The award of the BEM had been discontinued by the then Prime Minister, Sir John Major, in 1993. Sir John said that the distinction between the award of the next higher honour, the Member of the British Empire (MBE) and a BEM had become “increasingly tenuous [and could] no longer be sustained”.<sup>2</sup>

b) The 2012 New Year Honours List was accompanied by adverse publicity surrounding the award of honours to people who had also made donations to political parties.<sup>3</sup>

c) In March 2012 the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a new Honours Committee to consider candidates for honours among MPs, representatives of the devolved Governments, and Parliamentary staff.<sup>4</sup>

d) The most recent prominent development was the recommendation, in January 2012, of the Honours Forfeiture Committee to “cancel and annul” the knighthood awarded in 2004 to Fred Goodwin, the former Chief Executive of the Royal Bank of Scotland.<sup>5</sup>

3. This Report builds on the work of our predecessor committee, the Public Administration Select Committee in the 2001-2005 Parliament, which recommended radical reform of the honours system in its Fifth Report of the 2003-04 Session, *A Matter Of Honour: Reforming the Honours System*.<sup>6</sup> In its response, the Government at the time rejected the majority of the Committee’s recommendations, but did commit to some more moderate changes to open up the way that the honours committees operate.<sup>7</sup>

4. After a review of the honours system by Sir Hayden Phillips in 2004, the Government subsequently agreed to report tri-annually to Parliament on the working of the system. We received the most recent tri-annual report in December 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> Cabinet Office, *Government re-introduces the British Empire Medal*, 29 October 2011, [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> HC Deb, 4 March 1993, col 454

<sup>3</sup> “Four Tory donors in honours row”, *The Sunday Times*, 1 January 2012, p 1

<sup>4</sup> Ev 59

<sup>5</sup> The then Prime Minister, Sir John Major, set out the provision for the Queen to “cancel and annul” appointment and awards in “most orders of knighthood” in a written answer (HC Deb, 2 December 1994, col 923W)

<sup>6</sup> Public Administration Select Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2003-04, *A Matter Of Honour: Reforming the Honours System*, HC 212-I

<sup>7</sup> Cabinet Office, *Reform of the Honours System*, Cm 6479, February 2005

5. This inquiry did not consider the honours which are in the personal gift of the Sovereign, the award of military medals or gallantry awards or the award of peerages.

6. Over the course of this inquiry we received forty one memoranda; the vast majority of which was received from Lords Lieutenant, the Queen's representatives in the counties. We also held three evidence sessions, where we heard from commentators on the honours system, Lords Lieutenant, the Head of the Civil Service, Sir Bob Kerslake, and the Chairs of three of the honours committees. We would like to thank all those who contributed to the inquiry.

## 2 The purpose and working of the honours system

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### The history of the honours system

7. The Government states that:

The British honours system is one of the oldest in the world. It has evolved over 650 years as the country has found alternative means of recognising merit, gallantry and service.<sup>8</sup>

This inquiry has focused on the award of honours outside the gift of the Sovereign, such as the Order of Bath which dates back to 1725 and the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George which was established in 1802. These honours were established to recognise state servants in the UK and across the British Empire, and members of the armed forces.<sup>9</sup>

8. The wish to recognise the service and achievement of people from all parts of society led King George V to introduce the Order of the British Empire in 1917. The Order of the British Empire introduced two new levels of the order—Officers and Members—which were not part of the Orders previously in existence, in addition to a lower level medal, the British Empire Medal.<sup>10</sup> Further reforms in the 1960s and in 1993 also sought to increase the proportion of non-state servants in the honours system.<sup>11</sup>

9. Recent Prime Ministers have sought to provide “strategic direction” to the honours system. Tony Blair increased the number of honours awarded to people working in education and the health system, particularly focusing on recognising the work of high-performing head-teachers.<sup>12</sup> More recently, David Cameron “has asked that the vast majority of honours go to individuals who have gone beyond excellence in playing their part to create a Big Society”.<sup>13</sup> The Prime Minister has also pressed for greater recognition to be given to philanthropists who have made a sustained commitment to a cause.<sup>14</sup>

### How the honours system works

10. Honours are awarded twice a year, at New Year and to mark The Queen’s Birthday in June, in the form of three separate lists: the Prime Minister’s List, the Diplomatic Service and Overseas List and the Defence Services List. The Prime Minister’s List is by far the

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<sup>8</sup> “Honours”, *Direct Gov*, [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

<sup>9</sup> Cabinet Office, *Review of the Honours System*, July 2004, p 14

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p 14

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p 6

<sup>13</sup> Ev 54

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

largest of the three, with a limit of 1,300 honours in each honours round, with the Diplomatic List and Defence List containing around 85 and 170 names respectively.

11. The 2004 Phillips Review of the honours system reported that nominations from the public (which the Cabinet Office evidence estimated at some 3,500 annually) accounted for around 45% of those awarded honours in the Prime Minister's List.<sup>15</sup> The remainder of honours recipients were identified by Government departments, each of which have their own systems for identifying suitable candidates for honours and contacting stakeholder organisations for nominations. As an example of the wide net cast for nominations by departments, Sir Hayden Phillips noted that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport requested nominations from some 230 organisations.<sup>16</sup>

12. The Honours and Appointment Secretariat in the Cabinet Office distributes the nominations received to the eight specialist honours committees, which assess the nominations made in a particular subject area, such as health, the economy or sport.<sup>17</sup>

13. The recommendations made by the specialist honours committees are then considered by the Main Honours Committee, chaired by Sir Bob Kerslake, the Head of the Civil Service (as required in the statutes of the Order of the British Empire) with the chairs of each of the specialist committees as members, alongside a small number of senior civil servants. The final recommendations are forwarded to the Prime Minister and then to the Queen for approval.<sup>18</sup>

14. The majority of honours are presented at one of 25 investiture ceremonies held each year by the Queen, or the Prince of Wales on the Queen's behalf. British Empire Medals are awarded by the local Lord Lieutenant, the Queen's representative in the counties, with recipients also invited to a Royal Garden Party.<sup>19</sup> Sir Hayden Phillips described the investiture ceremony as "an important part of the honours process, representing the direct link between the Head of State and the recipient being honoured by his or her country".<sup>20</sup>

## What are honours for?

15. Honours are intended to recognise exceptional service or exceptional achievement.<sup>21</sup> The Association of Lord Lieutenants said that "it is right that the state can recognise valued contributions to our society".<sup>22</sup> John Lidstone, a commentator on the honours system noted that "every country needs to honour by exception people who have done outstanding things in bravery, civilian life or elsewhere".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Q 252, Cabinet Office, *Review of the Honours System*, July 2004, p 19

<sup>16</sup> Cabinet Office, *Review of the Honours System*, July 2004, p 20

<sup>17</sup> "Honours", *Direct Gov*, [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

<sup>18</sup> Q 192 [Richard Tilbrook]

<sup>19</sup> Cabinet Office, *Government re-introduces the British Empire Medal*, 29 October 2011, [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

<sup>20</sup> Cabinet Office, *Review of the Honours System*, July 2004, p 25

<sup>21</sup> Cabinet Office, *Reform of the Honours System*, Cm 6479, February 2005, p 3

<sup>22</sup> Ev w75 [references to Ev wXX are references to written evidence published in the volume of additional written evidence published on the Committee's website]

<sup>23</sup> Q 176

16. Lord Aberdeen, the Lord Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire, commented that recipients of honours, particularly those who have been nominated by their peer group, “feel a great sense of pride in the recognition they receive”.<sup>24</sup> Dione Verulam, Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, commented that this pride was shared by the wider communities, and charities supported by the recipients.<sup>25</sup> A similar point was illustrated by Dame Janet Trotter, the Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire:

I awarded an MBE to an 82 year old last week who was too ill to travel to London/Windsor. 130 members of the local community were present and there was a real sense of individual celebration and community support. This is when the system seems to be recognised as exceptionally worthwhile.<sup>26</sup>

17. One of the most consistent, and repeated concerns raised in our inquiry was the distribution of honours to people who have not fulfilled the criteria of exceptional service or exceptional achievement, and who are simply “doing the day job”. Sir Bob Kerslake stressed that “the Government’s policy remains that the honours system should be entirely based on merit”, and that honours should not be rewarded simply for “doing the day job”.<sup>27</sup> Sir Bob did, however, argue that there are some people who should be recognised in the honours system solely for their day job, as this is merited by their professional achievement, giving the examples of “Nobel prize-winning scientists [or], Oscar-nominated actors” as people who may fall into this category.<sup>28</sup>

**18. The existence of the honours system reflects a wish to recognise and reward the exceptional service and achievement of citizens across the UK. The system has evolved over the last 850 years and it is right that it should continue to do so, to reflect changes in society and respond to public concerns.**

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<sup>24</sup> Ev w9

<sup>25</sup> Ev w9

<sup>26</sup> Ev w28

<sup>27</sup> Ev 50

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3 Increasing public trust in the honours system

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19. Sir Bob Kerslake, the Head of the Civil Service and Chair of the Main Honours Committee, reported high levels of awareness of, and pride in, the honours system among the public, citing Cabinet Office polling data from 2009 that 81% of the public were aware of the honours system, and 71% were proud that it existed.<sup>29</sup> Sir Bob also reported a reduction in the number of people who viewed the honours system as “out-of-date” from 40% in 2007 to 34% in 2009.<sup>30</sup>

20. There remains, however, a certain level of public scepticism about the process of selecting recipients of honours. Witnesses told us that members of the public believed that honours could be “bought” by donating to a political party.<sup>31</sup> Graham Smith, Chief Executive of the pressure group Republic, believed that that the public viewed the honours system as “widely abused”.<sup>32</sup> Sir Bob Kerslake told us that further work was necessary to increase the proportion of people who viewed the honours system as open and fair, from the current figure of 44%.<sup>33</sup>

21. Sir Bob argued, however, that suggestions that honours could be “bought” “demean[ed]” the “ordinary people who have done exceptional service in their communities” and who received the “vast majority of honours”.<sup>34</sup> David Briggs, the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, also urged us not to over-emphasise concerns about trust, arguing that “in the main the public think well of the honours system”.<sup>35</sup> The Lord Lieutenant of Clackmannanshire, George Reid, cautioned however, that:

there is a gap between process and public perception. A substantial number of citizens neither understand the system nor believe that it has anything to do with them.<sup>36</sup>

**22. Our evidence suggested that the perception that honours are linked to donations to political parties is prevalent. It is a serious concern that many members of the public do not view the honours system as open or fair.**

#### Understanding of different honours

23. Sir Hayden Phillips’s 2004 review of the honours system identified a lack of understanding about the series of different orders and awards as one of the factors

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<sup>29</sup> Ev 50

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Q 161, Ev w32

<sup>32</sup> Q 173

<sup>33</sup> Q 254

<sup>34</sup> Q 259

<sup>35</sup> Q 4

<sup>36</sup> Ev w17

contributing to the view that the honours system was “opaque”.<sup>37</sup> The level of honour awarded, from Knight or Dame to BEM, depends in part on whether the impact of the work of the nominee is at national, regional or local level. A knighthood or damehood for example, recognises “pre-eminent contribution ... at a national level”, while an OBE is awarded for a “distinguished regional or county-wide role in any field”, and an MBE recognises outstanding service or achievement “to the community”.<sup>38</sup> Our witnesses were concerned that offering higher honours for work at a national level elevated such work above devotion to the local community.<sup>39</sup>

24. The delineation between local impact, recognised by an MBE, regional impact, recognised by an OBE, and national impact, recognised by a knighthood or damehood also raised issues in the devolved nations. It was argued by Major Alexander R. Trotter, Lord Lieutenant of Berwickshire, that following devolution, people who perform outstanding work in the voluntary sector at the national level in Scotland were awarded MBEs, not OBEs.<sup>40</sup> A similar point was made by Bernard Galton, Director General for Honours in the Welsh Government. He argued that the requirement to demonstrate impact at a national level in order to be eligible to receive the most senior honours penalised people living in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as national level was viewed in terms of the UK rather than in the nations that make up the United Kingdom.<sup>41</sup> Mr Galton added:

If devolution had not taken place, many of the individuals concerned may have been called upon to advise in a UK-wide capacity. Effectively, these individuals are paying the price for devolution; this is clearly unfair.<sup>42</sup>

**25. The evidence also suggests that the devolved nations, and certain English regions, receive a higher proportion of honours than is proportionate for their population size. This highlights the success of devolved bodies in championing nominations for honours, but also raises the danger of unequal treatment of nominations, depending on where in the UK the nominee is from. The high level of influence of the devolved bodies on the honours system also increases the risk of politicisation of the honours system in these regions.**

**26. The different levels of Order of the British Empire reflect the wish to recognise sustained and exceptional achievement and service on a large and a small scale. The inconsistency about how different levels of honours are rewarded, particularly in the devolved nations, adds to a lack of understanding of the honours system. We call on the Cabinet Office to treat work at national level in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as national not regional service or achievement, when considering nominations for honours.**

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<sup>37</sup> Cabinet Office, *Review of the Honours System*, July 2004, p 33

<sup>38</sup> “Honours”, *Direct Gov*, [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

<sup>39</sup> Ev 48, Ev w21

<sup>40</sup> Ev w6

<sup>41</sup> Ev w32

<sup>42</sup> Ev w32

## How honours are awarded

27. Several Lords Lieutenant called for a reduction in the time taken for nominations to be considered, which at present, they argued, contributed to public concerns about the way honours are awarded. The Association of Lord Lieutenants stressed the need “to make the system more agile and responsive to public nominations” and warned that “it can take up to three years for a nominee to be honoured: that is too slow”.<sup>43</sup> Peter Stephen, the Lord Lieutenant of the City of Aberdeen, said:

The time it takes for an honour to be considered and any award to be made is far too long. What is the reasoning for this? It only adds to the mystery and lack of clear process.<sup>44</sup>

Sir Garth Morrison, the Lord Lieutenant of East Lothian, described the nomination papers as going into “what appears to be a black hole from which you hear nothing”, which caused public concern.<sup>45</sup> The Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, the Duchess of Northumberland, suggested that increasing the transparency of the honours system would be the single change which would make the most positive difference to the system.<sup>46</sup>

28. Richard Tilbrook, the Head of the Honours Secretariat at the Cabinet Office, recognised that the honours selection process was “a lengthy process” but said that this was because it was “very robust”, with “all sorts of checks on individuals”.<sup>47</sup> Such checks included, for example, confirming with the Charity Commission that any charitable work cited was for an official charity, or speaking with professional bodies for the nominee’s sector.<sup>48</sup> Sir Bob Kerslake denied that this process was not sufficiently transparent, stating that while discussions about individuals had to be kept private by necessity, “in every other respect, it is an open process”.<sup>49</sup>

**29. There remains a lack of transparency about what happens to nominations once submitted, and why it takes so long to consider a nomination. The system is unclear even to the Queen’s representatives in the counties, the Lords Lieutenant. The length of time taken to consider nominations, and the lack of clarity about the process and why some nominations are successful, make it harder for members of the public to understand why and how honours are awarded. These concerns are not allayed by the speed at which honours are awarded to celebrities and sports stars. Greater clarity about the chances of success when nominating an individual and how the nomination will be considered would increase public understanding and confidence that the honours system recognises the most deserving individuals in each community.**

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<sup>43</sup> Ev w25

<sup>44</sup> Ev w19

<sup>45</sup> Q 92

<sup>46</sup> Ev w24

<sup>47</sup> Q 252

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Q 200

## Honours for “doing the day job”

30. A persistent concern of witnesses during this inquiry was the number of honours awarded to civil servants and other public sector workers, which was seen as rewarding people simply for doing “the day job”. David Briggs, the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, told us that in his view there were “people who get honours because of their job and that is it.”<sup>50</sup>

31. Such concern extended to the level of honours received by senior civil servants: Alistair Darling commented that the “usual suspects” at the top of the civil service received knighthoods, while people working in their communities only received MBEs.<sup>51</sup> Lord Digby Jones, the former Director of the Confederation of British Industry and Minister of State for Trade and Investment, commented that automatic honours to civil servants might have been a remnant of a time when such workers did not receive a market rate salary, but that this was not appropriate now wages had increased.<sup>52</sup>

32. David Lindsay, the Lord Lieutenant of County Down, commented that in the 2012 New Year Honours list, it appeared that only three of the 16 people in County Down who received an honour worked outside the public sector.<sup>53</sup> Mr Lindsay suggested that “while all of those nominated from County Down in this year’s list are probably most deserving”, public sector workers had a much greater chance than others of receiving an honour.<sup>54</sup> Professor Helen Carty, Deputy Lieutenant of Merseyside, argued that it was:

utterly unreasonable that civil servants should have a higher chance of getting an honour than the general public. They are paid to do their job, have security and do not contribute to those who create wealth.<sup>55</sup>

33. The issue of honours being awarded for “doing your day job” went wider than just civil servants. Lord Jones, while praising the emphasis given to education in the honours system under the direction of the then Prime Minister Tony Blair, noted that it was no different in principle from rewarding a civil servant.<sup>56</sup> Graham Smith of the pressure group Republic argued that in the 2012 New Year Honours List, “the knighthoods were almost entirely for people doing their jobs: mathematicians getting it for doing maths; professors getting it for services to scholarship”.<sup>57</sup>

34. Sir Garth Morrison, the Lord Lieutenant of East Lothian contrasted the “well paid” Chief Executives of NHS Trusts, with people in the voluntary and charitable sector who had not been recognised by the honours system.<sup>58</sup> Sir Garth also argued that officials selecting honours recipients applied “a different standard” when considering state servants

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<sup>50</sup> Q 69

<sup>51</sup> Q 111

<sup>52</sup> Q 118

<sup>53</sup> Ev w2

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Ev w13

<sup>56</sup> Q 147

<sup>57</sup> Q 160

<sup>58</sup> Q 6

compared to nominations of people who volunteered in their local community.<sup>59</sup> He had found that individuals involved in, for example, their local Scout group, would not be considered for an honour unless they could demonstrate additional other work in their community.<sup>60</sup>

35. The number of honours distributed in the Prime Minister's List is limited to 1,300 in each honours round. Without such limits, Sir Hayden Phillips argued that the "value of recognition [would be] cheapened".<sup>61</sup> As a result of the limit on honours awarded, the award of honours to civil servants and public sector workers has been seen as "crowding out" other candidates for honours. David Briggs, the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire highlighted the low proportion of honours per capita in the North West. He suggested that London and the south east of England were overrepresented in the honours system because "a lot of Government officers receive awards and they tend to be based in the south east of England".<sup>62</sup>

36. Sir Bob Kerslake, the Head of the Civil Service and Chair of the Main Honours Committee, insisted that the "policy of getting an honour just for doing the day job has gone".<sup>63</sup> This point was reinforced by Dame Mary Marsh, the Chair of the State Honours Committee, which is responsible for honours to civil servants, who told us that "there is absolutely no automaticity at any level".<sup>64</sup> The proportion of honours awarded to "state servants" fell from 38% in 1955 to 20% in 1992, and then to 18% in 1997 and 15% by 2000.<sup>65</sup> The Committee remains sceptical of this evidence and believes that too many honours are still automatically awarded to senior civil servants.

37. Sir Bob Kerslake insisted that the same criteria applied to Permanent Secretaries in Whitehall departments as to everyone else who was nominated for an honour: "they have to have achieved something that is exceptional in the delivery of their role and/or exceptional in something that they have done beyond their role"; the same principle which applied, he argued, for a surgeon.<sup>66</sup> Sir Bob also added that several Permanent Secretaries had retired without receiving an honour and that it would be possible to have a Cabinet Secretary or Head of the Civil Service who did not have an honour.<sup>67</sup>

38. Sir Bob further explained that there were automatic knighthoods and damehoods conferred on High Court Judges on appointment, arguing that such a provision was necessary to avoid a situation in which the judicial work of some judges was rewarded with an honour, but not others, which could, he cautioned, lead to the perception that honours were being distributed to reward the "right" judgment.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Q 7

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Cabinet Office, *Review of the Honours System*, July 2004, p 6

<sup>62</sup> Q 68

<sup>63</sup> Q 203

<sup>64</sup> Q 205

<sup>65</sup> Cabinet Office, *Review of the Honours System*, July 2004, p 14

<sup>66</sup> Q 281

<sup>67</sup> Qq 284, 285

<sup>68</sup> Ev 50

39. We believe that no-one should be honoured for simply “doing the day job”, no matter what that job is. In particular, honours should not be awarded to civil servants or businessmen unless it can be demonstrated that there has been service above and beyond the call of duty. Instead honours should only be awarded for exceptional service to the community or exceptional achievement above and beyond that required in employment. This would result in a far higher proportion of honours being awarded to people who devote their time to their local community, instead of politicians, civil servants, and celebrities. There should be no special privileges or quotas for groups of society or certain professions: the honours system should be fair and open to all. Sir Bob Kerslake’s insistence that there are no automatic honours for senior public servants is not reflected in the number of honours that have been awarded to civil servants and public sector workers in recent honours lists. Indeed, one such recent example of an apparently automatic honour was the knighthood received by Sir Jeremy Heywood the day before he took up the role of Cabinet Secretary; Lord O’Donnell had no less than four honours as a result of his Civil Service career.

40. It is distasteful and damaging for people who already command vast personal remuneration packages for doing their job, to also be honoured for simply being at the helm of large companies. This must stop. All who get honours must be judged on whether they have done things above and beyond their normal duty, shown extraordinary leadership and shown extraordinary service to the community.

### An honours system open to all?

41. The Lords Lieutenant who provided evidence to us reported that many people felt excluded from the honours system. David Briggs, the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, argued that “a large number of the public are of the view that it [the honours system] is a closed shop and they will not get an honour because they are not posh enough”.<sup>69</sup> George Reid, the Lord Lieutenant of Clackmannanshire, reported that there was “little sense that all citizens have a stake in the process and can contribute to it”.<sup>70</sup>

42. Several Lords Lieutenant also suggested that too many honours were awarded to celebrities rather than volunteers and those who serve their local community.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, Cabinet Office polling data revealed that 38% of the public believed that “celebrities were the most likely to receive an honour”.<sup>72</sup> Graham Smith, of the pressure group Republic, suggested that the award of honours to celebrities “debases the whole system and devalues the awards”.<sup>73</sup>

43. Sir Bob Kerslake emphasised the outreach work by the Cabinet Office, which aimed to make people think “I know somebody I would want to put forward for it”, rather than thinking, “this is not for me; this is stuff I wouldn’t be connected to”.<sup>74</sup> Richard Tilbrook,

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<sup>69</sup> Q 90

<sup>70</sup> Ev w17

<sup>71</sup> Ev w13, ev w25, ev w28

<sup>72</sup> Ev 50

<sup>73</sup> Q 178

<sup>74</sup> Q 202

Head of the Honours and Appointments Secretariat at the Cabinet Office, provided further details of the outreach activities being done to promote nominations from groups and parts of the country under-represented in the honours list, referring to a national campaign with the Women’s Institute, a visit to Sheffield and work with ethnic minority communities.<sup>75</sup> Mr Tilbrook added that the outreach work was aimed at ensuring that the nominations received by the selection committees “accurately represent the population at large”. He emphasised, however, that once the nominations were with the Honours Committees, decisions were made “absolutely on merit”.<sup>76</sup>

**44. The perception that the honours system is not open to everyone may deter people from nominating deserving candidates for honours. We welcome the outreach work carried out by the Cabinet Office to correct this view, and believe that the changes we have recommended to increase transparency in the honours system will also help to correct this public perception.**

### Honours and political donations

45. Witnesses reported a public perception that honours could be “bought” by donations to a political party. George Reid, the Lord Lieutenant of Clackmannanshire, stated that, despite the efforts to separate political donations from honours, “a substantial number of citizens believe there is a link between gifts to political parties and the award of an honour”.<sup>77</sup>

46. The 2012 New Year Honours List awarded a knighthood to a noted philanthropist, Sir Paul Ruddock. The decision received considerable media coverage, which highlighted Sir Paul’s past donations to the Conservative Party. Sir Paul provided written evidence to this inquiry which suggested ways to dispel the suggestion of a link between honours and political donations, particularly through the publication of longer citations in the honours list:

I would recommend that more information is included in the New Year Honours List to explain the reasons as to why individuals are being honoured. In my own case, specific details of my contribution to cultural institutions in the UK may have served to dispel the notion that the award was related to political donations.<sup>78</sup>

Sir Paul added:

Fundamentally, the honours system serves a purpose—to recognise individuals for their significant contributions to the society of this country. The more open and transparent the system is as to why these honours are granted, the greater the system will be respected and valued.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Q 200

<sup>76</sup> Q 201

<sup>77</sup> Ev w18

<sup>78</sup> Ev w3

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

47. There was widespread agreement among our witnesses that there needed to be longer citations setting out why an honour has been awarded. It was argued that doing so would not only help to make clear that a party political donation had not influenced the award of an honour, but would also encourage more people to nominate others to receive honours.<sup>80</sup> John Lidstone, a commentator on the honours system, noted that:

If you read any citation for a VC, an MC or any of those bravery awards, it runs sometimes to 150 words, whereas if you read most of these MBEs, OBEs, CBEs, KBEs, the citation is about four words.<sup>81</sup>

48. Sir Bob Kerslake agreed that the Honours Secretariat should consider the use of longer citations.<sup>82</sup> He also insisted that making a donation to a political party would not increase the chance of getting an honour, but that it would be unreasonable to exclude donors to political parties from consideration for honours “when they might have achieved something very exceptional in another field”.<sup>83</sup>

**49. The perception that honours can be “bought” is a significant threat to the credibility of the honours system. It has even been reported that it is possible to pay a consultancy firm which claims it can “significantly increase” the chances of obtaining an honour.<sup>84</sup> The brevity of the citations in the honours lists, and the lack of accompanying information to explain why an honour has been awarded, does not help to counter concerns that honours have been awarded as a result of making a donation to political parties. We recommend that longer citations be published for all honours at the level of CBE and above in the 2013 New Year Honours List and all future honours lists.**

## Rewarding philanthropy through the honours system

50. Graham Smith questioned the priority given in the honours system to rewarding philanthropists, arguing that simply donating a large sum of money to a charity, if you are very wealthy, should not be sufficient to secure an honour. Mr Smith questioned whether large donations by multi-millionaires were more deserving of a knighthood than smaller donations by less-wealthy individuals, particularly if those smaller donations represented a greater proportion of the donor’s income or wealth.<sup>85</sup>

51. The Lords Lieutenant reported contrasting views on the recognition of philanthropy in the honours system. Dr Monica Main, the Lord Lieutenant of Sutherland, argued that “there should be no weighting towards philanthropy as only the very rich can indulge in this pastime”.<sup>86</sup> Dione Verulam, the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, however, argued for

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<sup>80</sup> Ev w5, Ev w25, Ev w28, Ev 58, Q3 [David Briggs]

<sup>81</sup> Q 177

<sup>82</sup> Q 256

<sup>83</sup> Q 255

<sup>84</sup> “Lord chairs ‘cash for honours’ firm”, *The Times*, 15 January 2012, p 9

<sup>85</sup> Q 163

<sup>86</sup> Ev w8

greater weight to be placed on philanthropy, arguing that doing so would recognise the generosity of the donor, and encourage further donations.<sup>87</sup>

52. Dame Mary Marsh, Chair of the Philanthropy Honours Committee, insisted that to be rewarded by the honours system, philanthropists had to have given “time, commitment and sustained engagement with their particular cause [...] and have made a significant difference through their philanthropy”.<sup>88</sup> She added:

We are not putting people into the pool simply because they have given a load of money to a particular charity once.<sup>89</sup>

Sir John Parker insisted that the Philanthropy Committee was “very clear that no one should be capable of buying an honour”.<sup>90</sup>

**53. It is right that the commitment of philanthropists who donate large sums of money to charities over a sustained period of time should be recognised in the honours system, if this is accompanied with a sustained donation of time and energy. Honours should also be awarded to recognise the contribution of those who donate time but not money to their local communities.**

## The Lords Lieutenant and the honours system

54. We heard that the role of the local Lord Lieutenant in the honours system varied depending on the part of the UK, with a very limited role for Lords Lieutenant in Scotland. While all Lords Lieutenant we heard from spoke of their active role in explaining to local communities how the honours system worked and encouraging nominations, their role in considering nominations was, for some, “extremely limited”, and much less than the public perceived.<sup>91</sup>

55. Sir Garth Morrison, the Lord Lieutenant of East Lothian, said he had only been consulted once about a nomination for an honour in his lieutenancy in his 11 years in the role. He viewed this as an “inadequate use” of the intelligence of local Lords Lieutenant and their deputies, whose job it is to be aware of what is happening in their local area.<sup>92</sup> Sir Garth reported that frustration among Lords Lieutenant about their limited role in the honours system was common.<sup>93</sup>

56. Sir Garth added that the only notice a Lord Lieutenant would receive would consist of a list of the names of local recipients, given in confidence, four or five days before the publication of an honours list. He told us that the contents of the list sometimes came “as a slight surprise”, and reported the experience of a fellow Lord Lieutenant who had not been

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<sup>87</sup> Ev w9

<sup>88</sup> Q 254

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Q 258

<sup>91</sup> Qq 20, 21 [Sir Garth Morrison]

<sup>92</sup> Q 22

<sup>93</sup> Q 54

consulted about a local individual nominated for an honour, who was in fact in jail when the award was made.<sup>94</sup> Captain David Younger, the Lord Lieutenant of Tweeddale, concurred that the failure to consult the local Lord Lieutenant had on occasion caused embarrassment.<sup>95</sup>

57. In contrast, David Briggs, the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, said that he, and other Lords Lieutenant in England, had more frequent opportunities to check over the nomination papers for local honours recipients. This role involved checking whether the facts as presented in the nomination were correct and providing further information on the nomination, which was then considered by the Cabinet Office. Mr Briggs told us that he and his deputies went “to some trouble to try to find out whether or not the person who has been nominated merits an award”, and on more than half of the nomination papers he received, he commented that the nominee was not deserving of an honour.<sup>96</sup>

58. As in Scotland, Mr Briggs’s opportunity to comment on nominations was restricted to the nominations that crossed departmental boundaries. This meant, the Association of Lord Lieutenants told us, that local Lieutenants did not “see the full picture”.<sup>97</sup> Mr Briggs told us that he was not consulted on the “vast majority” of local honours nominations, and said that he “would welcome the opportunity for me and my four committees of Deputy Lieutenants around the county to comment on all [civilian] honours within the county”.<sup>98</sup>

59. The Head of the Honours Secretariat, Richard Tilbrook, clarified that, while in England Lords Lieutenant were consulted on every nomination that fell between two or more Honours Committees, the process for consulting Lords Lieutenant in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland was different.<sup>99</sup> There was not, however, a process for consulting Lords Lieutenant on the majority of nominations.

60. Where comments were sought from Lords Lieutenant, the Cabinet Office insisted that they were taken “very seriously indeed”. They did not, however, supersede other comments about a nomination.<sup>100</sup> There was also no support for the suggestion of separate allocations of honours for Lords Lieutenant to distribute, which would be, Sir Bob Kerslake said, a “confusing and odd direction” for the honours system to go in.<sup>101</sup>

**61. The Lords Lieutenant, the Queen’s representatives in the counties, link the monarch and the recipients of honours. Their local knowledge could be crucial in ensuring that the most deserving people in each and every community are suitably recognised in the honours system. It is disappointing that the current method of considering nominations for honours, particularly for candidates in Scotland, has not utilised this**

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<sup>94</sup> Qq 22, 30

<sup>95</sup> Ev w1

<sup>96</sup> Qq 33- 37

<sup>97</sup> Ev w25

<sup>98</sup> Q 23

<sup>99</sup> Qq 262, 268

<sup>100</sup> Q 262

<sup>101</sup> Q 267

**opportunity fully. We recommend that each Lord Lieutenant has the opportunity to consider and comment on all nominations for an honour within his or her lieutenancy.**

## Removing the political direction of the honours system

62. The Cabinet Office stated in its 2008 report on the operation of the honours system that:

Notwithstanding the title of the largest of the Honours Lists, the Prime Minister does not play an active role in the honours process. But, in line with past practice, the Prime Minister gives strategic guidance to the honours committees as to the Government’s priorities for honours.<sup>102</sup>

63. The right of the Prime Minister to set a strategic direction for the honours system, for example by supporting honours for people involved in building the “Big Society”, was questioned by several witnesses. Mr Lidstone did not think that any political direction should be placed on the honours system.<sup>103</sup> Alexander Matheson, the Lord Lieutenant of the Western Isles, commented that, despite attempts to depoliticise the honours system, it was “still the case that the public view [it] as still being very much under the control of the political system”.<sup>104</sup>

64. Sir Bob Kerslake described the Prime Minister’s direction that “the vast majority of honours [should] go to individuals who have gone beyond excellence in playing their part to create a Big Society” as the exercise of his “right to give a view on policy issues relating to the way the honours system works”.<sup>105</sup> This strategic direction was not, however, he insisted about rewarding people who supported a specific Government policy, but instead rewarding people who had made a contribution to their community.<sup>106</sup> Sir Bob added that he did not view the strategic role of the Prime Minister in the honours system to pose a risk of politicisation of the system. He suggested that it would have been a problem if the Prime Minister was “taking decisions on individuals related to politics”; a role which the current Prime Minister, and his two immediate predecessors had declined.<sup>107</sup>

65. Graham Smith, Chief Executive of the campaign group Republic, recommended removing the Government from any role in the honours system, and instead establishing an independent committee to select honours recipients. This committee, he argued, should be governed by rules set by a cross-party parliamentary committee, independent of Government influence.<sup>108</sup>

66. Our predecessor Committee, the Public Administration Select Committee in the 2001-2005 Parliament, recommended that:

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<sup>102</sup> Cabinet Office, *Three years of operation of the reformed honours system*, 2008, p 4

<sup>103</sup> Q 170

<sup>104</sup> Ev w15

<sup>105</sup> Ev 5, Q 273

<sup>106</sup> Q 274

<sup>107</sup> Q 277, Cabinet Office, *Three years of operation of the reformed honours system*, 2008, p 3

<sup>108</sup> Q 160

the honours selection committees should be replaced by an Honours Commission, which would take over from ministers the task of making recommendations to the Queen for honours. It should be established by statute, following the precedent of the Electoral Commission.<sup>109</sup>

67. The Committee's recommendation was rejected by the then Government, which argued that planned changes to the honours committees would "bring about real improvements in transparency and accountability", and would do so more cost-effectively, and more quickly than the creation of a commission.<sup>110</sup> In his 2004 review of the honours system, Sir Hayden Phillips rejected the proposal to create an independent commission to consider honours nominations as neither "necessary or desirable".<sup>111</sup> He argued that the membership of an independent commission would not vary from that of the Main Honours Committee.<sup>112</sup>

**68. The honours system should be free of political influence. We recommend the removal of the Prime Minister's role in providing strategic direction for the honours system, and the renaming of the "Prime Minister's List". Instead the Government should establish an Independent Honours Commission to oversee the honours system. In 2005 the then Government rejected the recommendation of our predecessor Committee to introduce such a commission, arguing that such an overhaul of the system was not necessary, as plans to reform the membership of the honours committees would improve accountability and transparency in the system. Seven years on, such improvements have been marginal. The creation of an Independent Honours Commission would restore the character and integrity of the honours system.**

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<sup>109</sup> Public Administration Select Committee, *A Matter Of Honour: Reforming the Honours System*, para 168

<sup>110</sup> Cabinet Office, *Reform of the Honours System*, Cm 6479, February 2005, p 5-6

<sup>111</sup> Cabinet Office, *Review of the Honours System*, July 2004, p 37

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

## 4 The reintroduction of the British Empire Medal, and the term “Empire”

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69. In October 2011, the Prime Minister announced the reintroduction of the British Empire Medal (BEM) for between 270 to 300 “local volunteers who make a real difference to their communities” in each honours round. The award of the BEM had been discontinued by the then Prime Minister, Sir John Major, in 1993. Sir John said that the distinction between the award of a Member of the British Empire and a BEM had become “increasingly tenuous [and could] no longer be sustained”.<sup>113</sup>

70. Several Lords Lieutenant supported the reintroduction of the BEM and the intention to recognise contributions that are not of a level that would normally receive an MBE.<sup>114</sup> Colonel Martin Amlot, a Deputy Lieutenant of Merseyside, commented that the withdrawal of the BEM in 1993 was “well intentioned but ill-advised” and “resulted in large numbers of members of the community being disenfranchised”.<sup>115</sup> Mr Clark, the Lord Lieutenant of Renfrewshire, described the reintroduction of the BEM as the “best part” of the honours system in recent time, and called for more than the current limit of 300 to be distributed in each honours round.<sup>116</sup>

71. The reintroduction of the BEM prompted a wider discussion on the use of the word “Empire” in the honours system. We heard mixed evidence suggesting that the word was outdated. Alistair Darling told us:

We do not have one [an empire]. In some way we are in a difficult position. We are making someone a Commander of the British Empire and we are in no position to offer him such a command.<sup>117</sup>

George Reid, the Lord Lieutenant of Clackmannanshire, argued that the use of the word “Empire” was “inappropriate to a post-imperial UK”, and cited the experience of a local resident in his lieutenancy, whose family came from a former colony of the British Empire who had said he would not be able to accept an honour “named after a system his family had fought to abolish”.<sup>118</sup>

72. Lord Jones argued that the word “Empire” posed problems for British businessmen abroad:

You go round the world and somebody says, “So and so is with you. He’s a CBE. What does that stand for?” The moment you say the word “Empire” you wish you

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<sup>113</sup> HC Deb, 4 March 1993, col 454

<sup>114</sup> Q 15, ev w4, ev w5

<sup>115</sup> Ev w11

<sup>116</sup> Ev w5

<sup>117</sup> Q 111

<sup>118</sup> Ev w17

did not have to. At one end you get the opium wars; at another you get some battle for independence. All over it smacks of arrogance.<sup>119</sup>

73. Sir John Parker, the Chair of the Economy Honours Committee, provided a contrasting view, suggesting that in parts of the world, such as China, the history and traditions behind the British honours system added to its value. He argued that

We should not throw tradition over in talking about the words “OBE”, because there is a value in these historic orders and awards.<sup>120</sup>

The Director General for Honours in the Welsh Government, Bernard Galton argued that the negative connotations of the word empire were balanced out by those who felt the term reflected the history of the order.<sup>121</sup>

74. The evidence we received was that only one or two people in the 2012 Birthday Honours round rejected an honour because of the word “Empire”.<sup>122</sup> Graham Smith of the pressure group Republic argued, however, that even if just a minority would not accept an honour because of the word “Empire”, it would be grounds enough to change it.<sup>123</sup>

75. We took evidence on a possible replacement for the term “Empire”. Both Sir Garth Morrison and Mr Briggs told us they would welcome in principle the use of a different term, such as “excellence” to replace the word “Empire”, as recommended by the Public Administration Select Committee in the previous Parliament.<sup>124</sup> Lord Jones recommended keeping the initials of the three orders MBE, OBE and CBE, but altering the title. He thought that the word British should be retained but the other words changed to highlight a more direct link to the monarch, emphasising that the gift is from the Queen, and not the Government.<sup>125</sup> Sir James Cropper, the Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria suggested changing the title of the Order to “The Queen’s Order for Service” or “The Queen’s Commonwealth Order”.<sup>126</sup> The Duchess of Northumberland, the Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, suggested renaming the BEM the “British Citizen Medal”.<sup>127</sup>

76. Richard Tilbrook, the Head of the Honours Secretariat in the Cabinet Office sought to place the title of the Order in context, noting that the Order of the British Empire was founded during a time of Empire in 1917.<sup>128</sup> He also explained that there was a significant obstacle to changing the name of the order:

When the order was established, the statutes made it very clear and the Queen’s grandfather said it was to be “known forever thereafter” as the Order of the British

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<sup>119</sup> Q 112

<sup>120</sup> Q 289

<sup>121</sup> Ev w32

<sup>122</sup> Q 249

<sup>123</sup> Qq 179, 190

<sup>124</sup> Qq 18-19

<sup>125</sup> Q 113

<sup>126</sup> Ev w22

<sup>127</sup> Ev w24

<sup>128</sup> Q 271

Empire and “by no other designation”. What that means in practice is, if you want to change the name of the order, you have to close the order and start a new one.<sup>129</sup>

Mr Tilbrook added that he thought it would be an “odd” time to close the Order of the British Empire, as the country celebrates the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and the upcoming centenary of the Order of the British Empire in 2017.<sup>130</sup>

**77. The reintroduction of the British Empire Medal allows for greater recognition of hundreds of people across the country who devote great time to their communities. Whilst we welcome this, the title of the honour was disliked by some witnesses, because of the connotations of the word “Empire”. We recognise that the title may need to change in the future, but recognise that this is not as straightforward as it would first appear: the name of the Order of the British Empire is enshrined in statute and cannot simply be changed: the Order itself would have to be closed. This would require fresh statutes. In recognition of the existing Order’s proud history and of the service and bravery of its members, we do not recommend any changes ahead of the Order’s centenary in 2017.**

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<sup>129</sup> Q 271

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

## 5 Membership of the Honours Committees

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78. Following the recommendation of the Public Administration Select Committee in the previous Parliament, the names of the specialist honours committees are now published and the independent members are now recruited through open applications in line with Nolan principles. The Cabinet Office emphasised that it sought to recruit “a broad cross-section of members”.<sup>131</sup>

79. Witnesses, however, raised concerns about the number of honours held by members of the honours committees. Mr Lidstone noted that there were 102 honours shared among the 84 people currently listed as members of the honours committees. He argued that this meant there was no “objectivity about any of those committees at all”.<sup>132</sup> Graham Smith suggested that it appeared there was “an elite that awards these titles to members of their own circles and rarely do they get awarded outside of those circles”.<sup>133</sup>

80. Sir Bob Kerslake did not accept that argument. He argued that members of the honours committees were usually not familiar with the names of the people nominated for honours as nominees “often make their impact at a very local level”.<sup>134</sup> Sir Bob also said that while it was not “inevitable” that members of the honours committees would have honours themselves, it was “more likely” as the specialist sub-committees sought members who were “knowledgeable and expert” in their field.<sup>135</sup> There was not, however, an “expectation that you have an honour in order to be on the committees”.<sup>136</sup>

**81. The Government acted on recommendations of our predecessor committee to open up the membership of the honours sub-committees through the public appointments system. The honours committees, however, remain composed of an establishment elite. We recommend that the Cabinet Office, or the new Honours Commission, sets out how it will broaden the range of people who take up roles as independent members of the honours committees.**

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<sup>131</sup> Q 195 [Richard Tilbrook]

<sup>132</sup> Q 160

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Q 204

<sup>135</sup> Q 196

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

## 6 The Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee

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82. On 19 March 2012 the Prime Minister wrote to the Chair of the Committee to inform him of the establishment of a new honours committee—the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee—to consider candidates for honours from the Members and staff of the Westminster Parliament and devolved legislatures, and “the staff of bodies which report to them, such as the National Audit Office, and the Ombudsman, and Party workers”.<sup>137</sup>

83. Sir Bob Kerslake told us that the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee was “set up at the proposal of the current Prime Minister” who was keen to get it “moving quickly”.<sup>138</sup> When asked why there was a need to move quickly, Sir Bob answered somewhat tautologically: “in order to get the new arrangements set up and running”.<sup>139</sup> Sir Bob also added that he had not been involved in discussions with the Prime Minister about the setting up of the new Committee, as they had occurred prior to him taking up the role of Head of the Civil Service in January 2012.<sup>140</sup> We were left without a clear answer as to why there was such a rush to create this new Committee, although Richard Tilbrook, the Head of the Honours Secretariat, informed us that all three main parties had “participated very enthusiastically” in the Committee’s establishment.<sup>141</sup>

**84. We regret that the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee was established without Parliament being consulted. Acting in such a manner will only serve to reduce public confidence in the honours system.**

