

GOVERNANCE PROJECT



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Political Honours

- R.5.1. The current system for the awarding of political honours has been the centre of much controversy, potentially risking undermining credibility in the public eye and the value of the awards to recipients.
- R.5.2. The Commission has focussed on the issues of governance presented by the current position, as opposed to wider issues of diversity (important though they are). It has focussed on: reducing the fact, risk and perception of politicisation – and hence of corruption; in particular, by removing the ability of the Prime Minister to make personal direct nominations; automaticity, particularly in the Civil Service when Civil Servants are well represented on the relevant committees (which is bad for public perception); the ability of the Prime Minister’s office to participate in the process and influence individual decisions for reasons that do not reflect the merit of the candidate; and an increase in transparency when the current system for nominations and decisions is variously confidential or opaque.
- R.5.3. That this Recommendation is intended to reduce the risk of abuse of power, improve the control environment and underpin the value of the honour for those receiving it under a more highly respected system.

We recommend that:

The Independent Committees should constitute an exclusive system

- R.5.4. All honours must go through the system and processes of the Independent Committees, supported by the Honours and Appointments Secretariat, with ultimate powers to approve or reject given to the Main Committee.

Prime Ministerial Patronage should be limited

- R.5.5. The custom of Prime Ministers making personal recommendations for Honours; either through specific resignation lists or outside the committee system and the normal Honours cycle, should cease. The grant of Privy Councillorships should not be used as a replacement for removing Prime Ministerial patronage over Honours.
- R.5.6. The Prime Minister’s office should not have special privileges or ability to intervene in operations of the Honours process. Representatives from No 10 Downing Street should play no part in the Honours Committees.

The Honours Committee structure and independence should be strengthened

- R.5.7. The State and Political Committees would be merged to create a new, single, central and independent committee. That would provide for:
- a. greater scrutiny of nominations from both the civil service and the political parties.
 - b. a better balance between the awards given for political and public service;
 - c. better control on total numbers; and
 - d. political honours going through the same process as for other nominations, requiring evidence of public service beyond the usual role.
- R.5.8. That new committee would have an independent chair who would ensure that the same standard of nomination was being followed for anyone nominated for their political or public service.

Transparency should be increased

R.5.9. The principles governing the honours system should continue to be published but the detailed criteria for a nomination to be put forward for approval, should also be explicitly stated and hosted on the Government's dedicated website. There should be greater transparency about how the nomination process operates in order to enhance and maintain public confidence. Full information should be published about how the process of making honours recommendations is managed within Government departments and more data published about from where nominations originate.

Certain additional, background material for this Recommendation is available on the website for the Commission (<https://www.ukgovernanceproject.co.uk>).