

POLICY
THUMBNAIL

Integrity & Honours

Repairing Trust & Respect In British Public
Life



SEPTEMBER
2025

Centre for Small State Conservatives



THE PROBLEM

Voters believe all political parties and most politicians have low levels of integrity and are only in it for themselves, rather than doing the right thing for the country.

THE SOLUTION

An integrity reset, which will include:

- Appoint a high-profile independent Ethics Advisor with the same terms of reference as The Prime Minister's Ethics Advisor, to investigate & advise the Conservative Leader on potential integrity breaches by Conservative Parliamentarians or senior Party staff whenever the Party is in Opposition. The Advisor would also provide the same service for Conservative Group leaders dealing with allegations against Conservative Councilors too.
- Require all Conservative candidates for Parliamentary & local Government elections to sign a declaration that they will abide by the Nolan Principles of Public Life before the Party nominates

them.

- Slash the number of political Honours which can be awarded each year, and create a new 'points based' Honours System which publishes the criteria & weightings which Honours Approval Committees use to award non-political honours too. This is explained in more detail in the 'Aristocracy of Talent' policy (outlined elsewhere).
- Apply the same transparent & objective Honours Approval Committee criteria & weightings to House of Lords appointments.
- Require Government Ministers to sign enforceable legal deeds when they are first appointed, binding them to abide by decisions of the Advisory Committee On Business Appointments (ACOPA) or its successor, to prevent 'revolving door' conflicts of interest after they step down.
- Merge the roles of the Prime Minister's Anti-Corruption Champion and the Committee On Standards In Public Life into a new Integrity Advisory Council whose members should be the Chair of ACOPA, the Prime Minister's Independent Ethics Adviser, the Chairs of the Commons & Lords Standards & Conduct Committees, and the First Civil Service Commissioner (responsible for the Civil Service Code), who would meet to identify issues, solve problems and advise the Prime Minister when needed.
- Make lobbyists meetings with ministers, advisers and senior mandarins more transparent by publishing clearer details of what was discussed, for which clients, within days instead of months & making everything digitally searchable so meetings can easily be cross-checked against the people who own or control companies, charities and foundations, to see if they've made political donations and whether decisions are clean.



THE BENEFITS

These reforms will repair trust & respect in British public life by:

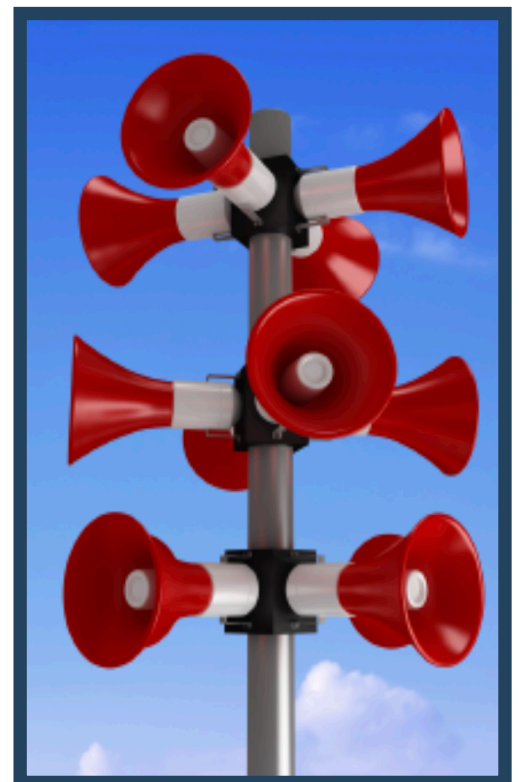
- Showing the Conservative Party is strongly committed to the Nolan Principles.
- Ensuring the Honours system is a modern, meritocratic recognition of talent and hard work, rather than an opaque way to reward political cronies.
- Giving sharper, legally-enforceable teeth & claws to rulings preventing 'revolving door' conflicts of interest when former ministers take lucrative jobs lobbying the same parts of government they'd been leading a few months before.
- Creating a strong new Integrity Advisory Council to advise the Prime Minister, co-ordinate practical steps to solve integrity problems, & improve behaviour.
- Ensuring lobbying is transparently visible, so Government decisions are always taken in the public interest rather than because of secret influence-peddling.