### Membership

85. The Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee is chaired by the former Conservative Minister and Chairman of the 1922 Committee, Lord Spicer, and the membership comprises the Chief Whips in the Commons of the three main parties and four independent members. These members were not selected through the open process in line with the Nolan principles, because of the rush to establish the new committee.<sup>142</sup>

86. Sir Bob Kerslake insisted that although the Chief Whip of the three main parties had a place on the Committee, they did not have the power to block nominations for party rebels, as they could be overruled by the Committee’s independent members:

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<sup>137</sup> Ev 59

<sup>138</sup> Q 206

<sup>139</sup> Q 208

<sup>140</sup> Q 290

<sup>141</sup> Q 244

<sup>142</sup> Ev 59

there are a majority of independent members on that committee who can express a view. If the whips were saying, “Don’t go for this person because they haven’t toed the line,” there are built-in safeguards.<sup>143</sup>

87. Dame Mary Marsh pointed out that the new Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee would be looking at representatives and staff of the devolved governments, as well as MPs and Westminster staff.<sup>144</sup> The political membership of the Committee, however, does not contain representation from the nationalist parties in Scotland or Wales, or any of the Northern Ireland political parties. The independent membership of the Committee is also entirely Westminster focused, with a former Lord Speaker of the House of Lords, Baroness Hayman, who is also a former Labour MP; the former Cabinet Secretary Lord Butler; Dame Mary Keegan, a former Finance Director at the Treasury; and the Rt Hon Peter Riddell, Director of the think-tank the Institute for Government.<sup>145</sup>

**88. We view the membership of the Chief Whips of the three main parties on the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee as inappropriate. The members of this committee should be elected by members of the House of Commons.**

### Purpose of the committee

89. The Prime Minister’s letter stated that the establishment of the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee marked a change in policy from that of the previous Government:

You will recall that the previous Government had a policy of not recommending honours for political service, although some individuals were honoured for services to Parliament. The Government believes that this policy was wrong. There are many people in politics who demonstrate selfless commitment for the good of the nation. It is right to recognise the best of them.<sup>146</sup>

90. Dame Mary Marsh, Chair of the State Honours Committee, said that the previous system, in which her Committee considered nominations of MPs for honours, had its disadvantages, because the roles of MPs and other Parliamentary staff were very different from those of the civil servants which she described as the “main focus” of her committee’s work. She argued that it was therefore difficult for the State Committee “to be informed enough to make the right judgments” when selecting recipients for honours.<sup>147</sup> Sir Bob Kerslake also emphasised that while “clearly MPs are perhaps the primary group who are considered”, the Committee also considers nominations for members and staff of the Devolved Legislatures, and staff of political parties.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Q 222

<sup>144</sup> Q 225

<sup>145</sup> Ev 59

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Q 213

<sup>148</sup> Q 224, ev59

91. Alistair Darling MP argued against changing the position from that of the previous Government, of which he was a member, suggesting that “at a time when politicians are not held in perhaps the highest regard we should not have a special allocation essentially for MPs”.<sup>149</sup> Lord Aberdeen, the Lord Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire, in evidence produced before the establishment of the new Committee was announced, stated that “many honours still seem to be awarded through the political system to the exclusion of those who are very deserving amongst the general public”.<sup>150</sup> Sir Bob Kerslake did accept that the Committee would not “change people’s attitudes towards politicians” or increase trust in MPs.<sup>151</sup>

92. Sir Bob insisted that the principle behind the establishment of the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee was “exactly the same” as the separate sub-committees already in existence for sport, business and other sectors of society, bringing in “distinct knowledge and expertise from the political field” which he described as an “important part of life in Britain”.<sup>152</sup>

93. The Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee has an allocation of four knighthoods/damehoods, four CBEs, six OBEs, nine MBEs and two BEMs for distribution in each honours round.<sup>153</sup> The allocation of a set of honours for the new Committee to distribute was described by Alistair Darling as “quite wrong”.<sup>154</sup> Sir Bob Kerslake clarified that the allocation was decided on by the Honours Secretariat in the Cabinet Office, and was provisional until an annual allocation is set by the Quinquennial Review of honours, due to begin later in 2012.<sup>155</sup> Sir Bob added that the allocation was “not an absolute number”, but a guide for the Committee “as to potential number of places available”.<sup>156</sup>

94. Sir Bob argued that the test of the system would be whether the people who received honours as a result of the recommendations of the new Committee were judged to be worthy recipients.<sup>157</sup> He added: “I do not think you can judge the system until it has done its work”.<sup>158</sup>

**95. We recommend that there should be no set allocation of honours for the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee. Instead, it should be clear that each recommendation made by the Committee is considered on its merits, in competition with the other nominations in the honours system.**

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<sup>149</sup> Q 145

<sup>150</sup> Ev w9

<sup>151</sup> Q 226

<sup>152</sup> Q 227

<sup>153</sup> Ev 60

<sup>154</sup> Q 144

<sup>155</sup> Q 241, Ev 60

<sup>156</sup> Q 241

<sup>157</sup> Q 211

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

## 7 The Honours Forfeiture Committee

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96. The Honours Forfeiture Committee considers cases where an individual who has been honoured is judged to have brought the honours system into disrepute. The stated examples of ways in which the honours system could be brought into disrepute are:

if the recipient has been found guilty by the courts of a criminal offence and sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more, or

has been censured, struck off etc by the relevant professional or other regulatory authority for action or inaction which was directly relevant to the granting of the honours.<sup>159</sup>

97. There were, Sir Bob told us, on average two or three such cases considered by the Forfeiture Committee each year.<sup>160</sup> When a case for forfeiture is received by the Committee, it is referred to the department which first nominated the individual, to make the case for or against forfeiture, based on the evidence received.<sup>161</sup>

98. The very existence of the Committee was viewed by some of our witnesses as mysterious. The former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Alistair Darling, told us: “having been in Government for 13 years, I had never come across it [the Forfeiture Committee] before”.<sup>162</sup> The way the Committee worked was also criticised by witnesses: Lord Jones told us that “the rule book, transparency and predictability went out of the window”.<sup>163</sup>

### The case of Fred Goodwin

99. In the 2004 Birthday Honours List, a knighthood was awarded to the then Chief Executive of Royal Bank of Scotland, Fred Goodwin, for “services to banking”.<sup>164</sup> It was announced on 31 January 2012 that this knighthood had been “cancelled and annulled”.<sup>165</sup> The decision was made on the advice of the Honours Forfeiture Committee, which, the Government reported, “advised that Fred Goodwin had brought the honours system into disrepute”.<sup>166</sup>

100. Sir Bob Kerslake stressed that the charge of bringing the honours system into disrepute was the “overriding criterion” for forfeiture, as had been the case for many years.<sup>167</sup> This charge had previously been illustrated with two specific examples: the conviction of the recipient of a criminal offence and sentenced to a term of imprisonment

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<sup>159</sup> “Honours”, *Direct Gov*, [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

<sup>160</sup> Q 320

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.* [Richard Tilbrook]

<sup>162</sup> Q 105

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> “Business rewarded in honours list”, *BBC News*, 12 June 2004, [www.bbc.co.uk/news](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news)

<sup>165</sup> “Goodwin Knighthood decision”, *Cabinet Office*, 31 January 2012, [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> Ev 50

of three months or more; or the recipient being censured or struck off by the relevant professional or other regulatory authority for action or inaction which was directly relevant to the granting of the honour. Neither of these criteria applied to Mr Goodwin. Indeed, Alistair Darling reported that as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had resisted calls for Mr Goodwin's knighthood to be forfeited in 2008-09, as he understood the rules to be "that you lost your honour if you had broken the law and gone to jail, or you had been struck off [and] whatever you think of Fred Goodwin, he had not done either of these things".<sup>168</sup> The Association of Lord Lieutenants suggested that the rules on forfeitures might have been "misapplied" in the case of Fred Goodwin.<sup>169</sup>

101. The Cabinet Office stated that "the scale and severity of the impact of [Mr Goodwin's] actions as Chief Executive of Royal Bank of Scotland made this an exceptional case".<sup>170</sup> The definition of Mr Goodwin's forfeiture as "an exceptional case" concerned Mr Darling, who cautioned that:

one of the things people value in this country is the rule of law, due process and predictability. Once you start to depart from that and say this was a one-off case, which it was not because he is not the only person one might want to look at, you bring the entire system into disrepute.<sup>171</sup>

102. Our witnesses suggested that the Cabinet Office stated that Mr Goodwin was an "exceptional case" because of pressure from the media. Mr Darling spoke of the "campaign by a newspaper to remove the knighthood from Fred Goodwin".<sup>172</sup> Lord Jones described the "biggest pressure of all" as the newspaper headlines, which led the Government to go "forward to satisfy the mob".<sup>173</sup>

103. Sir Bob Kerslake, as Chair of the Honours Forfeiture Committee, insisted that while the Committee was aware of the press coverage and concerns of politicians, it did not take into account individual views when considering Mr Goodwin's knighthood.<sup>174</sup> The Cabinet Office said, however, that the "widespread concern about Fred Goodwin's decisions" meant that "the retention of a knighthood for 'services to banking' could not be sustained".<sup>175</sup> Sir Bob also commented that the Committee would have considered other cases for forfeiture, if they "had come forward with the same force" as Mr Goodwin's case.<sup>176</sup>

104. Sir Bob denied that the Honours Forfeiture Committee had been instructed to consider the case of Mr Goodwin, but did say that it "clearly had a signal" from the public and the Prime Minister that the case "could and should be considered by the Forfeiture

<sup>168</sup> Q 126

<sup>169</sup> Ev w25

<sup>170</sup> "Goodwin Knighthood decision", *Cabinet Office*, 31 January 2012, [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

<sup>171</sup> Q 105

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Q 134

<sup>174</sup> Qq 306, 323

<sup>175</sup> "Goodwin Knighthood decision", *Cabinet Office*, 31 January 2012, [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

<sup>176</sup> Q 300

Committee”.<sup>177</sup> Sir Bob added that he had not had direct communication with the Prime Minister before the Honours Forfeiture Committee met, and had no conversation with the Prime Minister about the decision the Committee should reach.<sup>178</sup>

105. The way the forfeiture was handled was criticised by some of our witnesses. Lord Jones suggested that the decision had “the whiff of the village green lynch mob”, and was “nothing more or less than punishment”.<sup>179</sup> By contrast, Sir Bob described the process the Forfeiture Committee went through:

We considered all the issues, the arguments and the information we had. We looked at the extent to which he could have been judged to have brought the honours system into disrepute against the reason why he received an honour in the first place and we felt, on balance, the argument favoured a recommendation that he forfeit his honour. It was a considered and very rigorous process on his individual circumstances and the merits of his individual case.<sup>180</sup>

Sir Bob Kerslake added that it would be “very hard” for the forfeiture committee to operate in public, and stressed the need for such cases to be heard in confidence.<sup>181</sup>

**106. The media storm around Fred Goodwin’s knighthood was one of the reasons why his case was considered by the Forfeiture Committee, and why the decision was made to cancel and annul his knighthood. Mr Goodwin’s actions did not meet the previously defined criteria for forfeiture and calls for his knighthood to be stripped had been rejected by the previous Government. The fact that the criteria for forfeiture were so obscure and narrow was unfortunate. There should be a clear and expanded criteria for the forfeiture of an honour, one of which should be damage to the industry or sector that the individual was originally deemed to have served so exceptionally.**

107. Our evidence from Sir Bob Kerslake revealed that the Forfeiture Committee was reformed after the Fred Goodwin case, following an internal review. The membership of the Forfeiture Committee was amended, having previously been composed solely of senior civil servants: the Cabinet Secretary; the Permanent Secretaries of the Scottish Executive and Home Office; the Treasury Solicitor; and the Head of the Civil Service as Chair. The new Forfeiture Committee still includes the Head of the Civil Service and the Treasury Solicitor, but also has a majority of independent members: the Chair of the specialist Honours Committee which recommended the honour to be forfeited, and the chairs of two other specialist committees unrelated to the case or cases under consideration by the Forfeiture Committee.<sup>182</sup>

108. The review recognised “a tension” between the over-arching criterion for forfeiture of “bringing the honours system into disrepute”, and the specific criteria previously set out, of censure by a professional body, or a prison sentence of more than three months. The more

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<sup>177</sup> Q 302

<sup>178</sup> Qq 303, 304

<sup>179</sup> Q 105

<sup>180</sup> Q 301

<sup>181</sup> Q 311

<sup>182</sup> Ev 50

specific criteria, it was noted, “present only a very small legal risk in the event of a challenge to a Committee decision”, while wider criteria would make a legal challenge more likely.<sup>183</sup>

109. The tension between the narrow objective criteria for forfeiture and the more subjective decision that an individual has brought the honours system into disrepute was central to many of the concerns of our witnesses about how fair the forfeiture process was. It was argued that the circumstances in which their honour might be forfeited were not clear to recipients of honours, such as Fred Goodwin.<sup>184</sup>

110. The review concluded that the Forfeiture Committee “should continue to use ‘bringing the honours system into disrepute’ as its over-arching criterion”, but should also have “the freedom to consider any other case where it might reasonably be argued that an individual has brought the honours system into disrepute”.<sup>185</sup>

**111. The Government’s review of the Forfeiture Committee has not addressed the subjective nature of the criterion for forfeiture of “bringing the honours system into disrepute”. The rules on the forfeiture of honours should set out specifically what kinds of action and behaviour would be considered to bring the honours system into disrepute. The failure to make clear the circumstances in which an honour might be forfeited brings into question the credibility of the entire honours system.**

## The wider impact on the honours system

112. We took evidence on what the decision in the case of Fred Goodwin meant for the honours system more generally, and on the prospect of other people in the banking sector forfeiting their honours. Graham Smith questioned why Fred Goodwin was “singled out without everybody else being subject to the same punishment”.<sup>186</sup> Sir Bob Kerslake also explained that, in his view, the case of Mr Goodwin was different from that of other people with honours in the banking sector, because the knighthood was awarded solely for “services to banking”, whereas others received honours for a variety of reasons.<sup>187</sup>

113. This leads into a wider question on the reasons that honours are awarded. Graham Smith, Chief Executive of the pressure group Republic, which campaigns for an elected monarch, suggested that “one of the big problems with Fred Goodwin is that most people could not really understand why he got the honour in the first place”.<sup>188</sup> He added:

If you are just going to give people these bizarre awards for doing their jobs, and then just term it “services to whatever”, that is where the problem lies. Certainly if you are going to give it for services to banking and you then cause a major collapse in the banking system, clearly there are grounds for revoking that honour. However, if you

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<sup>183</sup> Ev 50

<sup>184</sup> Q 107

<sup>185</sup> Ev 50

<sup>186</sup> Q 183

<sup>187</sup> Q 300

<sup>188</sup> Q 183

just did not award the honour in the first place, that would be a stronger step forward. You would not be faced with that problem.<sup>189</sup>

114. John Lidstone, a commentator on the honours system, argued that the Fred Goodwin situation could have been avoided if the honours committee had, as was the case historically, given honours at the end of the recipient’s career, when “all their dirty linen—if there was any—had been hung out before”.<sup>190</sup>

### An independent Honours Forfeiture Committee?

115. Several witnesses suggested that a legal framework would aid the working of the Forfeiture Committee by avoiding politicisation and increasing transparency. Captain David Younger, the Lord Lieutenant of Tweeddale, said:

The forfeiture must be in the public interest and not be vindictive. It is therefore preferable that it should be dependent upon a greater element of judgement.<sup>191</sup>

Mr Lidstone cautioned that if the Forfeiture Committee “is to have teeth and be respected, it has to have a legal framework within which to make its decisions”.<sup>192</sup>

116. The Association of Lord Lieutenants suggested that a serving Lord Justice of Appeal could have a place as an independent member of the Forfeiture Committee.<sup>193</sup> Alistair Darling recommended making the Forfeiture Committee “independent of the political establishment”, and suggested that it should be chaired by a retired judge.<sup>194</sup> Mr Darling argued that if you did not make the committee independent of the Civil Service, there would be a temptation for civil servants to be guided by what their Ministers would like to see from a political viewpoint.<sup>195</sup>

**117. We recommend that decisions on the forfeiture of honours are placed in independent hands, away from political influence. The Government should establish an independent Honours Forfeiture Committee which should:**

- a) **be chaired by an independent figure, such as a retired high court judge;**
- b) **act on evidence, according to clear and expanded criteria, free of political or media influence;**
- c) **consider representations from the individual who was the subject of the case; and**

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<sup>189</sup> Q 186

<sup>190</sup> Q188

<sup>191</sup> Ev w1

<sup>192</sup> Q 183

<sup>193</sup> Ev w25

<sup>194</sup> Q 137

<sup>195</sup> Q 138

- d) **hear evidence and proceedings in public; as befits British justice. In the case of Fred Goodwin, the confidentiality of the discussions of the Forfeiture Committee merely served to protect those behind the decision and did not prevent Mr Goodwin being subjected to “trial by media”.**

## 8 Conclusion

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118. We are concerned by the relatively low proportion of the public (44%) who feel that the honours system is “open and fair to all”. Despite efforts to change this perception, celebrities and sports stars are viewed as more likely to receive honours than people with years of service to their local communities. There is also still a belief that honours are used to thank donors to political parties, or received automatically at senior levels of the Civil Service. This Report sets out the reforms which we believe are needed to increase transparency and public confidence in the honours system.

119. We believe that it should be easier to understand why and how honours are awarded, and that there should be no political influence on this process. We have therefore called for the introduction of an Independent Honours Commission to select recipients for awards, and an Independent Forfeiture Committee to consider cases in which honours should be revoked. There should be clear and expanded criteria for both the award and forfeiture of honours, and no honour should be awarded simply for “doing the day job”. Such reforms will increase public confidence that honours are awarded to the most deserving recipients and that the honours system is open and fair to all.

## Conclusions and recommendations

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### What are honours for?

1. The existence of the honours system reflects a wish to recognise and reward the exceptional service and achievement of citizens across the UK. The system has evolved over the last 850 years and it is right that it should continue to do so, to reflect changes in society and respond to public concerns. (Paragraph 18)

### Increasing the public trust in the honours system

2. Our evidence suggested that the perception that honours are linked to donations to political parties is prevalent. It is a serious concern that many members of the public do not view the honours system as open or fair. (Paragraph 22)

### Understanding of different honours

3. The evidence also suggests that the devolved nations, and certain English regions, receive a higher proportion of honours than is proportionate for their population size. This highlights the success of devolved bodies in championing nominations for honours, but also raises the danger of unequal treatment of nominations, depending on where in the UK the nominee is from. The high level of influence of the devolved bodies on the honours system also increases the risk of politicisation of the honours system in these regions. (Paragraph 25)
4. The different levels of Order of the British Empire reflect the wish to recognise sustained and exceptional achievement and service on a large and a small scale. The inconsistency about how different levels of honours are rewarded, particularly in the devolved nations, adds to a lack of understanding of the honours system. We call on the Cabinet Office to treat work at national level in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as national not regional service or achievement, when considering nominations for honours. (Paragraph 26)

### How honours are awarded

5. There remains a lack of transparency about what happens to nominations once submitted, and why it takes so long to consider a nomination. The system is unclear even to the Queen's representatives in the counties, the Lords Lieutenant. The length of time taken to consider nominations, and the lack of clarity about the process and why some nominations are successful, make it harder for members of the public to understand why and how honours are awarded. These concerns are not allayed by the speed at which honours are awarded to celebrities and sports stars. Greater clarity about the chances of success when nominating an individual and how the nomination will be considered would increase public understanding and confidence that the honours system recognises the most deserving individuals in each community. (Paragraph 29)

## Honours for “doing the day job”

6. We believe that no-one should be honoured for simply “doing the day job”, no matter what that job is. In particular, honours should not be awarded to civil servants or businessmen unless it can be demonstrated that there has been service above and beyond the call of duty. Instead honours should only be awarded for exceptional service to the community or exceptional achievement above and beyond that required in employment. This would result in a far higher proportion of honours being awarded to people who devote their time to their local community, instead of politicians, civil servants, and celebrities. There should be no special privileges or quotas for groups of society or certain professions: the honours system should be fair and open to all. Sir Bob Kerslake’s insistence that there are no automatic honours for senior public servants is not reflected in the number of honours that have been awarded to civil servants and public sector workers in recent honours lists. Indeed, one such recent example of an apparently automatic honour was the knighthood received by Sir Jeremy Heywood the day before he took up the role of Cabinet Secretary; Lord O’Donnell had no less than four honours as a result of his Civil Service career. (Paragraph 39)
  
7. It is distasteful and damaging for people who already command vast personal remuneration packages for doing their job, to also be honoured for simply being at the helm of large companies. This must stop. All who get honours must be judged on whether they have done things above and beyond their normal duty, shown extraordinary leadership and shown extraordinary service to the community. (Paragraph 40)

## An honours system open to all?

8. The perception that the honours system is not open to everyone may deter people from nominating deserving candidates for honours. We welcome the outreach work carried out by the Cabinet Office to correct this view, and believe that the changes we have recommended to increase transparency in the honours system will also help to correct this public perception. (Paragraph 44)

## Honours and political donations

9. The perception that honours can be “bought” is a significant threat to the credibility of the honours system. It has even been reported that it is possible to pay a consultancy firm which claims it can “significantly increase” the chances of obtaining an honour. The brevity of the citations in the honours lists, and the lack of accompanying information to explain why an honour has been awarded, does not help to counter concerns that honours have been awarded as a result of making a donation to political parties. We recommend that longer citations be published for all honours at the level of CBE and above in the 2013 New Year Honours List and all future honours lists. (Paragraph 49)

### Rewarding philanthropy through the honours system

10. It is right that the commitment of philanthropists who donate large sums of money to charities over a sustained period of time should be recognised in the honours system, if this is accompanied with a sustained donation of time and energy. Honours should also be awarded to recognise the contribution of those who donate time but not money to their local communities. (Paragraph 53)

### The Lords Lieutenant and the honours system

11. The Lords Lieutenant, the Queen’s representatives in the counties, link the monarch and the recipients of honours. Their local knowledge could be crucial in ensuring that the most deserving people in each and every community are suitably recognised in the honours system. It is disappointing that the current method of considering nominations for honours, particularly for candidates in Scotland, has not utilised this opportunity fully. We recommend that each Lord Lieutenant has the opportunity to consider and comment on all nominations for an honour within his or her lieutenancy. (Paragraph 61)

### Removing the political direction of the honours system

12. The honours system should be free of political influence. We recommend the removal of the Prime Minister’s role in providing strategic direction for the honours system, and the renaming of the “Prime Minister’s List”. Instead the Government should establish an Independent Honours Commission to oversee the honours system. In 2005 the then Government rejected the recommendation of our predecessor Committee to introduce such a commission, arguing that such an overhaul of the system was not necessary, as plans to reform the membership of the honours committees would improve accountability and transparency in the system. Seven years on, such improvements have been marginal. The creation of an Independent Honours Commission would restore the character and integrity of the honours system. (Paragraph 68)

### The reintroduction of the British Empire Medal, and the term “Empire”

13. The reintroduction of the British Empire Medal allows for greater recognition of hundreds of people across the country who devote great time to their communities. Whilst we welcome this, the title of the honour was disliked by some witnesses, because of the connotations of the word “Empire”. We recognise that the title may need to change in the future, but recognise that this is not as straightforward as it would first appear: the name of the Order of the British Empire is enshrined in statute and cannot simply be changed: the Order itself would have to be closed. This would require fresh statutes. In recognition of the existing Order’s proud history and of the service and bravery of its members, we do not recommend any changes ahead of the Order’s centenary in 2017. (Paragraph 77)

## Membership of the Honours Committees

14. The Government acted on recommendations of our predecessor committee to open up the membership of the honours sub-committees through the public appointments system. The honours committees, however, remain composed of an establishment elite. We recommend that the Cabinet Office, or the new Honours Commission, sets out how it will broaden the range of people who take up roles as independent members of the honours committees. (Paragraph 81)

## The Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee

15. We regret that the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee was established without Parliament being consulted. Acting in such a manner will only serve to reduce public confidence in the honours system. (Paragraph 84)

## Membership

16. We view the membership of the Chief Whips of the three main parties on the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee as inappropriate. The members of this committee should be elected by members of the House of Commons. (Paragraph 88)

## Purpose of the Committee

17. We recommend that there should be no set allocation of honours for the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee. Instead, it should be clear that each recommendation made by the Committee is considered on its merits, in competition with the other nominations in the honours system. (Paragraph 95)

## The case of Fred Goodwin

18. The media storm around Fred Goodwin's knighthood was one of the reasons why his case was considered by the Forfeiture Committee, and why the decision was made to cancel and annul his knighthood. Mr Goodwin's actions did not meet the previously defined criteria for forfeiture and calls for his knighthood to be stripped had been rejected by the previous Government. The fact that the criteria for forfeiture were so obscure and narrow was unfortunate. There should be a clear and expanded criteria for the forfeiture of an honour, one of which should be damage to the industry or sector that the individual was originally deemed to have served so exceptionally. (Paragraph 106)
19. The Government's review of the Forfeiture Committee has not addressed the subjective nature of the criterion for forfeiture of "bringing the honours system into disrepute". The rules on the forfeiture of honours should set out specifically what kinds of action and behaviour would be considered to bring the honours system into disrepute. The failure to make clear the circumstances in which an honour might be forfeited brings into question the credibility of the entire honours system. (Paragraph 111)

### **An independent Honours Forfeiture Committee?**

20. We recommend that decisions on the forfeiture of honours are placed in independent hands, away from political influence. The Government should establish an independent Honours Forfeiture Committee which should:
- a) be chaired by an independent figure, such as a retired high court judge;
  - b) act on evidence, according to clear and expanded criteria, free of political or media influence;
  - c) consider representations from the individual who was the subject of the case; and
  - d) hear evidence and proceedings in public; as befits British justice. In the case of Fred Goodwin, the confidentiality of the discussions of the Forfeiture Committee merely served to protect those behind the decision and did not prevent Mr Goodwin being subjected to “trial by media”. (Paragraph 117)

# Formal Minutes

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**Tuesday 17 July 2012**

Members present:

Mr Bernard Jenkin, in the Chair

Alun Cairns  
Charlie Elphicke  
Paul Flynn  
Robert Halfon

Kelvin Hopkins  
Greg Mulholland  
Priti Patel

Draft Report (*The Honours System*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Draft Report (*Dishonoured Honours*), proposed by Paul Flynn, brought up and read as follows:

1. The Honours system is both a popular institution and also a dishonoured relic of the past that strengthens class divisions in British Society. It has honourable and dishonourable histories.
2. The beneficiaries of the major awards are the rich, the powerful and the famous. These are ceremonially bestowed by the Queen or Prince Charles. Minor lowly awards are handed unceremoniously by Lord Lieutenants to thousands of people of modest means and humble jobs. Great numbers of people doing splendid voluntary work or who contribute beyond the call of duty are ignored and un-rewarded. The limit of the total of awards is that there is a far greater proportion of aspirant BEMs that are disregarded than the aspirant knights.
3. The present architecture of the honours system institutionalises snobbery and privilege and cements class divisions. Those who are already over-privileged by wealth, birth, fame or fortune are further rewarded with titles and medals.
4. Knighthoods and peerages are freely distributed in abundance to the tax-avoiding comedians, overpaid bankers or dreary political time-servers. Dedicated charity workers who have inspired and innovated are less fortunate. Teachers, local authority workers, nurses or postmen appear amongst the awards with demeaning minor gongs. Michael Winner famously refused to accept an OBE because that was what he said should be offered to a 'toilet cleaner at King's Cross Station'. His comment is accurate. The Honours are distributed, not of meritorious service, but on the ranking of the recipient in the social ladder of snobbery.
5. The dark history includes selling honours from the times of James 1 in 1611 to Lloyd George in the 1920s. Sales were understood by the public. They had a robust honesty. The rich paid for their baubles of vanity. The poor judged their worth by more reliable criteria. To reduce the deficit, a return to the historic precedent should be seriously considered. The vain-glorious should be allowed to contribute to the nation's wealth. Vanity could be a rich source of finance for the nation's coffers.
6. While there is reluctance to accept the full truth, honours are still bought by party donors. There is a transparently untrue pretence that merit is the main criterion for political honours. All major parties have cynically used the honours system to advance their agendas, to dispose of the troublesome, to silence the soothsayers or to reward their lobotomised loyalists. A knighthood is a convenient lollypop to persuade the bed-blockers to vacate their seats. Promotion to the Lords has been used to put the rebellious into places where they can do less harm.
7. Having served on the PASC committee in the last parliament investigating the Cash for Honours scandal, I concluded that the evidence pointed to a causal link between party donations and honours. Unfortunately the evidence that was available was insufficient to establish a formal public charge by the committee.

8. In the 2012 New Year's honours list there was well founded press derision on the obvious links between donations and knighthoods. A disgraced property tycoon and a hedge fund trader who cashed in on the credit crunch were both in the New Year Honours list.

9. Ex-convict Gerald Ronson – the great survivor of the Guinness share-trading scandal – was made a CBE. There was a knighthood for Tory donor Paul Ruddock, who has given more than £500,000 to party coffers since 2003.

10. His firm, Lansdowne Partners, made a staggering £100million from the financial crash by betting that the price of Northern Rock shares would fall and also made millions in a matter of days by predicting the likely slide of other banking shares. The wages of greed are handsome and partly paid in honours.

11. The automatic system of awards among the civil service and the military encourages deference. All will be rewarded in turn if they respect a system of unquestioning obedience to their immediate superiors. There are few rewards for the original thinkers, the pioneers or the innovators. The civil service ethos is based on the supremacy of subservience and the unimportance of being right. The present grey uninspired political and civil service mandarins prove that mediocrity dominates.

12. The monarch has influence over only a handful of gongs. The choices are exercised by the ludicrously unrepresentative Lord Lieutenants and the Honours Committees whose members are weighed down with their own surfeit of medals. The establishment is rewarding itself and reproducing itself in its own image. Lord Lieutenants are chosen from those who are free to do full time work without pay. They appoint groups of deputies from friends of similar rank and social standing. The elite have the power to reward the elite. If the public became aware of the self-serving freemasonry who preside over the distribution of honours they would be rightly angered by the patronising cheat of a fundamentally unfair system.

13. The present Honours System fosters and strengthens a society of ossified class barriers and endemic drabness.

14. At various times from 1611 to 1920s honours have been sold to fill the nation's treasury. The creation of the Order of the British Empire in 1917 reflected the jingoism of a county at war. The Empire celebrated no longer exists. Its legacy is a mixed one. It includes the creation of practical and progressive institutions and major injustices where local population were oppressed and mis-used. For many people of ethnic minority origins the word 'Empire' is tarnished. It would be sensible to replace 'Empire' with 'Excellence' as recommended by a previous PASC committee.

15. The suggestion by one witness that the award should be renamed the British Citizen's Medal would be acceptable to subjects and citizens.

16. John Major and Tony Blair attempted to detoxify the class based system by spreading awards beyond their traditional dominance by the military and civil servants. These were progressive uses of Prime Ministerial directives. David Cameron's plans to use awards to shore up his controversial 'Big Society' policy, described as 'aspirational waffle' by the Archbishop of Canterbury, is less defensible. He also wishes to further reward philanthropists who fill funding gaps resulting from Government 'Big Society' cuts. These changes are likely to distort priorities in favour of those seeking prime ministerial approval, political advancement or philanthropists who make a public show of their generosity. David Cameron's present use of honours to advance party political ends or policies of questionable value is novel in recent times. It will further politicise the honours system and the unpopularity of the 'Big Society' will plunge the honours into disrepute. This is a new abuse of the honours system.

17. Much evidence was heard of the pleasure enjoyed by the recipients of honours. We hear nothing about those whose nominations are repeatedly and mysteriously rejected. They suffer the pangs of perplexed disappointment. Often aspirant candidates are baffled when honours are given to those whose achievements are indistinguishable from those achieved by thousands of their colleagues.

18. Greater transparency is likely to increase public cynicism.

19. A widely respected honours system exists in Wales. The Gorsedd of Bards admits members on the basis of excellence demonstrated by examinations or awarded on the basis of merit in service to the nation of Wales. The awards enjoy public trust because of their history of recognising fairly achievements from all sectors of Welsh life from the sporting arenas to the political assemblies.

20. The unwelcome creation of a new body, the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee to distribute honours to MPs and parliamentary staff has been treated with widespread derision. EDM 137 reads:- That this House believes that the highest honour attainable by a democrat in this country is achieving the office of Member of Parliament; is surprised that without the knowledge or consent of Parliament, a committee has been set up to give four knighthoods and 21 minor honours to hon. Members and other political staff; further believes that this act of self-aggrandisement will be regarded with contempt by the public; and asserts that the committee's dominant membership of chief whips and other establishment figures brands it as an unwelcome instrument of patronage that will expose recipients of awards to ridicule.

21. Twenty five years ago, all Conservative MPs were automatically given knighthood for completing 20 years of services. The rare exception was the MP Robert Adley who was a distinguished but independently minded MP. No Labour MP then accepted honours. The automatic awards were a useful tool for maintaining obedience of backbench MPs to the demand of the Executive. The re-introduction of parliamentary awards is a retrograde step. We urge the abolition of the Parliamentary Honours Committee.

22. It was claimed that honours were not given to those who had simply 'given a load of money to a charity'. Those who give money unselfishly to charity are anonymous. Awards go only to those who allow that charity giving to be made public. The convincing evidence is that large gifts to charity are linked with awards. If it was not so, there were be no potency in the claim that rewarding philanthropists encourages more donations – presumably in the hope of buying gongs. The impression that honours can be bought is a widespread and damaging perception.

23. The present decisions on awards are made by individuals who are not representative of society as a whole. Lord Lieutenants and the Honours Committees should be replaced by independent committees governed by rules set by a cross-party parliamentary committee, independent of Government control. Our predecessor Committee recommended that an Honours Committee should be established following the precedent of the Electoral Commission. This would be a sensible reform and would lead to better informed decisions through improved accountability and transparency.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Chair's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.–(The Chair.)

Amendment proposed, to leave out "Chair's draft Report" and insert "draft Report proposed by Paul Flynn".– (Paul Flynn.)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 2

Paul Flynn  
Kelvin Hopkins

Noes, 4

Alun Cairns  
Charlie Elphicke  
Robert Halfon  
Priti Patel

Main Question put and agreed to.

*Ordered*, That the Chair's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 24 read and agreed to.

A paragraph –(Alun Cairns)–brought up and read as follows: “The evidence also suggests that the devolved nations, and certain English regions, receive a higher proportion of honours than is proportionate for their population size. This highlights the success of devolved bodies in championing nominations for honours, but also raises the danger of unequal treatment of nominations, depending on where in the UK the nominee is from. The high level of influence of the devolved bodies on the honours system also increases the risk of politicisation of the honours system in these regions”

Question put, That the paragraph be read a second time.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 4

Noes, 1

Alun Cairns  
Charlie Elphicke  
Robert Halfon  
Priti Patel

Paul Flynn

Paragraph inserted (now paragraph 25).

Paragraphs 25 to 34 (now paragraphs 26 to 35) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 35 (now paragraph 36) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 36 to 37 (now paragraphs 37 to 38) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 38 (now paragraph 39) read, amended and agreed to.

A paragraph–(Greg Mulholland)–brought up and read as follows: “It is distasteful and damaging for people who already command vast personal remuneration packages for doing their job, to also be honoured for simply being at the helm of large companies. This must stop. All who get honours must be judged on whether they have done things above and beyond their normal duty, shown extraordinary leadership and shown extraordinary service to the community”.

Paragraph read a second time and inserted (now paragraph 40).

Paragraphs 39 to 46 (now paragraphs 41 to 48) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 47 (now paragraph 49) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 48 to 68 (now paragraphs 50 to 70) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 69 (now paragraph 71) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 70 to 74 (now paragraphs 72 to 76) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 75 (now paragraph 77) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 76 to 78 (now paragraphs 78 to 80) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 79 (now paragraph 81) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 80 to 85 (now paragraphs 82 to 87) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 86 (now paragraph 88) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 87 to 102 (now paragraphs 89 to 104) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 103 (now paragraph 105) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 104 (now paragraph 106) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 105 to 112 (now paragraphs 107 to 114) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 113 read, as follows: “The decision to strip Fred Goodwin of his knighthood because of the subsequent events at Royal Bank of Scotland risks establishing a fundamental change in the character of the honours system: that honours could become a temporary award, dependent upon a subjective judgement which may be made about the recipient’s conduct at some date in the future. This opens up the process of forfeiture to political influence and tarnishes the honours system as a whole.”

Paragraph disagreed to.

Paragraphs 114 to 115 (now paragraphs 115 to 116) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 116 (now paragraph 117) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 117 (now paragraph 118) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 118 (now paragraph 119) read, amended and agreed to.

Summary amended and agreed to.

Question proposed, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 5

Noes, 2

Alun Cairns  
Charlie Elphicke  
Robert Halfon  
Greg Mulholland  
Priti Patel

Paul Flynn  
Kelvin Hopkins

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Written evidence, ordered to be reported for publishing on 24 April, 15 and 22 May, 12 June and 3 July, was ordered to be reported to the House for printing with the Report.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 5 September at 10.00 am

## Witnesses

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### Tuesday 24 April 2012

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**David Briggs, MBE, KStJ**, Lord-Lieutenant for Cheshire and **Sir Garth Morrison, KT, CBE, DL**, Lord-Lieutenant for East Lothian

Ev 1

### Tuesday 15 May 2012

**Lord Digby Jones** and **Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP**

Ev 15

**Graham Smith**, Chief Executive, Republic and **John Lidstone**, commentator on the honours system

Ev 23

### Tuesday 22 May 2012

**Sir Bob Kerslake**, Head of the Civil Service and Chair of the Main Honours Committee, **Dame Mary Marsh DBE**, Chair of the State Committee, **Sir John Parker**, Chair of the Economy Committee and **Richard Tillbrook**, Head of Honours and Appointments Secretariat

Ev 31

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2	David Briggs MBE KStJ, Lord-Lieutenant, Cheshire (HS 14)	Ev 49
3	Sir Bob Kerslake, Head of the Civil Service (HS 23)	Ev 50
4	John Lidstone (HS 32)	Ev 58
5	The Prime Minister (HS 34)	Ev 59
6	Correspondence between Chairman of PASC and Sir Bob Kerslake (HS 35)	Ev 60
7	Richard Tillbrook (HS 36)	Ev 61
8	Lord Spicer (HS 38)	Ev 61
9	Supplementary written evidence submitted by John Lidstone (HS 41)	Ev 68

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2 David Lindsay, Lord-Lieutenant, County Down (HS 03)	Ev w2
3 Susan Cunliffe-Lister, Lord-Lieutenant, East Riding of Yorkshire (HS 04)	Ev w3
4 Sir Paul Ruddock (HS 05)	Ev w3
5 Mrs Clare Russell, Lord-Lieutenant, Banffshire (HS 06)	Ev w4
6 Ingrid Roscoe, Lord-Lieutenant, West Yorkshire (HS 07)	Ev w5
7 GWNH Clark, Lord-Lieutenant, Renfrewshire (HS 08)	Ev w5
8 Brigadier Melville Jameson, Lord-Lieutenant, Perth and Kinross (HS 09)	Ev w6
9 Major Alexander R Trotter, Lord-Lieutenant, Berwickshire (HS 10)	Ev w6
10 David Hill (HS 11)	Ev w7
11 Patrick Prenter, Lord-Lieutenant, Midlothian (HS 12)	Ev w8
12 Dr Monica Main, Lord-Lieutenant, Sutherland (HS 13)	Ev w8
13 Dione Verulam, Lord-Lieutenant, Hertfordshire (HS 15)	Ev w9
14 Lord Aberdeen, Lord-Lieutenant, Aberdeenshire (HS 16)	Ev w9
15 Colonel Martin Amlot, OBE DL, Merseyside Honours Nomination Panel (HS 17)	Ev w11
16 Professor Helen Carty DL, Merseyside Honours Nomination Panel (HS 18)	Ev w13
17 Mrs Jean Evans, Merseyside Honours Nomination Panel (HS 19)	Ev w14
18 Alexander Matheson OBE, Lord-Lieutenant, Western Isles (HS 20)	Ev w15
19 Dr Peter Beck, Lord-Lieutenant, South Glamorgan (HS 21)	Ev w16
20 Rt Hon George Reid, Lord-Lieutenant, Clackmannanshire (HS 22)	Ev w17
21 Peter Stephen OStJ MCIBS, Lord-Lieutenant, City of Aberdeen (HS 24)	Ev w19
22 Isobel Brydie MBE, Lord-Lieutenant, West Lothian (HS 25)	Ev w21
23 Mushtaq Ahmad OBE, Lord-Lieutenant, Lanarkshire (HS 26)	Ev w21
24 Sir James Cropper, KCVO, Lord-Lieutenant, Cumbria (HS 27)	Ev w22
25 Anne (MAG) Dunnett, Lord-Lieutenant, Caithness (HS 28)	Ev w24
26 Duchess of Northumberland, Lord-Lieutenant, Northumberland (HS 29)	Ev w24
27 Association of Lord-Lieutenants (HS 30)	Ev w25
28 Dame Janet Trotter, Lord-Lieutenant, Gloucestershire (HS 31)	Ev w28
29 SJ Warrilow MBE (Military) (HS 33)	Ev w29
30 Additional evidence submitted by Association of Lord-Lieutenants (HS 37)	Ev w31
31 Bernard Galton, Director General, People Places and Corporate Services, with responsibility for Honours within the Welsh Government (HS 39)	Ev w32
32 CP Johnston (HS40)	Ev w33

## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

### Session 2012-13

First Special Report	Public Appointments: regulation, recruitment and pay: Government Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report of Session 2010-12	HC 18
Second Special Report	Leadership of change: new arrangements for the roles of the Head of the Civil Service and the Cabinet Secretary: Further Report: Government Response to the Committee's Twenty Third Report of Session 2010-12	HC 313
First Report	The Big Society: Further Report with the Government Response to the Committee's Seventeenth Report of Session 2010-12	HC 98
Second Report	The Honours System	HC 19
Third Report	Business Appointment Rules	HC 404

### Session 2010-12

First Report	Who does UK National Strategy?	HC 435 (HC 713)
Second Report	Government Responses to the Committee's Eighth and Ninth reports of Session 2009-10	HC 150
Third Report	Equitable Life	HC 485 (Cm 7960)
Fourth Report	Pre-appointment hearing for the dual post of First Civil Service Commissioner and Commissioner for Public Appointments	HC 601
Fifth Report	Smaller Government: Shrinking the Quango State	HC 537 (Cm 8044)
Sixth Report	Who Does UK National Strategy? Further Report with the Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2010-11	HC 713
Seventh Report	Smaller Government: What do Ministers do?	HC 530 (HC 1540)
Eighth Report	Cabinet Manual	HC 900 (HC 1127, Cm 8213)
First Special Report	Cabinet Manual: Government Interim Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2010-12	HC 1127
Ninth Report	Pre-appointment hearing for the post of Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman	HC 1220-I
Tenth Report	Remuneration of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman	HC 1350
Eleventh Report	Good Governance and Civil Service Reform: 'End of Term' report on Whitehall plans for structural reform	HC 901 (HC 1746)
Twelfth Report	Government and IT — "a recipe for rip-offs": time for a new approach	HC 715-I (HC 1724)

Thirteenth Report	Change in Government: the agenda for leadership	HC 714 ( <i>HC 1746</i> )
Fourteenth Report	Public Appointments: regulation, recruitment and pay	HC 1389
Fifteenth Report	Smaller Government: What do Ministers do? Further Report	HC 1540 ( <i>HC 1746</i> )
Sixteenth Report	Appointment of the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority	HC 910
Seventeenth Report	The Big Society	HC 902
Eighteenth Report	Change in Government: the agenda for leadership: Further Report, with the Government Responses to the Committee's Eleventh, Thirteenth and Fifteenth Reports of Session 2010-12	HC 1746
Nineteenth Report	Leadership of change: new arrangements for the roles of the Head of the Civil Service and the Cabinet Secretary	HC 1582
Twentieth Report	Government and IT—"a recipe for rip-offs": time for a new approach: Further Report, with the Government response to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2010-12	HC 1724
Twenty First Report	Future oversight of administrative justice: the proposed abolition of the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council	HC 1621
Twenty Second Report	The Prime Minister's adviser on Ministers' interests: independent or not?	HC 1761
Twenty Third Report	Leadership of change: new arrangements for the roles of the Head of the Civil Service and the Cabinet Secretary	HC 1914
Twenty Fourth Report	Strategic thinking in Government	HC 1625



# Oral evidence

## Taken before the Public Administration Committee

on Tuesday 24 April 2012

Members present:

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Chair)

Alun Cairns  
Paul Flynn  
Robert Halfon  
David Heyes

Kelvin Hopkins  
Greg Mulholland  
Priti Patel  
Lindsay Roy

### Examination of Witnesses

*Witnesses:* **Sir Garth Morrison**, KT, CBE, Lord-Lieutenant of East Lothian, and **David Briggs**, MBE, KStJ, Lord-Lieutenant of Cheshire, gave evidence.

