**PRESS NOTICE**

**Committee on Standards in Public Life**

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**Chair:**

**3 November 2016**

**NEW RESEARCH – COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE - PARTY FUNDING GROWN IN IMPORTANCE TO THE PUBLIC SINCE 2011**

[New research](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-attitudes-to-party-funding-in-britain) published today by the [Committee on Standards in Public Life](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life) shows the issue of party funding has grown in importance to the public since 2011. The evidence drawn from Wave Seven of the [British Election Study](http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/) survey shows that the public perceives resolving the issues surrounding political party funding in Britain to be an important and complex issue.

The [research](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-attitudes-to-party-funding-in-britain) shows:

* Respondents find the issue of party funding ‘important’, and are more likely to answer that the issue is ‘of great importance’ than in 2011.
* A substantial majority (93%) of respondents believe that large party donations are motivated by hopes for access and influence or special favours from the political party. 79% of those asked identified these as the most common motivations for donors.
* 90% of respondents believe that MPs ‘very often’ or ‘sometimes’ decide what to do based on what their donors want, rather than on what they really believe. Even more responded that politicians ‘very often’ or ‘sometimes’ do special favours for their donors.
* Even 48% of those who register high trust in MPs believe that they ‘sometimes’ prioritise their donors’ interests.
* The public are also clear in their belief that this behaviour is unacceptable, with 88% responding that it is ‘never’ or ‘very rarely’ acceptable for politicians to do special favours for contributors.

This evidence suggests that the public think that the issue of party funding is important, and are concerned about the impact of large donations to British politics, but they are much less clear about what should be done about this.

* 42% of those asked said they did not know whether there should be a cap on donations to political parties or at what level it should be set.
* There are some partisan differences in support for introducing a legislative donation cap with Conservative supporters twice as likely as Labour supporters to say there should be ‘no limit at all’ on donations.

Publishing the research, Lord Bew, Chair of the [Committee on Standards in Public Life](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life), the independent body which advises the Prime Minister on ethical standards said:

“While the public understand that these are not simple issues, they are very clear that party funding currently fails the public confidence test and requires attention. It is in all the parties’ interests to continue to work towards a system which commands greater public support and creates less ground for scepticism and suspicion.

“ In publishing this research and our recent research on [party finance and expenditure 2010-2015](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-into-party-expenditures-and-funding-2010-2015), my Committee has met its commitment to provide an updated picture of this issue since our [full inquiry](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20131002005939/http:/www.public-standards.gov.uk/our-work/inquiries/political-party-finance/) and [report](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-party-finance-ending-the-big-donor-culture) into party funding in 2011. I hope that the political parties will now look again at areas for cross-party reform.”

Ends

**Notes to Editors**

1. **Interview requests and media enquiries should go to Maggie O’Boyle on 07880 740627.**
2. More information about the work of the Committee is available on its website: [**https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life**](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life)
3. The Committee on Standards in Public Life advises the Prime Minister on ethical standards across the whole of public life in the UK. It monitors and reports on issues relating to the standards of conduct of all public office holders.
4. The current members of the Committee are: Lord (Paul) Bew, Chairman, Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP, Sheila Drew Smith OBE, Jane Ramsey, Monisha Shah, Richard Thomas CBE and Dame Angela Watkinson DBE MP.
5. This research report draws on a series of questions asked in Wave 7 of the British Election Study Internet Panel. These questions were asked on behalf of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, and address public perceptions of the issues surrounding donations to political parties. The data was collected by YouGov, and is an online survey of members. This survey was undertaken between 14th April 2016 and 4th May 2016, immediately prior to the 2016 local elections. A representative sample of 7,761 respondents from the BES full panel were posed the Committee's questions. As the survey over-represents Scottish and Welsh voters, data summaries are calculated using importance weightings which help to make the analysis more representative of Britain as whole. Unless specifically addressed, ‘don’t know’ responses are omitted. This report builds upon the [2011 report by Jonathan Rose](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20131002005939/http:/www.public-standards.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Jonathan_Rose_Party_Funding_Report_final.pdf) and the Committee’s [Research Advisory Board](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life/about/membership), which discusses the results of several surveys undertaken by the Committee on the issue of the funding of political parties.
6. This report was complied for the Committee by Dee Goddard, School of Politics and International Relations, University of Kent. Data available to download here: <http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/data-objects/panel-study-data/>