THE SOUNDBITES

"We want to make British public life more transparently honest and public-spirited, the way it ought to be."

"British Honours should recognise talent and hard work, not be dished out as rewards for political cronies."

"Government decisions should always be taken in the public interest, rather than because of shady backroom deals with lobbyists."



THE REBUTTALS

1. Why not just abolish the Committee on Standards in Public Life instead of reforming it? Isn't it just another pointless, talking shop quango that hasn't made politics any cleaner since it was first created?

The Committee invented the Nolan Principles of Public Life under its first Chair Lord Nolan, so it has a pretty distinguished history. But it could become more effective with these reforms, because the key public integrity watchdogs would all be working together as members in future.

2. Why aren't you backing the current Government's plan to stop 'revolving door' conflicts of interest by merging ACOBS into CSPL & stopping payouts to former Ministers who ignore the rules?

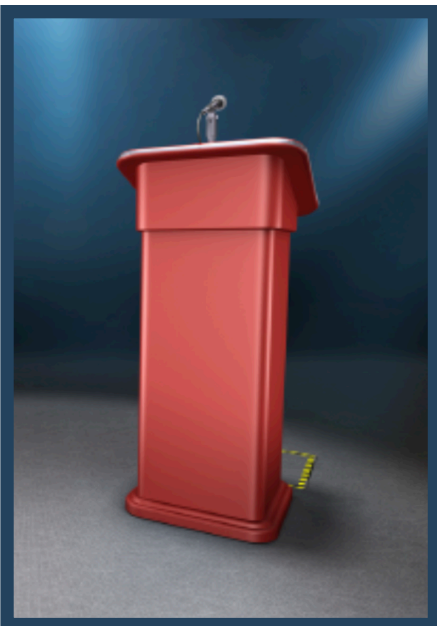
Stopping severance payments won't work if a former Minister's new role earns them more than the payout they're losing, so the new system's safeguards will be weakest when conflicts of interest are biggest & most valuable. Signing a legally-binding deed is simpler, stronger & isn't affected by the size of an ex-Minister's pay-cheque.

3. Why aren't you backing proposals to register in-house lobbyists like consultant lobbying firms already do?

Because it won't make any difference. If an in-house lobbying team from a company, a charity, a labour Union or a religious body has a meeting with a Minister or their officials it's obvious who they are representing, so making them register with a regulator is a pointless, expensive waste of time. The problem only comes with Consultant Lobbying firms who have lots of clients so it isn't automatically clear whose interests they are representing when they meet Ministers or mandarins. That's why we're demanding faster, clearer, more transparent, digitally searchable declarations of what goes on, so everyone can see.

4. Are you saying that the [Knighthood / Damehood / other gong] given to [this or that current or former MP] wasn't deserved?

Political honours ought to recognise outstanding talent & hard work, just like the non-political Honours in other walks of life. I'm not going to name names but a fair few politicians from across the political spectrum would certainly qualify on that basis, while the others just devalue it for everyone else.



5. Aren't these proposals a bit naïve? Isn't this just the way politics has always worked?

No political system is ever perfectly clean, but that shouldn't stop us trying to do the right thing. None of us wants to live in a country that doesn't expect & demand honesty and integrity from its leaders.

6. These reforms don't even mention the scandal of corrupt PPE contracts being given to Tory Party cronies.. Why are you ducking the biggest issue of all?

I'm afraid you're behind the times. The last Conservative Government passed an entire new Act of Parliament (the Procurement Act 2023) to modernise the entire public contracting system, and there's also a huge and fully-independent Public Enquiry into the pandemic too. These new integrity measures are the next steps, to take us even further in future.