**Q1 Chair:** May I welcome our two witnesses to this first session on the honours system? Could I please ask each of you to identify yourselves for the record?

**David Briggs:** I am David Briggs, the Lord-Lieutenant of Cheshire.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I am Garth Morrison, the Lord-Lieutenant of East Lothian.

**Chair:** We are extremely grateful for your appearing before us today. Thank you for your written evidence, which we found extremely helpful.

**Q2 Priti Patel:** Good morning. I would like to start by getting a view from you both in terms of what you think the purpose of the honours system is. Does the system achieve the ultimate purpose?

**David Briggs:** In outline, I think the purpose of the honours system is to award and publicly recognise exceptional service to the community. Largely, it achieves that objective.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I share that view. I think it is a very important means of recognising an extraordinary contribution to the wellbeing of society and the nation. I broadly think it works.

**Q3 Priti Patel:** Both of you have just highlighted the fact you think it is a positive force for British society, but concerns have been raised about public confidence in the system. Are such concerns, in your view, inevitable? How do you think we could go about trying to increase public confidence in the honours system?

**David Briggs:** I suspect there will always be some who lack confidence in the system, but I think there are also things that could be done to improve the situation. First, when people get an honour I would like to see, instead of a two- or three-word citation after their name in the press, a proper citation to show what they have done. I think that would make a significant difference.

I also think two points need to be clear: first, that you cannot buy an honour, and I have no doubt the word “philanthropy” will be used a few times this morning. My view is that in addition to writing a cheque, people who get an honour should have to spend some of their time committing themselves to helping society. The

second thing is that I do not think jobs should automatically bring with them an honour.

**Alun Cairns:** Hear, hear.

**David Briggs:** Basically, you should get an honour for doing more than the day job. It is not just as a right.

**Q4 Priti Patel:** This is about public confidence, but on that point, do you think the public in particular think the decision-making around honours is subjective and not particularly transparent?

**David Briggs:** I do not think we should over-emphasise this, because in the main the public think well of the honours system. Unfortunately, the press inevitably pick up a few exceptional situations—there has been a lot in the press about donations to political parties. Sadly, the way the tabloid press works is those are the ones that get sensationalised. You have to be very careful to make sure that cash does not buy honours.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I think the fact that a Select Committee of the Houses of Parliament is investigating this, not for the first time, and that is known to the public, helps to build confidence in the system. It means that the criteria and processes being used are being scrutinised, and the results made public later.

I have a concern that the fact that the citations are so brief, as Mr Briggs has just said, conveys to the public the impression that an awful lot of honours are being given simply for doing the job for which people are paid.

**Q5 Chair:** Does the public not also feel that it is a bit hit-and-miss? Speaking as a Member of Parliament who has been asked frequently to support applications for honours, it is very perplexing why some honours are handed out and some honours are refused. I can't see any logic to it; don't you think the public share that view?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Sir, you will recall that in my written evidence I did actually reflect on this. Although 1,000 honours are given in a year and the honours committees consider about 1,800, I asked the Cabinet Office last week how many nominations were actually made for honours. That record is not actually kept because they come from so many different

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24 April 2012 Sir Garth Morrison and David Briggs

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sources, but I think there must be several thousand. The sifting of those nominations is done entirely within Government Departments. I think the integrity of the system stands or falls by that process and I wonder just how broadly and widely the criteria that we think important for national honours are applied.

**Q6 Alun Cairns:** The issue that resonated with me both in your written evidence, Mr Briggs and Sir Garth, and your oral comments were the comments that related to giving an honour simply for doing the day job or receiving an honour for simply doing the day job. Why has that come about and can you give us some typical examples that come to mind?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Part of the issue is the citation, to which my colleague here referred. A simply one-liner saying, “For services to the Justice Department” does not actually say anything at all other than that perhaps the person is being honoured for doing a good job in the Justice Department, so I think there is an issue about that.

Long before I got involved as a Lord-Lieutenant I was Chairman of an NHS Trust in Scotland, and in my written evidence I remark on the fact that at the time Ministers thought it was important that the NHS should be recognised and perhaps an OBE to a few Chief Executives would be a good idea, and that was duly done. I just sensed that these were good chaps doing a good job, for which they were really quite well paid. I was personally rather aware of a number of people whom I knew quite well in the voluntary, charitable sector who actually deserved an OBE much more than they did. That is just an example of what I am getting at.

**David Briggs:** I come back to the issue of community service, and voluntary community service in the large, or something over and above what you are paid for. To take the example that Sir Garth used of the Chief Executive of an NHS hospital, clearly they are now reasonably well-remunerated for that service and in order to get an honour they need to do something over and above what they are expected to do and what they are paid to do, or to do the job with considerable excess performance.

**Q7 Alun Cairns:** I certainly agree. Sir Garth, you mentioned an OBE at the beginning, but I think that has been elevated to knighthoods in all too regular cases, I would suggest, since then. Would you support a recommendation from the Committee—should it be the will of the Committee—that it needs to be something over and above the day job in the majority of cases like this?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** If I could give another example of my experience in the voluntary sector, when a nomination for an honour for somebody serving in the Scouts was made in Scotland at the time I was Chief Commissioner; I used to get a telephone call from the HM Inspector of Schools, who was helping the departmental sift of all the nominations. I was fascinated that on two occasions he said to me, “Well, that’s a great guy. He does a super job running Giffnock Scout Group, but what else does he do? Is he involved with his local church or is he involved with the Community Council?” and I said to myself,

“Wait a minute. Here is a chap who is earning a living and having to devote attention to that, and on top of that he’s running a Scout Group.” Yet, somehow, for the Department concerned, the bar was even higher because he was not really worth rating unless he was involved in his church, his Community Council or something like that. I said to myself, “That is actually applying a different standard to those who are simply doing their day job”.

**Q8 Robert Halfon:** Would one way of improving the awarding of honours be to democratise the way honours are awarded? If I could just start off with the committee, the members of the committee are all the great and the good, and most of them are knights themselves. Could the committee itself be an elected committee or a parliamentary committee instead?

**David Briggs:** I don’t have strong views about the make-up of the committee. I have certainly heard no criticism whatsoever of the individuals actually involved in making the decisions.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** It is very helpful that those in the Cabinet Office responsible for honours and awards are in touch with Lord-Lieutenants reasonably regularly. In Scotland we meet every two years and one of their officials comes and talks with us, and shares with us their perception of how things are going. That includes the membership of the honours committees, and I must say it is a very impressive list.

**Q9 Robert Halfon:** But the honours committee is in essence the great and the good and does that not mean they will select the great and the good? Surely it should be opened up to people of all walks of life at least?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Like my colleague here, I have no strong feelings on that. What really matters is the criteria by which the committee are making their assessment as to the suitability of Mr A, Miss B or Mrs C for an honour. The presence of capable, perceptive and objective minds is really pretty important. I would not have any difficulty with broadening that in the manner you suggest.

**Q10 Robert Halfon:** Just to extend the democratisation argument a little further if I may, could you not have a system, as far as the community champions are concerned, that the honours committee could recommend a number of community champions who could then be chosen by the public via the internet or whatever it may be?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** This is interesting because the discussion of the democratisation of the House of Lords is currently on the national agenda, and I just wonder myself what the constituency would be—how widely do you draw it? Perhaps through the internet might be one way of doing it, but the integrity of that process is something I would need to be rather clearer about before I say that it is a good idea.

**David Briggs:** There must be a danger, in that situation, that it becomes politicised, and it is very important that we understand that honours come from the Sovereign, not from the Government.

**Chair:** Mr Flynn—provoked?

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**Q11 Paul Flynn:** I am provoked by that remark. The Sovereign has nothing at all to do with it; she approves the list. Do you know of any occasions when the Sovereign has intervened either for or against?

**David Briggs:** Obviously there are some honours within the Sovereign's grant. Those are not the ones we were talking about today.

**Q12 Paul Flynn:** I know. But generally, the Sovereign is a cipher who approves what is presented to her. I think it would be wrong to blame her or to give her credit if people believe they come from the Sovereign. It is a complete myth, isn't it, that the Queen is sitting there going through and saying, "Well, it should be going to Mrs Jones, not to Mrs Evans". That does not happen.

**David Briggs:** The perception that it is seen not to be a grant from the political system is desirable.

**Q13 Paul Flynn:** Yes, but it is the truth. We deal with reality and not fantasy here; we are living in a world where this place becomes infantilised during times of royal celebration and people behave in a strange way, but we do not have to pursue it here by emphasising or giving new life to another myth. Could I ask you what your role as Lord-Lieutenants is?

**Chair:** Can we come back to that later?

**Paul Flynn:** We will come back to that, but on the politicisation, do you think the system is not politicised at the moment? What percentage of the Lord-Lieutenants would you say are supporters of the Labour Party?

**David Briggs:** I can't possibly answer that question, Sir.

**Chair:** I don't think we can make these people accountable for other Lord-Lieutenants, Mr Flynn.

**Q14 Paul Flynn:** Is it not true that the Lords-Lieutenancy system is highly politicised? I applied for the job description once; I applied for the job and I can give you the details of what happened. I was a steelworker at the time and I asked whether it was absolutely essential, from my studies of the Lord-Lieutenants in my area, to live in a large house in its own grounds. Was it essential to be so rich that you could do a full-time job without a salary? Was it essential to have a military career, as most of them had? To have been a Freemason, to be a gentile, male and white? Or was this just how things had gone? I know things have improved since then but we have a system of Lord-Lieutenants that is hugely politicised and does not represent society. When are we going to get a Lord-Lieutenant who is living in a council house?

**David Briggs:** First, I think this is perhaps the appropriate moment to say that I speak for myself and not for the Association of Lord-Lieutenants. It is something I try hard not to do—to talk about why I became Lord-Lieutenant. Indeed, one does not know why one becomes Lord-Lieutenant; you are invited to take the role, effectively, I accept, by the Prime Minister, not by the Sovereign. If I were to be put on the spot and asked why I got my job, I think it is fair to say that I have done my bit for the voluntary sector.

**Q15 Paul Flynn:** We appreciate that. We have seen your biographies and we realise that you both have distinguished records as people who have served the public in a way. We have had evidence from your association, but would you describe the group of Lord-Lieutenants, as a body, as politically balanced?

**David Briggs:** We try very hard, once we become Lord-Lieutenants, to be apolitical.

**Paul Flynn:** But you are not. You are the great and the good, and the privileged and the wealthy. That is what Lord-Lieutenants are. You exercise influence over the selection in the honours system, don't you? Perhaps you could tell us what that influence is?

**Q16 Chair:** Could we come back to that later? We are going to come to that later, Mr Flynn. I would like to move on to the other questions. I promise you we will let you ask that question. Can I just ask about the BEM? Do you think the reintroduction of the BEM has been good for the credibility of the honours system, or does the overtone of the non-officer class of the BEM undermine its credibility?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I welcome the return of the BEM. I know there is an issue about whether the word "Empire" is appropriate in 2012, but that is a separate issue altogether. I welcome it because I am very conscious that in my own area the height of the bar to get an MBE is very significant. There was one very successful recommendation put in about three years ago, and a year later the chap who delivered the milk to a range of cottages in the countryside quite close to where I live, including my own cottage—I am a farmer—was also put up for an MBE. I am very glad to say he got it, but he was the exception rather than the rule.

It was very difficult to compare the level and quality, and depth of service given by the lady who got the MBE for services to the community of North Berwick and this chap who for many years had been a very important lifeline to a number of old-age pensioners living in rather remote farm cottages, for whom he was perhaps the only link with the outside world for days at a time. It was very difficult to make an effective comparison and in fact the award of the BEM, and increasing the number of awards at MBE and BEM level, is very welcome.

**David Briggs:** I would also welcome it. I think that there are a lot of people who do great work for the local community who are never going to quite get over the bar to receive an MBE but it is quite right that they should be recognised for their outstanding local service. Therefore, I welcome it. I have made some comments about the particular naming of the award in my written evidence.

**Q17 Kelvin Hopkins:** I am just not convinced by this. Why not just convert the BEM into the MBE without any arguments at all? It seems to me to be harking back to the class structure of the past that many of us have been doing so much to try to break down.

**David Briggs:** Indeed, that is what I said in my written evidence. I think there are two problems with the reintroduction of the BEM. The first is that it is associated with class, and we all want to get rid of

that. Secondly, it has the word “Empire” in it, and it is perhaps unfortunate to bring back a new medal with the word “Empire” in it, so were we to rewind the clock, I might call it something different. However, I welcome the concept that there is an award for those who have really made a contribution below the level of MBE.

**Q18 Chair:** So you approve of the recommendation of our predecessor committee that in fact we should replace the word “Empire” with “Excellence”? If it was a British Excellence Medal and an Order of British Excellence, would you approve of that?

**David Briggs:** I have not actually thought of a new terminology, so it would be slightly putting me on the spot to choose that specific word, but I have in principle no objection to that.

**Q19 Chair:** It would be handy not to have to change the letters.

**David Briggs:** Yes.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I recognise the difficulty of the word “Empire” and I just spent three weeks in the United States. For them it is a completely foreign language; they were part of our empire once, they thought. Therefore, the choice of a different word or term would be a good thing, but I have not had an opportunity to think about what it should be.

**Q20 Lindsay Roy:** Can I just explore with you the extent to which people in your local area are aware of the honours system?

**David Briggs:** I think there is a huge percentage of the population who are aware of the system. I do get asked very regularly how one applies for an honour: “How can I nominate somebody for an honour?” I think Lord-Lieutenants do spend a lot of time trying to get the message across that anybody can nominate anybody else, but that is not well enough known.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I spend a fair amount of my time explaining how the system works. In the public mind, the role of the Lord-Lieutenant is far greater than it actually is. I think our role in the system is extremely limited. Having said that, just like my colleague here, I explain to those who ring me up, write to me or write to my clerk asking that a certain name should go forward exactly the process, that it is all available on the internet and say to them, “That is the way you should go ahead. If you think it is appropriate that I should support that I am prepared to look at that.” However, my experience is that the influence of the Lord-Lieutenant as to whether or not an honour should be awarded is very small.

**Q21 Lindsay Roy:** So in essence what you are saying is that there is a reactive role. Is there a proactive role in enhancing awareness? What exactly have you done in your own area to enhance awareness of the honours system and its objectives?

**David Briggs:** In quite a lot of my public speeches, I explain that everybody can nominate people who have done their bit for society for an honour. I do my best to make it more widely known that that is available because I do think some people think it is a closed shop, only for the great and the good, and that,

“They’d never put my brother, uncle, or whatever it is, up for an award”. We try to make it very clear to people that they should nominate people and that there is a very simple system available to do that. That is the most important thing: to tell the people the system exists. We are part of the communication system.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I am not sure how many people live within the Lieutenancy of Cheshire, but in my Lieutenancy the population is about 90,000. I have nine Deputy Lieutenants who support me in my work within the area of East Lothian. We make it our business when we visit particularly community activity—whether it is the local Riding for the Disabled Association, the Princess Royal Trust for Carers or the local Save the Children shop in the village—we have in mind all the time the encouragement of people to submit names for national honours.

**Q22 Lindsay Roy:** You mentioned in your evidence a village in Scotland and I think you felt that your knowledge and expertise was not adequately tapped. Would you like to say a bit more about that?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Every two years the Lord-Lieutenants in Scotland get together in Edinburgh for a meeting to discuss matters relating to our roles. Invariably, the civil servants responsible for the honours system are there. Every time they say, “Oh, yes. When we receive nominations or recommendations for people in your area that do not fit precisely within the scope of one Government Department, we will almost always ask the local Lord-Lieutenant for his view.” I have been a Lord-Lieutenant for 11 years now and I have had one such request; I think inadequate use is made of that opportunity. It is part of my role and that of my deputies who support me to be aware of what is happening in our local Lieutenancy, and I think we are well-placed to provide some intelligence on that. There was one notable occasion four or five years ago where one of our Lord-Lieutenants said that such was the lack of knowledge at head office of the circumstances of a particular individual that they had to wait until he got out of jail before they could make arrangements for the presentation.

**Q23 Lindsay Roy:** So there is huge room for improvement. Mr Briggs, is that your experience too?

**David Briggs:** The one thing I would like to change is at the moment my understanding is that the only nominations for honour that come to the Lord-Lieutenants are those that do not fit neatly into any Government Department, and all the military honours. Let me just park the military ones for a moment. As far as the civilian honours are concerned, I would welcome the opportunity for me and my four committees of Deputy Lieutenants around the county to comment on all honours within the county. The vast majority at the moment do not come across my desk at all.

**Q24 Lindsay Roy:** Finally, are you aware of the detailed reasons around why someone has gained an honour? We have already mentioned what is on the citations, but do you have any additional information?

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**Sir Garth Morrison:** No, except where we have been personally involved in supporting such a recommendation.

**Q25 Lindsay Roy:** Is that something you would welcome?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I would certainly welcome it. I would welcome a dialogue. Threading right through my written evidence is the fact that I do not believe that simple “achievement in my day job” is adequate; there has to be something else—other dimensions. I sense that Lord-Lieutenants are quite well placed to comment on whether the other dimensions are in fact sound or not.

**Lindsay Roy:** So it is the component of additionality you would like to be involved in.

**Q26 Chair:** As a matter of fact, do you have any influence over the award of medals?

**David Briggs:** Only to the extent that if somebody is put forward for an honour and it does not fit neatly into a Government Department, a copy of all the papers is sent to the Lord-Lieutenant for him or her to comment on.

**Q27 Chair:** Does that include for medals as well?

**David Briggs:** Only for knighthoods and for the CBE to the BEM.

**Q28 Paul Flynn:** Could you describe what you do with honours? What is your influence? What ones do you get in? What power do you have to comment on them and to influence them in some way? What is your job?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** As far as the honours system is concerned?

**Paul Flynn:** Yes.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I have already explained that part of my job and that of my deputies is to encourage people to make the appropriate nomination.

**Q29 Paul Flynn:** What power do you have in the awards, in choosing between candidate A and B?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** None at all. We have no locus on that at all. Very often, about four or five days before the announcement of an honours list, Lord-Lieutenants will receive a note from the Cabinet Office showing those in their Lieutenancy who are going to be in the honours list. It is given in confidence.

**Q30 Chair:** Do you ever look at that and think, “Oh, no. They’ve made a mistake”?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Yes, I have to say that sometimes it comes as a slight surprise.

**Q31 Chair:** Did you mention that somebody in your county actually had to be let out of prison?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Not in my county, Chairman, no.

**Q32 Chair:** But it has happened, has it?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** My point is it has happened. It was an anecdote that was related at one of our biannual meetings in Edinburgh during my time as a Lord-Lieutenant. I can’t place it any more accurately.

**Lindsay Roy:** He or she was obviously mentoring a prisoner.

**Q33 Chair:** I can testify that in my own county somebody got an MBE and he was on bail for fraud charges at the same time. Are you expected to be a filter to prevent this sort of thing happening?

**David Briggs:** To some extent we are. Life may be different in Scotland because I think there are some differences in the regional parliaments, but certainly in England if an honour does not fit neatly into a Government Department—this is largely the voluntary service, charity people and generally speaking the people who have been nominated by the public—a copy of all the papers is sent to the Lord-Lieutenant. In Cheshire we have four committees in four different regions in the county of Deputy Lieutenants, to whom I send a copy of the papers. They do some local work first to check that the nomination is true and that the facts as stated in the papers are correct. It is not infrequent that somebody puts up a relative, which they are allowed to do, and I think it is quite important, if someone nominates their son or father, that the facts of the paperwork are checked.

We do go to some trouble to try to find out whether or not the person who has been nominated merits an award and we then comment. There are a couple of paragraphs where the Lord-Lieutenants can make comments. There is a tick box to start with that starts at “Outstanding”, “Very Deserving”, “Deserving” and “Recognition of Local Award”. For some people I have written, “Done great things. I will try to get them invited to a Buckingham Palace garden party”. The reality is, until the BEM arrived, the only honour that was available was an MBE or below that an invitation to a Buckingham Palace garden party, which is largely within the gift of a Lord-Lieutenant. That is the only award—we have a quota system for inviting the great and the good to a garden party at the palace.

**Q34 Paul Flynn:** I seem to be getting a slightly different impression from each of your evidences. When you put down “Outstanding”, “Good” or “Useless”—whatever it might be—what happens then?

**David Briggs:** We do then put a paragraph of further information.

**Q35 Paul Flynn:** And then what happens?

**David Briggs:** Then we send it back to the Cabinet Office. It is part of their evidence when they are considering—

**Q36 Paul Flynn:** So you do have influence on the selection. Is that with your own personal opinions in most of the cases, or your deputies’?

**David Briggs:** It is very rarely my personal opinions. Unless I happen to know the candidate personally, which happens occasionally—we have something slightly in excess of 1 million people in Cheshire so I do not know most of them—we use these groups in the different areas of the county to do some genuine local work. They really do try very hard to try and find out whether it is—

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**Q37 Paul Flynn:** And then what happens? How many of the original list then disappear because of your recommendations?

**David Briggs:** I would say that more than half of papers that come to me I suggest that they are not deserving of an honour.

**Q38 Paul Flynn:** So you blackball a large number?

**David Briggs:** This is not blackballing. It is part of the evidence that goes to the cabinet committee, whatever they do with it.

**Q39 Paul Flynn:** Is that the end of their hopes for an award?

**David Briggs:** The award is not in our gift, sir. This is just part of the evidence.

**Q40 Paul Flynn:** You are an influential part of providing information to the committees that will make the decisions? Is that right? I am still not clear what it is exactly that you do.

**David Briggs:** I am sorry if I am not making it clear. There is a simple one-page piece of paper that comes from the Cabinet Office together with the papers.

**Q41 Paul Flynn:** Right; you get that and you tick them off and the ones—

**David Briggs:** We tick the paper and we write a paragraph of information: that “I have checked with my Deputy Lieutenants in South Cheshire; they have found out that the evidence in the papers is correct. Joe Bloggs has done a fantastic job and, in fact, in addition to that he has done X, Y and Z as well, and I think he is very meritorious of an honour.” It may be that we say, “Actually, we don’t think it is meritorious,” for whatever reason.

**Q42 Paul Flynn:** Are you entirely satisfied about the fairness and objectivity of your Deputy Lieutenants?

**David Briggs:** I am.

**Q43 Paul Flynn:** How are they selected?

**David Briggs:** The Deputy Lieutenants are selected by the Lord-Lieutenants.

**Q44 Paul Flynn:** So they are people who you are acquainted with or friends of yours in most cases.

**David Briggs:** In my case they are always people who have done something for the community.

**Q45 Paul Flynn:** Just to go back to the point we were making earlier on about the honour of Lord-Lieutenant and how this is distributed: are you happy that this is done in a fair, open and democratic way and we get a cross-section of society acting Lord-Lieutenants?

**Chair:** It is of interest to us but it is not actually part of this inquiry.

**Paul Flynn:** It is an honour, for goodness’ sake. It is a supreme honour, I would have thought, to become a Lord-Lieutenant. You have a job for life.

**Chair:** Actually it is a good deal more than an honour.

**Paul Flynn:** You are representing the Queen on all these major occasions.

**Chair:** It carries with it some considerable obligations.

**Paul Flynn:** I am sure it does, but it also carries with it prestige and we hear that people are lusting for invitations to a wet day out at the palace. People prize these things; it is pretty inexplicable, but people do.

**Q46 Chair:** Very quickly, if each of you would like to comment on that, and then we will move on.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** There are two things there, actually. One is that all the advice and guidance given by the Cabinet Office and writing out citations and so on is requiring people to focus on facts and achievements that actually happened, not opinions. Whenever I am asked to contribute to that I always simply state the facts. I have been asked once in 11 years because the nature of Scotland being a village is that I think the Government Departments reckon that they know what is happening in every nook and cranny in Scotland and therefore do not need to refer to Lord-Lieutenants. That sounds a bit of an injustice, but that is my experience.

**Q47 Paul Flynn:** We are all full of prejudices and I am sure you would give greater credence to someone who had had a distinguished career in the Boy Scout movement than to someone who had a distinguished career in the Socialist Workers Party. That affects all of us. I am suggesting that you, as a tribe of Lord-Lieutenants, are biased towards the right wing in politics and towards conservative politics because of your backgrounds and the circumstances in which you find yourselves, as rich people who can do a full-time job without pay. Is that not true? You are not representative of the community.

**David Briggs:** I would refute that, sir. As far as Lord-Lieutenants are concerned, it is almost exclusively about charity work. I have absolutely no idea of what the politics are of the people on whom I comment. My guess is, given that that I do my best to get into the housing estates and into the deprived parts of the county, that many of these people who do wonderful work in the community in the back streets of Crewe or Warrington are Labour Party voters. I have no idea though.

**Q48 Chair:** On this question of how you categorise the applicants before you, it has been remarked to me that anything less than “Highly Deserving” is a kiss of death. If you do not put “Highly Deserving” they are not going to get the honour, are they? Why not just have “Highly recommended”, “Not recommended” or “Insufficient Information”? Is that not the reality when you are asked about individual cases? Am I making sense?

**David Briggs:** It is very difficult for me to comment on what the Cabinet Office do with the papers that we send them, because clearly I have no—

**Q49 Chair:** Is there a protocol? Is there some kind of written procedure of a relationship between Lord-Lieutenants and the Cabinet Office with regard to honours? Is it written down somewhere?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Yes, there is guidance given to Lord-Lieutenants.

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**Q50 Chair:** Is there an understanding of what your role is and what their role is? Is it written down and does it give you some leverage of the process, or are you just used as a dumping ground for the difficult cases?

**David Briggs:** I think we are used as a way of trying to get some local information in an unbiased way.

**Q51 Chair:** I am sure you do that very well, but do you feel you are consulted sufficiently? Do you feel you should be consulted much more?

**David Briggs:** I would like to be consulted on other civilian awards of citizens who live in the county.

**Q52 Chair:** Does that go for you, Sir Garth?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** As I tried to explain, we are hardly ever consulted in Scotland, not even with the community and local charity things. As I say, I have been consulted once in 11 years.

**Q53 Chair:** So you have all the responsibility in public imagination but actually very little of the power?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Part of my job is therefore to explain that the Lord-Lieutenant currently has very little influence over the system.

**Q54 Chair:** Do you think this sense of frustration is a common view amongst Lord-Lieutenants?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Yes.

**Paul Flynn:** Will you survive independence?

**Chair:** We are not doing independence. We might do an inquiry on independence and we might invite Sir Garth to come and give us evidence, but that is going to be a different inquiry.

**Q55 Robert Halfon:** If I may, I would like to go back to the question of your roles, just for a moment. Unlike my good friend Mr Flynn I am not a Cromwellian on these matters.

**Chair:** He just appointed generals. They had to be generals.

**Robert Halfon:** Could I just ask you to explain how you are actually appointed in the first place? Could you just set that out?

**David Briggs:** How the system works?

**Robert Halfon:** How you suddenly find yourselves in the position of Lord-Lieutenant?

**David Briggs:** Let me try. I am not totally sure that is connected with this Committee, but the position is that Lord-Lieutenants are appointed until their 75th birthday. When an existing Lord-Lieutenant is 74 and a half, the head of the honours committee comes up to the county and interviews a number of people. When I was appointed I understand there were 35 people interviewed verbally and a further 30-something questioned by letter. I was extraordinarily surprised when a letter one day arrived from Gordon Brown asking if he could give my name to the Queen.

Traditionally, as Mr Flynn has said, it has been largely either very big landowners or very senior military officers. I am neither of those things. I am a small businessman, and if you look at the list there are a lot of Lord-Lieutenants now who have no title, who live in ordinary houses and who do not own any land. The

Queen talks about “her service” and I think as representatives of the Queen what we try to do in a small way is also to be of service to the community. I spend the vast majority of my time trying to help the voluntary sector in various ways.

**Q56 Robert Halfon:** In my experience, the Lord-Lieutenant and Sheriff—and I am sure my two colleagues would agree—in Essex are hardworking and outstanding. When I have spoken to them, as I understand it, they pay for all the expenses themselves in terms of events. Whilst this is incredibly noble, does it not suggest that in order to be a Lord-Lieutenant you have to have some kind of wealth? Therefore, does this not exclude people from all walks of life from becoming Lord-Lieutenants or High Sheriffs?

**David Briggs:** It certainly costs me something to be Lord-Lieutenant. Let’s be clear about that. However, there are some expenses that one can claim and there are some strict rules on what you can claim for. My view is that as Lord-Lieutenant you do not have to throw all sorts of fancy parties and do lots of expensive entertaining. You absolutely could do the job of Lord-Lieutenant without having to put your hand in your pocket.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** When my predecessor was approaching his 75th birthday, the Secretary for Commissions, who is the civil servant in the Honours and Appointments Secretariat department of the Scottish Executive, comes into the Lieutenancy and takes soundings and meets a variety of people. As far as I am aware, the First Minister is the first sifting point before it ever reaches Downing Street, and at least three names must be presented to the First Minister. Out of those he will select one that will then be sent to the Prime Minister. Lo and behold, two days before my predecessor’s 75th birthday, a letter arrived from Mr Blair inviting me to take on the role. I was not involved in the interviewing process at all, but I had been a Deputy Lieutenant since 1984.

The scale of my area is smaller to almost a factor of 10 than my colleague’s area. I am 90,000; he is 1 million. Therefore, my knowledge of what is happening in my patch is much more intimate. I do not incur particularly great expenses; if I have a party I usually have a self-financing party.

**Q57 Robert Halfon:** Are you aware of any Lord-Lieutenants or High Sheriffs on average earnings of about £20,000 a year?

**David Briggs:** I am not aware of the earnings of any Lord-Lieutenants.

**Q58 Chair:** A very good answer. Is a fundamental qualification for the job that you can confidently handle some pretty tricky social situations—you are not in awe of authority or intimidated by people in authority? That does require some exceptional people but it does not necessarily define the class or income of the people involved. Would that be an accurate description?

**David Briggs:** In my view you need to really care about the community because you are there to help. You have this honour and it enables you to open some

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doors, which other people may find difficult to open, and I like to think that I act as a bridge between different sections of society. In particular, I try and act as a bridge between the business sector and the voluntary sector. Those are the two worlds I have some experience with.

**Q59 Chair:** The criticism that you are picking up from one or two members of the Committee is that your own office is a closed shop. Is that changing? Should that continue to change?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** It is changing quite rapidly. For example, certainly the number of women Lord-Lieutenants in Scotland has very significantly increased during my time as a Lord-Lieutenant. That is extremely welcome. The other important aspect is that an organisational ability is important because the Queen has come to East Lothian three times in the last five years. To be responsible for the organisation of that and the tailoring of expectations to what can actually be delivered does require a fair amount of ability, which is part of the reason for being appointed.

**Q60 Robert Halfon:** Is it possible for somebody to be an efficient and good Lord-Lieutenant or High Sheriff earning an average salary of £20,000 a year, in your honest opinion?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** In much of Scotland, yes.

**David Briggs:** I do not think that finance is the issue. You have to care about the community; you have to be able to speak in public—there is quite a lot of public speaking—and at the end of the day you are the representative of the Sovereign. The first line in the job description is to preserve the dignity of the Crown. If you are able to do that, then why not?

**Q61 Chair:** So it would be quite difficult to be a republican.

**David Briggs:** I think it would be very difficult to be a republican. You clearly have to believe that the monarchy is a good thing.

**Robert Halfon:** That's why you didn't get the job, Paul.

**Q62 Lindsay Roy:** In terms of nomination, I think you were saying it was straightforward if the nomination matched into a Department and the evidence was departmental-based. Are you saying that people whose nominations bridge Departments are potentially at a disadvantage within the honours system?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I think they are. That is the burden of much of what I was saying in my written evidence.

**Q63 Lindsay Roy:** What can be done to improve that position then for those who bridge? We are talking about people who have a professional background, perhaps, who engage in voluntary activity and charity work—how does that all tie together in terms of the nomination? How is that taken forward? How could it be taken forward in a much more improved way than we have at present?

**David Briggs:** The Government Departments recommend people for honour and they tend to

recommend people they like. The most stark situation is the military. I have some statistics for 2010—sorry that I do not have them for 2011—talking about the military. There were 1,330 UK recipients of the MBE in 2010. If we assume that the potential number of people who might have got an MBE is 25 million—obviously of the 60 million population some are children and so on—that means a one-in-19,000 chance of a civilian getting an award. In the military division there were 248 MBEs awarded. There might be a recipient population of 200,000 if we include the TA, so there was a 1-in-800 possibility of receiving a military MBE. If my maths is correct, that means it is nearly 25 times harder to win an award as a civilian.

**Q64 Alun Cairns:** I want to talk about the geographical breakdowns of the honours, with London and the South East far outweighing their population spread. Interestingly, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland also outweigh their population spread. Sir Garth, before we come onto the detail of those, will you talk me through the influence that devolved administrations have in relation to the honours system in Scotland, for example? You have touched on it with the Scottish Executive or the Scottish Government; can you tell me a little more about how it may well be different in Scotland compared to England or other parts of the UK?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I do not think the fact the administration has devolved has made much difference, if any. To be honest, there was a more political direction given prior to the arrival of the Scottish National Party—what we now call the Scottish Government. That, for example, is my example with the NHS being a political imperative. You may remember that Mr Blair suggested that teachers and education should get greater recognition and, sure enough, a significant number of teachers appeared in the honours list. That political direction is now explicitly excluded from the consideration in Scotland. Mr Salmond and his Ministers say they take no part in that. Therefore, it is a civil service-driven operation.

**Q65 Alun Cairns:** That is helpful, but in terms of the process, because Mr Briggs talked about the communication that he and his Deputy Lieutenants would have with the Cabinet Office, is it different in Scotland whereby you would have your relationship with the Scottish Government, or would you have your relationship with the Cabinet office?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** My relationship would be with the Honours and Appointments Secretariat at St Andrew's House in Edinburgh. I think all nominations and recommendations for residents of Scotland, even if sent directly to the Cabinet Office or sent to St Andrew's House, will be processed in Scotland.

**Chair:** For the benefit of those who are English Members of Parliament, St Andrew's House is part of the UK Government.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** That's the Whitehall part of the Scottish Government.

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**Q66 Alun Cairns:** Presumably that would be the same in Wales, as a Welsh Member of Parliament, and to Northern Ireland and their administration as well?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I think so. The big difference, which my colleague has clearly identified, is that for all those nominations for people who do not fit comfortably within a Government Department, reference is made out to the Lord-Lieutenant. Lord-Lieutenants in England have a system whereby they make those assessments and report back as part of the sifting process. In Scotland, we do not have that.

**Q67 Alun Cairns:** Would you therefore say that the opportunity for political patronage in Scotland could well be greater because the role of the Lord-Lieutenant is reduced in terms of sifting out and analysing those nominations?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I am not sure I would go so far as to say that it is more politically driven than England. I am not really able to comment on that. What I do know is that when people ask me about it I say that it is essentially a political process driven by the Prime Minister's office, which is the Cabinet Office, in which Lord-Lieutenants in Scotland play very little part except on those rare occasions when we are invited to comment on a nomination.

**Q68 Alun Cairns:** Let me just make a statement, then, in relation to Wales. I certainly feel that there is far more political bias in the nomination system in Wales. That is from analysing the honours twice a year when they come out. The accusation that Mr Flynn made about the Cabinet Office—and I do not mean this in a party political way—could easily be made in relation to the situation in Wales because of the control, as well as the appointment of the Lord-Lieutenants; I assume that there would be a similar system whereby, as you have talked about, the Scottish Government would have a strong input in the appointment of Lord-Lieutenants, as the Welsh Government would have in Wales.

Therefore, can I come now to the main thrust of what I wanted to talk about? The spread tends to bias London and the south-east, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. How would you account for that? Can I come to you, Mr Briggs?

**David Briggs:** I think the answer to that question is that Government is in those areas. Clearly, there is not a lot of Government, and central Government is not administered from the North West of England. I think I am right in saying that the North West of England has a smaller percentage of honours compared to its population than any other region of the country. I make that point every time I speak publicly on this issue and that is why I encourage more people to nominate people for honours. The way the system works at present is that a lot of Government officers receive awards and they tend to be based in the south-east of England.

**Q69 Chair:** So your objection to the day-job people getting their awards automatically is that they are crowding out other geographical regions where public servants are not concentrated, and they are crowding

out the volunteers and the citizens' nominations. Is that the objection?

**David Briggs:** I am trying not to be critical, because I am not suggesting that anybody who gets an honour does not deserve one. That is not what I am here to do, but I do think that there are, as we have said several times this morning, people who get honours because of their job and that is it. Traditionally if you are a Permanent Secretary you have a gong associated with that position.

**Q70 Chair:** If there are to be honours for certain jobs automatically, then you object to that day-job honouring in principle, but if they are to exist then you would insist that they are a separate list and they do not crowd out others—if there are a lot of retiring Permanent Secretaries or a lot of retiring senior civil servants who are getting MBEs, or a lot of military officers who are getting MBEs, that that should not crowd out the number of ordinary citizens who are getting MBEs. It should be a separate allocation.

**David Briggs:** I think there might be a case for a separate allocation of people who have served the Government rather than those who have served the community.

**Q71 Chair:** Ironically, it has just been announced that Parliament should have a separate allocation of honours. We were not consulted about this, but we are including it within the scope of our inquiry. It is so that the Clerk of the House and I suppose a quota of Members of Parliament should get their knighthoods. There was a concern that the Cabinet Secretary had previously said that the Clerk of the House should not automatically get a knighthood. How do we grapple with this problem? In certain jobs there is an expectation that honours should be bestowed.

**David Briggs:** There may be some exceptional situations where it is actually for the benefit of the country that people get an award—for example, ambassadors to major countries. The Government might take a view that if you are the British Ambassador in Washington you should have a knighthood; it gives you more prestige and that is good for the country. You might even take that view with certain senior people from industry and you might take it with senior people from Government Departments as well, but they will be the exceptions.

**Q72 Chair:** And they should not crowd out the availability or the allocation of honours to public volunteers and people who are serving the public in their own communities.

**David Briggs:** Correct.

**Q73 Chair:** I think that is the nub of it.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** There are two issues here. One is about the fact that the ones you were talking about just now can crowd out and make less space for those who contribute in a much wider sense. There is also, of course, the quality of the written citation that is an issue. It is part of the civil service profession to be able to write effective reports, papers and citations. I just sense in response to the issue about Scotland doing rather well, I am pretty certain that in terms of

the civil servants in Scotland, the heads of the various divisions sit down and say, "We want to get our fair share of honours here. Let's turn our formidable writing skills to make sure that we get more than our fair share". That is doing them a disservice, but set that against some small community group; take the local Riding for the Disabled Association, where the chairman has worked her socks off for the last 15 years in addition to running a hotel. Whether she will get recognised or not I do not know, but it does depend an awful lot upon the quality of the citation that is written. I know the Cabinet Office have issued guidance on this area about how to write citations, but at the end of the day, when the little group of civil servants sit down in Whitehall or in St Andrew's House to sift out their recommendations to the honours committees, I sense the playing field is not wholly level.

**Q74 Alun Cairns:** In pursuing the issue of the regional distribution of honours, Sir Garth, I did not give you the opportunity to respond about why you think that there is such a disproportionate distribution. Then I have one final question, with the Chairman's permission.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Every time we meet every two years in Edinburgh to discuss matters around Lord-Lieutenants' roles and so forth, we also have an input from the Honours and Appointments Secretariat division in the Scottish Office, and someone from the Cabinet Office comes up and shares with us the figures about which you are talking. There is no doubt the Permanent Secretary of the Scottish Office is there and several other civil servants, and they are saying, "We've done well, haven't we?" I sense that is nothing to do with us, but they have done well, and they set themselves to strike as well as they possibly can.

**Q75 Alun Cairns:** Sir Garth, under this arrangement do you feel deprived of the opportunity to promote some community groups from your area because the system is slightly different to that Mr Briggs faces, where he is asked to verify, validate, qualify and support nominations in his part, whereas you have less of an influence on that because of the relationship you described with the Scottish Executive?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** "Deprived" is probably rather stronger a word than I would have used, but I sense that it is a great advantage for England that all those recommendations that are made for those who do not fall within a Government Department, who are mainly in the voluntary or charitable sector, are considered by Lord-Lieutenants there; it is an advantage to them which we do not enjoy in Scotland.

**Q76 Alun Cairns:** Therefore, an attitude to overcome the South East and London dominance very often within Government—and I mean this across all Government—is to localise the decision or to devolve the decision, but ironically in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland it has arguably centralised the decision-making process rather than devolving it out to Lord-Lieutenants as in England. Is that a fair assessment?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Yes, although it is important to have in mind proportionality and scale here. In Cheshire there are 1 million—and I am not the smallest in Scotland by any means at 90,000—and so on this question of how far you devolve out, I just sense that if I were consulted more regularly—not speaking on behalf of my colleagues at all—about nominations for people living within East Lothian, I would have more confidence in the system.

**Q77 Alun Cairns:** Do you have any closing questions on this part?

**David Briggs:** No; other than to say that because I have to comment on people who are nominated, I do not propose people, because I think it is inappropriate to propose people, so to that extent it actually limits what I can do. If I think that somebody deserves an honour I might suggest that it is up to someone else, not me. Theoretically, I am allowed to nominate people because I am a citizen, but in practice I think it is inappropriate to do that because it is quite inappropriate that I should nominate then have to comment on my own nomination. Therefore, I would be encouraging others in the community to put the person concerned up for an honour, rather than doing it myself.

**Q78 David Heyes:** I just have a quick question to Mr Briggs on this issue of regional disparity. Has the abolition of the Government Office for the North West region made a difference in your case? I understand they were consulted in a similar way to the way the Lord-Lieutenancy is consulted about proposed nominations.

**David Briggs:** I am not aware of it making any difference and I cannot remember when the Government Office in the North West came to an end. It was probably before I became Lord-Lieutenant, so I cannot comment.

**Q79 Kelvin Hopkins:** We have talked about regional distribution. In terms of local distribution, in your view is it important that the distribution of honours reflects the make-up of your local population and the population of the UK as a whole? I may say that my own constituency and my own town has a very large ethnic minority. I think half the children in the schools are from a wide range of ethnic minority backgrounds. How far do you think honours should reflect local populations?

**David Briggs:** Sir Garth has already mentioned the female element and I think we are now very close to 50% of nominations being female. My understanding is there are three sections of society that are not adequately represented: the north-west of England as a whole, women and ethnic minorities. I make that point in all my public speeches and I try and encourage people to nominate people from those minority communities. I am not the best Lord-Lieutenant to talk about this because the ethnic population in Cheshire is something under 2%.

**Q80 Kelvin Hopkins:** In fact in the most recent honours, the 2012 New Year Honours List, the ethnic minority group has leapt up to 11%, which is a pretty

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significant move, and 43% women, so things have improved. However, do we want to see more people from different social classes represented? I think that is one thing that is very noticeable; there tends to be a class bias.

**David Briggs:** In a perfect world, we do. However, we also want to make sure that we maintain the standard of honours and we do not just give people honours because of statistics. It seems to me very important that the service that people have given in order to receive an honour merits that honour irrespective of their gender or their ethnicity.

**Q81 Kelvin Hopkins:** The other problem with ethnicity, of course, is that there are a wide range of ethnicities. Do you think that those who decide upon honours should be sensitive to the fact that there are a wide range of ethnicities and should maintain some degree of balance between them?

**David Briggs:** I think it is very important that all of us in public positions are aware of the ethnicity of the UK and that we are a multi-racial society.

**Q82 Kelvin Hopkins:** Indeed. There is one thing I should say in your defence: I normally agree with everything my good friend Paul Flynn says, but I know because it has happened locally that Lord-Lieutenant is not an honour because you can retire from the position; Sam Whitbread recently has as Lord-Lieutenant for Bedfordshire. You cannot retire from an honour, although I suppose you could in theory.

**David Briggs:** Not only can you retire, you also have to retire when you are 75.

**Q83 David Heyes:** Like Kelvin, I normally readily agree with Paul on most things and my starting point would have been to be quite critical of the Lord-Lieutenancy, not you personally. I have completely changed my view after this morning; I think there is a good argument for a much enhanced role for the Lord-Lieutenancy for the sort of reasons that you have touched on about the perception of a closed shop, the honours for doing the day job and that sort of thing. There is a real scope for the Lord-Lieutenancy to help as a counterbalance towards that, so I am going to eschew my question to invite comments on that. I suspect you are both too modest to make the argument for an enhanced role for the Lord-Lieutenancy but clearly there is an argument for it.

**David Briggs:** Clearly, I did not come here to talk about the role of Lord-Lieutenant; I came here to talk about the honours system. However, certainly the way I have chosen to exercise the role of Lord-Lieutenant is that clearly I do the ceremonial part of the job—organising royal visits, presenting awards on occasions, commenting on the honours system, which we have talked about this morning—I would say that the whole of that is less than 20% of my time. The other 80% of my time is helping charities to raise money and, as I have already said, to act as a bridge between the business world and the charity world, and to harness the fantastic amount of good will that I perceive to be in the business sector. It is what the Prime Minister would call the Big Society.

There is a huge amount of good will in the business sector and I think it can be harnessed to help the voluntary sector. I am trying very hard to make the voluntary sector more effective and more efficient. It is a very important part of the UK economy and I think the Lord-Lieutenant can play a role in making the voluntary sector more efficient. That is my passion.

**Q84 David Heyes:** But with the support of more influence over the award of honours. That would seem to sit alongside that.

**David Briggs:** There is a connection, clearly. As a result of the work I do in the voluntary sector, I meet some people who do outstanding things. Clearly, those who do the most outstanding things can be put forward for honour. It is a small percentage; there are not that many honours.

**Q85 Paul Flynn:** I have some final questions on this. You just talked about the charities, and many of the charities are very upset by the Government's Big Society proposals because about £4 billion is going to disappear from their funding, and a much smaller amount, about £600 million, is being paid to them. The Government have said that they want to promote the Big Society by using the honours system in order to give awards to people. Many people would see it as a very cheap wheeze by the Government or a political stunt, which the Big Society is. Do you think it is right to use the honours system to pursue a political objective, as the Government are doing?

**David Briggs:** The reason I am hesitating, Sir, is because I have to be apolitical in this role. I find that you put me in a difficult position to answer a political question that I think it is inappropriate as a Lord-Lieutenant to answer.

**Q86 Paul Flynn:** Do you think the honours system should be distorted by politicians for their own ends, which is what I am asking you here?

**David Briggs:** No, I don't.

**Q87 Paul Flynn:** I think the evidence you have given is something on which we generally agree. We all know of instances, particularly in the military, where if you get to a certain position you get an honour. We have a colleague who was given an honour and refused it because he already had an honour, but the automatic system is the reason. The other point with the changes by the present Government has been they are seeking to reward unselfish philanthropic acts. If a philanthropic act is unselfish, it would be an anonymous one.

I have shared with the Committee an experience I had with a friend of mine who asked how to get an honour and I advised him, and I advised him to give money to charities. I said he should give them to the fashionable charities, like the Prince's Trust, and every £1 he gave to the Prince's Trust is worth £100 if he gave it to Mind or to Oxfam, which do not have that same kudos. He was in the last distribution awards and got his gong by following the advice I gave him, which was practical advice given to him cynically. I do not

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think it is any credit to him; he actually bought his award. How can we stop this happening?

**David Briggs:** In my very first remarks this morning I did say that I was concerned about the new philanthropy committee and that in my personal view you should not be able to buy an honour. Clearly, if you have given a lot of money to a charity it is a factor, but you should, in addition to writing a cheque, have to spend some time and get involved.

**Q88 Paul Flynn:** Don't you feel there is a danger that the Government are filling the gaps in the charitable giving by using the honours system to encourage philanthropists to fill in those gaps and give their own contributions? This is not a legitimate use of the honours system.

**Chair:** If that is too political, I think the Committee would respect your reticence on that question. The question in a way makes its own point, Mr Flynn.

**Paul Flynn:** Can we come back to the other point? I don't know if you want to talk about the Lord-Lieutenancy, but you regard it as being hopelessly out of balance politically.

**Chair:** I don't think that's what they did say.

**Q89 Paul Flynn:** Mr Morrison, you do not sound like the Scottish members of our Committee; you are clearly one of the great and the good in Scotland. There is this aristocratic view of the Lord-Lieutenancy that is still there, but it is getting better in every way than it was 30 years ago when I offered my services.

**Chair:** Do you wish to comment further on that question?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** My whole approach has been the other way around altogether. First of all, I think that the abuse of the honours system for political purposes has been reducing, and inquiries like this and a more open treatment of the process has improved things. My perspective is that people who have achieved great things in their particular field of endeavour or employment or whatever—there has to be something additional to that. As my colleague here says, it could be a contribution of money but also time and involvement.

In my written evidence, I talk about the fact that an industrialist who achieves the peak of his profession normally gets a knighthood. I sense that in order to qualify for a knighthood there must be evidence of additional influence and work within the community, for the wellbeing of the community. You are now talking about the Prince's Trust or the Youth Business Trust, just as examples, and that is the way I would look at it. To distort it and to allow the judgment by an honours committee to be distorted by the wish of central Government to give greater emphasis to this is dangerous ground.

**Q90 Greg Mulholland:** There is clearly still a problem with public perception of the honours system and how open and fair it is, even though people are reasonably well-disposed towards the idea of the honours system. A survey carried out by the Cabinet

Office in 2009 found out that only 44% of the public agreed that the honours system is open and fair in the way it operates. Is that something that you feel is a concern in your respective areas and what can be done to try to improve that?

**David Briggs:** I think the word "open" is probably more important than the word "fair". There have been a few public cases where people are concerned about people buying honours and so on, but I think they are the exception. The word "open" is more important, and in my written evidence I used the words "closed shop". A large number of the public are of the view that it is a closed shop and they will not get an honour because they are not posh enough. I think that is untrue and I do my best to try and encourage those sorts of people to nominate people who deserve it for honours in those sorts of realms. That is really important and very much part of the job.

My understanding is that those people on the honours committee want people who are working hard in local communities, maybe in very humble circumstances, to be honoured for what they do and it is absolutely right that they should be honoured for that. Anything that all of us in public life can do to try to make it very clear that the honours system is open to all is important; I believe that it is open to all, but I believe there is a perception that it is not.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I would agree with that. It is an improving situation, because I think the previous survey was probably in the region of 35%. We are seeing an improvement, but it is a long way to go and it is a significant part of my role in East Lothian, as I go around taking part in activities and so forth, to remind those with whom I interact that, "The honours system is in fact something that you all participate in. I sense if you make the recommendation you stand a better chance than if I made it."

**Q91 Greg Mulholland:** Do you think that figure would go up even further if there was more detail as to why honours were awarded? Do you feel there is a need for more information about why honours are being awarded?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** Both of us have expressed the view that the public citation for the award is usually pathetically small. It says, "For services to the Justice Department" or whatever. I did actually touch on one made in my own area relatively recently where, in fact, the citation said, "For services to a Government Department in Edinburgh and to the local community". Of course, he is actively involved in youth work within his local community and I can tell you that award received an extremely high level of approval from the local community because they saw that it was not just for doing his day job in St Andrew's House or wherever it is. I sense that a fuller explanation there would be helpful.

**David Briggs:** I would agree with that. I can think of a lady I know in Cheshire who has just got an MBE in the last New Year Honours List who has done all sorts of things with very small charities and good works locally, largely in one village. I think a lot of

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people would be rather surprised if they knew that she had got an MBE and I think that should have been publicised more widely. Every single event that I ever go to in that village, she is in the kitchen doing the cooking or the washing up. However, she has done this for 30 years, she is a real stalwart of the community, and she has a really well-deserved MBE for it. Currently there are two words—I think it said “For services to the community in the village”—but if there were a paragraph explaining what this lady had done it might well encourage more people to nominate others.

**Q92 Greg Mulholland:** The other issue that has been raised in several submissions from other Lord-Lieutenants is the speed of the process and the fact that it takes, to quote Peter Stephen, Lord-Lieutenant of Aberdeen, “far too long”. Do you share that feeling that there is a problem and that we should find a way of speeding up that process?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** The answer is yes. It is interesting because the Lord-Lieutenants of the cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee are in fact the Lords Provost by virtue of their appointment, and that term can be as short as four years. It is a bit depressing if you take part in a process and you are out of office before you see any conclusion. That is where Provost Stephen is probably coming from when making those remarks. It does take a very long time and also the citation and the nomination papers go into what appears to be a black hole from which you hear nothing.

We are occasionally enabled to ring up the office and say, “Hey, I’m aware of a recommendation for so-and-so. Can you tell me about its progress?” I will get a curt, factual reply saying, “This is where it’s reached” and whether the chances of success are great or not, but that is the limit of it. I think the wider public are concerned, because these nominations go in and nothing more is heard unless, hooray, an award is made.

**Q93 Lindsay Roy:** Whilst there is a perception that it is a laborious process and very time-consuming, could it not also be construed that it is therefore quite a robust process and that is why it takes so much time?

**David Briggs:** I am not personally familiar enough with what actually happens during the process, but I think it is really important that it is a robust process, and it will take some time. I would share Sir Garth’s comments: if the system can be speeded up and it still be a robust process then clearly that would be an advantage.

**Q94 Lindsay Roy:** Is it your experience that the process is robust?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I am absolutely certain it is robust.

**David Briggs:** I have certainly had no issues of anybody I know getting an honour who should not have done.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** It is robust. I am absolutely clear about that. I sense that the imposition of deadlines or targets for speed of process might concentrate minds within Government Departments a little bit more than they are at the moment.

**Q95 Greg Mulholland:** Can I just ask about a slightly different issue? This relates clearly to the concern about the political tinkering in the honours system, which of course has reared its head from time to time, and that leads directly to the trust concerns that some people have. Clearly, reform of the House of Lords is in the media at the moment and on the political agenda and there are very different views around this very table on whether that is a good thing, and about if, how and when. Do you agree with me that there is a fundamental problem that damages the honours system because we have political appointees, both former Members of Parliament and indeed outsiders to the House of Lords, who then immediately become, at the say-so of the Prime Minister, Lord So-and-so of So-and-so, which frankly to most ordinary people sounds like an honour and sounds far grander than Someone MBE.

I am not at all asking your views on whether we should have a reformed second Chamber, elected, appointed or not; that is clearly not the remit of the inquiry. However, do you agree that there is a fundamental problem because we have all these Lords, Baronesses, etc, who are perceived to have been given an honour, and yet they are simply supposed to be legislators?

**David Briggs:** In the papers I received, peerages were specifically excluded from this inquiry. I think it is a totally different position to an honour. If you become a knight of the realm or a BEM, at the end of the day that gives you no power; it is quite simply an honour. It is a very different discussion if you are giving a title to somebody that makes them part of the Legislature and that is certainly not within my brief today.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** The concern you are expressing, of course, is that in the public mind they are closely allied, and in fact almost one and the same thing. I agree with my colleague that they are two totally separate things, and we would welcome measures to ensure that the public perception is that they are separate.

**Q96 Greg Mulholland:** I appreciate what you are saying but it is interesting that many people have raised it in their submission, including, I think, some Lord-Lieutenants. The simple question I am asking is: should we really be calling legislators Lord So-and-so of So-and-so Borough, or should they simply be called their name and some way of designating that they are legislators in the way that I am Greg Mulholland MP? Would that not help them to differentiate, and help elevate the status of the honours system, which as you say is a purely honorary thing?

**David Briggs:** I do not really want to comment. My understanding is that this investigation is from knighthoods to BEMs and does not deal with peerages.

**Chair:** I think you are right.

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**Q97 Greg Mulholland:** It has come up in the evidence quite a lot, Chair.

**David Briggs:** It may have come up in the evidence but it was not part of the questions.

**Q98 Greg Mulholland:** I think it is unavoidable; that's my point. I think it is unavoidable and I think it is the elephant in the room.

**David Briggs:** My comment to that is in my view it should be separated. I do believe that a position in the House of Lords is a completely different situation to giving somebody a knighthood or the awards we have been talking about this morning.

**Chair:** I think it is perfectly legitimate for you to ask the question, but I think it is also legitimate for our witnesses to defer that that is a separate issue.

**Greg Mulholland:** Indeed. Just to make clear, I entirely accept that. As you probably guess, I think it is a ludicrous aberration that we do not elect all our legislators in this country.

**Chair:** You do disappoint me.

**Q99 Paul Flynn:** Could I ask a general question on this House? It would be interesting to get our witnesses' opinion of it. 25 years ago, no Labour Member of Parliament accepted a knighthood, but all Conservatives who served about 15 years had a knighthood, except those who had been caught in possession of intelligent ideas or an independent turn of mind. Think of Robert Adley, who complained bitterly about this before his death. I genuinely think that there is a group of people who refuse honours, and the fact that people want honours is a very good reason in many cases why they are not worthy of honours. Isn't the highest accolade one can give to anyone a little badge with HRH on it, saying, "Has refused honour"—yes or no?

**David Briggs:** I actually do not agree with you, Sir. I think that the award of an MBE to people like the woman I described two minutes ago gives them a huge amount of pleasure. It is recognition of their work and I think it is a good thing.

**Paul Flynn:** For every one who gets the MBE there are 49 who do not and who feel aggrieved about it

because they are as good as this lady who does the washing up that you described.

**Q100 Lindsay Roy:** Are you aware of the percentage of those nominated who actually refuse an honour? Does that information come to you?

**David Briggs:** I am not aware of the answer, no.

**Chair:** That is published.

**Q101 Lindsay Roy:** But for your own area?

**David Briggs:** I am personally not aware.

**Sir Garth Morrison:** All we know is that I think in the Cabinet Office paper to this Committee, it tells us 11 were declined in 20—

**Q102 Chair:** We have kept you for an inordinately long time on the witness stand and we are very grateful to you. Could I just ask one final question? Do you have any views about the Honours Forfeiture Committee? Did you have any feelings about the way it operated recently?

**Sir Garth Morrison:** I am extremely uneasy about what happened in those circumstances and I feel there was a scapegoating of a particular individual, which I think is quite damaging and I would like to have seen it done differently.

**Q103 Chair:** It has been suggested to us that the Honours Forfeiture Committee should be of a more legal character and it should be more evidentially based and less politically directed. Would you agree with that?

**David Briggs:** I noticed in the submission that you received from the Association of Lord-Lieutenants that there was a suggestion that the chairman might be a Lord Justice of Appeal, which would clearly give it a more legalistic structure. The only comment I would make is that it is really important that that the Honours Forfeiture Committee is not seen to be influenced by the tabloid press.

**Chair:** On that note of purity and detachment, I would like to thank you very much indeed. You have been really helpful and informative to our inquiry—a great start. Thank you very much indeed.

**Tuesday 15 May 2012**

Members present:

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Chair)

Charlie Elphicke  
Kelvin Hopkins  
Greg Mulholland

Priti Patel  
Lindsay Roy

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**Examination of Witnesses**

*Witnesses:* **Lord Digby Jones** and **Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP** gave evidence.

**Q104 Chair:** Welcome to this morning's session, which is the second one on the honours system. Would each of you identify yourself for the record, please?

**Mr Darling:** I am Alistair Darling, Member of Parliament for Edinburgh South West.

**Lord Jones:** I am Lord Digby Jones, Cross-Bench Member of the House of Lords.

**Q105 Chair:** We are particularly interested in what both of you have said about the way Fred Goodwin was stripped of his knighthood. What are your concerns about the way the decision was taken?

**Lord Jones:** The morning after it all happened I woke up and, frankly, the emotional response would be, "It serves him right." He was a man whose faults gave the man to my left a serious headache and almost caused the downfall of democratic capitalism. I guess the emotional response is that he got off lightly. As I said at the time and I repeat today, this was no way to go about meting out any form of discipline, sanction or punishment. I said it then and will repeat it: it had about it the whiff of the village green lynch mob.

I just thought to myself that you have some people who in secret meet every one of them who had a knighthood. They decided that this person should not have one against a load of criteria that, frankly, at the end of the day, seemed to me, in ignorance, had been dreamt up on the spot. He had never been convicted of a single offence. Everybody says, "Jolly good," the mob is satisfied and you have sent them another drumstick on which they can chomp. It is not the way I would like to see issues like this dealt with.

**Mr Darling:** I agree with what Lord Jones has said. I said at the time I thought the whole thing was tawdry, and that remains my view. I do not carry any particular flag for Fred Goodwin. We know what happened with RBS, but he was singled out when there were other members of the board of RBS who had knighthoods. The board is legally responsible for that company. If you look at HBOS, there were knights sitting round the table then, one of whom in particular is still on one of the advisory committees of the honours system. They were not gone after.

If you look at what happened, there was a campaign by a newspaper to remove the knighthood from Fred Goodwin. The thing seemed to gather momentum out of nowhere. The Prime Minister said he would refer it to the Forfeiture Committee. Having been in Government for 13 years, I had never come across it before. I knew there were some circumstances in which you could get rid of it. Then, rather like a train being set on a set of rails, it came to the only

conclusion it was ever going to come to, and Fred Goodwin was stripped of his knighthood. I think the whole thing was unfair. As Lord Jones said, it looked like the lynch mob. Interestingly, one of the reasons I do not think you will see this happen again is that the public reaction was the complete opposite of what the Government anticipated. A lot of people said, "We've got no time for Fred Goodwin; we know what he did, but the way in which this has been dealt with is very distasteful."

Especially vis-à-vis our relations with the rest of the world, one of the things people value in this country is the rule of law, due process and predictability. Once you start to depart from that and say this was a one-off case, which it was not because he is not the only person one might want to look at, you bring the entire system into disrepute. The whole episode backfired. It should not have been done. You are going to inquire into this and I would dearly like to know what happened here. Who set this process going? How does this committee get convened? What deliberation did they have over the thing? It seems to me to be something dreamt up as an instantaneous reaction to a particular campaign, and in years to come the Government will probably think this was one terrible mistake.

**Lord Jones:** If you are graduating from a university in Bangalore you might think, "Where in the world am I going to plan my career? Where am I going to create some wealth? Where am I going to make my fortune and do so in safety and security?" I have always believed that I belong to a country that is number one in the world for that. We have our faults. I spent 20 years as a lawyer. Often, the law is an ass, but the one thing I always knew as a lawyer was that I was working to a set of rules. They had been made in advance by democratically elected people, and at the end of the day I knew where I stood. I fully understand that the conclusion could be commonsense going out of the window, but everybody knows where they stand.

Suddenly, you have this and, at the same time, the disgraceful behaviour of the lynch mob towards Stephen Hester's bonus. The rule book, transparency and predictability went out of the window, and they responded as on 14 July with the fall of the Bastille and the guillotine. If I was that young man in Bangalore I would think, "Maybe there are better countries than Britain in which to plough my furrow." That will be the greatest casualty of this.

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 15 May 2012 Lord Digby Jones and Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP
 

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**Q106 Chair:** Are you saying that Fred Goodwin deserved to retain his knighthood?

**Mr Darling:** I do not think that is the question. Assuming you want a system where people are awarded honours, it is clear that, for example, if you go to prison for more than three months, or you are censured or struck off by a professional association, you run the risk of your honour being forfeited. I know there is a catch-all that says “in exceptional circumstances”. If you look at what happened in this case, it was not as if there was some sort of inquiry into his conduct. The committee relied on the FSA report, which was drawn up for completely different reasons. It started off life as an inquiry into what the FSA had done wrong, and then it was extended to look at some of RBS, but it was not a trial of Fred Goodwin. Had due process been followed for all the knights, or anyone who held an honour—I do not know who did—and who happened to be culpable in this whole sorry business involving the banks, regulatory system and, who knows, Government going back years, by all means do that, but do not just dream up a set of rules that fit one particular instance. That was the thing that was so unfair.

The public reaction to this is interesting. By chance, I had written an article for *The Times* the day before. The news came out to allow me to comment on this as well. As to the reaction to the things I said the following day on television and radio, I was surprised at just how one way the traffic was. People do not have any time for Fred Goodwin, but they had absolutely no time for the way this was dealt with.

**Q107 Chair:** The public knew he was being scapegoated.

**Mr Darling:** Yes.

**Lord Jones:** When someone is in receipt of an honour it would perhaps be helpful if they were sent discreetly a letter, or whatever—or maybe called in for a briefing—in which it is said, “This is what is expected of you.” People might say it is a statement of the obvious. Nevertheless, “This is what is expected of you and this is what will happen if certain things occur.” If Sir Fred Goodwin, as he then was, had been called in and told, “By the way, on these events happening, your name will go forward to a group of people who have the power to do this,” I would settle for that.

**Q108 Chair:** You want a much more transparent process.

**Lord Jones:** Not just transparent—because it certainly was not—but a set of rules we obey. We have sets of rules. In this country we are making 10 regulations a day, including Christmas Day. For some reason, in the honour system there are no rules, regulations and understanding, and it seems very much as if there is a response to the last headline in the popular press. That is no way to run a railway.

**Q109 Chair:** Mr Darling, you were suggesting that future governments might regret this. Do you think it does set a precedent?

**Mr Darling:** I do not think they will touch this again. My guess is that were you, for example, to come up

with a recommendation that there ought to be clear rules governing the giving and taking away of honours, they will look at it. I saw the useful note prepared by the House of Commons Library. Numerous attempts have been made by successive governments to try to improve the entire process, not just this narrow one. I suspect the time is now ripe to look at it again in the light of this, but, frankly, I do not see this happening again because it went badly wrong for them.

**Q110 Chair:** Do you think we need to make some recommendations?

**Mr Darling:** I do. You need to make sure this does not happen again. It is entirely right that as a country we should honour people who have done well or made a contribution to our national life, in whatever sphere it is, but we need to be clear about the process of nomination and how that works but also, if something goes wrong, what circumstances might cause the whole thing to be reviewed. Having a catch-all that allows you to open something up and, frankly, go into uncharted territory is wrong. Everybody has to be judged by this. The board of RBS, just like the board of HBOS, were legally responsible for their company. Why go after one knight just because he happens to be in the public mind?

**Lord Jones:** I would very much welcome the Select Committee coming up with recommendations and using your brief to go a little wider to answer some of the questions that certainly the public asked me at the time. I remember being on BBC’s *Question Time* during the week it occurred. There were a lot of questions about it. For instance, is it right that for MBEs, OBEs and CBEs we still use the word “empire”? Is it right that a civil servant does his or her time, gets to a certain level and, bang, thank you very much, gets a gong? Is it right that Fred Goodwin gets a knighthood for services to banking when he was paid incredibly handsomely for doing so? I ask the questions, and possibly there are some rhetorical answers in there, but the whole issue is: why did he get a knighthood? Why do so many people get theirs? What are the rules pertaining to the granting of honours and those honours being taken away?

**Q111 Chair:** At the end I was going to ask about the word “empire”. Should we drop it?

**Mr Darling:** We do not have one. In some way we are in a difficult position. We are making someone a Commander of the British Empire and we are in no position to offer him such a command. There is a lot of tradition about knighthoods and so on. I feel less strongly about that. If I were giving you advice, having seen this operate for over 25 years, the wider you go, the greater the chance people just ignore everything you say. I would go for the things that are fixable. Two things are fixable. One is how people get on the list in the first place. There is the business of having quotas for top civil servants and the top brass of the military. Whenever you open the newspapers at new year or in the summer time, it is striking. You see the usual suspects at the top end with a knighthood, and the people who have done something special and

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it really matters to them are at the MBE end of the market. I would have a look at that.

In relation to this particular mischief, if someone has transgressed what are the criteria? That is something you certainly need to look at. It is not just here. I do not think it is entirely for the other place. One of the things I am sure Lord Jones came up against was people saying, "How can you take a knighthood off Fred Goodwin when people who have been in prison are sitting, legislating and voting in another place?"

**Q112 Chair:** Unfortunately, that does not fall within our remit.

**Mr Darling:** It has never stopped you in the past.

**Lord Jones:** I think Alistair is absolutely spot on with that. I would change the word "empire". One of the ways we are going to win in the 21st century is on merit. We will get round the world; we will shelve and dismiss the arrogance that comes from 200 years of empire and show the world that we are damned good at what we do. I have done this for a living, and I also do it because I care. You go round the world and somebody says, "So and so is with you. He's a CBE. What does that stand for?" The moment you say the word "empire" you wish you did not have to. At one end you get the opium wars; at another you get some battle for independence. All over it smacks of arrogance.

**Q113 Chair:** Do you not get it also with knighthoods? You do not wear armour and carry a lance any more.

**Lord Jones:** The only upside of a knighthood in my little example is that it does not have the word "empire" attached to it. I would call the whole thing to a halt for 12 months to give yourself a clean break. Then I would start with three orders, and over that I would probably still have knights and dames. Those three orders would be the same as MBE, OBE and CBE, but they would be called something that related to Her Majesty, or one day His Majesty, because it is a gift from the monarch and not Government, and possibly—I do not know—involve the Commonwealth. I would certainly have the word "British" in it.

**Q114 Chair:** How about substituting the word "empire" with "excellence", and then we do not need to change the orders, which is what we recommended before?

**Lord Jones:** Maybe. I just would not have "empire". I would push that one, but the other thing you can fix, and you should do, is I would like to see these awards, from knighthoods down to MBEs, given for something extra over that for which you are paid. If you are a business person and are fabulous at creating loads of wealth for a bank and making money yourself, but you are also doing charity work, fair enough, but do not say the award is for banking; say it is for charity.

**Q115 Chair:** People have said in evidence that you should not get an honour for doing a day job.

**Lord Jones:** Exactly right.

**Q116 Chair:** Do you agree with that?

**Mr Darling:** Yes.

**Q117 Chair:** So do away with all the automatic honours for military, diplomats and civil servants.

**Mr Darling:** If you look at the Civil Service, as Secretary of State I remember lists coming up to me. Not only does someone automatically expect a knighthood; you get upgrades of knighthoods. I do not know how many different orders there are, but every year you see that someone is upgraded. That means nothing to the general population, but it means an awful lot to Sir Humphrey that he has been upgraded to the top notch. I think it is all nonsense. There should not be quotas, either explicit or implicit, about these things.

**Q118 Chair:** To be devil's advocate, there are certain pinnacles of professions and careers where you have to be excellent to get to that position. That goes for the Chief of the Defence Staff, Cabinet Secretary and so on.

**Mr Darling:** That is fine. If someone has been recognised for something that they have done really well, I do not mind. It is not something that keeps me awake at night. That was why I had nothing to do with the calls to remove Sir Fred Goodwin's knighthood in 2008 and 2009, because there were rather more pressing issues to deal with. However, if you are to look at it you need to consider the whole thing afresh and proceed on the basis that this should be something exceptional. The people I would like to see going to the palace in larger numbers are those who, frankly, do an awful lot in whatever field it is but do not always get the recognition they should.

**Lord Jones:** The world has changed. Not only do we no longer have an empire, but there are lots of ways we can sing our song and reward excellence with honours that do not reflect that word. Similarly, when you were a very poorly paid civil servant or diplomat and not being rewarded on a market rate, I can see why a grateful country and sovereign should say thank you by way of honours recognition. Now a top civil servant is getting more than a top manager in many a business and a stonkingly good pension compared with the private sector. I am sorry, but the idea of rewarding because you are not being paid in the same way goes out of the window. I am thrilled that at last we are rewarding the public sector in a way they thoroughly deserve, but they cannot have it both ways. They cannot then say, "By the way, I'd also like my automatic honour."

**Q119 Kelvin Hopkins:** I hold no brief for Fred Goodwin and I am no enthusiast for the honours system but, given the crisis that came upon us because of the behaviour of a large number of people, including officials from the FSA, Treasury and Bank of England who should have known better and got a grip of it earlier on, something dramatic had to be done to pull people up short and restore some integrity, if you like, to the British banking system. People from Bangalore no doubt know it is a bit better now than it was then. It may not be perfect now, but

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something dramatic had to be done. It just so happens that Fred Goodwin was first in line.

**Mr Darling:** That is precisely my objection to it. We are all supposed to be equal before the law. Something is very wrong when you say, "Right, I'm picking you out two years after the event." You are right that the banking system is better, but not because of the removal of Fred Goodwin's knighthood but because various other things have been done in the meantime. If you look round that boardroom table, all of those guys still have their knighthoods and, by the way, are still operating in other boardrooms and other parts of the British establishment. Fred's mistake—I told him this would happen—was holding on to his pension. If he had not done that, he would have been able to dip below the horizon and reappear somewhere. As it is, I think the man is virtually unemployable.

**Q120 Kelvin Hopkins:** But the boil had to be lanced somehow. I agree with you that we should not be scapegoating, but the parallel, if you like, is with MPs' expenses. Something had to be done to try to get back some public respect.

**Mr Darling:** Yes, but people have to be treated equally.

**Lord Jones:** You execute Admiral Byng pour encourager les autres, do you?

**Q121 Kelvin Hopkins:** It may be a lot of knighthoods, not just one.

**Lord Jones:** The problem is that the subject matter is so easy to condemn. I thought next morning that he thoroughly deserved it.

**Q122 Chair:** Do you think that if the public could strip politicians of their honours and privy councillorships, they would vote to do so.

**Lord Jones:** On the basis that they make mistakes as well.

**Q123 Chair:** Perish the thought.

**Lord Jones:** Exactly.

**Q124 Charlie Elphicke:** Mr Darling, you have dealt with honours to businessmen and civil servants. What about politicians? For example, do you think that Gordon Brown should have an honour for his services as Prime Minister, or was he simply doing a day job?

**Mr Darling:** I would not exclude politicians, national or local, in either House from being awarded it if they had done something special. It would be a great pity if we went back to the system where there were political honours in every list. Basically, you would see "for political services" in relation to the chairman of a local party, or something like that. I do not think that is a good thing. What I am saying is that it should not be automatic; it should be something special. In other words, MPs and politicians should be treated as the rest of the population.

**Chair:** We will come to political honours later on. I know you have views on that.

**Q125 Lindsay Roy:** Is it your contention that Sir Fred Goodwin was a sacrificial lamb?

**Mr Darling:** The problem was that there was a bit of the lynch mob about it. He was offered up and dealt with.

**Q126 Lindsay Roy:** Can you elaborate on what changed between 2009, when there were calls for annulment, and 2012? You have made mention of lynch mobs, but what were the various pressures brought to bear to bring the Forfeiture Committee about to make this decision?

**Mr Darling:** I do not know what happened under the present Government. In 2008 and 2009 occasionally there would be calls—you would read about them in the newspapers—for one or more people concerned to have their honours removed. I was very clear at the time that, with all the other things we had to deal with, with banks on the brink of collapse, frankly it was not at the front of my mind. My permanent secretary at the Treasury said he had been approached by the Cabinet Secretary on one or maybe two occasions to see what we thought. I was very clear, as was Sir Nick Macpherson, that we wanted nothing to do with it. The rules, as we understood them, were that you lost your honour if you had broken the law and gone to jail, or you had been struck off. Whatever you think of Fred Goodwin, he had not done either of these things.

**Q127 Lindsay Roy:** It was the wrong way to go about it.

**Mr Darling:** It was something I did not entertain for more than a couple of minutes. Suppose we had done this. I think we would have got exactly the same reaction as the present Government, where people say, "Hold on, you are trying to pass all the buck on to this one man." When you look at the build-up to the banking crisis and so on, it was not the fault of one man. He made mistakes—do not misunderstand me—but to try to pass this off on the basis that by dealing with one man you deal with the problem is something that brings politics into disrepute.

**Lord Jones:** To answer your specific question, I think the publication of the FSA report suddenly provided chapter and verse to dish out a bit of blame around the place.

**Q128 Lindsay Roy:** And the wolf pack came out.

**Lord Jones:** Exactly. He got a kicking in the FSA report. As Alastair rightly says, he was not accused of any criminal offence.

**Mr Darling:** He was not the only one who was criticised in that report.

**Lord Jones:** To answer your specific question about what changed, I think suddenly the pack got a bit of paper it could work on.

**Q129 Chair:** It is worth pointing out that the FSA's Bill Knight told the Treasury Select Committee there was "no evidence" of Mr Goodwin's incompetence, and that the FSA report did not amount to a censure of Mr Goodwin.

**Mr Darling:** Absolutely.

**Lord Jones:** The fact is that there was a report that provided a hook.

**Mr Darling:** It would be interesting to see the deliberations of the Forfeiture Committee. Every one

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of them is a knight and civil servant. When you criticise a country in another part of the world for lack of democratic process, you know what the verdict will be once you refer a case to a court or committee. That is precisely what happened here. From the moment I heard it had been referred to that committee I was in no doubt what it could come up with. It is a function of the way it was dealt with, but there is no way this should be decided by six permanent secretaries and one or two others.

**Q130 Chair:** We are going to interview the chairman of the Forfeiture Committee.

**Mr Darling:** You tempt me to come along.

**Q131 Lindsay Roy:** To clarify, the Forfeiture Committee did not change the rules.

**Mr Darling:** No, it did; it used the holdall, and then referred to the FSA report, but, as the Chairman just said, that does not help them.

**Q132 Chair:** We have a Labour vacancy on this Committee at the moment, if you would like to volunteer.

**Mr Darling:** I have other commitments at the moment.

**Q133 Priti Patel:** Should decisions to annul honours take into account the views of Members of Parliament?

**Mr Darling:** No.

**Lord Jones:** Certainly not.

**Q134 Priti Patel:** Going back to the case of Mr Goodwin, do you think the fact that many Members of Parliament were commenting at the time helped to drive it, or influence what then happened?

**Mr Darling:** Yes. To be blunt about it, I suspect that the members of the committee were fooled. Inasmuch as one can say, they were fully aware of what the noise was. I think that would include the fact there was an early-day motion, or something like that. Lots of MPs were quoted—I cannot remember which—but that is all the more reason, as in any court, for it stand aside from what people are shouting and say, “Let’s look at the facts here and the criteria and come to a view.” Despite what a lot of people said, the reaction afterwards was almost universally one of criticism.

**Lord Jones:** If an MP sat in his or her surgery the weekend before the Forfeiture Committee sat and the issue of Fred Goodwin was mentioned, it would have been said, “This man doesn’t deserve his knighthood. How on earth he got a knighthood is beyond me; he should be in prison and bankrupted.” That is the sort of thing the average guy in the street—or my mum—would have said. I understand why MPs reflect that; that is why they have surgeries. That would have filtered up to places. One of three things could have been done. He could not be put in prison because he committed no criminal offence. He could not be bankrupted, because, as I understand it, he had not committed an actionable tort. He could have his knighthood taken away, but only in my view by action taken today and implemented retrospectively. In that respect was the action taken because of MP pressure?

I think it helped, but the biggest pressure of all was the headlines in the newspapers and a Government who were influenced by that and went forward to satisfy the mob. It is not the way this nation should be seen to mete out justice. It was nothing more or less than punishment, and in our nation punishment should be meted out to people after due process and proper trial by their peers in a transparent way, unless there are huge reasons why it should not be transparent. Not one aspect of that happened.

**Q135 Chair:** Would you not say that in part this was politicians shifting the blame on to the banking and regulatory class?

**Lord Jones:** No, I would not, to be fair to them, although I do not know why we should be fair to them. The huge anti-banking, anti-business and anti-wealth creation sentiment in this nation at the moment does not need to be fuelled any more by politicians.

**Q136 Chair:** But the politicians ramped this up.

**Lord Jones:** Of course they ramped it up; it is populist to hate business and to try to get people to dismiss wealth creation. I do not think this decision was taken to shove blame away from politicians, which was your question. Do I think it was part of a populist revolt against wealth creation and banking in particular? Yes, I do.

**Mr Darling:** It is worth reflecting that this was the end of January and beginning of February; it was just coming into the bonus season. I referred to the article I wrote in *The Times*—I wrote it during the day—about the fact I thought the Government were making a big mistake in going along with vilifying the chief executive of RBS. That evening the news came out, so I added to it. Those were the atmospherics at the time. But it will not wash. The public are well aware that, when it comes to pointing the finger on this particular thing, there are many different groups to look at. Anyone who thought for a moment about trying to put it all on to one person would realise it would not work. This is a classic case where the Cabinet Secretary should have said, “If you want to change the rules, fine, but don’t ask us to do this for you using rules on the subject that are somewhat less than clear.”

**Q137 Kelvin Hopkins:** You have said that MPs should not sit on the Forfeiture Committee. Who should sit on that committee?

**Mr Darling:** I would make it independent of the political establishment. I certainly would not have MPs on it. You might have a top civil servant advising the committee. I would give the job to a retired judge, or somebody like that, maybe with three or four other people, but it has to be seen to be independent. There might be the odd one or two who do not have a knighthood.

**Q138 Kelvin Hopkins:** It does have some rules to go by.

**Mr Darling:** It has to have clear rules; otherwise, you cannot judge anything, but I think the committee itself should be out of the establishment, so there is no temptation for civil servants to say, “What do our

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masters want?" In the Civil Service mind, that can happen very easily. Of course, they would not be told what to do, but I should not think any of them would have any doubt as to the general mood at the time.

**Q139 Chair:** They have to be people who are capable of resisting public pressure.

**Mr Darling:** Yes. You ask me what MPs think. Over the past three or four years I have had the job, and still do to some extent, of defending bankers' high pay and bonuses. At times you think, "I'm not getting any of that, and here I am having to defend this because of the world in which we live." Sometimes you have to stand up and say things that are not popular. When I said what I said about Fred Goodwin's knighthood, I believed that next morning when I went into the BBC the world would be against me, but I thought that if I did not speak up on the subject I would be making a huge mistake, because I just found the whole thing so repugnant.

**Lord Jones:** I completely agree with that. I remember that it came out at about five o'clock. I was in the studios doing something else. I went on all the news channels at six o'clock to deal with it. I remember thinking, "I don't think I am where the public are on this, but I know I am standing up for something I believe in, which is the rule of law." I did think I would get a kicking in the morning's newspapers but at least I could look in the mirror and think I had done something right that night. Quite a few journalists came out against me, but, as I got round the country and talked to businesses, I was quite surprised that they were all of the same opinion, which is what you found: "We didn't like him; we thought he thoroughly deserved everything he got, but this is not the way of going about it."

**Q140 Kelvin Hopkins:** I agree about not scapegoating, but, from your experience, someone somewhere in the Treasury or Bank of England must have seen what was happening. I wrote articles in a scurrilous left-wing newspaper suggesting that running an economy on an asset price bubble and credit card debt was not sensible, and at some point it would all crash. I wrote this long before it all happened. Surely, people in the Treasury must have been saying, obviously before your time, "Chancellor, this is not going to work in the end."

**Mr Darling:** It is a subject on which I can speak for some hours. Happily, much of it is covered in my book.

**Lord Jones:** It is available in all good book shops.

**Mr Darling:** And now out in paperback. Since I have mentioned it, perhaps I should draw the Committee's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Interests, which includes the book. There are many examples where people inside or outside Government saw things going wrong. Part of the problem was that at no point prior to this did someone bring all this together and say, "Hold on, we're sitting on a potential time bomb here." There was concern expressed about the property bubble and the amount of private debt. What I do not think anyone really foresaw was that it was all coming together in such a lethal combination. Critically, a lot of people, including the regulators,

failed to spot the interconnections, especially within the banking system, so that when something went wrong it fed right through the system within a matter of weeks. We are still living with that today. One of the problems we have today is that, while we and the Americans cleaned up the banking system four years ago, Europe did not. We saw Spain last week desperately trying to do that, but that is probably way off your honours inquiry.

**Q141 Chair:** We could spend hours on that, and I would love to do so, but we cannot.

**Mr Darling:** Good.

**Lord Jones:** Perhaps I may declare an interest because of my book. It does not talk about the banking crisis. Let's take the example of Northern Rock. In about 2004 or 2005 if a non-executive director had said, "I'm completely uneasy about this because it depends on the rest of the banking system lending you money, and one day the rest of the banking system might run out of money to lend you," he would have been told to go into a corner, put a towel round his head and wait until the feeling went away. I am not making a value judgment about whether that is right, wrong or indifferent, but if he had said the reason his bank would be made bankrupt is that the rest of the banking system would have no money, no one, including my learned friend, would have agreed with him.

**Q142 Chair:** This is the interesting thing, but we cannot spend too much time on this. There are others like Mr Hopkins who were forecasting impending doom for some years. For some reason the system could not do that. We look at strategic thinking across Government. You may not be aware that an organisation tried to put forward global banking collapse as one of the major risks to be addressed in the first iteration of national security strategy, and it was excised.

**Lord Jones:** When was that?

**Q143 Chair:** In 2006, which was before your time. Moving on, perhaps we may talk about the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee. I first learned of this in a letter from the Prime Minister that I was not expecting. Lord Spicer will chair this committee, which will be composed of Patrick McLoughlin, Conservative Chief Whip; the Liberal Democratic Chief Whip; the Labour Chief Whip; Baroness Hayman; Lord Butler; Dame Mary Keegan; and Peter Riddell. This committee is to oversee honours for parliamentarians and staff in Parliament. Is it necessary to have this separate honours committee in your view?

**Mr Darling:** Can you help me on one point? Your clerk was kind enough to send me a copy of this letter, and a copy of a letter written to you by the Head of the Civil Service, but I was also reminded that, because the Committee had not yet made it public, I should not make it public myself. I really need to refer to the second letter to answer your question. Am I allowed to do that?

**Q144 Chair:** Of course you can, because I have.

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**Mr Darling:** I have probably now left you with no option but to say yes. I do not think that Members of Parliament, or peers for that matter, should be treated any differently from the rest of the population; in other words, if someone does something special, or above and beyond the call of duty, of course they should be considered. That is entirely acceptable. When I was elected in 1987 the House of Commons had a surprisingly large number of knights on the back benches, predominantly in one party rather than another, who had got these things for political services. I think the general feeling was that this was out of date; it should not be happening, and over the years there were fewer and fewer knighthoods given in particular. I think we said we would specifically end the knighthoods and honours for political services. The Prime Minister now explicitly says he wants to restore that. I do not think that is right.

What I have concerns about is that the letter from Sir Bob Kerslake, Head of the Civil Service, refers to an allocation of four knighthoods or damehoods, four CBEs, six OBEs, nine MBEs and two BEMs. I think that is quite wrong. There should not be allocations. It means, presumably, that this allocation will be taken up. As far as I know, there are not allocations for doctors, nurses, lollipop men and women; they are just not there. I think this is the wrong way to go about it.

**Q145 Lindsay Roy:** Not only that. Would it not be a hugely disproportionate percentage of the overall honours?

**Mr Darling:** I do not know how wide the field is and whether it is just Members of the House or all politicians, meaning local ones, but you are right; it is still a pretty small section of the population. I do not think people in political life should be excluded from public honour, if you like. As I said to you earlier, in the Civil Service there are quotas. When these things come up before secretaries of state there is a quota. You see things like, "We're likely to get two CBEs this year. Here are three names." I just do not think it is right. At a time when politicians are not held in perhaps the highest regard we should not have a special allocation essentially for MPs.

**Lord Jones:** I completely disagree with any form of quota. Alistair Darling's deduction is completely right. I would not want a quota in any other part of our society either, and I do not see parliamentarians as better or worse in that regard.

I am quite convinced of my indecision about the following. Take a footballer, rugby player, tennis player, racing driver or swimmer. If they swim or play rugby or football to the best of their ability, they have done the job for which they are paid. They may happen to win and bring glory to our nation and to their sport. All of us can see the difference between an enfant terrible and a fabulous exemplar in a particular sport; we know various examples of both sorts. I never know the answer to the question: do you reward the England rugby world cup team that won the world cup in 2003? The manager got a knighthood; the skipper got a CBE and the rest got OBEs or MBEs. In one way, I am thrilled to bits. Personally, I would have given all of them

knighthoods. I thought it was marvellous for the nation and great for the sport. Most of them were role models who would help in the community and all the rest of it, but they were only doing their job, which is the other side of the argument.

If you are an MP, you are doing the hard hours MPs do and shouldering the burden of being unpopular all the time. In my experience 99% of MPs really do make a contribution to society. I may disagree with them politically sometimes and agree with them at other times, but the vast bulk are much unloved and yet do a fabulous job. They are a bit like that world cup winning team, are they not? They are only doing their job for which they are paid. Therefore, they should not get recognition. On the other hand, society is better off for them and they are making a contribution that is greater than other people, so they should get an honour. I am convinced of my indecision, and I would look forward to your recommendations to advise me on where I should put my cross.

**Q146 Lindsay Roy:** Are you of the view that too many honours are given for just doing a day job, no matter where it is?

**Lord Jones:** Yes, in all aspects of society.

**Q147 Lindsay Roy:** One of the criteria should be that to achieve an honour there should be a contribution way above and beyond the call of duty.

**Lord Jones:** I think so. The military is a very good example. It is a very sad fact of life—we are finding it daily and tragically at the moment—that when you join the Armed Services one of the things you may sign up to do is die. I suppose that police and prison officers are much the same. I cannot think of many others cases where that is part of the job description. Therefore, an act of bravery, as opposed to doing your job, is something that can be recognised by military honours, all the way from the Victoria Cross at the top to the bottom. I can understand that. But I do not understand why there are honours for a military career, no matter how brave you may have been on the way through it, for which there are awards for gallantry. You are doing your job, as you are if you are a senior civil servant or chief executive of a business. One thing Mr Darling's Government did really well after 1997 was to start to dish out knighthoods to head teachers of big comprehensive schools that got good reports and results. I thought it was fabulous because it was elevating education and excellence in managing education to the same extent that business, the Civil Service and the military had had for years. On my argument, do I think that those head teachers deserved it, because they are only doing their jobs? On the other hand, it was a huge morale boost for probably the most important sector of our society. I do not mean you can use the honours system on the basis, "Give me a load of money for my political party and I'll give you a knighthood." I mean you can use it to reward a sector to get their heads up and make them feel good about themselves, and then you will get the results for society going down through the classroom.

I can see why you use policy to move that forward, probably unfairly when looked at in the round, but

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they did use the honours system as a way of elevating the importance of education in our society. I personally applaud them for that, but, if I was to be cynical about it, it is no different from giving it to a civil servant or businessman because they are just doing their job. Jonny Wilkinson scored a drop goal and won the world cup. He did only what he was trained and paid to do. On the other hand, he won the world cup and we all said, "Well done," and he got an honour for it.

**Q148 Lindsay Roy:** Should a citation go beyond, for example, services to banking and indicate what it is over and above the call of duty that gained that award?

**Lord Jones:** Definitely and absolutely categorically. When I was at the CBI and signed off recommendations to what was then the DTI—in fact to you—I always asked to see what else they had done. What charitable work did they do? Did they give their time willingly to do a report, investigation or something like that? What other contribution did they make other than their day job? I felt that very strongly, as I did about mine. I do feel very strongly that should happen. I would go as far as to say that if it does not happen they should not get it.

**Chair:** That has been very helpful. I do not know whether my colleagues have any further questions.

**Q149 Greg Mulholland:** I am sorry for being late; I travelled down this morning. Perhaps I may ask one quick, final and related question. We have been talking exclusively about what the honours system is technically, but there is another way that the public perceive people, including politicians—of course, both of you are former Government Ministers—being rewarded, which is by giving them seats in the House of Lords. Digby, you have become Lord Jones. That is perceived to be an honour, often very well deserved for a number of reasons. Do you agree with me that that muddies the water considerably? I am not asking for your view on what you think of reform of the Lords.

**Lord Jones:** You do not want me to give you a discourse on reform of the House of Lords.

**Q150 Greg Mulholland:** I am not asking you to do that. We have very different views on this Committee, and that is absolutely reasonable. Nevertheless, do you accept this is an issue and somehow we need to find a way? Of course, the accusations of cronyism with regard to the House of Lords, fairly or unfairly, are most pertinent and troubling to the public. Do you think we need to find a way of dealing with that as we go forward to restore more credit to the honours system as well?

**Mr Darling:** I would make a distinction here. In relation to the House of Lords generally, I happen to be in favour of an elected second chamber. That is the way you would sort out that problem. However, a problem remains. If prime ministers want to bring in people from outside the House of Commons into Government, they have to be answerable to Parliament. Therefore, the only thing you can do is put them in the House of Lords. I think that when Gordon Brown asked Digby Jones to join the

Government, he had to become a Lord; otherwise, there was no other way to get him to the Dispatch Box. There is no way round that. If you move to an elected system and wanted to have provision for outsiders to be Ministers, you would have to think of some way to allow them to be answerable. There are a number of stages before you even get to that point. I have not spent much time thinking about it, but the only way ultimately you can resolve the House of Lords problem that you enunciate is by electing it because appointment then does not arise, but, as I understand it, there will be many happy hours of debate in this place when we come to look at that.

**Q151 Chair:** I take it you are voting for an open list system.

**Mr Darling:** I remember studying this in great depth some years ago, so much so I came to the conclusion, like so many others, that of all the problems we face in this country the House of Lords is probably not the biggest one, although there is merit in reforming it. I would have thought there are other matters, economic dare I say, on which we would better concentrate our minds at the moment.

**Lord Jones:** It will come as no surprise that I fundamentally disagree with the man on my left.

**Mr Darling:** We have fallen out at last.

**Lord Jones:** As I go round the businesses of Britain and ask what are the top 10 things a government could do right now to create jobs, wealth, generate taxation and sort out the mess, I have to say they do not say, "Please reform the House of Lords." It is not exactly at the top of the national agenda, so on that we agree. To answer your specific question, first, you are right that I became a peer to do a job. I became a peer to be able to stand at the Dispatch Box and participate in fighting for trade and investment within the Government. I am the only Minister the country has ever had that did not belong to the party of government. I did not want to belong to any party; I never have and never will in my view. I and the Prime Minister felt that trade and investment was the one job you could do that was not party-politicised. It was very promotional, especially overseas. We live in a world where overseas you need titles. I am not too sure what those titles need to be, but they have to be recognised so people understand they are talking to a certain stratum of the country you are representing. It might be anathema to some people; it just happens to be a fact of life. If you sit down with people in other countries and promote trade and investment, believe me they want to know they are talking to senior people and they need titles. We can certainly have a conversation about what those titles should be.

Second, I considered it an enormous honour and privilege, and I still think that today. People always say I am one of those who never take it for granted any day of my life, and I do not. But I did not see it as an honour in the same way as I did when I got my knighthood. When I was knighted by Her Majesty, that was purely an honour. There were no obligations or responsibilities coming with it at all. That was recognition for charitable work and for the work at the CBI and business. I considered that a most tremendous honour.

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When I became a peer I saw that as a job of work and an obligation and responsibility to fulfil a task every day. It was a tool to enable me to do so. I find it difficult to answer a question you have not asked me: even if you bought that argument, on that basis does it mean that when you stop doing that job you cease to be a peer? Do I go back to “Sir” in my case or “Mr” in others? I do not know. What I do know is that I participate actively in the House of Lords as a cross-bench peer, and I take part in debates. I am there quite often. Did my experience from all the things I have done add to the quality of the debate to which I can contribute? Yes, it does. By the way, loads of peers with former ministerial briefs carried on in the House of Lords when the job stopped and add to the quality of the legislative process by being there, which

could not happen if your title stopped when your job stopped.

**Q152 Chair:** I think we are going off the subject.

**Lord Jones:** But I am answering these questions. I would end that little bit by saying that, even if you have an elected upper chamber or you do not—in other words, the thing on which Alistair and I disagree—the matter on which we are both in agreement is that somehow you have to get expertise into the government side of life within Parliament, which has to be accountable to Parliament. How you do that, whether it is elected or not, is for another day.

**Chair:** It is for another day, but thank you both very much. It has been a delight to have you both before us.

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### Examination of Witnesses

*Witnesses:* **Graham Smith**, Chief Executive, Republic campaign, and **John Lidstone**, commentator on the honours system, gave evidence.

**Q153 Chair:** I welcome our second panel of witnesses. I would be very grateful if you could identify yourselves for the record.

**John Lidstone:** My name is John Lidstone.

**Graham Smith:** I am Graham Smith, chief executive officer of the Republic campaign.

**Kelvin Hopkins:** I want to put on record that I am a member of Republic.

**Q154 Chair:** Let me start by putting a question to Mr Smith. The Cabinet Office did a survey on this topic in 2009 and it was found that 71% of people were proud that the UK honour system existed. Does that not suggest that the reforms you propose are unnecessary?

**Graham Smith:** I did look at the evidence. I could not see any source materials. I am not quite sure what questions were asked of people.

**Q155 Chair:** Generally, people are content with the honours system.

**Graham Smith:** Maybe they are or are not. I think it is difficult to take one bit of evidence and draw too many conclusions from it. I think there is widespread discomfort with a lot of the details of the honours system, even if they are happy with the fact that we have such a system. Some of those issues were raised by the previous witnesses, Lord Digby Jones and Mr Darling. Clearly, there is a lot of discomfort with issues such as the use of the word “empire” and the idea of giving people titles. I think the problem with titles is the distinction between recognition and elevation. Rather than simply recognising people, you are elevating them and implying there is a structure within society in which some people have a higher status than others. I do not think that is appropriate in a democratic society where we are all supposed to be recognised as equal citizens with political equality, if not other forms of equality.

**Q156 Chair:** Mr Lidstone, do you want to comment on that?

**John Lidstone:** If one looks at the Republican argument, my problem is that we have a Queen who has been on the throne for as long as she has and, having come to the throne at the age she did, she did not have what I would call any publicly stated views on anything. She now has that remarkable ability to be able to meet all conditions and types of people throughout the world and the Commonwealth. She has great abilities to give counsel to the Prime Minister and any other member of the Government or Opposition. My difficulty with republican argument—I have made some attempts to study it—is: where will you get that accumulation of wisdom? Where will you find a person who can fulfil that role in the same way she has? We have got Charles coming, and that is a problem with all the ammunition he has given to the opposition through his rather ill-made remarks.

**Q157 Chair:** I do not think we want to discuss that.

**John Lidstone:** We do not need to go that way, but it has to be taken in the balance when one looks at the republican argument versus the monarchy. What I am saying is that I find myself in a difficulty in being able even to say who could be a candidate for that job, even if the argumentation was not so many in favour of royalty and so few in favour of a republic at the moment.

**Graham Smith:** I think the focus is on honours rather than the monarchy.

**John Lidstone:** But I wanted to give that view about the republican case.

**Graham Smith:** The problem is that there is a fundamental dishonesty in the whole system in the pretence that the Queen is granting honour and she is the fount of it. Clearly, the Queen has very little input into the process and she is simply doing what is required of her, which is to turn up and go through the ceremony. The system ought to be open and honest and it should be clear who is doing the rewarding.

**Q158 Chair:** But the principle is that those recommended to receive honours from Her Majesty

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have to pass a certain threshold or test that they are suitable for such honours.

**John Lidstone:** Edward Heath remarked upon the ‘fount of honour’ years ago. He said he wanted to do as little as possible to damage the Queen’s ability to exercise the fount of honour, and yet she does not exercise it; it comes through all these different committees up to her. Of course, one of the problems is that, as we heard from your previous witnesses, so many honours are given for being in the job you do. If you take Gus O’Donnell, who as just retired as Chief Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, he has four gongs. For what, for heaven’s sake? All of these permanent secretaries have gongs; they all go with the job. Why? Nobody has answered that question at all. The fact is that they are civil servants doing their job, and that is it.

**Graham Smith:** We are supposed to be a democratic society, and our sovereignty ought to lie with the people, not the Crown or Parliament. It ought to be the people who are the fount of honour. It is the people who ought to be rewarding and recognising their fellow citizens, and the monarch ought not to have a place in this process at all.

**Q159 Chair:** The honours system ought to be run like *X Factor*, should it?

**Graham Smith:** I am not suggesting we have public votes on it. I agree with a lot of what was said earlier by Alistair Darling and Lord Digby Jones about putting in place a process involving an independent committee. I think that the rules of that process ought to be entirely in the hands of a cross-party parliamentary committee.

**Q160 Chair:** That leads to a more specific question. What steps do you think we ought to take in order to improve the transparency of the honours system?

**Graham Smith:** Remove Government’s participation in the process completely and have an independent committee that is open and transparent and has clear rules. The rules ought to be set and policed by a cross-party parliamentary committee independent of Government influence, so that the people awarding the honours are managed through an independent committee on behalf of Parliament—not on the behalf of an unelected monarch.

**John Lidstone:** I have gone on record as saying that, in my judgment, honours should only be given for two categories of people: those who do outstanding things beyond their job and duty and those in the armed forces or in civilian life who perform acts of outstanding bravery—nobody else. We have heard a not dissimilar view from Alistair Darling that the honours system should virtually recognise that. The starting point is that there is no definition, as it were. Forget about republicanism and monarchy and all the rest of it; let us start by saying “what are honours for”. I thought I would draft something: this is how I look at the honours system. “The honours system exists to recognise, through tangible awards, acts of outstanding excellence or bravery beyond an individual’s duty or job.” If you do that, you are immediately going to exclude all these politicians, diplomats, people like that, who get honours with the

job. If you analyse the Birthday and New Year honours lists, it seems to be that you see these people coming up and getting their honours all the time. Ambassadors getting knighthoods: for what? They are doing their job, nothing more. It does not open any gates to political favour because they have knighthoods or anything like that. The starting point has to be a definition of what you mean by honours. Flowing from that, you have to look at all the committees. If you look at the committees at the moment, the latest committees we have, there are 84 members of all the committees. Guess how many honours they have all accrued to them: 102. You have all these people sitting there with titles. Nearly every chairman has a title or an honour, mostly going with the job. Why? No objectivity about any of those committees at all. In fact, Mr Chairman, I made the excuse when I campaigned after the last inquiry of going around the country. I thought I would put my own name forward to one of these committees that was going to be put forward to take the place of the ones headed by the Civil Service. I was rejected, although I do bring a bit of knowledge about this subject. The fact that I turned down the CBE when it was offered to me might have played a part in that; I am not sure.

**Graham Smith:** Putting aside the republican issue, I agree with a great deal of what John has said in terms of the limitations of who should be awarded. There is a lot of fiction and euphemism around the awards that are given. People are saying they should go with their jobs, but I was looking at the New Year honours list for 2012, and the knighthoods were almost entirely for people doing their jobs: mathematicians getting it for doing maths; professors getting it for services to scholarship. The list is entirely full of people getting it for their jobs and for no other reason. I find that quite bizarre. Particularly with the knighthoods, it is insidious that we are essentially elevating these people to some higher status. It reinforces this idea that there is a stratified society, where there is an elite that awards these titles to members of their own circles and rarely do they get awarded outside of those circles.

**Q161 Lindsay Roy:** We would accept there seems to be a widespread public view that some people get an honour for doing their job. Is there also a widespread public view that honours can be bought?

**John Lidstone:** Yes.

**Graham Smith:** Absolutely.

**Q162 Lindsay Roy:** What evidence do you have for that?

**Graham Smith:** Again, looking at this list, there is evidence from Paul Ruddock, who suggested some changes. He claims that he was given his knighthood for charitable work. It is very notable that he was a long-standing donor to the Conservative Party. Quite frankly, having read his evidence, I cannot see any reason why he ought to be knighted over and above anybody else. The only thing that does stand out is his very close relationship with the Conservative Party.

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**Q163 Chair:** To be fair to Sir Paul Ruddock, his charitable work and his donations to charity utterly dwarf his donations to the Conservative Party. Are you suggesting that anybody who gives money to a political party should be excluded from any honour?

**Graham Smith:** There needs to be a very good reason for anybody getting an honour; I do not think charity work is good enough. It is very difficult to judge these things. This is the whole question of philanthropy. If a very rich person gives large amounts of money to a charity, I do not think that is sufficient to be awarded. Someone who is on the minimum wage may give a considerably greater contribution to charity, whether it is in terms of their own money or whether it is in terms of time and effort. It is considerably less likely that they would then be knighted for that effort. It is a matter of how much sacrifice they are making: is it really a huge sacrifice for a multi-millionaire to give a few thousand pounds to a charity? Is that a greater sacrifice than a person on the minimum wage giving hundreds of pounds, £50, or a considerable amount of their time?

**Q164 Chair:** To be fair to Sir Paul Ruddock, who is not here to speak for himself, he has devoted a considerable amount of time and effort to his charitable work as well.

**Graham Smith:** As do many other people, and I think it is notable that it is people occupying certain circles in society who are much more likely to receive knighthoods for charitable work than other people who do so without recognition.

**Q165 Chair:** Do you think it is right for the press to demonise somebody who gets an honour just because they have given a donation to a political party? Is it not quite a patriotic thing, to support political parties?

**Graham Smith:** I have no problem with people supporting political parties.

**Q166 Chair:** Would you rather they were funded by the taxpayer?

**Graham Smith:** I have no problem with people supporting political parties at all, and I certainly do not think that people should be demonised for it.

**Q167 Chair:** That is the only reason he got publicity—because he had given money to a political party.

**Graham Smith:** Most people would accept there is a link, and I do not think the evidence would suggest this is a fair and balanced system of awarding people for charitable work.

**Q168 Chair:** You believe he got his knighthood because he gave money to a political party?

**Graham Smith:** That is my personal thought.

**John Lidstone:** I have an example, and Kelvin Hopkins will remember this, from when I was asked by Tony Wright to introduce myself. This is one example of many. A great friend of mine, who was chairman of four major British companies—Rank,

Westland, one of the banks, Standard Chartered, and Glynwed—was playing golf with me on the morning of the publication of the honours list in 1984. His name came up and I said, “Leslie, how come?” He said, “Well, the President of the Board of Trade”—it was called Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at that time—“asked me if I would write a cheque out for £40,000 made to the Conservative Party, and if I did that he would make sure I got a knighthood.” It was quite blatant. Then he quoted Showering and all sorts of other people, and the list that is published of all these people that gave £290,000, or £429,000, like Jeffrey Sterling of Plaistow.

The other point I would make about charity—and you may find this uncomfortable—is I do not think anybody who gives large sums of money to charity should ever be allowed to employ a publicity agent or a PR person to make sure that is broadcast so that it comes to the attention of people. Edward Heath—funny old sod that he was—had a great reputation for giving to charity in secret; nobody knew that until he died. I do not think people should buy titles through charitable giving. I think it is quite obscene. Give it in private, give it in secret, but do not publicise it for your own aggrandisement.

**Q169 Chair:** The Government has the opposite policy: they want to encourage charity.

**John Lidstone:** They do, but I do not agree with it.

**Q170 Chair:** They want to encourage charitable giving by encouraging people to advertise their charitable giving.

**John Lidstone:** It is a bit like trying to steer political policy—and, presumably, knighthoods and all that flows from them—from the Big Society, or, in Blair’s case, teachers: funnel your knighthoods towards teachers.

**Graham Smith:** It is worth noting that there are other awards for philanthropic behaviour. I do not want to pick on Paul Ruddock; it is just that he was the example being raised in the evidence. You do get other awards from the charities involved. You might get a box in the theatre or status and recognition for your generosity, and so on and so forth. I do not think it is appropriate as a nation to single these people out and say, “Because you happen to be very wealthy, and you happen to be”—as many people are—“generous with your charitable donations, we are going to then raise you to a higher status and give you a title that you can expect to be used in perpetuity.” I do not think that is appropriate at all.

**Q171 Lindsay Roy:** Are you arguing that what is happening is an over-influence on charitable giving in terms of finance, as opposed to time, energy and enthusiasm.

**John Lidstone:** Yes I do. There are two categories of charitable giving: one is to give of yourself, your time and your expertise. I used to give a lot of free time, when I was in business, to charities that needed the expertise I could bring in place of the fees they would

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have had to pay, which might have been £5,000 to £10,000. That was one form of giving, as opposed to money, which is the easiest thing to give without too much effort. Again, I would stress that I find the way people peddle their money in order to get honours slightly obscene. It is quite disgraceful.

**Q172 Priti Patel:** You spoke earlier on about civil servants receiving gongs for doing their day job, and the fact that there are some civil servants, very senior ones, that have several gongs and awards. How do you feel about the crowding out of the availability of honours at that level, so that it prevents other people, members of the community and society, from getting awards?

**John Lidstone:** You are now touching upon a number of issues, one of which is quotas; another of which is the ethnic minority of 7%; another is the percentage of women in society. All these issues seem to contend to compete with the availability of honours that are going to be handed out. I find that in itself very odd. Again, Kelvin Hopkins was a member of the last Committee that looked at this. One of the things that shook me was the way the last Committee in 2004 had its recommendations, except two rather paltry ones, kicked into the long grass. Why? Because there was a General Election coming up and Blair wanted to milk the system so that he could sell more honours before the General Election of 2005.

**Q173 Chair:** It is a good job this session is privileged.

**John Lidstone:** It is privileged, which is why I say it.

**Graham Smith:** I do not think these views are particularly unusual among the public.

**John Lidstone:** They are very common.

**Graham Smith:** I speak to people about these sorts of issues all the time. It is widely held, not just by republicans, that this system is widely abused.

**Q174 Chair:** Mr Lidstone, would it not be rather odd if the vast majority of recipients of honours were all white men in our present society?

**John Lidstone:** I do not disagree with that at all, but the question that was being put by Priti Patel was about the numbers of honours. I think too many honours are being given out to privileged people. I would like to see the recommendations of the last Committee, which recommend from 16 to 4, and then get rid of the knighthoods, because knighthoods and titles divide society, whereas what you do and achieve distinguishes you. For me, titles are an aberration; they are totally irrelevant to society as we live in it today.

The other thing about this whole business of trying to decide how many honours you have is let us say we have a man and woman competing on level terms for an honour: what is that committee going to do? Is it going to say, "Right, we have to have a bigger quota of women, so we give it to a woman," or an Anglo Chinese rather than a white person? Some of it is absurd once you start to look at it.

**Graham Smith:** With the quotas, it does seem very odd that the process seems to start with: "We have 1,000 honours; let us go and find people to give them

to." We ought to be finding the people through some other, more natural means and then saying, "Can we give them an honour." There was something Digby Jones said that I thought was very strange. He was implying that people would come to him with names of people they would like to give honours to, asking whether he could then find reasons to give them an honour. He would have to investigate their background and see whether they had done other things beyond being in the City. If you are asking people to go and investigate them after you have already decided you would like to give them an honour, that is a very strange, backward process.

**Q175 Priti Patel:** Are you calling for a radical overhaul and complete change in the criteria of the honour system?

**John Lidstone:** Yes I am. What I am calling for first of all is, as I read out earlier, a definition of the starting point from which you found an honours system. I gave my version of it. Whatever the defining point you would like to put down for it, let that be the criteria that you use, and from that you then have to look at the committee structures that sift through all of this and make sure that the right people are coming forward and being given honours. I have been up and down the country talking about the honours system for the last eight years, and I will quote what a rather cynical woman said to me in Wallingford, a very conservative place, where there are about 260 men and women at a meeting. She said, "John, why don't you just accept that the honours system is totally corrupt, and let us, like the Americans, have a tariff and sell them, quite openly. And I will tell you one thing," she said, "that I am sure will go down a hell of a treat, and that is that people are paying a great deal of money to have tea at the Ritz and the Connaught. The Queen could make a fortune out of afternoon tea parties." When she said that—it is very cynical and paltry—there was a clap of applause, because they felt that is the level to which our society's approach to the honours system has fallen.

**Q176 Charlie Elphicke:** I have two very quick questions. Given all you say, first, do you think we should just scrap the honours system altogether?

**John Lidstone:** No, I do not think that. Every country needs to honour by exception people who have done outstanding things in bravery, civilian life or elsewhere. That is the starting point.

**Graham Smith:** There is widespread agreement that there is a place for an honours system. I spent many years in Australia where they have an honours system. It is very simple: people are awarded an AO and there is generally very little controversy about it. There are no knighthoods or anything else.

**John Lidstone:** There were, but the Australians dropped them.

**Graham Smith:** Curiously, New Zealand has reintroduced knighthoods having previously got rid of them. That has caused some controversy. Something of that simplicity would be fine. I agree with John's limitation of whom you might give them to; the other things are independence and honesty about where the honour is coming from. Clearly it does not come from

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the Queen; it comes from other places, and it ought, as I say, to come from the people via a system that is controlled by Parliament. Part of the problem is it is done as a means of PR, both by government and the Palace: they award celebrities in order to try to bask in the reflected glow.

**John Lidstone:** I would disagree with the Palace, because the Palace does not award honours, except four.

**Graham Smith:** The Palace certainly exploits the system. I know some celebrities have commented on the fact that they have had to go through the process of the award ceremony in a manner that was going to be good for their photo and PR opportunities. It is notable that these things are televised and recorded. Very often you see on TV someone going up to the Queen and receiving their honour when they become a knight. After the controversy with Fred Goodwin, the Palace slapped a ban on the broadcasting of the footage of him becoming a knight. They clearly see it as part of their PR to be a central part of this system of honour, and were clearly very concerned they then might be blackened by association with giving an honour to someone who was vilified in the press.

**Q177 Charlie Elphicke:** My second question, moving on, is if we are to have an honours system, let us look at the mechanism. Currently a bunch of civil servants sit round and make a recommendation to the Prime Minister, who recommends to the Queen. For many years that has been the case; for many years there has been a concern that the bunch of civil servants propose a bunch of civil servants, and that Prime Ministers like to give honours to political cronies and things like that. If we swept away that system and simply gave it to the monarch to do, and establish a committee and a group of people to award honours to—monarch elected or otherwise—would that be a better system: that you take it away from the Civil Service, away from the politicians, very much in a philosophy that it is truly separated from the governmental system?

**Graham Smith:** The monarch herself would have reservations about that, because when you come down to controversies about whom you have given the awards to, it would then very directly reflect back on the monarch as having been personally implicated in that process. It is quite clear—we saw this with the hung Parliament in 2010—that the Palace now wants to distance itself from all of its serious constitutional duties in order to protect itself from undue scrutiny and challenge. That is the flaw of the monarchy: it cannot withstand that kind of scrutiny and challenge, and therefore it tries to distance itself from anything remotely controversial.

**John Lidstone:** Your question was implicit in one of the recommendations of the 2004 Honours Report, which said that there should be an independent commission. If I remember rightly, one of my recommendations was that there should be a royal commission constituted so that Parliament no longer had anything to do with the honours system and the

Prime Minister had no more power to do anything to the honours system. They could make recommendations, but it would be a group of totally independent people who would propose those honours. By implication, if you adopt some of the things that we have been talking about, the honours given would be much fewer and of greater stature. If you take what was said about Fred Goodwin, he was given a knighthood, and it described his award in six words, “For services to the banking industry.” If you read any citation for a VC, an MC or any of those bravery awards, it runs sometimes to 150 words, whereas if you read most of these MBEs, OBEs, CBEs, KBEs, the citation is about four words. What does that tell you? What does that tell anybody? All it tells the general public is that it is a stitch up.

**Q178 Chair:** Are you recommending there should be a much longer citation?

**John Lidstone:** There should be a much longer citation, fewer honours, and they should be outstanding honours. For example, if you take a question that arose from Priti Patel’s one to us earlier about honours, if you take the law, Parliament itself, livery companies, industry, the acting profession: all of these bodies have mechanisms for recognising outstanding competence beyond what they do in their normal way. The greatest joke to me was the award of a knighthood to Bruce Forsyth. It was absolutely bizarre, as it was to Terry Wogan. These people have their Oscars, Baftas and everything else.

**Graham Smith:** There also seemed to be with Bruce Forsyth—

**John Lidstone:** That was a campaign.

**Graham Smith:** There was a campaign, but there seemed to be a sense of entitlement: simply because he had reached a certain age and longevity in his career, it was now his turn. I do not think that is appropriate at all. It completely debases the whole system and devalues the awards. Personally, if I had done something quite extraordinary that saw me awarded an MBE and I then saw Bruce Forsyth getting something for essentially making an awful lot of money out of entertaining people, I would have been very angry indeed. I imagine some people were.

**John Lidstone:** Paul Scofield, the famous Shakespearean actor, said, “I am totally against knighthoods for anybody who acts.” He said, “They may stand up and say, ‘Of course, I am accepting this on behalf of my fellow thespians.’ Rubbish—who are they kidding?”

**Q179 Kelvin Hopkins:** This is a question to Mr Smith. You have called on nominees for honours to, and I quote, “publicly reject any such honour until such time as they are appropriately titled and properly reserved for legitimate purposes.” How successful have you been at persuading people?

**Graham Smith:** People do reject them. This is a fairly recent statement. Obviously the whole process is secretive, so it is difficult to know who is in line for them before they accept them. There is a long line of

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people who have rejected them, and one of the problems of the system is it is, for some people, divisive and exclusive. I do not think we ought to put up with a system—even if it is only a minority of people—where some people feel unable to take those honours because of their views about empire and the monarchy. I do not think that is appropriate. An honours system ought to be acceptable and open to everybody in the country if they have done things worthy of nomination. There are people, Benjamin Zephaniah, Joan Smith, for example: they have rejected them for different reasons.

**John Lidstone:** Or returned them, as in the case of Yasmin Alibhai-Brown.

**Graham Smith:** People do reject them; that in itself is a sign that it needs to be changed so that it is acceptable to everybody. I do not think it is right that some people should be excluded from that system.

**Q180 Kelvin Hopkins:** You want to move towards—as I would personally—a democratic country of citizens, rather than subjects.

**Graham Smith:** Democratic values are very deeply and widely held in this country; that should be reflected in the honours system. It should be citizens rewarding other citizens for great deeds or bravery, and it should not be a slightly patronising notion of a higher power conferring status upon a lower subject. I think that is quite wrong.

**John Lidstone:** Chairman, could I make just one comment about the nomination system that I think John Major introduced, did he not? It was his idea. You earlier had interviewed two Lord-Lieutenants. It seems to me that if the nomination works properly that could be one of the principle sources for the discovery of people of outstanding courage in civilian life or outstanding acts in civilian life. Of course, the services have their own bravery awards. That could be a principal source—to feed into an independent commission—of people who could be considered for an honour, and give the Lord-Lieutenants a greater say in these matters, assuming that one wants to continue that system. At the moment—and I cannot get any information about the nomination system—it seems to me there were about 7,000 people coming into that system through the application. If about 20 got an honour, would that sound right? It would be about as many as did. That seems to me to be so bizarre in itself that it is not working. That should be a principal source.

**Q181 Lindsay Roy:** The evidence from the Lord Lieutenants was they felt marginalised.

**John Lidstone:** Indeed they did, as I read, very marginalised, but you see, in a way one of the problems with Lord-Lieutenants is most of them come from very privileged backgrounds. Therefore their ability to relate to the general public is rather stifled, to say the least.

**Q182 Chair:** I am not sure they would agree with that.

**John Lidstone:** One of them would not.

**Q183 Greg Mulholland:** If I could turn to the question of forfeiture, which was touched on by the first panel. An obvious place to start is what are your views on the decision to cancel and annul Fred Goodwin's knighthood? I do not know which of you would like to start with that.

**Graham Smith:** I would start by saying I was in the strange position of agreeing with quite a lot of what Digby Jones was saying. I have absolutely no sympathy for Fred Goodwin whatsoever, but I felt that the process and the manner in which it was done were quite odd. As was said earlier, there was a complete lack of clarity about the rules, about the process, about who was making the decision and why he was being singled out without everybody else being subject to the same punishment, if you like. One of the big problems with Fred Goodwin is that most people could not really understand why he got the honour in the first place.

**John Lidstone:** I agree with that.

**Graham Smith:** That is quite a significant contributory factor. This is the problem with the honours system: these things are just given out to people like Fred Goodwin who have done nothing to deserve it. That is widespread. When you are watching the news you get experts from senior positions in business, politics, academia and so on, and an awful lot of them are sir this and sir that. People get the impression that, if you mix in certain circles and you are of a certain class, if you like, the odds of you getting a knighthood are considerably increased.

**John Lidstone:** One of the points about Fred Goodwin's knighthood is that, normally speaking, the job that he was doing, if he did a good job—forget about what happened with NatWest and the Royal Bank of Scotland—at the end of his career, when he was retiring, somebody might well then say, "He has done a first class job, was outstanding in other respects and could be perhaps worthy of some sort of an honour", but not, first of all, give it whilst he is still working there.

So far as the Forfeiture Committee is concerned, and you can go back to people like Roger Casement and all those people who have had their knighthoods removed from them, the problem with that—and I also agree with a lot of what Digby Jones said—is that there is no framework of legality about that system of removing somebody under forfeiture. One of the problems we have at the moment is we have a chap sitting in the House of Lords and there is no way of getting rid of him—Jeffrey Archer—and a lot of other peers of dubious background and behaviour over expenses. But I do agree that, if the Forfeiture Committee is to have teeth and be respected, it has to have a legal framework within which to make its decisions.

**Q184 Greg Mulholland:** Thank you for that. I think we all agree that the process is not sufficiently clear, and certainly there is a lack of transparency about decisions like that, whatever people may think of them. Do you not think there is a clear, gaping hole

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in the criteria for forfeiting an honour, whether it should have been given or not? The two criteria that are laid down are to be found guilty of a criminal offence and sentenced to a term of three months' imprisonment, or to have been censored, struck off, by the relevant body.

**John Lidstone:** That makes the point that there was not, if you like, a really factual basis on which the Fred Goodwin case was founded.

**Q185 Greg Mulholland:** Indeed, but the point I am coming on to is that they are two very specific criteria, and then there is discretion. That is where the grey area is, which is unacceptable. Is there not one third, blindingly obvious criteria that should be there? If someone has been given something for services to an industry and they then are deemed to have damaged that industry, they should lose it. I wish to give one example, because there are many examples. This is also an example, Mr Lidstone, that fits very well with your description of the reasons for giving honours. Ted Tuppen, the CEO of Enterprise Inns, in 2007 was given a CBE for services to the hospitality industry, which I think surprised Enterprise Inns' tenants—

**John Lidstone:** A lot of people.

**Q186 Greg Mulholland:** —at the time, but in fact Enterprise Inns have had a 96.6% collapse in share prices over the last five years. At the same time Mr Tuppen has paid himself half a million pound bonuses, he has also increased his pay by 50% and the company has been over £3 billion in debt. There are many people—including me—who study the pub industry very closely who believe he has done more damage singularly than any other individual in this country to the British pub industry. Should there not be a third criteria to say that where people are deemed to have damaged the very sector they are supposed to have helped, they should forfeit their honours?

**Graham Smith:** That is fair enough, but the problem would be better resolved by having a clearer understanding of why people get them in the first place.

**John Lidstone:** More transparent, yes.

**Graham Smith:** If Fred Goodwin, for example, had been knighted for a singular act of bravery, it could be argued that what he did as a banker did not reflect on the fact he had, at one time in his life, committed a singular act of bravery. You could clearly say that the two are disconnected. If you are just going to give people these bizarre awards for doing their jobs, and then just term it “services to whatever”, that is where the problem lies. Certainly if you are going to give it for services to banking and you then cause a major collapse in the banking system, clearly there are grounds for revoking that honour. However, if you just did not award the honour in the first place, that would be a stronger step forward. You would not be faced with that problem.

**John Lidstone:** Your Chairman asked me about that earlier. The transparency with which honours are given, and the facts and citations that are given, would enable you to have a really good understanding for the general public when they read this to say, “Yes, yes, yes,” or “No, no, no.” You would not have so

many “nos” if you had the facts before you. In his case we had none of those facts. Of course, you are getting situations now where not just honours but huge great salary increases are given for failure. It is almost the same thing.

**Q187 Chair:** That is different.

**John Lidstone:** I know it is a different thing, but it is almost parallel to the way that honours are given.

**Graham Smith:** It is related in the sense there is a sense there is this network of people at the top end of society who get rewarded no matter what. They are generally the same groups of people rewarding each other, and yet the people at the bottom really are the ones that suffer the consequences of all these decisions. It is part and parcel of a wider problem.

**Q188 Greg Mulholland:** Very clearly and finally, I absolutely agree giving people like Ted Tuppen an honour brings the honours system into disrepute; he has rewarded himself enormously whilst his companies are failing, his tenants' businesses are collapsing, families' lives are being ruined and pubs are closing up and down the country. Should there be tighter criteria that say, “We will reward you for certain things”—perhaps not most things, but for certain things—“and if you then do things that are an antithesis to that, you will have that honour taken away,” and that then should become an understanding of the system?

**John Lidstone:** I have a lot of sympathy with that view. That is why historically honours were given at the end of somebody's working life rather than at the beginning, because all their dirty linen—if there was any—had been hung out before. The point you are making about removing honours should be a part of the honours system for people who have disgraced it.

**Graham Smith:** It does need to be made clear when you are awarded the honour, and Fred Goodwin was part and parcel of a system where there was no need to behave in a certain way or there was never any suggestion of any consequences relating to his honour in the future.

**Chair:** I would just like to say that any views expressed about any individual by a Member of this Committee are the views of that Member and not necessarily the views of the Committee.

**Q189 Lindsay Roy:** The last Committee suggested substituting “empire” with “excellence”. Is that something you would support or is that just another recipe for rewarding people who have done the job but done it well?

**John Lidstone:** If you look at the OBE itself, it was iffy in its conception under Lloyd George, who was looking for another source of sale. There were about 25,000 of his OBEs given out, for which I believe Maundy Gregory said he could get £100 a time for the sale. It has an iffy background. John Major was then able to put together words that seemed to be too clever by half: you could keep the OBE, but just change one word, calling it “excellence” rather than “empire”. The empire does not exist anymore, and therefore to have an award for a nonexistent empire is a bit ridiculous.

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**Q190 Lindsay Roy:** It is purely an anachronism.

**Graham Smith:** I obviously completely agree that we should not have “empire” in the title. This is certainly one of the reasons why some people reject the title. That is grounds enough. Even if we say that 74% of the population are happy with the honours system, if 25% think that they cannot accept an honour because of the word “empire” being in them, that is sufficient grounds to change it immediately. Whether it is called

“excellence” or something else—I think we suggested Companion of Honour, or something similar—it does not matter too much, so long as it has a certain prestige about it and so long as it is acceptable to every right-minded person.

**Chair:** Any further questions? Thank you very much indeed for your evidence today. It has been extremely helpful and we are very grateful for your being with us this morning.

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**Tuesday 22 May 2012**

Members present:

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Chair)

Paul Flynn  
Robert Halfon  
Kelvin Hopkins

Priti Patel  
Lindsay Roy

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**Examination of Witnesses**

*Witnesses:* **Sir Bob Kerslake**, Head of the Civil Service and Chair of the Main Honours Committee, **Dame Mary Marsh DBE**, Chair of the State Honours Committee, **Sir John Parker**, Chair of the Economy Honours Committee, and **Richard Tilbrook**, Head of Honours and Appointments Secretariat, Cabinet Office, gave evidence.

**Q191 Chair:** May I welcome our witnesses to this evidence session on our inquiry into the honours system? I would invite each of you to identify yourself and your role for the record, please.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Bob Kerslake, Head of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary at the Department for Communities and Local Government.

**Sir John Parker:** John Parker, chairman of the Economy Committee and, in my day job, chairman of Anglo American.

**Richard Tilbrook:** Richard Tilbrook, Head of the Honours and Appointments Secretariat in the Cabinet Office.

**Dame Mary Marsh:** Mary Marsh, chair of the State Honours Committee and the Philanthropy Committee. My day job is mainly still in the charity sector.

**Q192 Chair:** Thank you all very much for joining us, and thank you to those of you who are volunteers and for becoming involved in this always potentially vexed and controversial area of public life. Sir Bob, we were initially led to believe, on the splitting of the role of the Cabinet Secretary and the Head of the Civil Service, that the Cabinet Secretary was going to take responsibility for the honours system and be Chair of the Main Honours Committee. Can you explain why that did not occur and you are doing the role?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** The honest answer to it is that it was incorrect at the time we made the announcement. Richard clarified that the responsibilities for the honours go very clearly with the Head of the Civil Service. There is no discretion on this; it is simply part of the job. We clarified that subsequently.

**Richard Tilbrook:** It is laid down in the statutes of the Order of the British Empire that the Head of the Civil Service has this role.

**Q193 Chair:** We did of course, naturally, request that a Minister come and give evidence to this Committee about government policy on the honours system. That was declined on the grounds that no Minister is responsible; it is entirely the Prime Minister who advises the Queen on honours policy. Should we therefore be interviewing the Prime Minister?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Clearly it is for the Committee to decide who it chooses to interview. There are other opportunities, of course, to speak to the Prime Minister on a whole range of issues at the regular meeting that is held with him.

**Q194 Chair:** For all intents and purposes, should we treat you as the Minister?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I think you should treat me as the Head of the Civil Service.

**Chair:** A diplomatic answer.

**Q195 Robert Halfon:** Can you just explain how the rest of the Honours Committee members are appointed?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Yes. The appointment process for the independent members is an open process, where people apply to become members of the committees, and then there is a selection process drawn from those who apply. It is a fully open process to recruit those independent members. I do not know if Richard wanted to add anything to that.

**Richard Tilbrook:** Yes. All the posts are advertised on the public appointments website. It varies in terms of the numbers of people that apply. If it is a member of a committee, then the Chair of that committee will conduct the interview, with me in support. We are looking for a broad cross-section of members.

**Q196 Robert Halfon:** The majority of members of your committee have honours themselves. Is this an inevitable consequence of appointing acknowledged experts in the field as independent members of the Honours Committee?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I do not think it is an inevitable consequence, but clearly what you are looking for are people who are knowledgeable and expert in the field that we are dealing with, whether it is the arts or business. It is therefore going to be more likely that they will have an honour, but it is not an absolutely inevitable consequence of the model. It is an open process. I guess it is also fair to say that those who have been honoured may also have more of an interest in joining the committees. Obviously John will speak for himself on that, and Mary. It is those things that influence the outcome of the process, rather than that it is an expectation that you have an honour in order to be on the committees.

**Sir John Parker:** Chairman, it might be helpful if I tell you that, recently, we had a public advertisement for four members for the Economy Committee. We had a very large number of applicants. The final selection, I believe I am correct in saying, was of two people without honours, two with honours, and three out of the four were female.

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**Q197 Robert Halfon:** What kind of backgrounds are the majority of your members coming from?

**Sir John Parker:** If I take the Economy Committee, we are looking for people who have a knowledge of different sectors of the economy, so that they can be well placed to give professional views and opinions of the citations that come before us. In fact, on the recruitment we have found someone who knows the retail sector very well, and that was an area that concerned us, because we had an under-representation of females. We have someone who understands the regulatory community and the technology community. We have someone who has a very wide range of business experience across the whole of the UK. The fourth member had a very good knowledge of the ethnic community and charitable work in particular.

**Q198 Robert Halfon:** Would you say the majority of the members of the Committee are from upper-income brackets?

**Sir John Parker:** That is difficult to say, but it would not surprise me if, doing the analysis, that was the case. We have tried, as you have just heard, to see how we can spread that.

**Q199 Robert Halfon:** I meant the Committee in general, not just your sub-committee.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** We have not truthfully done the analysis. The names are all in the public domain. I think you would actually see people from a range of incomes. If you look at the committee that I am a member of as well as chairing the main Committee, the committee of the voluntary and local sector, you will see that there are people from a range of different backgrounds on that committee.

**Q200 Priti Patel:** How open and accessible is the process to members of the public?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** In terms of the process of putting forward people, it is a very open process. Indeed, we are doing a lot of work—Richard would be very happy to talk about this—to do outreach to make it more widely known. The process of nomination, putting people forward, is a very open and clear process. The process of deciding is done in private, and I think that is perfectly legitimate, because we are talking about individuals. It is reasonable, as they have not themselves put their names forward—they have come from others—that that is kept in confidence. In every other respect, it is an open process and we actively encourage people to put forward names.

**Richard Tilbrook:** May I just add to that? If you Google the word “honours”, the first website that comes up is ours, which gives you a huge amount of information on the honours system and how to nominate someone for an honour. It gives case studies of people who have been honoured in the past. If someone is proactively wanting to find out that is quite easy, but there is a broad range of outreach work that we are doing as well. We have linked up with the Women’s Institute. You will have seen from our statistics that women are still not, I don’t think, fairly represented in the honours list, so we are doing a national campaign with them. We are doing outreach

visits to the parts of the country that are particularly under-represented in the list, so I will be in Sheffield later this week talking about the honours system. We have had efforts with ethnic communities, and so on, so there is a big effort to try to make it as accessible and as well known as possible.

**Q201 Priti Patel:** Are you going down a target route?

**Richard Tilbrook:** Not a target route, no. What we would like to achieve is that the nominations that come forward to the selection committees do accurately represent the population at large. Once they reach the committees, then it is absolutely on merit and only those who are truly deserving will get above the bar.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** It is worth saying that, where we think the names coming forward to committees do not give us an adequate mix to choose from, there will be a push back to the Departments that are putting forward names to ask whether we can look again to see if we have the right balance. It is quite a challenging process now to try to get as even and balanced a representation as possible.

**Q202 Priti Patel:** How do you expect to address the whole issue of public confidence in the system? You are trying to get balance on the one hand, which is a commendable objective, but, at the same time, you have to demonstrate to the public that there is objectivity here as well.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** That is a very fair challenge, but the way to do that goes back to the point that I touched on and so did Richard. The more we can encourage awareness of the opportunity for people to think, “I know somebody I would want to put forward for it”, rather than thinking, “This is not for me; this is stuff I wouldn’t be connected to”, for ordinary people in the community, the more we can get that sense of people in the community thinking, “I’d like to put someone forward”, the more we get the range of choice we need in order to get a representative set of people. It is all about raising awareness, outreach work and getting more people put forward.

**Q203 Lindsay Roy:** Does the fact that Government Departments make submissions not lend itself to the perception that too many honours are awarded just for doing the day job?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** We are very, very clear now that, with one exception which I referred to in my submission, which is high court judges, nobody gets an honour now for just doing the day job. We are looking for exceptional service and exceptional achievement, and we also test very hard about people’s community involvement as well. We are very clear now that that policy of getting an honour just for doing the day job has gone. We look at what people have achieved in what they do. Whether those names come from the public or whether they come from Departments, the same test applies.

**Q204 Chair:** The Committee is gaining a strong impression that these committees have a specific remit and they drive their remit. The nominations that come in from the public or Lord-Lieutenants sometimes fall

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between the stools and it becomes very serendipitous, as was put to me by one lord lieutenant, as to whether it is picked up by one of the committees or not. Is there not a sense that the committees themselves represent something of the vested interests and the great and the good, and will tend to nominate people known in those fields of endeavour, perhaps very deservedly, but tend to miss people who are not known to people on those committees?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I would not personally accept that argument. If you look at the role of the committees, given the numbers we are talking about here and the wide range of people who get honours, you do need to break down the task to a number of committees that can bring knowledge and expertise. I would not suggest for a moment that the members of those committees can and do know the names of everybody who comes forward. We are, after all, talking about people who often make their impact at a very local level.

**Q205 Chair:** Perhaps I may ask Dame Mary Marsh. You will tend to use up quite a lot of your allocation on people who must get this honour or must get that honour, because they have worked in this field or they are known to be pre-eminent in that field or in that endeavour. The honours for ordinary members of the public get what is left over.

**Dame Mary Marsh:** I do not think that is the way the system works overall. Obviously I am a member of the main committee as well as chairing the State Honours Committee in particular. I have been a member of the State Committee for nearly four years now; I was a member of the committee before I was appointed its chair. What is interesting with the State Committee is that there is absolutely no automaticity at any level. What I find very rewarding about that committee is the range of people who we recognise across the devolved administrations—it is not just in England but in all four nations—who are working in public service, recognising people who do work that I did not even know needed to be done. There is a lot of recognition that goes to people who you would not necessarily expect, if you gave me a blank piece of paper to write down where the roles might be. It is very widely dispersed. I see the same thing when I go to the main committee, when I have access to the whole list of recommendations, which is discussed at the main committee. A very diverse range of roles are recognised.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** If I could add one last point, Chair. We also hold a pool as well, in terms of handling the allocations. If there are people who straddle a range of committees, there are ways in which we can handle that.

**Richard Tilbrook:** In an earlier session there was an assertion, which was just being replayed now, that people who are involved in voluntary work were being crowded out by people who were just doing their job. That is absolutely not the case. In the Birthday List, which will be published shortly if the Queen gives her approval, in fact Mary's committee under-used its allocation. It has an indication of a maximum number of honours that it can recommend for service in the state sector, but it did not use all of

those honours. A very wide range of people in the voluntary sector will be honoured. In particular, the reintroduction of the British Empire Medal, which is really spreading across all sectors of society—very few state servants would be recognised through that method—is just cementing this as honours open to all.

**Sir John Parker:** The only point I would like to add is that, in a number of cases, when a citation comes, say, to the Economy Committee, it will also have a note to say, "This is also being looked at in X Committee." You get feedback from there and we will provide our feedback. The other point I would just make, which you might have been heading to, was utilisation, because we certainly do not always fill our allocation of the awards. If we do not have the quality, if we do not have people who meet the criteria of going beyond the job in their voluntary service or their charitable work, then we just will not fill the allocation.

**Chair:** We are moving on to the Political Service Honours Committee.

**Q206 Paul Flynn:** This extraordinary committee, which was formed in secret, without the consent or the knowledge of MPs, has the job of distributing honours to Members of Parliament and other people involved in the parliamentary service. I asked my fellow MPs this morning at breakfast what their opinion was of this. I could not find a single MP who knew about it. Everyone I asked whether they would accept an honour from this committee gave a reply that I cannot repeat—any of their replies—but what they said was that they would firmly and impolitely suggest an alternative destination for that honour. Is this not a crass idea, knowing the public's view of politicians at the moment? Politicians are not respected at the moment. The public will see this as an attempt by politicians, having grabbed everything else, to grab the gongs as well.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** The committee was set up at the proposal of the current Prime Minister. It was his proposal and it was something that he was keen and we were keen to get moving quickly. There had been previous arrangements whereby—it is important to say there had not been people in political spheres—

**Q207 Paul Flynn:** Why did it not go through Parliament?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** We have, as you know, made a statement to Parliament, but the proposal came from the Prime Minister and we followed the normal practice, where there is a proposal from the Prime Minister to form a committee. There was a desire to move quickly on this and, therefore, Michael Spicer was asked to chair the committee.

**Q208 Paul Flynn:** Why was there a desire to move quickly?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** In order to get the new arrangements set up and running.

**Q209 Paul Flynn:** The new arrangements consist of a prominent part of that committee being the chief whips of all parties. What it will be doing is strengthening the patronage of the whips, whereas the

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Tony Wright reforms move in the opposite direction. What we want is to weaken the power of the whips. Did you consider, if you were rewarding people who were the whips' favourites, introducing a new parliamentary award of the Order of the Lickspittle or the Order of the Toady, which would be appropriate? At one time there were automatic awards given to Members of Parliament, in one party, if they had served here for 20 years, except those, like Robert Adley, who had been caught in possession of intelligent ideas or rebellious ideas. This is re-establishing the obedience of MPs to serve causes that the whips want, and is a retrograde step.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** The whips are one part of the committee, not the only part.

**Q210 Paul Flynn:** There are three of them, are there not?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** There are three of them on it; quite right. They are not the only members of the committee. It is not just rewarding MPs; it is for those involved in parliamentary and other political service. They will make their recommendations, and do make their recommendations, on the same criteria as we do for every other committee, and they come forward to the main committee for consideration.

**Richard Tilbrook:** If I may add one clarification, as with all committees, there is a majority of independent members.

**Paul Flynn:** Independent like Lord Butler and Baroness Hayman? These are establishment figures in the House, who would stand up for conformity in Parliament. I have just finished a book on the person I regard as the greatest Back Bencher.

**Chair:** We are not advertising books here.

**Q211 Paul Flynn:** There is no profit made on the books, so there is no commercial interest in this. This is a man whose philanthropy was such that I found out things that his wife did not know—the money he gave away. He did it entirely secretly. How can you reward selfless philanthropy if people advertise their generosity?

**Chair:** This is a different question; we are looking at the Honours Committee at the moment.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** The test of the parliamentary committee will be through those who gain honours, and whether Parliament and others believe that they are worthy of those honours. I do not think you can judge the system until it has done its work.

**Q212 Paul Flynn:** Why do we need a system? We turned our backs on this. I used those terms about splendid Back Benchers who achieved a great deal. I remember Robert Adley being asked by the Speaker at the time to withdraw the word 'lickspittle', because it was automatic. People had the award just for sitting on the green benches for 20 years without actually saying a word. There were rewards for blind, dumb obedience. You are putting that system in; this is an establishment committee awarding those who have done the right thing. We have seen it creep back in, where people are having awards who have not—this is a parliamentary system; it is supposed to be something that we are behind. Most MPs would turn

down any award from this system, because we are already rewarded by our re-elections and we are actually paid for the job.

**Chair:** Do you wish to respond to that statement?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I make two points really. One is the number of people who turn down honours is actually generally very, very low. We will see with this new system. The second point I would make, and I will repeat it, is that the parliamentary committee will apply the same tests about exceptional service and exceptional achievement as any of the other committees. They will be making recommendations to the main committee, which will make the ultimate decision.

**Q213 Chair:** Dame Mary Marsh, your committee was overseeing political and parliamentary honours as part of your remit before this was established. What was wrong with that system?

**Dame Mary Marsh:** There were some constraints, because the roles of the public servants, who are working in the parliamentary system, are very different kinds of roles from the Civil Service that was the main focus of our work. It was quite difficult for us to be informed enough to make the right judgments about the recommendations that were coming to us. It was felt that it would be better if it was focused, so that all the parliamentary awards across the UK were dealt with on a more consistent basis. As far as parliamentarians are concerned, there had been a period of time when there had been very few awards made to parliamentarians. There is absolutely a wish to recommend parliamentarians in the same way as anyone else in the community who has done something beyond the job, which seems to be behind this principle.

**Q214 Chair:** When you say there is absolutely a wish, whose wish?

**Dame Mary Marsh:** The wish of creating that particular committee to look at those kinds of contributions.

**Q215 Chair:** Whose wish? The Prime Minister's wish?

**Dame Mary Marsh:** The Prime Minister's wish, because I think the Philanthropy Committee emerged in a similar sort of time period, in principle.

**Q216 Lindsay Roy:** Can I just clarify? If it is the same criteria that apply for exceptional service above and beyond the call of duty, why is there a need for a separate award?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I think we have covered that point, which is that—

**Q217 Lindsay Roy:** Is it because the Prime Minister says so?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** As has already been said, it allows a specific consideration of those who have made a contribution in terms of Parliament and parliamentary service. It is recognising that as a distinct contribution, but the criteria are the same. That is what I am saying.

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**Q218 Lindsay Roy:** The call has not come from anywhere else other than from the Prime Minister.

**Richard Tilbrook:** For every committee, the members of that committee are experts in that field, and so it is appropriate for the political committee to have that same benefit.

**Q219 Lindsay Roy:** I just want to clarify where the pressure has come from, other than from the Prime Minister. There may well have been for education or for other aspects of professional life.

**Richard Tilbrook:** Those committees are already in place.

**Lindsay Roy:** I am aware of that.

**Q220 Kelvin Hopkins:** I just want to reinforce the point made by my colleague and honourable friend, Mr Flynn. With the chief whips of the political parties on the committee, anybody coming forward from a particular political party, the chief whip of that party just puts the blue line through their name and they will not get on. If the name crops up and the whip discusses it with the leader of the party, the Prime Minister or whoever, they will immediately blackball anybody they do not like. It is a system that will work negatively rather than positively, stopping anybody who is not in favour with the whips.

**Richard Tilbrook:** That is not the only route that names will come forward to the committee. Names also come forward from members of the public.

**Q221 Kelvin Hopkins:** But it is a parliamentary committee because you have got parliamentarians on that committee.

**Richard Tilbrook:** Yes, I know, but what I am saying is that the whips are not the only route for feeding names through to the committee. Names also come from members of the public.

**Q222 Chair:** How often has the Honours Secretariat received a recommendation from a member of the public that an MP should get a knighthood?

**Richard Tilbrook:** You might be surprised; it does happen and people do recommend their own constituency MPs.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Just to reinforce that comment there, there are a majority of independent members on that committee who can express a view. If the whips were saying, "Don't go for this person because they haven't toed the line," there are built-in safeguards.

**Q223 Robert Halfon:** Do you think one answer might be that the committee should be like a select committee and composed of elected members, who deal with parliamentary and policy honours?

**Richard Tilbrook:** That would be rather against the grain of all the recent reforms to the honours system, which have been to de-politicise it as far as possible.

**Q224 Robert Halfon:** Can I just interject? If it were a select committee, you would have MPs from all parties in the same way that you do now. It is already politicised because of the people who are on this new parliamentary committee.

**Richard Tilbrook:** What makes it different is that it has independent members who are not MPs and they are in the majority. I do not see how your proposal would quite work.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** The other point is that, while clearly MPs are perhaps the primary group who are considered, it is not only MPs who are being considered for honours through this particular committee.

**Q225 Robert Halfon:** I am talking about the political and MP honours. Surely to have that decided by a parliamentary committee of elected members is the fairest way of doing it, rather than just appointed people.

**Dame Mary Marsh:** It is also for across the UK, so it is not just Westminster. It is looking at service in other Parliaments and Assemblies as well.

**Q226 Priti Patel:** Sir Bob, with regards to the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee, why should the public trust this committee? How can the public have confidence that this is not certain sections of the British establishment handing out gongs to each other, and just patting themselves on the back and rewarding each other?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I think we have been through some of the arguments on that. Clearly we cannot, through this process, change public attitudes and their trust in politicians, bluntly. What we can do is to try to establish a committee that has a mix of those involved through the whips and through independent members as well. If you are going to have a group of people who are going to look at the specifics and have specific knowledge of those who are in the parliamentary area who might receive honours, this is to me a reasonable way of trying to do it. What we cannot do is change people's attitudes towards politicians, but it is a system that has built-in safeguards, as I said earlier, and it is a sub-committee of the main committee. Ultimately, the main committee makes the decisions.

**Q227 Priti Patel:** On that point, to actually instil public confidence in the honours system and a degree of trust with members of the public—not about the establishment, not about Members of Parliament—how would you actually sell this particular committee to the public and say that it is not a stitch-up; it is actually for good works and public service?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** We would sell it, as we were saying, as we talked about earlier, that we wanted to bring distinct knowledge and expertise from the political field, which is an important part of life in Britain, and one way of doing that was to establish a distinct committee that did it. That is the way we would do it. In the same way as we have a committee for sports, business or the community and voluntary sector. It is the same principle, exactly the same principle.

**Richard Tilbrook:** If I can just add again for the birthday honours list that is coming up, the committee did not fulfil its full allocation, because it was absolutely concerned about merit.

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**Q228 Paul Flynn:** So you are saying there were not four who were worthy of getting knighthoods or damehoods.

**Richard Tilbrook:** I am talking across the board, at all levels. I am not just talking about—

**Q229 Paul Flynn:** You are not talking about the parliamentary distribution of gongs.

**Richard Tilbrook:** No, I am.

**Q230 Paul Flynn:** You have not found four MPs who are worthy.

**Richard Tilbrook:** No, that is not what I said.

**Q231 Paul Flynn:** It is what you said.

**Richard Tilbrook:** It is not.

**Q232 Paul Flynn:** We all heard you say it.

**Richard Tilbrook:** With respect, Mr Flynn, what I said was it has not met its full allocation across all the levels of honours, not just knighthoods and damehoods.

**Q233 Paul Flynn:** What has it met?

**Chair:** Please let Mr Tilbrook answer.

**Richard Tilbrook:** MPs are not solely eligible for knighthoods or damehoods. They are eligible for honours at any level in the system, just like any other member of the British public.

**Q234 Paul Flynn:** The great majority of MPs will tell you the highest accolade they have are the words “MP” after their name. They are not grubbing around for bog-standard awards that are being distributed. Do you recall what Michael Winner said when he was offered an OBE? He said, “This is the sort of award you give to a toilet cleaner at King’s Cross.” Of this list of awards you have got, and I see there are four knighthoods and damehoods, six OBEs, nine MBEs and two BEMs, to be distributed to MPs and their staff, who do you think will get the BEMs?

**Richard Tilbrook:** I am afraid you will have to wait and see until the list is published.

**Q235 Paul Flynn:** This is reinforcing the hierarchy. It will be the poor infantry who get the OBEs and the MBEs, and MPs will get the knighthoods and the damehoods, won’t they?

**Richard Tilbrook:** That is not how I would characterise it at all, because people who will be receiving BEMs and MBEs are doing extraordinary things. I would not want to denigrate them at all.

**Q236 Paul Flynn:** There is a considerable portion of the country who would possibly disagree with the honours system. My attitude to it—and there is a group that is selling information for £3,900—

**Chair:** This is a different question. We are dealing with the Political and Parliamentary Honours Committee.

**Q237 Paul Flynn:** What I advise those who come to me and ask for an honour is that the system is, at best, unfair and, at worst, corrupt, because you will be judged by people who are not necessarily

sympathetic to a wide range of society. It will be decided by Lord-Lieutenants and other people who have got awards. Let us look at this wonderful committee. It is composed of two lords, four right hon., one baroness and one dame. Is this a cross-section of society in your street or where you live? This is an establishment committee that will reward the establishment.

**Richard Tilbrook:** As I said before, I think you should see who they do put forward.

**Q238 Paul Flynn:** Will we have a list of those who reject the awards that are put forward?

**Richard Tilbrook:** No, of course not.

**Q239 Paul Flynn:** Can you give an undertaking that those who were offered and reject them will be published?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** No, there will not be any list of those rejected, for the simple and obvious reason that they do not choose to be nominated.

**Q240 Paul Flynn:** It is the highest honour to have refused an honour, I would have thought. I have advocated for a long time that they are allowed to wear a badge that says, “HRH”—“has refused honour”.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Refusing an honour is an entirely separate point. You have said “rejected”, and it would be completely inappropriate to list people who are rejected, when they did not know themselves that they were being nominated.

**Q241 Lindsay Roy:** Can I just clarify who decided on the quota and whether indeed, if the quota is fulfilled, that is an over-representation compared with society as a whole?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Just to be clear, it is not an absolute number, as Richard has said. It is an allocation for the committee that they cannot go above. The numbers were worked through, I think by the Secretariat, as a guide for the committee to come forward with names. They did not either have to exactly hit that figure or not. They simply had to come forward with a set of names, and it was a guide for them as to the potential number of places available.

**Q242 Lindsay Roy:** Can I probe you further? If the quota is indeed fulfilled, would that mean an over-representation from parliamentary services?

**Richard Tilbrook:** Do not forget the breadth of the committee. It is not just Members of Parliament: it is the devolved administrations; it is the bodies that report to those; and it is party workers across the country, which is a very large number of people. These are all in competition with each other on this committee, so it is quite a sizeable workforce.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** It is very hard for us to work out whether that constitutes an over-representation.

**Q243 Lindsay Roy:** I think we have evidence that, in the defence quota for example, you have a much higher chance of getting an award than an ordinary citizen.

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**Richard Tilbrook:** What you will also know is that, every five years, we do a review of allocations across committees. We will be starting that process again towards the end of this year. Actually, the views of this Committee will be very useful in that. We will re-examine the different proportions each sector has in society to try to get a fair representation across the board.

**Q244 Chair:** Before we leave this subject, can I take it that all three parties were equally enthusiastic about this proposal?

**Richard Tilbrook:** They certainly all participated very enthusiastically in the process.

**Q245 Chair:** As a confirmed Back Bencher, I am always mildly suspicious when three chief whips are in agreement about something. We see that in the way that the House votes on standing orders and things like that sometimes. Wouldn't this committee, if it is going to exist, have more credibility if the three dominating factors on it were not all current chief whips, either holding or in pursuit of high office?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Clearly that is something you may want to reflect on when you produce your report, but it was a reasonable starting place, I think, to get the committee moving.

**Chair:** Let me emphasise I have nothing personally against any of our chief whips. They are all extremely fine and upstanding hon. Members.

I did say, in my response to the Prime Minister, whether he could regard this proposal as provisional, when he wrote to me about it. I am bound to say his letter came as a complete surprise, after we had already commenced this inquiry, and we may well have recommendations to make about it. Moving on, could we talk more about the selecting of recipients of honours?

**Q246 Lindsay Roy:** How do you choose who will receive an honour?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I touched earlier on the things that we are testing here. We are looking at exceptional service or exceptional achievement. We are also now looking to see the extent to which they have played a wider role in the community, but we do not make that an absolute, so there will be circumstances, across all the areas that we give honours to, where what people have achieved in the job they are doing is so exceptional that it stands as justification for an honour in its own right.

**Q247 Lindsay Roy:** How many candidates put forward do not actually receive an award because of the constraints of a quota?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** We use the word "quota" here but, as I was saying earlier, what we give each of the committees is an allocation. We use those allocations as a way of guiding those particular committees to the maximum numbers for their committee. If they have more people, then they have other routes to bring those up through the pool or, as I say, we hold back a number in the pool as well. Actually, my experience from the Main Committee is that the allocation to individual committees, of itself, does not create a

great constraint, but clearly we get more cases to consider than we agree awards for, in the totality of the Main Committee.

**Richard Tilbrook:** If the competition is particularly stiff in a particular round, a committee may feel that there are more people who are worthy of awards than there are spaces available. It may say, for these particular candidates, they should come back next time rather than lose them all together.

**Lindsay Roy:** So they can be carried forward.

**Richard Tilbrook:** Exactly.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Yes, they can.

**Sir John Parker:** Chairman, if it is helpful to give you an absolute feel, for example in the number we handle in the Economy Committee, New Year 2012, Birthday 2012, about 446 people in total citations came in front of us. We recommended awards to 247, which is about 55%, so we actually decided that 45% did not make the cut in terms of the criteria of their wider contribution beyond their job to society, voluntary work, charitable work, etc.

**Q248 Lindsay Roy:** Of those who are offered an honour, what percentage actually turns an honour down?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** It is very low indeed actually.

**Richard Tilbrook:** It is about 2%.

**Q249 Lindsay Roy:** Of that 2%, what percentage is related to the word "empire"?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Very small—single numbers.

**Richard Tilbrook:** The sounding letters have gone out for the current round, for the Birthday List. We have maybe 10 or 11 refusals all together. Of those, one or two have mentioned the word "empire". Only one person so far has refused a British Empire Medal and the word "empire" was not mentioned as a reason.

**Q250 Lindsay Roy:** Are these 10 or 11 awards reoffered to someone else because they have been refused?

**Richard Tilbrook:** No, we cannot restart the whole process all over again.

**Q251 Lindsay Roy:** Is this because of the time factor?

**Richard Tilbrook:** Yes, exactly.

**Q252 Priti Patel:** We took evidence from several Lord-Lieutenants during the course of the inquiry, who raised concerns about the length of time that it takes to process honours nomination. In one instance, there was reference to an elderly nominee who had passed away during this entire process. The question is: what can be done with regard to the time process? Could you explain something about the actual process itself and why it takes so long? Also, again on my point about public confidence, how can you ensure that the public feels confident in a process that they know very little about once the nomination actually goes in?

**Richard Tilbrook:** It is a lengthy process and that is because it is a very robust process. The moment in time when a name is put forward will also affect how long it takes. If a name is submitted just before an

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honours list is published, then that automatically builds another six months into the timetable. We do have to do all sorts of checks on individuals. When the nomination first comes in, we want to consult Lord-Lieutenants to get their views on that candidate. Government Departments will have their own checks with professional bodies to try to get as good a cross-section of views as possible on that particular candidate. If they come forward, we also need to do checks with people like the Charities Commission, for example, if they are engaged with charitable work, to make sure it was a bona fide charity. All that takes time. What we do say is that, if someone who has nominated wants to find out about the progress their nominee has made, then we are always happy to take those calls and to let them know where it has got to. What we do not have the resource to do is to proactively phone everyone. We get maybe 3,500 members of the public a year putting someone forward. We cannot just automatically phone all of those to let them know how it is going but, if they phone us, we will tell them.

**Q253 Priti Patel:** I would like to go back to the point about public confidence again. I know we have touched upon engagement and awareness-raising, to, I guess, debunk some myths about the whole honours system, the transparency and the accessibility. However, how would you address a very specific point that the public holds a view or perception that honours can actually be bought?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** We have to be very open in describing the process by which we make decisions and be very clear that that cannot and does not form part of the process, and be very rigorous about that description. We cannot clearly describe the arrangements in relation to individuals. That is difficult for all the reasons we have said earlier, but I think we can be very transparent about how decisions get made on individuals and be very clear about the role, for example, of independent members and the rigour with which the testing that Richard has described is done. Those are the ways we are doing it. What we cannot do is guard against somebody making an allegation of something being bought simply because of somebody's actions in terms of how they have used their money, but we can have a rigorous process and be very transparent about that.

**Q254 Priti Patel:** In light of the Government's obsession in taking focus groups, opinion polls, snapshots in time, etc, is there any active work going on to actually test public confidence in the honours system?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Actually, funnily enough we do have information on that and I think we supplied some of that to you in attachment 1 to my letter. What it shows actually is some good news. There is a very high level of awareness, over 80%, of the honours system. There is also quite a strong view about people feeling proud that we have an honours system, up to 70%-odd, but there is also a challenge there precisely on the point that you have raised, about whether people perceive it is as open and fair. The figure at the moment is around 44%. We still have to carry on

working at that issue but, in terms of awareness and support for the honours system, the numbers are pretty high.

**Dame Mary Marsh:** It is very clear that the Philanthropy Committee, which is effectively a sub-committee of the Main Committee and was set up as recommended through the Giving White Paper, is not there to identify philanthropists and bring them forward necessarily. We are making sure that any of the committees that are recognising people for their philanthropy, as part of their honour, are doing so on a consistent and reasonable basis. You are not just looking for somebody who has made a single gift of something, whatever size. You are absolutely looking for people who have given time, commitment and sustained engagement with their particular cause, and have made a significant difference through their philanthropy, which is both that they volunteer time as well as their money. Inevitably, people who are philanthropists of that sort are being honoured otherwise anyway, because they are often people who have given distinguished service in other walks of life. We are very keen, in the way we look across the three main committees that tend to produce the philanthropists into the award system—the CVLS, the Economy Committee, chaired by Sir John, and the Arts and Media—that, if we are mentioning it at all, we are doing it consistently. We are not putting people into the pool simply because they have given a load of money to a particular charity once.

**Q255 Robert Halfon:** Do you think one way to restore the public confidence in the honours system would be to limit honours that are given to people who have donated substantial sums to political parties?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Our current policy is to say that we do not preclude somebody who has made a contribution, but the fact that they have made a contribution does not in any way enhance their likelihood of getting an honour. That is a clear position that we take. To preclude people, when they might have achieved something very exceptional in another field, would seem to me to be unreasonable. At what level would you preclude them? What would you regard as a substantial donation to a political party, for a start? The position we have now, which is that the committees take no account of that and, indeed, are not aware of it when they are considering the cases—we are very clear that it cannot form any part of why you would give somebody an honour—but equally we do not exclude people, is the right and proper place to be on this issue.

**Q256 Robert Halfon:** Clearly there is an issue, because there are often people who have given money to political parties of either side and who are then subsequently awarded honours. Really the focus from the public is on the donations they have made rather than the philanthropic work they have done.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** You are entirely right. One of the things your Committee, I know, has had others say to it is: do we say enough, at the time we make the honours, about why people have got the honour? There is certainly something there, where I think we

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should look at a longer description of why people have got the honour than we do at the moment.

**Q257 Robert Halfon:** How do you ensure that the honours are given to people who are genuinely engaged with philanthropy and doing active service rather than just writing out cheques?

**Dame Mary Marsh:** When we have been considering cases, we have sometimes said that there is not sufficient evidence here for this to be supported as a recognition for philanthropy. It may be that the evidence does exist; we just haven't got it in front of us. Sometimes we do not think there is sufficient evidence of anything more than a single donation, and sometimes even the scale of the donation is not entirely clear. There are cases that may be presented as philanthropy but actually they have been people who have just been very active fundraisers, getting other people to give; that is not individual philanthropy. We are very clear about being sure we have sufficient evidence. It is this contribution over time and that giving of your own time and expertise to something that are important. It has to be significant.

**Q258 Robert Halfon:** Is that now a key driver?

**Dame Mary Marsh:** It conforms to all of the other expectations we have across the whole system about wider voluntary service. You are not just being recognised for something you did once; you are being recognised because you have given something over a period. In the past, we have just talked about charitable services, but it has been suggested that significant philanthropy is important and should be recognised. That can be added. It is very unlikely that many people will get a citation that says it is just for philanthropy, as I said before.

**Sir John Parker:** On Mary's Committee, I think we are very clear that no one should be capable of buying an honour. That is what we have to be exceptionally clear about.

**Q259 Paul Flynn:** Baron Mackenzie's committee or body that he has called, I understand, Awards Intelligence, exists to advise people. If they spend £3,900 with him, he will show them the way to get an honour. He claims, and the body claims, success. We are meeting today in the Lloyd George Room in this House. If awards can be bought in that way, would it not be more honest to just sell them and make a few bob for the country? I think it absolutely true that the people who get the honours tend to be people who are rich. I have given advice to people who have come to me about honours and it has been remarkably successful. Are honours being bought?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** The blunt answer is no. We are very clear that they are not. One of the difficulties of this whole debate is we focus on small numbers of particular high-profile honours; if you look at the vast majority of honours, they go to ordinary people who have done exceptional service in their communities. It just demeans them to carry on talking about buying honours.

**Q260 Paul Flynn:** These are the bog-standard honours, the ones that go to the toilet cleaners at

King's Cross. The prestigious honours that you would like to have and you have, and most of the people you work with have—civil servants and top military—are the ones that go to that layer of society that happens to be rich.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Two points: the people who get those honours do not see them as bog-standard. I get the letters back from them about how absolutely enthralled they are about achieving their honour. In a sense, you are demeaning the whole process.

**Paul Flynn:** You get the letter back from the one person who got the honour, but you do not get letters back from the 99 other people who are equally of merit but who did not get the honour. This is the problem with it. It seems to be a completely arbitrary system. Many people are worthy of honours; few get them.

**Q261 Chair:** Should there be 1,000% more honours?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** All I can say, as I have said earlier, is look at the public perceptions of the system. I will go back to my point: we try to run a process that is as rigorous and fair as possible. One of the reasons why it takes time is that we do that. We test whether the information we are given is accurate. For the vast bulk of people, as I said earlier, these are about local people who have made an impact in their communities. Nobody buys honours in the system as it works today.

**Q262 Chair:** Can I just press a little further on the role of Lord-Lieutenants, because it came through very strongly in the oral evidence we received and in other evidence we have received, and indeed in private conversations, that they are formally consulted though, very often, people in their counties receive honours who they never expected to receive honours? Very often, they feel their recommendations are completely ignored. They do not feel as involved as, for example, Mr Tilbrook, you have led them to believe that they would be.

**Richard Tilbrook:** It is certainly the case that, for all the cases that we run centrally in the Cabinet Office, we always consult Lord-Lieutenants on the merits of those cases. We take their comments very seriously indeed. They are not the only comments we receive, so they cannot trump everybody else's comments. There will be other people who are also providing comments on a particular citation. But I do want to stress that we value the role of Lord-Lieutenants very highly, not just for providing those comments, because very often they will have the reach in their county that very few other people have. To get that from the local society is extremely helpful. Also, they have a huge role in publicising the honours system and making it known. If I can mention one lord-lieutenant in dispatches, the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester does roughly a monthly presentation on the honours system to local communities just to debunk the myths, to explain how it works and to try to reach those communities that are not properly represented in the list.

**Q263 Chair:** The Cabinet Office does not have an allocation, does it?

**Richard Tilbrook:** We do not have an allocation, no.

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**Q264 Chair:** You are competing. The public's applications and Lord-Lieutenants' applications come straight into the Cabinet Office.

**Richard Tilbrook:** These are nominations that have come in from members of the public, which we then ask Lord Lieutenants for their views on.

**Q265 Chair:** There isn't an allocation to that part of the process, is there, or have I misunderstood? The committees all have an allocation. But these random ones that come in from the public, there is no allocation for that.

**Richard Tilbrook:** There is, because the majority of those will come to the Community, Voluntary and Local Services Committee, which does have an allocation.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** The point is that people do not have to think which committee they are putting it in. They put in their nomination and then the committee that is relevant to that nomination will look at it. That is the way it works.

**Q266 Chair:** What do you think should be done to formalise the relationship perhaps a bit more between Lord-Lieutenants and the honours system?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Clearly we can talk more to them about how we might improve the liaison. I am quite happy to do that. I am sure Richard has quite regular conversations with them. I do think that we should keep with the point, though, that their advice is welcome and we seek it out, but it is not an absolute. They do not have a right to say, "You should or should not take someone".

**Q267 Chair:** It has been suggested that they should have their own allocation.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I think that misreads how the system works. The allocations are simply a means of pulling together a set of names for the Main Honours Committee to take a view on. It would be odd to give a particular group of people an allocation when, effectively, the allocation is a way of looking at different nominations for particular fields. I think that would be a confusing and odd direction to go in.

**Q268 Lindsay Roy:** I think the views of a substantial number were that they felt marginalised in terms of the extent of consultation; not wishing to nominate for honours, but just marginalised in terms of the contact with them. I wondered if you had any plans to do anything about that.

**Richard Tilbrook:** I am regularly talking to Lord-Lieutenants and I travel around the country doing so, and also speaking to their deputies, to try to make them as aware as possible of the system and to encourage them in their outreach work. That is only England; devolved administrations have their own ways of seeking comments, and they do it slightly differently.

**Q269 Lindsay Roy:** In our previous session, it was suggested that the word "empire" was an anachronism and that it be replaced by the term "excellence". Is that something that is being considered now?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** It is not being actively considered now. Obviously your Committee may ask us to re-examine the issue again.

**Q270 Lindsay Roy:** One of the criteria is "above and beyond the call of duty". I suppose that is equivalent to excellence. Indeed, I note that there might be two categories because, in terms of philanthropy, the Prime Minister has said it should be for those who have gone beyond excellence. Have you any comment to make on that? What do we mean by "gone beyond excellence"?

**Sir John Parker:** We interpret it as beyond excellence in their particular role; in other words: what else have they done in society beyond doing an excellent job?

**Richard Tilbrook:** May I come back to the question of "empire" again, if that would be helpful?

**Chair:** Yes, it is troubling us.

**Richard Tilbrook:** It is troubling you. There are clearly some quite loud voices arguing against the continuation of the use of the word "empire". I fully respect those who find it rather anachronistic, at a time when we do not have an empire, to carry on using the word.

**Q271 Chair:** Try explaining it to President Obama.

**Richard Tilbrook:** The explanation to President Obama is that we have a history, and it is a history of which probably the majority of the country is quite proud.

**Chair:** America would find it rather off-putting.

**Richard Tilbrook:** The Order of the British Empire was founded at a time of empire. That is a part of its history. Just changing the name is not actually that straightforward. When the order was established, the statutes made it very clear and the Queen's grandfather said it was to be "known forever thereafter" as the Order of the British Empire and "by no other designation". What that means in practice is, if you want to change the name of the order, you have to close the order and start a new one. In terms of timing, I think in a jubilee year and just before the order is about to celebrate its centenary, that might be an odd moment to choose.

**Q272 Paul Flynn:** Had we not done that? Had the Prime Minister not introduced, in all but name, the order of the Big Society in order to use the honours system to advance what is a political stunt, which has probably outlived its usefulness now and appears to be a dead wheeze walking? Do you think it is legitimate to use the honours system to advance what is a party-political policy of the Big Society?

**Richard Tilbrook:** I think it is entirely legitimate to use the honours system to reward voluntary work.

**Paul Flynn:** This is a party thing, which is regarded by many people in the Conservative Party and the Government now as a very foolish idea that is not going anywhere. It started out as a prime ministerial wheeze and probably should be consigned to the dustbin of three-word prime ministerial wheezes, where the Big Society and the cones hotline now reside.

**Chair:** Mr Flynn, can I just bring in Mr Hopkins on this, because he was going to ask this question?

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**Q273 Kelvin Hopkins:** The role of the Prime Minister in all this is something that has always concerned me. Apparently, he recently said that he requests for people who “have gone beyond excellence in playing their part to create a Big Society”. It is clearly asking the honours system to reward those people supporting a government policy. What changes have you made to accommodate the Prime Minister’s request?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** This is still the position here. Clearly Prime Ministers do have the right to give a view on policy issues relating to the way the honours system works, and the Prime Minister is exercising that right here. We all took this issue as being about, exactly as Richard said, recognising people who have made a contribution to the community, in one form or another, voluntary or otherwise, in a way that they have carried out their role, so it has gone beyond their immediate job. That is what we have taken his reference to the Big Society as being about. The way we have recognised that is to look for, in those who come forward for honours, evidence of whether they have done something in their lives that goes beyond the job they are doing and has contributed to the community. So that is one very specific way in which we have sought to recognise that desire to have a stronger society element to what we are doing. That is the first point.

The second point is that the reintroduction of the British Empire Medal gives you a way of recognising people who have made a contribution at a very local level. So those are two very tangible ways in which the Prime Minister’s wishes have been reflected in what we are doing.

**Q274 Kelvin Hopkins:** Would someone who, like me, believes that the Big Society is just a disguise for unpicking the welfare state, and has said that, but otherwise was very distinguished, be struck off the list by the Prime Minister because they were not supporting his policy?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** No, this is not about whether people believe in a specific aspect of government policy. This is about whether people can demonstrate, through what they have done in their lives, that they have made an active contribution to the community. It is an entirely different point.

**Q275 Kelvin Hopkins:** Let’s take a couple of other examples. What about a distinguished surgeon, who was on the verge of being awarded a knighthood, but then is critical of the Government’s health reforms and does not want to see the health service privatised?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I think if you look at those who have received awards, you will find quite a few who have been critical of the Government of the day. There is not in any sense an issue that says if you criticise the Government you cannot be considered for an honour. We judge it on their merits and we judge it on their achievements.

**Q276 Kelvin Hopkins:** You do not know, off hand, whether Mr Blair approved anybody who had opposed the Iraq War, for example.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Mr Blair withdrew from any involvement at all in the decisions on individuals.

**Q277 Kelvin Hopkins:** You said that the Prime Minister “provides the key strategic direction to the UK honours system”, Sir Bob. Does this not really mean that the honours system is at risk of being politicised?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I think if he was taking decisions on individuals related to politics that might be an argument, but I think it is perfectly reasonable, indeed part of the honours system, for the Prime Minister to give a direction of travel that he wishes us to go in considering who gets honoured.

**Q278 Chair:** You do not think the chief whip is likely to take his advice.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I have no idea what advice the chief whip takes from the Prime Minister or otherwise. I would not venture to speculate.

**Q279 Kelvin Hopkins:** My concluding question on this little section is really about the overall role of the Prime Minister. Our government in Britain is extremely centralised and is focussed even more extremely on the power of the Prime Minister. Some regard our system as a limited five-year dictatorship. I think this is exaggerated, but, nevertheless, that is a view. Would it not be sensible to take the whole honours system right out the hands of the Prime Minister, so the Prime Minister has no role? We can have some worthy body doing this and then honours nominally awarded by the Queen and so on, or the head of state if there were not a monarch. Taking it out of the hands of the Prime Minister would avoid any risk of it being politicised.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** That is clearly something that the Committee can take a view on. One of the first questions you asked was: is there a Minister in charge of this? In this instance, it is the Prime Minister who takes overall responsibility but, for some time now, the Prime Minister has focused his involvement, whichever Prime Minister it is, on the strategic direction rather than the individual decisions.

**Q280 Kelvin Hopkins:** The power of patronage of the Prime Minister is excessive in Britain. Would this not be a good way of actually making our society a bit more democratic, by taking away some of the patronage from this extremely powerful leader we have?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** That is something for the Committee to consider.

**Q281 Kelvin Hopkins:** You have said that permanent secretaries “can no longer expect knight or damehoods as a matter of course”. What do permanent secretaries have to do to receive a knighthood or a damehood now?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** They have to do the same as everybody else has to do in order to be considered for those honours. They have to have achieved something that is exceptional in the delivery of their role and/or exceptional in something that they have done beyond their role. It is about exceptional service and

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exceptional achievement. It is no different whether we are considering a permanent secretary or whether we are considering a surgeon or somebody from the arts. It is the same principle.

**Q282 Kelvin Hopkins:** The last four honours lists have awarded knight or damehoods or upgraded knighthoods to six current or recently retired permanent secretaries. If every honours list contains a knighthood or damehood for a permanent secretary, does it not appear that these honours are still handed out as a matter of course?

**Dame Mary Marsh:** That is simply not the way the decisions are made. We do not award them automatically. The citations are not always there anyway but, even if the citations are there for us to consider, we do not put them through automatically and we do not take up our full allocation if we do not think there are worthy candidates in front of us.

**Q283 Kelvin Hopkins:** If there were two a year or even four a year, you would soon get through all the permanent secretaries.

**Dame Mary Marsh:** It just so happens, in that phase of time, there were a number of exceptional people who needed recognition, but it is not always like that.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Permanent secretaries have left the role as permanent secretaries without receiving an honour.

**Q284 Kelvin Hopkins:** I look forward to seeing some permanent secretaries who retire and go gracefully into retirement, and never receive a knighthood or a damehood.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** There are examples of those.

**Q285 Chair:** Can we imagine a Cabinet Secretary or a Head of the Civil Service who does not have any honours?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** You can certainly imagine it, because it is possible within the system we now operate.

**Q286 Chair:** It would be unthinkable for us to send an ambassador to Washington who did not have a knighthood. They would not understand it at all, would they? Could we?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I think they would get used to it. Let us be clear: we have moved away from automatic honours. Some people might like it to stay that way, but it has gone. There will be circumstances when people who would have expected to get an honour will not get one, because that is the nature of the change.

**Q287 Chair:** It has been put to us, and there must be this pressure, that there are many countries where, for someone to operate effectively internationally, it is expected that an important person representing the United Kingdom will have some kind of title or designation, other than Mr. You are shaking your head, Dame Mary.

**Dame Mary Marsh:** Yes, because one of the roles I fulfil as part of my chair role for the State Honours Committee is that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has their separate list but I sit on their

committee. I can assure you that there are no automatic honours for ambassadors. We've got ambassadors in places like China, India and Pakistan at the moment who are not knights and dames. It is not automatic at all. It is a question again, as Bob has just described, of it being done on the basis of merit, length of service and beyond the job.

**Q288 Chair:** As ambassador, if the Queen visits the country where you represent Her Majesty's Government, you no longer automatically get a knighthood.

**Dame Mary Marsh:** Absolutely not, no.

**Paul Flynn:** Could I ask a question?

**Chair:** On that point?

**Paul Flynn:** No, just generally. I do not think that is a serious point. It seems an extraordinary suggestion to me.

**Q289 Priti Patel:** Very specifically to that point, last week we had Lord Digby Jones in front of the Committee. Although we were talking about the Forfeiture Committee at the time, he specifically said that, in the trade capacity, business capacity in particular—and perhaps Sir John may like to comment on this—having a title is considered to be incredibly useful when you are looking to do deals internationally or represent the Government in a trade capacity or in a trade envoy capacity.

**Sir John Parker:** Chairman, I have been in business now for 50 years travelling the world, probably much more extensively even than my good friend Lord Jones. I travelled the world for a very long time without an honour and still did satisfactory business. It is true that, in certain countries, you can be received perhaps at a higher level because you come with an honour. It certainly does not do any harm, I have found, but I would not say that it is absolutely a necessity to do business across the world.

I have also to say that, in my travels around the world, in many nations, and of course we are not unique as a country in giving honours—many nations do—the honours system in Britain is actually held in very high regard. I often get interesting questions in China and the Far East in particular about the system. They like the historical aspects of it. There is a point here about tradition that we should be careful about. We should not throw tradition over in talking about the words "OBE", because there is a value in these historic orders and awards.

**Q290 Paul Flynn:** I would just like to ask Mr Kerslake how this happens. Does the Prime Minister come up to you and say, "Bob, I've got this great idea. I'm going to introduce a special committee that will give gongs just to MPs and their staff. We won't tell Parliament about it. We won't ask for their agreement; we'll just introduce it." What do you say? Do you say, "Dave, this is a great idea," or "Dave, perhaps we should think again, because it is a profoundly stupid idea"? What line did you take?

**Chair:** You are not obliged to discuss advice to Ministers.

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**Sir Bob Kerlake:** I am not obliged to, but also I could not, because I was not in the job when this conversation happened.

**Q291 Paul Flynn:** The Nuremberg—okay, fine. If you had been in the job, what would you have said?

**Sir Bob Kerlake:** I would not answer a hypothetical question.

**Q292 Paul Flynn:** Sir Gus O'Donnell I think has got four knighthoods.

**Sir Bob Kerlake:** He has not.

**Q293 Paul Flynn:** Where does this greed run out—this lust for having appendages to your name? Do they feel better? Do they sleep better? Do they have a better life?

**Sir Bob Kerlake:** In the interests of accuracy, he has two.

**Q294 Paul Flynn:** I have seen in the papers he has four.

**Sir Bob Kerlake:** No. Of course, he is a lord as well, which is quite a separate process. The point to make here is that people are reconsidered for higher honours. It is no different for officials than it is for any other walk of life. If people have achieved something at a certain level and then, after a period of time of five years or more, something else happens in terms of their achievements and service that justifies a reconsideration, that is what happens. It is no different for anybody, whether it is a permanent secretary or anybody else.

**Q295 Robert Halfon:** Going back to what you said about tradition a moment ago, which I felt was really important, and regarding the names of honours, is it not important for people to remember that the medal is a gift of the monarch, of Her Majesty, and therefore it should be the monarch who decides what the medal is, or may or may not be, called, rather than politicians? Just to turn around some of the questions I have asked earlier, given that the honour is a gift of the monarch, surely one idea would be for the committee that decides the gifting of honours to be entirely in the hands of the monarch, so she would choose the committee that decided the awarding of the honours.

**Richard Tilbrook:** I may just chip in on that, in that the committee that decides policy on honours, the Committee on the Grant of Honours and Decorations, the HD Committee as we call it, was established to give advice directly to the sovereign. That is how the process actually works.

**Paul Flynn:** Can we not clear this up? There really is no involvement, apart from a tiny number of honours, in which the monarch has any influence at all. You cannot blame Her Majesty for those who do not get the honours. She is not really involved in it.

**Q296 Chair:** Is it correct that the vast majority of honours are on the advice of the Prime Minister?

**Richard Tilbrook:** Yes.

**Q297 Chair:** Could we move on to the Forfeiture Committee? Sir Bob, one of the jobs you inherited as Head of the Civil Service is chairman of the Forfeiture Committee, which moved into public prominence on the question of Fred Goodwin's knighthood. Previously, it has been clear that people only forfeit an honour if they have been convicted of a criminal offence or they have been censured by their professional body, though John Major, as Prime Minister, introduced a third criterion of bringing the honours system into disrepute. How does the committee objectively assess these questions?

**Sir Bob Kerlake:** The first thing to be clear about is the criteria. The overarching criterion is, and has been for some time, whether or not the person has brought the honours system into disrepute.

**Q298 Chair:** That is the most modern criterion.

**Sir Bob Kerlake:** No. It goes back to John Major and, indeed, before.

**Chair:** I think that is particularly modern. If you go back much further than that, you had to break the law to lose your honour.

**Sir Bob Kerlake:** No, if you go back, the overarching view has always been about bringing the honours system into disrepute. The two tests that have been most commonly used have been a criminal offence that leads to a prison sentence of more than three months and, more recently, the issue of being struck off from your professional group. The overarching test has been the issue of bringing the honours system into disrepute.

**Q299 Chair:** How do we make this an objective test that observes the basic rules of natural justice? You will be aware of Lord Digby Jones' comment that this smacked of village-green justice. If there was a howl of outrage fuelled by the media, which we all know can feed on itself and create a tsunami of public sentiment, how are you meant to resist that if you have no open and transparent and objective procedures, no representation, no consultation or no opportunity for the person concerned to make any representations to the committee? This is not a system that passes the test that we usually expect of such decisions.

**Sir Bob Kerlake:** What we try to do is consider the extent to which the individual has brought the honours system into disrepute. We look at the issues and the facts around the case, and then we form a judgment based on those facts and information. We clearly have the ability to seek a view from an individual. We did not on the occasion of Fred Goodwin, but it is an option that is open to us.

**Q300 Chair:** Why was he the only banker who had to forfeit an honour? There are other bankers with honours, who are on the board of the Royal Bank of Scotland. They were equally responsible. Why have they not been vilified in public by this kind of decision as well?

**Sir Bob Kerlake:** There are two or three points I would make on that. First of all, Fred Goodwin got his honour by virtue of his services to banking and exclusively for his services to banking. Others may have got their honour for a wide range of reasons.

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Secondly, the issues were raised in respect of Fred Goodwin and we considered his individual case on its merits. If other cases had come forward with the same force, we would have considered those as well. Thirdly, we looked at the extent to which the issues at the Royal Bank of Scotland had impacted on the country. As you know, tens of millions of pounds of public money went into that company in order to tackle the issues there.

**Robert Halfon:** It went into other banks as well. Was Sir Fred Goodwin a bit of an easy scapegoat? Why not remove honours from the politicians who created the mess in the first place like, dare I say it, the former Prime Minister, Mr Brown? He was quite an easy target, was he not?

**Chair:** Is there not a danger that, in this circumstance particularly—and I have no brief for Mr Goodwin myself and make no judgment about it—that this system is used to scapegoat people to try to divert attention from the responsibility of politicians and public officials? Let us face it, the regulatory system was run by public officials and set up by politicians.

**Q301 Robert Halfon:** Sir Fred Goodwin only did what he was allowed to do because the political framework had enabled him to do it. Should he have deserved to lose his honours, as opposed to the politicians who allowed him to do it in the first place?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Let me go back to what I said earlier. We had a very rigorous process of considering Fred Goodwin's position. We considered all the issues, the arguments and the information we had. We looked at the extent to which he could have been judged to have brought the honours system into disrepute against the reason why he received an honour in the first place and we felt, on balance, the argument favoured a recommendation that he forfeit his honour. It was a considered and very rigorous process on his individual circumstances and the merits of his individual case.

**Q302 Chair:** It was not a very transparent process. Did you receive any instruction or suggestion that the Forfeiture Committee should be convened on this topic?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** We had no instruction. We clearly had a signal from a number of people, both in the public world and indeed from the Prime Minister, that they felt it was a case that could and should be considered by the Forfeiture Committee.

**Q303 Chair:** The Forfeiture Committee knew the mind of the Prime Minister on this subject.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** We knew that the Prime Minister felt that the committee should consider his case, but I had no direct communication with him on the case before the committee met. We took our decision based on the arguments in front of us.

**Q304 Chair:** Why would he want to convene the committee to consider this matter if he did not think there was quite a strong case for you to consider?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** He clearly thought there was a case to consider, but it was for the committee to make its own decision. I repeat: we received no information; I

had no conversation with the Prime Minister about what decision we should reach. We reached our own decision, based on the arguments.

**Q305 Chair:** You were under considerable public pressure at the time. There was an early-day motion tabled by the then MP for Reading West, and indeed the former adviser to the Chancellor to the Exchequer, my hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk, Matthew Hancock. He tabled an early-day motion, so it must have been quite obvious to you what the senior Ministers of the Government wanted. How can we have confidence that this was an objective process, given that you were under that kind of political pressure, and there is no transparency to the process anyway?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** There were plenty of people putting the counter-argument at the time. It was not solely a view that said he should lose his honour. Since the decision was made, indeed in front of your Committee, people have expressed a contrary view, so we knew there were differing views around. It seemed to us that we should properly consider the issue on its merits, and we took a judgment based on that.

**Q306 Chair:** Did you take into account the views of politicians?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** No, we did not take into account any individual views of individual people on the issue. We considered the issues of the case.

**Q307 Robert Halfon:** Why did you target this particular individual, as opposed to other particular individuals who also had millions and millions of taxpayers' money spent because they had buggered up their banks?

**Chair:** Order, order.

**Robert Halfon:** Messed up their banks; I beg your pardon.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** As I have said earlier, there was a fairly strong set of representations to say we ought to consider the case of Fred Goodwin. Had there been representations that made the case for other individuals, obviously we would have to look at them on their own terms, but there was clearly a specific set of representations on Fred Goodwin. We considered Fred Goodwin on his merits. I cannot comment on other individuals.

**Q308 Robert Halfon:** Is it not the case that the Fred Goodwin situation was the easy case, because the media were calling for his head and various politicians were calling for his head? He received all the focus, so it was an easy thing for your committee to strip him of his honour, when there were other bankers equally culpable. As I have said moments ago, politicians were even more responsible for what occurred.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** It was not an easy issue. It was an issue that took considerable deliberation by the committee to consider all the arguments.

**Q309 Robert Halfon:** It was the easy case, because you are not consistent, because you did not look at other bankers. It just seemed to satisfy bloodlust, a

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French guillotine style, “Let’s have the next person to lose their head for this.”

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** There will be a whole range of people, and there were at the time, who have views about the issue and what it represented. All we could do as a committee was to consider the specific issue of Fred Goodwin, the grounds there were to consider his particular knighthood, and judge it on its merits. It is impossible, in a committee like that, to say, “Let’s have the list of everybody else who might be worthy of consideration.”

**Q310 Chair:** Sir Bob, that just underlines the subjectivity of the system, does it not?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** It is clearly a judgment that is made in the light of the information and evidence we have available to us.

**Q311 Chair:** Here we have a process where the state is handing out a punishment that is delivered by a rather obscure committee of government, of civil servants, which is acting under political pressure—not necessarily express direction but the indications are clear—and that meets in secret. This really hardly meets the standards that we expect, in a free and democratic country, before somebody is punished.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I think it would be very hard to do a process like this in public, frankly. You have to consider the issues confidentially. As you will see from the papers I have sent you, we have now reviewed and extended the committee to include a majority of independent members but, at the time we considered Fred Goodwin, we used the procedures that were available. We considered the case based on the facts that we had available to us and we reached a view.

**Q312 Chair:** Can I ask you a personal question? As someone who is responsible, as a professional person, for this process, were you not even a little bit uncomfortable about the way this operated?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** No, because what I felt actually, at a personal level, was a high level of responsibility to consider the issue properly and in a measured way before a conclusion was reached. That was the view of every member of the committee. What I felt was not an issue of discomfort, if you like, but an issue of needing to deal with the issue seriously and properly, and a high level of responsibility.

**Q313 Chair:** I have no doubt you dealt with it professionally and responsibly, but were you not uncomfortable about the public reaction to the decision, the ready audience there was for comments, like Lord Digby Jones, which suggested that this was not itself a process that commanded public confidence?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** There would have been a reaction whichever way we had gone on the decision. That was inevitable. We had to take our decision based on the strength of the arguments in this particular case, not on how the public would react to our decision.

**Q314 Chair:** I think the whole process was about how the public was reacting. It was driven by public demand, was it not?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** The public furore about the issue clearly, I think, justified considering the case. It did not of itself drive the decision. The decision was based on the arguments on the particular case, and I have gone through the reasons why the committee made its decision.

**Richard Tilbrook:** May I just add one point? When this Committee last considered this issue, in fact it was itself calling for the Forfeiture Committee to consider the case of Fred Goodwin. This Committee was one of the voices that was actually asking for the Forfeiture Committee to meet.

**Q315 Chair:** That was the previous Committee. I was not even on the Committee then. Should it be for a bunch of politicians to be able to demand the removal of an honour? That is the question.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I come back to the point again that I have made. I think it is perfectly reasonable, if there is a wide debate, for the Committee, as Richard mentioned, and indeed the Prime Minister, to say that the Forfeiture Committee should consider the case, but that did not imply that we had to take a particular decision in either direction. It required us to consider the issues.

**Q316 Chair:** As soon as we knew that the Forfeiture Committee was going to meet, the result was inevitable, was it not?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** No, it was not. To be very clear, when I went into the meeting, I did not go in with an assumption in either direction.

**Q317 Robert Halfon:** Did you consider removing the honour of the chairman of Lloyds bank, who worked very closely with the former Prime Minister and virtually destroyed the bank in the process, and had millions of taxpayers’ money thrown at him as well? I just do not understand why you came to the decision on one individual, rather than consider others.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I am in danger of repeating myself, but we considered that individual case because there was a higher level of desire for the committee to consider it, both at political level and—

**Q318 Chair:** That is rather a subjective thing, is it not?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Let me finish—and because there were clearly, on the face of it, issues that needed to be considered.

**Q319 Robert Halfon:** You considered it, but clearly because there were more press headlines and there was an outcry against this particular individual. It does not make sense for you to consider one individual who threw his bank down the wall and just to totally ignore another, who was even closer to the then Prime Minister and who also made a series of mistakes that cost the taxpayers millions of pounds.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** As I have said really, we can only go on the breadth of—it was not just the newspapers;

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it was leading politicians and, indeed, this Committee that made the case for us to consider Fred Goodwin.

**Q320 Paul Flynn:** One of the interesting allegations that has been made following this is that, when your decision was made to strip this gentleman of his knighthood, the television programmes rightly did not want to show a stale old film of him walking out of a bank somewhere. They wanted to show the act of his being knighted by the Queen. They were not allowed to do so, for fear that royalty would be associated with what was a bad decision. This seems to be an extraordinary way of doing things. We do not have a system of de-knighting people. The French Army are very good at this, tearing the epaulettes off and so on. Is it a fair system? Have you looked at all the knights, for instance, who have had prison sentences and considered them for the forfeiture of their knighthoods? What was brought up last week before the Committee was the fact that this seemed to be arbitrary, unfair and concentrated on one individual.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I cannot comment on the filming, quite frankly. I am just checking with Richard.

**Chair:** I think that is a matter for the Palace and not for you, Sir Bob.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** It is not an issue I can usefully comment on. If somebody has been convicted of an offence and they serve a prison sentence of three months or more, they are then potentially considered for removal of their honour. We usually consider such cases where this is drawn to our attention through a Department or through indeed a member of the public. If somebody goes to prison, quite clearly, it is not an automatic thing that they will lose their honour, but it is a very high likelihood that they will. We are very clear on that point. As I said earlier, the criteria we use here are not solely the two that I have explanation. There is the overarching criterion of bringing the system into disrepute.

**Richard Tilbrook:** May I just add one additional point on the process? Whenever any name comes to our attention that someone thinks should have an honour forfeited, we then refer that proposal back to the Department from which the original nomination came. It is then for them to make a case, if there is sufficient evidence to do so. Some of those suggestions will be purely scurrilous and are not taken any further, but those that are serious are then looked at seriously.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** Indeed, and there are, on average, perhaps two or three a year that we consider in those circumstances.

**Q321 Paul Flynn:** As it happens now, Sir Fred Goodwin has been named as one of the 60 most significant persons of the last 60 years. I think your committee seems to believe that everyone is gagging for honours. Members of this House greatly prize the honour of becoming the Back Bencher of the year in the eyes of their colleagues, and are fairly indifferent to some of the other gongs that are distributed for reasons of patronage.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** That obviously may be a particular view of the Members of the House, but the public at large both back the honours system and welcome receiving an honour.

**Q322 Priti Patel:** Could you just clarify, Sir Bob, at what point that decision was made, and why, for the Forfeiture Committee to actually meet on this particular issue? Was it because it was in the mind of the Prime Minister or was it because a Member of Parliament had tabled an EDM, both of which are political? Secondly as well, you stated that you considered the body of evidence in a very measured way. Can you explain what that measured way was, in light of the fact that, every time anybody put the telly on, there were constant news headlines calling for Fred Goodwin to be stripped of his knighthood, with lots of MPs turning up on the green outside to comment on this, and a lot of public commentary?

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** There were two or three things that influenced us in taking a view on this. Clearly there was the publication of the FSA report and its analysis of the circumstances that led to RBS's difficulties. That was one factor. Clearly the conversation then happened between the Secretariat and myself about whether the committee should meet, and we agreed that we felt it should, in the light of the public comment and, indeed, the view of the Prime Minister.

**Q323 Chair:** Before you continue with that answer, may I just interject? The Treasury Select Committee took evidence from Mr Bill Knight, one of the FSA's two external supervisors, who said there was "no evidence" of Mr Goodwin's incompetence and that the FSA report did not amount to censure of Mr Goodwin.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** We are quite aware of that. I am just saying one of the bits of information we had, which led us to think about the issue of taking action, was the FSA report. What the FSA report does say—it clearly does not name individuals, exactly as you say—but it does say there were some serious failings in the way in which the bank operated. Clearly the man most prominently in charge of the Royal Bank of Scotland was Fred Goodwin. One factor was the FSA report. You asked what the factors were. The FSA report was one part of that. The wider public clamour on the issue and the view of the PM—all of these things led us to have a conversation about the committee meeting. A report was commissioned from Richard and the committee was organised to meet. That is the basic process that was followed here. Yes, of course we were aware of the daily coverage of it but, as I said, there were competing views about the issue and we did not let that decide our outcome for that process. We took it on the merits of the case.

**Q324 Kelvin Hopkins:** There was one recent example of a very wealthy businessman who spent some time in prison, I think for fraud, quite a long time ago, then subsequently made very, very large donations to charity over a prolonged period, and was granted a knighthood, I think in the last 18 months. This suggests that having gone to prison does not necessarily disbar you from receiving an honour, and also it suggests making very large financial donations does help you get an honour.

**Sir Bob Kerslake:** I am aware of that particular case. It was in fact a CBE. I think it went through the Business Committee, did it not? The point there was about whether we regard somebody's previous

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22 May 2012 Sir Bob Kerlake, Dame Mary Marsh DBE, Sir John Parker and Richard Tilbrook

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transgressions as barring them for life from receiving an honour. On balance, the view was, taking account not just of his donations but his personal commitment to voluntary sector work, there was a good case for him to receive an honour. That is how we reached a view on that particular case. I do not know if John wanted to add anything.

*Sir John Parker:* I can vouch for that. We did consider very carefully. First of all, very many years have passed from his sentence. Secondly, over that period of time he did an enormous amount to redeem himself. He continued as a successful businessman but, more importantly, his commitment to charitable work accelerated significantly. He did a very good job in terms of his voluntary and charitable giving.

**Q325 Kelvin Hopkins:** Had he been a very worthy person without all that money, it is likely he would not have been given an honour, I suspect.

*Sir John Parker:* I would not agree with that.

*Sir Bob Kerlake:* There are plenty of people who get CBEs, if you look at the CVLS list, who, without

knowing their personal circumstances, would not be categorised as very wealthy. They have got it because of what they have done.

**Q326 Chair:** Do you think your polling shows that there is the same public confidence in the Forfeiture Committee as there is in the rest of the honours system?

*Sir Bob Kerlake:* We have not polled on the Forfeiture Committee, so I cannot answer that question, Chair.

**Chair:** It might be a good idea. Next time you do polling, perhaps you will poll on the parliamentary committee as well. Anyway, I am extremely grateful to you all for the very patient way you have dealt with our questioning. It has been very informative. We may well have some recommendations that you like and maybe some that you do not like, but I hope you will look forward to our report. Thank you very much.

# Written evidence

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## Written evidence submitted by Sir Garth Morrison KT CBE, Lord-Lieutenant, East Lothian (HS 01)

Some reflections prepared in response to the request for the views of Lord-Lieutenants for the inquiry by the Public Administration Select Committee.

### SUMMARY

1. While the honours system is a positive force there is room for improvement.
2. While the membership of the honours committees is impressive, the primary sifting process is carried out within government departments without independent oversight.
3. There remains a perception that too many recipients are being honoured solely for doing the job for which they are paid.
4. Civil servants, diplomats and those in the armed forces should have the same chance of getting an honour as other people.
5. In the assessment of merit greater weight should be attached to the contribution of the individual to the well-being of society additional to the work for which they are remunerated, usually rather well.

1. I think that the existence of an honours system does act as a positive force in British society, but this depends upon public confidence that it is being operated properly. The fact that it is reviewed so regularly, with the conclusions being widely circulated, builds confidence in its operation. Part of the price that we pay for a democratic society is there will always be some in the media and elsewhere who make it their life's work to find fault.

2. There is a concern, which I share, that too many honours are bestowed on people who are perceived simply to be doing the job for which they are paid, perhaps rather better than their peers, but nonetheless they are basically earning their salaries or wages. There is a perverse element here—a highly talented, committed and hard-working individual who devotes him/herself entirely to the “day job”, to the exclusion of all else, and reaches the top is quite likely to receive a national honour, whereas an equally talented, committed and hard-working individual who devotes some of his/her time to an organisation like the Scouts, is much less likely to do so—yet it might be argued that the latter has brought more public benefit. The vast majority of those in the voluntary sector who are recommended for a national honour make their contribution to the well-being of society in addition to making their living—they give of their free time wholeheartedly to the wellbeing of others. I realise that within the voluntary sector there is a wide spectrum of circumstances, from wholly unremunerated through various part-time employment to full-time executive direction, so it would not be right to devise hard and fast distinctions. It is a matter of the culture underlying the process whereby recommendations are sifted and I have concerns about that.

3. I think that the system is viewed as less susceptible to party politics, although that is taking some time. In Scotland the Ministers have expressly separated themselves from the process, and that is helping to build public trust. While this has diminished concern over party political involvement, there is still scope for the departmental heads to skew the system in accordance with their predilections. Ministerial statements, such as “there should be more recognition of the NHS (or teachers) in the honours list” does lead to distortion and unfairness. In my experience a number of Chief Executives of NHS Trusts were awarded the OBE at the behest of St Andrew's House, when I was, and am, aware of many others in the voluntary sector who were, and are, more deserving. They were good Chief Executives doing a good job, for which they were well paid, but the bar was lower for them than for many.

4. I do not think that civil servants, diplomats and those in the armed forces should have a better chance of getting an honour than other people. In my view the bar should be set at the same height for all who are honoured in this way. Achievements leading to the award of a national honour ought to extend beyond the activities defined in the job description of a civil servant, diplomat or member of the armed forces, and take into account the impact of those additional activities on the well-being of the communities in which they live or serve. In the case of the armed services, whose personnel I admire enormously, there is a range of military decorations that should be fully used to recognise their outstanding contribution to our security. Subject to the criteria used for assessment of recommendations for national honours being appropriate, it does not really matter if those for diplomats and the armed services are considered separately, so long as there is some independent oversight of the process. The purpose of that oversight would be to ensure that the chosen criteria are applied even-handedly.

5. The criticism that individuals are being honoured almost solely for being very successful at their day job is applicable to other fields of endeavour and not just the public sector. If the criteria for assessment were to include aspects demonstrating effective community involvement and a concern for the well-being of society the awards might command greater respect. By way of example, a very successful industrialist whose endeavours have generated much economic benefit is probably very well remunerated and is much esteemed in his/her peer group. It strikes me that the award of a national honour should depend upon additional factors, for example, involvement in organisations like Business in the Community or the Prince's Youth Business Trust, where the individual's skills would be greatly valued, or support for the arts and culture as well as an

element of philanthropy. The same principle is applicable across all the fields covered by the honours committees.

6. The membership of the honours committees is impressive with majorities of members drawn from outside government departments, and who have achieved great distinction themselves. They have the difficult task to select 1,000 names from a list of about 1,800 short-listed nominations. I am not sure how many nominations are submitted every year, but it is well known that there is a substantial piece of work to select the 1,800 for further consideration, and that is carried out wholly within government departments. In my view the integrity of the procedure for national honours stands or falls by that stage of the process, and the role of the honours committees, which is much trumpeted by the senior civil servants driving the honours system, is regarded by some as adding little more than a veneer of independent assessment. I have no doubt that the officials in government departments carrying out this sifting process do it to the best of their ability and seek to be scrupulously fair, but the outcome over many years appears to me to be the continuing recognition of officials in the public sector, for whom the bar appears to be lower than that for those whose contribution to community well-being is made in the voluntary sector. As noted above, this may well be a cultural issue.

7. There is a sense in which Scotland is a village in which everybody knows nearly everybody else. One consequence is that undue weight appears to be placed on whether an individual is known within the relevant government departments, either directly or through involvement in well established organisations. This leads to the effective exclusion of a number of individuals whose sterling work for the well-being of the community does not fit within the auspices of any one department and who are not known to any one department. Perhaps there is also a tendency for those at the centre to think that they know all that they need to know about what is happening in every nook and cranny of the country—viewed from afar this is detrimental to community interest. It is part of the remit of a Lord-Lieutenant to be aware of these issues and he/she could be very helpful with advice and information, but our experience is that this element is generally ignored.

8. I welcome the reintroduction of the British Empire Medal for the reasons set out in the Cabinet Office report of December 2011. It is perhaps too early to assess the impact of the weight given to philanthropy, and it will be important to avoid any sense of an honour being “bought”. The parable of the widow’s mite is not wholly irrelevant here.

9. The Honours List as gazetted allows space for the briefest of notes, which is a pity. It would be helpful to know what a recipient has actually done, in addition to occupying a certain position in a company or department. The vast majority simply state the person’s paid employment, eg “assistant solicitor, Justice Department” which conveys nothing, other than to reinforce the perception that civil servants are being honoured simply for doing their job. A good recent example in my experience noted that the award was for “services to ... (government department) and to the community of ... (his local town)”, where he is actively engaged in youth work. Naturally there was widespread approval locally. That would help to overcome the perception that an honour is awarded simply for doing the day job.

*March 2012*

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**Written evidence submitted by David Briggs MBE KStJ, Lord-Lieutenant, Cheshire (HS 14)**

This is provided by David Briggs, Lord-Lieutenant of Cheshire, after consultation with three of the Cheshire Honours Committees, which are groups of Deputy Lieutenants which he has to advise him on individual honours nominations.

Answers to the questions set out in your question paper using your numbering.

1. Yes but much of the public probably regards it as a “closed shop”. The system as a whole needs more publicity as to the reasons for granting individual honours—the challenge is of course to get local media to print good news or ‘worthy’ stories.

2. The biggest negative is that some jobs appear to automatically bring with them an honour. An honour should not be awarded just for doing a job for which one is paid.

3. Yes, capped at the right level but the balance between civil and military is very distorted.

4. Sadly the system is not yet seen to be de-politicised. There is still a perception that people can “buy” honours.

5. No. The public sector whether civil or military is still favoured and still gets honours for “doing the day job”. To a lesser extent this is also true for senior people in the private sector.

6. No. Honours should only be awarded for service over and above the call of duty. You should not get an award for simply doing what you are paid to do. There may be a few special cases in the diplomatic service where for the ‘Honour of Britain’ the Ambassador in the most important countries is awarded a Knighthood.

7. They should be part of the same process in that it is visible that no preferential process is in place.

8. The only comment on this issue I have is from a very able lady DL who made the point that there appear to be very few women on the Committees.

9. I welcome the introduction of a medal below an MBE to recognise outstanding but very local good works. I do however think it was unfortunate that the sub-MBE medal was brought back as the BEM for two reasons—first it is associated with ‘class’ which we all want to get rid of and secondly it seems inappropriate in 2012 to bring back an award containing the word ‘Empire’.

10. This is probably the most difficult area of all not least because The Big Society or as we used to say Charitable Causes needs cash and philanthropists are vital and need encouraging.

That said it has to be clear that no-one can simply “buy” an honour.

The mere writing of a cheque by a wealthy person needs to be balanced against the charity volunteer who puts hours of unpaid time into benefiting the community.

My view is that if the philanthropy is associated with time and personal commitment then it has the qualification for an award. The mere payment of money does not.

11. No. This is a significant concern of the public and does lower the status of the Honours system.

12. The honour should represent the time and commitment of an individual to benefit society. Every effort should be given to get more publicity for the reasons why an award is made.

13. There is no reason why the Honour Forfeiture Committee should not be the appointed body but there is a feeling that Fred Goodwin was made a scapegoat which is bad for the system.

14. There should be rules but there will also need to be the ability to use discretion on occasions.

April 2012

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**Written evidence submitted by Sir Bob Kerslake, Head of the Civil Service  
(HS 23)**

Please find attached the Government’s contribution to your call for written evidence to inform your Inquiry into the honours system. I look forward to expanding further during the oral session on 22 May.

**GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION TO PASC’S INQUIRY INTO THE HONOURS SYSTEM**

1. The Government welcomes the opportunity to provide written evidence to the Inquiry, and would like to do so under a number of headings linked to the questions raised in the Inquiry’s Issues and Questions Paper. Its second three-year report, covering 2009–11, has already been submitted, but the Committee may like some updated statistics from the New Year 2012 list: the proportion of honours awarded to women remained at 43%; the proportion of honours awarded to those known to be of an ethnic minority background rose to 11%; and there were 17 refusals, slightly lower than the norm.

2. Some introductory remarks may also be helpful. The Government’s policy remains that the honours system should be entirely based on merit. It is fundamental to the integrity of the system that its processes should be open (while retaining a necessary degree of confidentiality, to protect those under consideration) and fair. Those who are honoured should be people of real achievement, with no sense of entitlement arising simply from holding a particular office: Permanent Secretaries, for example, can no longer expect Knight- or Damehoods as a matter of course. We want to recognise both excellence and selfless voluntary service. The Government is especially keen to broaden the base of those who are honoured (and the reintroduction of the British Empire Medal is helping with this, particularly in encouraging more nominations of those who contribute to the Big Society): it is focusing this year on outreach efforts to encourage more nominations of women, and a number of the honours selection committees are working with Departments to reach out to those sectors which have thus far not been properly represented in the honours lists. We are also looking at how best to use social media to reinforce the message that the honours system is open to everyone. The Committee’s views on how to do even better would be particularly welcome.

**VIEWS OF THE HONOURS SYSTEM (QUESTIONS 1, 2)**

3. Between 2007 and 2009, the Honours and Appointments Secretariat commissioned an independent market research company to conduct an awareness and attitudinal survey of public perceptions of the honours system. The results of the three annual surveys are summarised in Attachment 1. The main messages were:

- Awareness of the Honours system was high in 2009 at 81%.
- 71% of people were proud that the UK Honours system exists, an increase from 66% in 2007.
- The number of people agreeing that the Honours system is out-of-date showed a statistically significant reduction from 40% in 2007 to 34% in 2009.
- The majority of people (76%) agreed in 2009 that the UK Honours system is open to all.
- The number of people agreeing that the UK Honours system is a unique method of recognising the achievements of ordinary people rose from 71% in 2007 to 75% in 2009.

- The number of people agreeing that Honours are mainly awarded to people for the service they have given to the country or their community showed a statistically significant improvement from 69% in 2007 to 76% in 2009.

The surveys also highlighted some particular areas for improvement:

- Only 44% of people agreed in 2009 that the honours system is open and fair in the way it operates, although this represented a marked improvement from 39% in 2007.
- 38% of people still believed that celebrities were the most likely to receive an honour.

#### DEPOLITICISATION OF HONOURS (QUESTIONS 4, 11, 12)

4. The Issues and Questions Paper rightly points out that many of the changes to the honours system in the last 15 years have aimed to remove politics from it. But it is less clear that this is also the public's perception, and it may be that the public's general view of politicians means that it will never be universally accepted that the honours system is free from political interference. This perception is not helped by the way the media presents the awarding of honours to those who are entirely meritorious in their own right, but who have also made donations to a political party. Such donations do not strengthen a case for an honour in any way, but neither do they preclude a candidate from receiving an award.

5. Sir Paul Ruddock has suggested that the problem could be alleviated by making public the details of the reasons for awarding the most senior honours. We agree that this has merit: there have in fact been some occasions when the purely factual elements of an individual's citation have been released, with the individual's agreement. We therefore see some scope for releasing shortened citations for those who receive the highest honours.

6. The creation of a new selection committee for parliamentary and political service further cements the independence of the system. Beginning with the Birthday 2012 honours round, this will consider honours recommendations for those who serve the Westminster Parliament, the Devolved Administrations and the political system more broadly, whether as politicians, officials or party workers (those involved in local government will continue to be considered by the Community, Local and Voluntary Service Honours Committee). The new committee is keen to receive as broad-based a range of nominations as possible, to cover the full range of political and parliamentary activity, including the smaller parties. As with all the other specialist selection committees, it has a majority of independent members.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF HONOURS (QUESTIONS 5, 6)

7. We doubt whether there will ever be an honours system that satisfies everyone. One of the most frequent criticisms is that honours are given to people who are simply "doing their job". In fact, by far the majority are given to those who are engaged in some form of voluntary work, and the re-introduction of the British Empire Medal is cementing this still further. The selection committees are particularly concerned to recognise those who have gone beyond their jobs and who put something back into society or their profession. This is particularly the case for candidates on the State Committee's list, and a determination to reward only the truly deserving means that that Committee has not used its full allocation of honours in the Birthday 2012 round. The overall balance of honours between committees will be looked at again soon in the forthcoming Quinquennial Review. The views of PASC will be a useful input.

8. Nonetheless, we believe there are some individuals who are so pre-eminent in their profession that recognition through the honours system is merited, even if their job is all that they do. Nobel prize-winning scientists, Oscar-nominated actors, multi-medal winning Olympians, internationally-acclaimed musicians are just some examples that might fall into this category. But as a general rule, the selection committees are looking for something more.

9. In previous years, successful Olympic and Paralympic athletes have been treated as a special case (each nomination was judged on its merits, but all Olympic gold medallists at Beijing received at least an MBE). Given the move away from automaticity in other fields, this no longer seems right. The Sports Committee has therefore identified four factors that will need to be taken into account when considering the case for honours for those who do well at London 2012. A summary of its conclusions may be found at Attachment 2.

10. The only remaining area where honours are automatic is the conferring of Knighthoods or Damehoods on High Court Judges on appointment. The rationale for this arrangement is that the independence of the judiciary is critical and must be preserved. If automaticity were to end, so that honours were granted to some judges for the quality of their judicial work, and not others, that could lead to accusations of 'honours from Government in return for the right judgements', no matter how transparent the process. The reform of the honours system to the current independent, apolitical process has reduced the weight of this argument, but the issue remains sensitive, touching as it does on the relationship between Government and the judiciary. An independent view from PASC would therefore be very welcome. Possible options might include creating a new selection committee composed of judges (or judges and some non-judges) to determine honours for judicial service, with its own quota of honours to allocate; or to extend such a committee's remit even further to cover all aspects of Law and Order currently handled by the Community, Voluntary and Local Service Committee, including police and prisons as well as judges.

## BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL (QUESTION 9)

11. The Committee may like to know that in the current (Birthday 2012) honours round, the selection committees have considered over 400 nominations for the British Empire Medal; about three-quarters of these were handled by the Community, Voluntary and Local Service Committee.

## PHILANTHROPY (QUESTION 10)

12. The Committee may find it useful to have the Terms of Reference for the Philanthropy Committee—see Attachment 3.

## FORFEITURE (QUESTIONS 13, 14)

13. When PASC and Sir Hayden Phillips conducted their reviews of the honours system in 2004, they did not include forfeiture arrangements within the scope of their work. We have therefore conducted an internal review, in consultation with some of the independent chairs of the selection committees and with the current members of the Forfeiture Committee. Its conclusions may be found at Attachment 4.

14. There have been a number of forfeitures since the PASC last took evidence on the honours system. Fred Goodwin's case had the highest public profile. We cannot comment in detail on that, beyond what has been already been made public, for the usual important reasons of confidentiality. But it is worth stressing that the over-riding criterion—that of bringing the honours system into disrepute—used by the Forfeiture Committee in all these cases has not changed for many years (the history of this is given in Attachment 4) and was duly applied in Goodwin's case too.

## Attachment 1

## PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE HONOURS SYSTEM 2007–2009—KEY FINDINGS

*Awareness of the Honours System*

Wave 1 (2007)	81%	Wave 3 (2008)	77%	Wave 4 (2009)	81%
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Of those aware of the UK Honours System, the following percentages of people “agree strongly” and “agree slightly” with the statements:

*The UK Honours system is out-of-date and should be replaced by a scheme more suited to the UK as it is today*

Wave 1 (2007)	40%	Wave 3 (2008)	37%	Wave 4 (2009)	34%
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*The UK Honours system is currently open to all. Everyone, from any background, can receive an award*

Wave 1 (2007)	75%	Wave 3 (2008)	73%	Wave 4 (2009)	76%
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*The UK Honours system is open and fair in the way that it is operated*

Wave 1 (2007)	39%	Wave 3 (2008)	47%	Wave 4 (2009)	44%
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*The UK Honours system is a unique method of recognising the achievements of ordinary people*

Wave 1 (2007)	71%	Wave 3 (2008)	71%	Wave 4 (2009)	75%
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*Honours are mainly awarded to people who deserve them for the service they have given to the country or their community*

Wave 1 (2007)	69%	Wave 3 (2008)	72%	Wave 4 (2009)	76%
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*I would feel very proud if I were to be nominated for a UK Honour*

Wave 1 (2007)	73%	Wave 3 (2008)	76%	Wave 4 (2009)	77%
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*I am proud that the UK Honours system exists*

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Wave 1 (2007)	66%	Wave 3 (2008)	69%	Wave 4 (2009)	71%
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## Attachment 2

### SPORT COMMITTEE'S CONCLUSIONS ON OLYMPIC HONOURS

#### HONOURS POLICY

Policy is that honours are awarded for:

- Service.
- Achievement.

There should be no automatic honours, except those currently awarded to High Court Judges on appointment.

In most walks of life—businesses, the arts, local communities etc—policy has developed in recent years. Candidates must do more than their “day job”.

#### SPORTING AWARDS

Current practice has been for sports people to be honoured when:

- they are about to/have retired after a long career. It has not always been thought necessary that they should be giving anything back;
- they have achieved a significant victory such as a Gold medal at the Olympics or become world champions (eg. motor racing). Achievement has often been the sole criterion; and
- they have captained a winning team in major international contests/been an important player in the winning team.

#### DISADVANTAGES

This gives rise to a number of anomalies and unsatisfactory outcomes, for example:

- people have been honoured without ‘giving back’ either in the community, or in the development of their sport;
- people have got MBEs for an achievement which they then repeat;
- charges of automaticity; and
- “fast tracked” honours for people who have achieved an instant success/record.

#### ELEMENTS OF A NEW APPROACH

In line with the policy applied across the other independent selection Committees, there should be no “automatic” honours.

All selections should continue to be made entirely on merit taking into account the following four factors when assessing sporting nominations:

1. Sporting achievement/excellence.
  - Taking into account the level of competition (be it within field, or when considered against historical achievement).
2. Length of Service.
  - Taking into account career achievements and duration (this might lead to a silver medallist who has competed at the highest level over a long period getting an award, when an 18 year old winning gold at first competition might not).
3. Service to sport or the wider community.
  - “Giving back”. In line with the Prime Minister’s strategic objectives, taking into account how the candidate has used their profile for the benefit of the wider community, and/or the development of sport.
  - Taking into account participation numbers.
4. Any Honours currently held.
  - The first three factors should be applied especially rigorously to nominations for further awards, particularly where performance has been repeated eg a gold medallist in the same discipline in subsequent Olympic Games might merit an upgrade not four years later but later in their career.
  - This could also help to achieve parity between the Olympics and Paralympics, as single gold medallists at the Beijing Paralympics did not receive honours.

We would make it clear that these are not absolute criteria and the Sport Committee would continue to exercise its judgement when making final selections.

#### BENEFITS OF THIS NEW APPROACH FOR THE OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPICS

Applying these four factors to all sporting awards would facilitate parity of approach to awards for Olympians and Paralympians that could deliver equitable proportions of awards for the Olympics and Paralympics without using an automatic formula that delivered an award for every gold medal.

It would also allow the Sport Committee to continue to honour Olympians and Paralympians as recognition is merited for career achievements and performance in other events etc. In particular, awards made at BD12 in advance of the Olympics and Paralympics could be used to demonstrate the new approach in practice.

- For example, recent awards have been made to Jessica ENNIS and Phillips IDOWU at BD11 and the Paralympians, Ann CUTCLIFFE at NY11 and Nyree LEWIS at BD09.

### Attachment 3

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE PHILANTHROPY COMMITTEE

##### BACKGROUND

The Prime Minister provides the key strategic direction to the UK honours system. He has particularly asked that the vast majority of honours go to individuals who have gone beyond excellence in playing their part to create a Big Society. He has also asked that greater prominence be given to philanthropists who are making a difference to the Big Society through a sustained personal engagement. He wants the Honours Committees to give more consideration to how our top sports stars, actors, business people etc are also using their prominence and profile for the greater good in giving back to society in any number of ways. The Philanthropy Committee has been established to ensure that such people are properly recognised and do not “slip through the net”.

##### SCOPE OF THE COMMITTEE

In the light of this strategic guidance, it is likely that the majority of candidates for honours will be engaged in some form of philanthropic activity. The Philanthropy Committee is not expected to review them all. It should focus instead on those who, in addition to sustained personal commitment to a charitable cause or voluntary endeavour, have also contributed a gift or gifts of significant monetary value. In each honours round, the Honours and Appointments Secretariat will provide a list of such candidates for the Philanthropy Committee to consider, comprising both those who have been recommended for honours by one or more of the specialist Honours Committees and those who have not.

##### PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE

The Philanthropy Committee’s functions will be:

- to review the levels of award proposed for philanthropists by the specialist Honours Committees;
- to consider whether any additional candidates should be recommended for honours; and
- to propose to the Main Honours Committee any additions or changes in level of award.

The Philanthropy Committee will not itself have an allocation of honours for distribution, but it may want to recommend additional candidates to compete for any honours that might be available in the “pool”.

##### CRITERIA FOR MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

Simply making a philanthropic gift does not qualify a candidate for an award: honours cannot be bought. Some or all of the following characteristics<sup>1</sup> also need to be evidenced in the citation:

- a sustained *commitment* to the body or bodies in receipt of the gift, and a thoughtful approach to such support, normally over a period of five years at least. Short term gifts which create financial problems for others are clearly unhelpful. A contribution of time, as well as money, is required for consideration for an honour;
- where a very large donation has been made, perhaps for a key project, no award should be made until there is evidence of *success*—eg a building has been completed or the project is running well;
- the activities supported should be *meritorious*, being well-selected and successfully meeting publicly recognised needs;
- there would normally be a *low-key* approach to giving—or at least giving which is not self-evidently designed to enhance the public prestige of the giver or to publicise his or her business interests; and

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<sup>1</sup> These are drawn from Annex 5 to the 2004 Review of the Honours System by Sir Hayden Phillips

- the source of the gift must be *legitimate* and not derived from activities which might bring the honours system into disrepute.

#### GOVERNANCE AND MEMBERSHIP

The Philanthropy Committee is a sub-committee of the Main Honours Committee. It is chaired by the Chair of State Committee. Its membership comprises the Chairs of those specialist Honours Committees (usually Arts and Media, Economy and CVLS) which have considered philanthropists for honours as defined above; a representative from Number 10 also attends. The Honours and Appointments Secretariat in the Cabinet Office provides administrative support and policy advice.

### Attachment 4

#### REVIEW OF FORFEITURE POLICY AND PROCESSES

##### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. The Forfeiture Committee should have a majority of independent members. It should comprise the Head of the Civil Service; the Treasury Solicitor; the chair of the specialist committee which recommended the honour to be forfeited; and two other specialist committee chairs who have no association with the case(s) under consideration. The Head of the Civil Service should remain Chair (paragraphs 11–12).
- II. The Committee should use “bringing the honours system into disrepute” as its over-arching criterion and consider forfeitures on a case-by-case basis (paragraph 16).
- III. The Committee should be prepared to accept written representations from the individual at risk of forfeiting an honour before it makes its final recommendation (paragraph 17).
- IV. In all other respects, the Committee should continue with present policies and practice (paragraph 10).

##### BACKGROUND

1. The honours system was reformed in 2005, following a wide-ranging review led by Sir Hayden Phillips. That reform created the independent honours selection committees we have today. But the Phillips review omitted to cover the policy and processes for forfeiting honours, which were last considered by a working party chaired by Sir Charles Cunningham in 1963. This paper is intended to fill that gap.

2. Both the Phillips and Cunningham reviews were confined to honours which feature in the New Year and Birthday Honours lists: the Companion of Honour; the Order of the Bath; the Order of St Michael and St George; the Order of the British Empire; and Knights Bachelor. They did not review those Orders of Chivalry for which awards are in the personal gift of the Sovereign, nor gallantry awards or other military medals. This review covers the same ground.

3. Peerages, baronetcies and privy counsellorships are outside the honours system and similarly are not covered by this review. The Cunningham review concluded that any forfeiture cases in those categories should be handled on an ad hoc basis: the surrender of peerages and baronetcies requires an Act of Parliament; privy counsellors who are convicted of a criminal offence are removed from the Privy Council by an Order in Council, unless they choose to resign.

##### CURRENT POLICY AND PROCESSES

4. The proposals put forward by the Cunningham review were implemented in full and, with some minor tweaks, are still in place today (see Annex). The key elements of the current system are:

- All proposals for forfeiture of an honour are considered by the Forfeiture Committee. This is a standing sub-committee of the Main Honours Selection Committee. It is chaired by the Head of the Civil Service and its membership comprises the Cabinet Secretary; the Permanent Secretaries of the Home Office and Scottish Executive; and the Treasury Solicitor. The Head of the Honours and Appointments Secretariat acts as Secretary.
- Cases are generally brought to the attention of the Committee by the Department which made the original nomination. Such cases are usually dealt with by correspondence, though some may require a meeting of the Committee. The subject of the forfeiture proposal is not given the opportunity to make representations to the Committee.
- If the Committee agrees that forfeiture is justified, the Chair makes a recommendation to the Prime Minister, who in turn submits that recommendation to the Sovereign for approval.
- The forfeiture is then announced in the London Gazette, after the individual concerned has been given prior notice.

5. The criteria for forfeiture have evolved slightly over time. In a discussion of the Order of the British Empire in 1936, Sir Warren Fisher (the first Head of the Home Civil Service) said:

“The view we have taken is that appointments [to the Order] should usually be cancelled on conviction by a competent Court of an offence for which there had been a sentence to a term of imprisonment of something more than a nominal period, or a substantial fine has been imposed, and the offence has involved moral turpitude. Most of the cancellations have been for embezzlement, theft or some such other offence.”

6. The Cunningham review tightened this to imprisonment for three months or more, and proposed that forfeiture should follow only if one of the following criteria was also satisfied:

- “(a) the offence involves disloyalty to the State; or
- (b) the offence was committed by a civil servant and involves a serious dereliction of duty; or
- (c) the offence involves such disgraceful conduct that public opinion would be likely to consider it wrong for the offender to hold a public symbol of Royal favour.”

However Cunningham also noted that:

“Forfeiture may sometimes be justified by special considerations. One instance of what we have in mind is the case of an employee of a Government department whose offence, though it may be treated leniently by the criminal Court, is nevertheless a grave one, having regard to departmental standards—for example, the theft of postal packets or the taking of a bribe. We accordingly think it right that departments should be free to submit for consideration on their merits cases in which there seem to be special reasons justifying forfeiture, even though they do not fall within the criteria set out [above].”

7. In 1994 John Major gave a wider definition in a written answer to the House of Commons:

“Cancellation is considered in cases where retention of the appointment or award would bring the honours system into disrepute. There are no set guidelines for cancellations, which are considered on a case-by-case basis.”

This was confirmed in a parliamentary answer given by Gordon Brown in early 2009.

8. The criterion of “bringing the honours system into disrepute” has been used both before and since. This was elaborated at a meeting of the Forfeiture Committee in late 2009. That meeting concluded that forfeiture was appropriate if an individual had brought the honours system into disrepute, as evidenced by having been:

- found guilty by the Courts of a criminal offence and sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more; or
- censured/struck off etc by the relevant professional or other Regulatory Authority for action or inaction which was directly relevant to the granting of the honour.

9. In early 2012, the Committee noted that forfeiture was not restricted to these two criteria: if there was other compelling evidence that an individual had brought the honours system into disrepute, then it was open to the Committee to consider such cases as well.

#### PROPOSALS FOR REFORM

10. Where no proposals are made, I recommend that the Committee continues with its present practice.

#### MEMBERSHIP

11. The current membership of the Committee is out of line with the principles established by the Phillips review, which concluded (and the Government accepted) that the specialist selection committees should contain a majority of non-Civil Service experts in order to guarantee the committees’ independence from political interference. If the same principles were to apply to the Forfeiture Committee, then a possible membership would be: the Head of the Civil Service; the Treasury Solicitor; the chair of the specialist committee which recommended the honour to be forfeited; and two other specialist committee chairs who have no association with the case(s) under consideration. If the Cabinet Secretary were also to attend, we would need to include one more specialist committee chair. I recommend that there should be a majority of independent members.

12. Given the gravity of the issues discussed by the Committee, and given that the Committee’s recommendations are submitted directly to the Prime Minister, it is appropriate for the Chair of the Main Honours Committee also to be Chair of the Forfeiture Committee. I therefore recommend that the Head of the Civil Service remains Chair. An alternative option would be for the chair to be taken by one of the chairs of the specialist honours committees, who would then submit the Forfeiture Committee’s recommendations to the Prime Minister via the Main Honours Committee, but this seems unnecessarily bureaucratic and could cause significant delay.

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## CRITERIA FOR FORFEITURE

13. The evolution of the criteria for forfeiture as described in paragraphs 5–9 above suggests a tension between the wide over-arching criterion of “bringing the honours system into disrepute”, which gives the Committee the maximum leeway in considering individuals on a case-by-case basis; and the narrower, specific criteria such as those recorded in paragraph 8, which present only a very small legal risk in the event of a challenge to a Committee decision. The courts are likely to be wary of straying into the territory of the Committee’s deliberations, but might be tempted in the face of a hard case based on an unfair process. If the Committee were to adopt more or wider criteria for assessing the question of disrepute, the more likely it would be that its processes would eventually come under the scrutiny of the courts. In particular, if it were to move to more subjective criteria, it would need to have some method of establishing the relevant facts. In certain circumstances, fairness might mean it had to invite the views of the person against whom forfeiture was proposed.

14. Perhaps greater than the risk of legal challenge would be the precedent created by moving from objective criteria to a more subjective test. Simply “bringing the honours system into disrepute” might capture many who have been honoured but who have since (or indeed previously) behaved disgracefully but not criminally.

15. A further issue is that the criterion of considering forfeiture if an individual has been censured or struck off by their professional body fails to capture those who might be judged guilty of misconduct but who are not members of any such body—many civil servants, for example.

16. It therefore seems right to continue to have a combination of:

- an over-arching criterion of bringing the honours system into disrepute as a result of the individual’s actions;
- the more specific under-pinning criteria described in paragraph 8, which provide examples of how the system may have been brought into disrepute. It would be open to the Committee to add to these, on the basis of cases successfully brought before it (for example, a civil servant might not be a member of a professional body, but might nevertheless have brought the honours system into disrepute as a result of an action which led to disciplinary proceedings), to ensure equality of treatment for others who might fall into a similar category. If any of these more specific criteria are met, that would then automatically trigger consideration of forfeiture; and
- the freedom to consider any other case where it might reasonably be argued that an individual has brought the honours system into disrepute.

I recommend that the Committee should continue to use “bringing the honours system into disrepute” as its over-arching criterion and to consider forfeitures on a case-by-case basis.

## PROCESSES

17. The appointment of a majority of independent members should help to allay concerns about the fairness of the process, particularly in cases where the more specific criteria have not been met. However, in cases where the specific criteria do not apply or where the issues are open to interpretation, an additional safeguard would be to allow written representation before a final decision is made. This is the practice adopted by the Order of St John, which allows individuals up to 28 days to make representations before a forfeiture decision is taken. I recommend that the Committee should in future be prepared to accept written representations before it makes its final recommendation.

Head of the Honours and Appointments Secretariat

*February 2012*

## Annex to Attachment 4

### THE CUNNINGHAM REVIEW: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Our main recommendations relate to Knighthoods and lower honours granted in respect of services in civil life. There should be no distinction of practice as between Knighthoods and lower honours.

2. We think that forfeiture should be considered in all cases where conviction of an offence is followed by a substantial sentence of imprisonment—we suggest three months or more. In such cases we think that forfeiture should, as a general rule, be recommended if and only if one or other of the following criteria is also satisfied:

- (a) the offence involves disloyalty to the State; or
- (b) the offence was committed by a civil servant and involves a serious dereliction of duty; or
- (c) the offence involves such disgraceful conduct that public opinion would be likely to consider it wrong for the offender to hold a public symbol of Royal favour.

Departments should bring to notice other cases where there seem to be special reasons justifying forfeiture or about which they would like advice.

3. The honours to which the above recommendations apply without qualification are the Companion of Honour; the Order of the Bath; the Order of St Michael and St George; the Order of the British Empire; Knights Bachelor; the Imperial Service Medal; and the Civil Defence Long Service Medal.

4. The Home Office and the Scottish Home and Health Department should consult chief officers of police with a view to obtaining reports of relevant convictions. A standing sub-committee of the Main Honours Selection Committee should consider all names brought to its notice and should consult sponsoring departments.

5. Exceptions to the above recommendations are given in respect of:

- (a) honours awarded by The Queen otherwise than on the recommendation of a Minister;
- (b) civil gallantry awards;
- (c) police and fire service awards;
- (d) other civil medals.

6. Our recommendations, if adopted, should be communicated to the Service departments so that they may consider modifying their practice.

7. Our recommendations only relate to honours held by citizens of the United Kingdom. Our recommendations have been brought to the notice of the Foreign Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Colonial Office.

April 2012

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#### Written evidence submitted by John Lidstone (HS 32)

It is eight years since the PASC's Report "*A Matter of Honour: Reforming the Honours System*" was published in 2004. In view of this I thought that you may like to know whether my views have changed, softened or hardened since I gave my expert evidence in February 2004.

I still believe that we should have an honours system to recognise and award just two categories of men and women: those who have done signal acts beyond their job and duty and those who have shown outstanding heroism in military or civilian life, no one else. It follows from this assumption, that the number of such people honoured would probably be less than the number now listed twice a year.

The "update" I added to the Churchill 1998 Lecture "Reforming The Honours System" in March 2007 has been circulated to you. This summarises my assessment of the PASC's first Report. But I should like to add a number of comments that have arisen since in talks, articles and broadcast interviews I have undertaken since that time.

The Report was never debated in the House of Commons so that MPs could express their views on the recommendations made in it. Just two seem to have been approved, changes in the composition of the eight sub-committees who review recommendations for honours. And the other, put forward by John Major for some sort of pin or badge that people who have been honoured could wear. But he said in his evidence: "this Companion of Honour would not wear it".

He added that he was content to have the CH for his work in the Northern Ireland peace process and would not be taking a former prime Minister's ration of honours, the Garter and a peerage. In 2005 a year on he had a Pauline conversion from saying he did not believe in automaticity and took the first half being dubbed a Knight of the Most Order of the Garter! The second half of his ration, a hereditary earldom will probably be accepted in due course. No wonder we do not believe anything a politician says.

Why was the Report never debated? In the absence of any explanation, I can only assume that Tony Blair kicked it into the long grass so that he could continue to sell honours for secret loans and donations to fund the 2005 Labour Party Election Fund. Accepting the recommendation that knighthoods should be phased out would have prevented him from continuing to milk the system.

In my original evidence I said that a Royal Commission should replace the eight sub-committees so that it was free from political influence of politicians and the Prime Minister. Instead we have eight sub-committees composed of the multi-honoured and a liberal sprinkling of Senior Civil Servants.

Here are the numbers of honours held by these sub-committee members so that you can compare the original committees with the present ones. In the first tranch of appointments to the eight sub-committees, 84 members between them had 84 honours many going with their jobs and not for any outstanding or meritorious reasons.

Taking my figures from the lists of present sub-committee members, the total number of is 84; between them they share 102 honours again many appearing to go with the jobs they do. There is an exception; the large number of honours shared by the members of the Sports sub-committee.

Whilst on this particular subject, the award of honours to those who compete in the Olympic Games is ridiculous. In a recent broadcast I was asked what honour Chris Hoy would get if he wins one or more Gold

Medals at the London Olympics? Since he already has been knighted presumably a life peerage! For anyone competing in the Games the award of a Gold medal is a sufficient honour. It needs no national top up.

I have found throughout the country widespread ridicule for the honours heaped on sports men and women, journalists, actors and television performers and people in the professions and business. These groups of people earn huge sums of money can be honoured by their own particular profession or body. Actors and television presenters have the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA), the Olivier Award, Emmies, Oscars etc. The law makes provision for people to be elected benchers, business people can become fellows of their specialisms, others be elected to City of London Livery Companies.

The Report's proposed that members of the public could apply to selected to sit on one of the sub-committees. In view of the time and study I have given to our dishonourable system, I decided to test this proposal by sending in an application in line with my comments that those who have no honours could bring a more objective view to those recommended for one. I was given no explanation why I was not considered. I imagine the sub-committee did not want any grit in their particular oysters! Or the fact that I had told the PASC Inquiry that I had refused an honour and was disgusted at having one dangled before me to try and persuade me to take the chair of a regional hospital authority.

Concerning my contention about who should be given honours; when those in the armed forces or in civilian life are awarded say the Military Cross or the George Cross, published citations run to at least 150 words and sometimes more. We can read about their deeds of valour, courage, or acts beyond their job or duty. And say "yes", "yes".

Those who get knighthoods like Fred Goodwin who has now been stripped of his, the citation read: "*For services to banking*". All the honours are followed by equally brief citations in the bi-annual honours lists. Is it any wonder that the general public has become so cynical about why people are given them!

Recommendations were made that there should in future be no automatic honours given to men and women in the Armed Forces, the Diplomatic Service, the judiciary or in the Civil Service. Yet knighthoods continue to be awarded to Army Generals, Permanent Secretaries, ambassadors, life peerages and knighthoods to judges. Why?

Another puzzling refinement to the operation of the honours system has been the guidance to sub-committees to include more women and at least 7% from ethnic minorities. Why stop there? The human beings considered could be made up like a bag of liquorice all sorts; agnostics, humanists, gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, atheists, muslims, members of the peoples revolutionary party *et al*. The permutations are endless.

Finally there is the issue of how political parties are to be funded and whether the general public through taxation should bear the cost. Press reports reveal that the Conservative Party continues to give life peerages in exchange for large financial contributions and payment for access to a minister. No doubt the other political parties are doing the same.

One person in an audience I addressed earlier this year made this cynical comment: "You have argued well the case for cleansing the honours system. Why don't we just accept that it is corrupt and adopt the American way of doing things in preference to everyone having to pay for it. Publish a tariff like Lloyd George and every British Prime has used ever since and the Americans do quite openly. In addition to the cost of a life peerage, baronetcy, knighthood, et al, there are plenty of other opportunities to exploit. Afternoon tea has become very popular and people now pay a lot of money to take it at places like the Ritz in London. Having it at Buckingham Palace Garden parties could prove a big money spinner".

To my surprise there was great applause for this suggestion from the 260 men and women at this meeting in one of the most conservative of towns, Wallingford in Oxfordshire.

It underlines nationwide contempt for our parliament, its members in every party political party and the operation of the honours system. The exposure of MP expenses scandals by The Daily Telegraph has strengthened this disgust.

May 2012

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#### Letter submitted by The Prime Minister (HS 34)

I am writing to let you know about the improvements we are making to the process for considering honours for MPs Parliamentary staff.

You will recall that the previous Government had a policy of not recommending honours for political service, although some individuals were honoured for services to Parliament. The Government believes that this policy was wrong. There are many people in politics who demonstrate selfless commitment for the good of the nation. It is right to recognise the best of them.

A new honours committee—the Parliamentary Honours Committee—is therefore being established. As well as considering candidates for honours from the Westminster Parliament, it will also consider recommendations for members of the Devolved Legislatures. And it will consider recommendations for honours for the staffs of

the Westminster and other Assemblies, the staffs of bodies which report to them, such as the National Audit Office and the Ombudsmen, and Party workers.

I am glad to say that Lord Spicer of Crophorne has agreed to Chair the new Committee. Other members will be the three Commons Chief Whips of the major parties and four independents: Baroness Hayman, Lord Butler, Dame Mary Keegan and Peter Riddell. The membership has been chosen to include a balance of party members and those who do not have known party allegiances but have a good awareness of Parliament and Parliamentary processes. Because there has been insufficient time, it has not been possible to select these independent members by the normal process of open advertising and written application in line with Nolan procedures. But the intention is that when further appointments are to be made, they will be carried out using the normal processes for selecting honours committee members. The full list of names will be published on the Government Portal ([www.direct.gov.uk/honours](http://www.direct.gov.uk/honours)).

The new Committee is being established for the Birthday 2012 Honours round. As with all the specialist Honours Committees, its recommendations will be subject to the agreement of the Main Honours Committee, chaired by the Head of the Home Civil Service.

*March 2012*

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### **Correspondence between Mr Bernard Jenkin MP and Sir Bob Kerslake (HS 35)**

#### **Letter from Mr Bernard Jenkin MP to the Prime Minister dated 26 March 2012**

Thank you for your letter of 19 March to inform me about the new Parliamentary Honours Committee. I have shared your letter with fellow Members of the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) and we have had some initial discussion about the matter.

Without having previously considered the system by which honours for Parliament might operate, we broadly welcome the principle of establishing of a new Honours Committee specifically for parliamentary and related service.

As you may know, PASC is currently investigating the operation of the honours system and we will include consideration of this new arrangement in our inquiry. I do not expect us to consider a draft report until after the Birthday Honours List has been announced, so we will be able to comment in the light of its initial period of operation. I imagine that you may have set this up at speed, so that it can be operational in time for the current honours round. In the meantime, noting your comments about the membership of the committee, we hope we can regard this as an interim measure, pending broader consultation.

To assist us with our inquiry, I wonder if you could explain a little more about the origins of this idea, *inter alia*:

- What representations you received, and from whom, suggesting that the process for considering honours for MPs and parliamentary staff should be changed?
- Whether there will be annual quotas for the new parliamentary honours committee at each level from Dame/Knight to BEM, and how will this affect the quotas available to the other specialist honours committees?

It would be most helpful if we could have your response by Wednesday 18 April.

#### **Letter from Sir Bob Kerslake to Mr Bernard Jenkin MP**

Thank you for your letter of 26 March asking for further details about this new Committee. The Prime Minister has seen your letter and has asked me to respond on his behalf as Chair of the Main Honours Committee.

In response to your first question, the Committee was not established as a result of any particular representations. It was more to bring the consideration of nominations for those who have given outstanding parliamentary or political service into line with the rest of the honours system, using a dedicated committee with a majority of independent members. In the last honours round, these cases were considered by the Philanthropy and State Committees, in the absence of a committee set up for the purpose (you may recall that three Knight/Damehoods were awarded to MPs, alongside a number of lower level honours). We now have a much better process.

The annual quota for the new Committee will be set by the Quinquennial Review of honours, which is due to begin later this year. In the meantime, it has been given an allocation of four Kt/DBEs, four CBEs, six OBEs, nine MBEs and two BEMs for distribution in each honours round. This does not affect the quotas available to the other committees: in previous rounds, committees have been allowed to “overbid”, in anticipation of the fact that there are always a number of refusals or deaths before the list is published. From the current round, we have stopped overbidding in order to create the allocation for the new committee.

*April 2012*

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**Written evidence submitted by Richard Tilbrook (HS 36)**

I will be attending the Select Committee on 22 May to give oral evidence to the inquiry into the Honours System, and I wanted, in advance, to provide a clarification regarding the proportion of honours awarded to people from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background in the New Year's Honours List 2012 (NY 12).

The Government's written submission of 13 April included a figure of 11% BME recipients at NY 12. This figure correctly reports the proportion of BME recipients as identified by the nominator, either a member of the public or government department. However, the proportion of BME recipients as determined by the recipients themselves, now looks to be less. Having now had the opportunity to collate the results of our ethnicity questionnaires sent out to the recipients of honours at NY12, the proportion of recipients from a BME background calculated in this way comes out closer to 7% which is more in line with the representation seen in previous recent honours lists. This may in part be due to the fact that not all recipients are prepared to declare their ethnicity, so a lower figure might be expected: I suspect the true figure is something between the two. But given the disparity between the two figures, I thought it best to advise you at the earliest opportunity.

*May 2012*

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**Written evidence submitted by Lord Spicer (HS38)**

**BACKGROUND**

Democracy is a defining characteristic of our country. Those who play a part in it, as elected representatives and volunteers or as officials, are to be applauded and encouraged. The bestowing of honours is one way of doing so. In recent years, and following the reforms to the UK honours system in 2005, candidates for political honours have been considered for honours through the independent Committee process, most recently via a sub-group of the Main Honours Committee.

The establishment of the Parliamentary and Political Service Committee now further cements the independence of the process, and offers an opportunity to increase transparency and public trust in the system, by putting arrangements on a more formal footing. Its creation ensures that nominations of individuals within this category will receive full and objective scrutiny.

In keeping with all other awards on the Prime Minister's List, the Committee will make recommendations to the Main Honours Committee, chaired by Sir Bob Kerslake, where the final Honours List is agreed for submission by the Prime Minister to The Queen for Her Majesty's approval.

We expect that the Committee will consider a broad range of candidates for honours from the Westminster Parliament and the devolved legislatures, the staffs of those bodies which report directly to them, and voluntary workers and staff of the political parties. I hope that MEPs will shortly be added to this list.

The Prime Minister laid a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) before Parliament on 17 May 2012 regarding the formation of the Committee. The WMS also sets out in full the membership of the Committee.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

At the first meeting of the Parliamentary and Political Service Committee, to consider candidates for The Birthday Honours List 2012, members of the Committee agreed a formal Terms of Reference, a copy of which I attach.

I would particularly like to draw attention to the criteria that have been agreed for recommending awards. These are entirely consistent with the criteria applied by each of the other eight independent Honours Selection Committees that make recommendations to the Main Honours Committee. There are no longer automatic awards in the UK Honours System, with the current exception of High Court Judges, and the Parliamentary and Political Service Committee will consider all citations received on merit. The Committee is not under an obligation to achieve political, or regional, balance and the full allocation of awards may not be used if there are insufficient meritorious candidates for a particular honours round. The content of citations will therefore be important in the future.

**NOMINATIONS**

The Committee would like to draw in a wide range of candidates for honours.

In an open system, members of the general public can, and do, make nominations for people in politics. These recommendations will be considered by the Committee on merit alongside all other nominations.

Nominations will therefore reach the Parliamentary and Political Service Committee via a number of routes. In each honours round, the Committee will consider candidates who have been recommended for honours by one of the political parties, the Westminster and other Assemblies, or through the public nominations route.

## THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY 2012

The Committee assessed each candidate on merit against the agreed criteria.

All the recommendations made by the Parliamentary and Political Service Committee were made unanimously.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### *Background—Process for Honours selection*

The process for Honours selection is transparent and robust; all nominations are considered by one of nine expert Honours Committees, each chaired by a non-civil service chair and comprising a majority of non-civil service members.

Once the selections have been made by each Committee, the Chairs take their recommendations to the Main Honours Committee and agree the final List for submission by the Prime Minister to The Queen for Her Majesty's approval.

The composition of each Honours List reflects the strategic guidance given by the Prime Minister. He has asked that the system should prioritise people who are making a real contribution, particularly in their local community, to build the Big Society, and that particular attention is paid to candidates who are philanthropists, and who are making a sustained and personal contribution.

### *Scope of the Parliamentary and Political Service Committee*

The Prime Minister would also like the UK Honours system to recognise the best of the many people in politics who demonstrate selfless commitment for the good of the nation. Until the mid-1990s, it was customary for there to be four or five Knights or Dames (normally Conservative) in each honours round. This practice was not continued by the Labour Party, although one or two Members, such as Gerald Kaufman, were knighted for Services to Parliament.

The Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee has therefore been established to consider candidates for honours from the Westminster Parliament, members of the Devolved Legislatures, the staffs of the Westminster and other Assemblies, the staffs of bodies which report to them (currently the National Audit Office; the Ombudsmen; the Electoral Commission; and the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority), and Party workers. Councillors and others working for local government are considered by the CVLS Committee, though Party workers who are also local councillors will be seen by both Committees.

In each honours round, the Honours and Appointments Secretariat will provide a list of such candidates for the Parliamentary Committee to consider, comprising both those who have been recommended for honours by one of the political parties, the Westminster and other Assemblies, and those candidates within the scope of the Committee put forward through the public nominations route.

It may be the case that a particular candidate has made a donation to a political party. This will be in the public domain on the Electoral Commission website. To ensure transparency, all the honours committees are made aware of any candidates for honours who have made a political donation. It is important to note that donating to a political party will not strengthen a case for an honour in any way, but neither will it preclude a candidate from receiving an award.

## PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE

The Parliamentary and Political Service Committee's functions will be:

- to review the citations submitted to the Committee for the New Year and The Queen's Birthday and to review the proposed levels of award;
- to recommend awards to the Main Honours Selection Committee within the allocations set out below; and
- to consider whether any additional candidates should be recommended for honours; citations would then be prepared for consideration on merit, and in the usual way, for a future honours round.

The Clerks of Parliament and the Devolved Administrations will be encouraged to obtain citations for the staff of those bodies. The three Commons Whips will put forward citations for members of their own Parties, the smaller Parties and Party workers.

### *Allocation*

Each specialist honours Committee has an allocation which is set by the Quinquennial Review of honours (the next one is due in 2013). These allocations are decided according to the size of the relevant workforce: so the Education Committee, for example, has an allocation of honours proportionate to the overall size of the workforce employed in that field.

If we were to have adopted a similar approach for the Parliamentary and Political Service Honours Committee, the allocation would have been tiny. We have therefore agreed the allocation for the Parliamentary and Political Service Committee based on precedent as a more sensible alternative.

The Parliamentary Committee will therefore have the following allocation of honours for distribution in each honours round:

Kt/DBE:	4 awards
CBE:	4 awards
OBE:	6 awards
MBE:	9 awards
BEM:	2 awards

The Committee will also be able to recommend additional candidates to compete for honours available in the flexible “pool” allocation at K/D and CBE level at the Main Honours Committee. At the present time there are 4.5 K/D (nine each calendar year) and five CBE “pool” spaces available at Main Committee each round.

#### *Criteria for recommending awards*

All the citations received by the Committee will be considered entirely on merit. This might mean that some political parties, or Assemblies, will receive no honours at all in some rounds. The Committee should not feel under an obligation to achieve a political or regional balance, though it may wish to do so once it has decided which candidates merit an award (the three Commons Whips will decide on priorities within their Parties). If there are insufficient meritorious candidates for a particular honours round, it is possible that the full allocation may not be used.

In broad terms, the Committee will recommend awarding Honours to people who:

- have changed things, with an emphasis on achievement, or
- have delivered in a way which has brought distinction, or
- exemplify the best in sustained and selfless voluntary service, or
- have demonstrated innovation and entrepreneurship, or
- carry the respect of their peers, or
- have shown sustained achievement against the odds requiring moral courage.

For meritorious candidates, the Committee will make decisions as to the appropriate level of award based on the following criteria:

#### **Knight/Dame**

A pre-eminent contribution in any field of activity (usually, but not exclusively, at national level), or in a capacity which will be recognised by peer groups as inspirational and significant nationally and demonstrates sustained commitment.

Key factors:

- Pre-eminent and sustained contribution.
- Recognised by peer groups as inspirational.
- Impact of contribution felt at a national level.

#### **CBE**

A prominent national role of a lesser degree, a conspicuous leading role in regional affairs through achievement or service to the community, or a highly distinguished, innovative contribution in his or her area of activity. Key factors:

- Achievement or service in a leading role at a regional level.
- Highly distinguished and innovative contribution of wide impact.

#### **OBE**

Distinguished regional or county-wide role in any field, through achievement or service to the community including notable practitioners known nationally.

Key factors:

- Regional or county-wide role.
- Impact of contribution felt by a significant number of people or across a broad geographical area.

## MBE

Achievement or service in and to the community which is outstanding in its field and has delivered sustained and real impact which stands out as an example to others. Key factors:

- Outstanding achievement or service.
- Sustained contribution.
- Real impact.
- Local role model.

## BEM

Achievement or contribution of a very “hands-on” service to the community in a local geographical area. This might take the form of sustained commitment in support of very local charitable and/or voluntary activity; or innovative work that has delivered real impact but that is relatively short (three to four years) in duration. Key factors:

- Sustained, local contribution, or
- Innovative, high impact work of a relatively short duration.

At all levels, awards illuminate areas of dedicated service which merit public recognition.

A list of Honours awarded to MPs since New Year 1990 is attached as Annex One. Members of the Committee may find this information helpful in terms of the precedent when assessing levels of awards.

### *Governance and Membership*

The Parliamentary and Political Service Committee is chaired by Lord Spicer. Its membership consists of the three Commons Chief Whips and at least four independent members; a representative from Number 10 also attends. Members are appointed for an initial term of four years.

The Committee is one of the nine independent Honours Committees that report to the Main Honours Committee chaired by Sir Bob Kerslake, the Head of the Home Civil Service.

The Honours and Appointments Secretariat in the Cabinet Office provides administrative support and policy advice.

Honours and Appointments Secretariat

March 2012

## Annex One

### HONOURS TO MPS IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S LIST BREAKDOWN OF AWARDS SINCE 1990

	<i>Con</i>	<i>L/D</i>	<i>Lab</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
NY2005 to NY2012	3	3	3	0	9
NY2000 to BD2004	3	3	2	0	8
NY1995 to BD1999	16	0	2	1	19
NY1990 to BD1994	33	1	1	1	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>67</b>

<i>List</i>	<i>Award</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Citation</i>	<i>Party</i>
NY12	Kt	Roger James Gale	For public and political services.	Con
NY12	Kt	Robert Russell	For public service.	L/D
NY12	DBE	The Right Honourable Joan Mary Ruddock	For public and political services.	Lab
BD11	Kt	Joseph Alan Meale	For public and political services.	Lab
BD11	Kt	Graham Robert Watson	For public and political services.	L/D
NY11	Kt	Peter James Bottomley	For public service.	Con
NY11	DBE	Ms Anne Begg	For services to Disabled People and to Equal Opportunities.	Lab
BD08	Kt	The Rt Hon Alan James Beith MP	Member of Parliament for Berwick-upon- Tweed. For services to Parliament.	L/D
BD08	Kt	Peter John Viggers MP	Member of Parliament for Gosport. For services to Parliament.	Con

<i>List</i>	<i>Award</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Citation</i>	<i>Party</i>
BD04	Kt	The Rt Hon Gerald Bernard Kaufman MP	Member of Parliament for Manchester Gorton. For services to Parliament.	Lab
BD04	DBE	Marion Audrey, Mrs. Roe MP	Member of Parliament for Broxbourne. For services to Parliament.	Con
NY04	Kt	Stuart Bell MP	Member of Parliament for Middlesbrough. For services to Parliament.	Lab
NY04	Kt	John Valentine Butterfill MP	Member of Parliament for Bournemouth West. For services to Parliament.	Con
NY04	Kt	The Rt Hon Walter Menzies Campbell CBE QC MP	Member of Parliament for North East Fife. For services to Parliament.	L/D
NY03	Kt	Archibald Johnstone Kirkwood MP	Member of Parliament for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. For services to Parliament.	L/D
BD02	Kt	Nicholas Raymond Winterton MP	Member of Parliament for Macclesfield. For services to Parliament.	Con
BD00	KBE	The Rt Hon Jeremy John Durham (Paddy) Ashdown MP	For political and public service.	L/D
NY97	Kt	Nicholas Brian Baker MP	Member of Parliament for Dorset North. For political service.	Con
NY97	Kt	Cyril David Townsend MP	Member of Parliament for Bexleyheath. For political service.	Con
NY97	Kt	Raymond William Whitney OBE MP	Member of Parliament for Wycombe. For political service.	Con
BD96	Kt	Robert Hicks MP	Member of Parliament for Cornwall South East. For political service.	Con
BD96	Kt	Stanley James Allen Hill MP	Member of Parliament for Southampton Test. For political service.	Con
BD96	Kt	Raymond Powell MP	For services to the House of Commons.	Lab
BD96	Kt	Roger Edward Sims MP	Member of Parliament for Chislehurst. For political service.	Con
NY96	Kt	James Theodore Lester MP	Member of Parliament for Broxtowe. For political service.	Con
NY96	Kt	Colin Ryley Shepherd MP	Member of Parliament for Hereford. For political service.	Con
NY96	Kt	William Michael Hardy Spicer MP	Member of Parliament for South Worcestershire. For political service.	Con
NY96	KBE	The Rt Hon James Henry Molyneaux MP	Member of Parliament for Lagan Valley and Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party 1979–95. For political service.	UUP
BD95	Kt	Julian Michael Gordon Critchley MP	Member of Parliament for Aldershot. For political service.	Con
BD95	Kt	Alan Gordon Barraclough Haselhurst MP	Member of Parliament for Saffron Walden. For political service.	Con
BD95	Kt	Geoffrey Lofthouse MP	First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means, House of Commons.	Lab
BD95	Kt	Julian Michael Shersby MP	Member of Parliament for Uxbridge. For political service.	Con
NY95	Kt	Patrick Thomas Cormack MP	Member of Parliament for Staffordshire South. For political service.	Con
NY95	Kt	The Rt Hon Peter Robert Cable Lloyd MP	Member of Parliament for Fareham. For political service.	Con
NY95	Kt	The Rt Hon Timothy Alan Davan Sainsbury MP	Member of Parliament for Hove. For political, public and charitable services.	Con
NY95	KBE	The Rt Hon Nicholas Paul Scott MBE MP	Member of Parliament for Chelsea. For political service	Con

<i>List</i>	<i>Award</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Citation</i>	<i>Party</i>
BD94	Kt	Andrew Bowden MBE MP	Member of Parliament for Brighton Kemptown. For political service.	Con
BD94	Kt	Kenneth Melville Carlisle MP	Member of Parliament for Lincoln. For political service.	Con
BD94	Kt	John Michael Gorst MP	Member of Parliament for Hendon North. For political service.	Con
NY94	Kt	Peter Derek Fry MP	Member of Parliament for Wellingborough. For political service.	Con
NY94	Kt	The Rt Hon Archibald Gavin Hamilton MP	Member of Parliament for Epsom and Ewell. For political service.	Con
NY94	Kt	William David Madel MP	Member of Parliament for Bedfordshire South West. For political service.	Con
BD93	Kt	Ralph Frederic Howell MP	Member of Parliament for Norfolk North. For political service.	Con
BD93	Kt	David Laidlaw Knox MP	Member of Parliament for Staffordshire Moorlands. For political service.	Con
NY93	Kt	Michael Anthony Latham	Formerly Member of Parliament for Rutland and Melton. For political service.	Con
NY93	Kt	Roger Denis Moate MP	Member of Parliament for Faversham. For political service.	Con
NY93	Kt	Alfred William (Jerry) Wiggin TD MP	Member of Parliament for Weston-super-Mare. For political service.	Con
BD92	Kt	James Alexander Kilfedder MP	For political service	UUP
BD92	Kt	Ivan John Lawrence QC MP	For political service	Con
BD92	Kt	Herbert Keith Speed RD MP	For political Service	Con
BD92	Kt	Malcolm George Thornton MP	For political service	Con
NY92	Kt	William Michael John Grylls MP	For political service	Con
NY92	Kt	John Gordon Hannam MP	For political service	Con
NY92	Kt	Robert John (Robin) Maxwell-Hyslop MP	For political service	Con
NY92	Kt	Donald Thompson MP	For political service	Con
BD91	Kt	The Rt Hon John (Ambrose) Cope MP	For political service	Con
BD91	Kt	(Albert) (Edward) Patrick Duffy MP	For services to the North Atlantic Assembly	Lab
BD91	Kt	Robert Vidal Rhodes-James MP	For political service	Con
BD91	Kt	The Rt Hon Bernard Harold Ian Halley Stewart MP RD	For political service	Con
BD91	Kt	Edward Macmillan (Teddy) Taylor MP	For political service	Con
NY91	Kt	Robert Anthony Bevis (Tony) Durant MP	For political service	Con
NY91	Kt	The Rt Hon Richard (Napier) Luce MP	For political service	Con
NY91	Kt	The Rt Hon Timothy (Hugh Francis) Raison MP	For political service	Con
BD90	Kt	Thomas Richard Arnold MP	For political service	Con
BD90	Kt	Robert Michael Marshall MP	For political service	Con

<i>List</i>	<i>Award</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Citation</i>	<i>Party</i>
BD90	Kt	Robert Arthur McCrindle MP	For political service	Con
BD90	Kt	Ieuan Wyn Pritchard Roberts MP	For political service	Con
NY90	Kt	Alan Glyn MP	For political service.	Con
NY90	Kt	Charles Graham Irving MP	For political service	Con
NY90	Kt	Christopher James Prout QC MEP	For political service	Con
NY90	Kt	John Daniel Wheeler MP	For political service	Con
NY90	KBE	Rt Hon David Martin Scott Steel MP	For political and public service	L/D

MPS APPOINTED COMPANIONS OF HONOUR  
BREAKDOWN OF APPOINTMENTS IN THE LAST 20 YEARS

June 2011	The Right Honourable Michael, Baron Howard of Lympne	Con
Dec 1998	The Right Honourable John Roy Major	Con
Dec 1997	The Right Honourable Christopher Francis Patten, CBE	Con
Aug 1997	Michael Ray Dibdin Heseltine, The Right Honourable the Lord Heseltine	Con
June 1996	Richard Edward Geoffrey Howe, The Right Honourable the Lord Howe of Aberavon, QC	Con
Dec 1995	Douglas Richard Hurd, The Right Honourable the Lord Hurd of Westwell, CBE	Con
June 1994	David Anthony Llewellyn Owen, The Right Honourable the Lord Owen	SDP
April 1992	Kenneth Wilfred Baker, The Right Honourable the Lord Baker of Dorking	Con
April 1992	Peter Leonard Brooke, The Right Honourable the Lord Brooke of Sutton Mandeville	Con
April 1992	Thomas Jeremy King, The Right Honourable the Lord King of Bridgwater	Con

HONOURS TO MPS IN THE LAST 20 YEARS  
RESIGNATION and DISSOLUTION HONOURS  
(not including Peerages)

1990 PRIME MINISTER'S RESIGNATION HONOURS  
(All Conservative)

<i>Award</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Citation</i>
Kt	George Arthur Gardiner MP	Member of Parliament for Reigate
Kt	Rt Hon Peter Hugh Morrison MP	Member of Parliament for City of Chester and lately Parliamentary Private Secretary, 10 Downing Street
Kt	Gerrard Anthony Neale MP	Member of Parliament for North Cornwall
Kt	Michael Jon Neubert MP	Member of Parliament for Romford

1997 PRIME MINISTER'S RESIGNATION HONOURS  
(All Conservative)

<i>Award</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Citation</i>
Kt	Robert Atkins	Former Minister of State for Northern Ireland, Environment, Sport, Transport, Trade and Industry
Kt	Rt Hon Michael Forsyth	Former Scottish Secretary
Kt	Rt Hon Brian Mawhinney	Former Transport Secretary, Chairman of the Conservative Party and Shadow Home Secretary
Kt	Richard Needham	Former Minister for Northern Ireland and Trade
Kt	Neville Trotter	Former Conservative MP for Tynemouth
Kt	John Ward	Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Prime Minister 1994–97

<i>Award</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Citation</i>
KCMG	Rt Hon Alistair Goodlad	Former Conservative Chief Whip and Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury
KCMG	Jeremy Hanley	Former Chairman of the Conservative Party and Defence and Foreign Officer Minister
KCMG	Rt Hon Malcolm Rifkind	Former Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Scotland, Transport and Defence

2010 PRIME MINISTER'S DISSOLUTION LIST  
(Both Labour)

<i>Award</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Citation</i>
Kt	Bill O'Brien	Former Member of Parliament for Normanton
Kt	Rt Hon Ian McCartney	Former Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Trade and Industry

**Supplementary written evidence submitted by John Lidstone (HS 41)**

In my evidence to you on Tuesday 15 May 2012 in response to question Q158 Chair: I replied "If you take Gus O'Donnell who has just retired as Chief Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, he has four gongs". My comments were picked up by the BBC and broadcast over the air.

I used the word "gong" deliberately to mean "an honour, a medal or a decoration" to quote an Oxford Dictionary definition. The record books, "Who's Who" and Debretts record Gus O'Donnell as having the following "gongs"; GCB; KCB; CB; and a life peerage—four "gongs". This appears to follow a quite illogical tradition in respect of all heads of the Civil Service. To pluck two other names who have held these two offices, their "gongs" are almost identical:

Robert Armstrong, formerly secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service. His "gongs": GCB; KCB; CVO; Life peerage;

Robin Butler, also a former secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service: GCB; KCB; CVO; PC; Life peerage. I have excluded his KG, this being in the personal gift of the Monarch.

This brings me to the question put to the meeting of your Select Committee on Tuesday May 22nd 2012 when you took evidence from Sir Bob Kerslake. Q292 Paul Flynn: "Sir Gus O'Donnell I think has four knighthoods". Sir Bob Kerslake: "he has not; he has two". Paul Flynn: "I have seen it in the papers he has four". Sir Bob Kerslake: "No, of course, he is a lord as well, which is quite a separate process".

When these types of exchanges take place and can be heard and read by the general public, they do not inspire any confidence in those who are supposed to be professionally involved in the process of sorting who gets what and whether they balance the honours quotas book.

*June 2012*

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