

HOUSE OF LORDS

APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION

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William Wragg MP
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

By email only to: pacac@parliament.uk

22 December 2020

Dear William,

HOUSE OF LORDS APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION - DR PETER CRUDDAS

You will be aware of the latest list of party political peerages published by the Prime Minister on 22 December, through which the Prime Minister confirmed his intention to appoint Dr Peter Cruddas to the House of Lords. The House of Lords Appointments Commission advised the Prime Minister that it was unable to support this nomination after carrying out its vetting, against published criteria.

My predecessors have previously committed to writing to the Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee should such a case arise, to ensure transparency in respect of the Commission's vetting function.

The Commission is an independent non-statutory advisory body with responsibility for vetting nominations for life peers in line with its published criteria. It carries out a range of checks and advises the Prime Minister if it has any concerns about the propriety of a nominee. The Commission takes the view that in this context, propriety means that the individual should be in good standing in the community in general and with the public regulatory authorities in particular; and that the past conduct of the nominee would not reasonably be regarded as bringing the House of Lords into disrepute. The Commission plays no part in assessing the suitability of those nominated by the political parties, which is a matter for the parties themselves.

The Commission provides advice but does not have a veto. Ultimately, appointments are a matter for the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has written to the Commission to set out his position, and has published the attached letter.

The Commission has been unable to support individuals nominated by the Parties on previous occasions and publicly confirms the number of nominations it has been unable to support and the nominating Party. This is the first occasion on which its advice has not been followed.

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the Commission's vetting process we do not comment on the detail of individual cases. It would be highly unfair on individuals to do so and risks undermining nominees' confidence in the confidentiality of our processes. We do, however, welcome the Prime Minister's decision to publish his recent letter, and his indication that he considers this to be an exceptional case.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Lords Constitution Committee for information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Bew".

Chair, House of Lords Appointments Commission



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Lord Bew,

I am grateful for your letter of 18 December and to you and your Commission Members' careful and thoughtful advice in respect of the most recent nominations for appointment to the House of Lords.

It is my expectation that we will publish a Political Peerage List on Tuesday 22 December. This will include the public service Crossbench nominations that your Commission has also considered and supported.

I have previously invited the Commission to consider a nomination for Peter Cruddas. The Commission has confirmed that it is unable to support the nomination. This relates to historic concerns in respect of allegations made during Mr Cruddas' term as Treasurer of the Conservative Party, and the judgement reached by the Court of Appeal in subsequent libel action.

It is vital that we give due weight and consideration to your scrutiny of these matters. There are, however, a number of wider factors which must also play into the consideration of this case. Firstly, the most serious accusations levelled at the time were found to be untrue and libellous. In order to avoid any ongoing concern, Mr Cruddas resigned from his post, and offered an apology for any impression of impropriety, and reflecting his particular concern for integrity in public life. An internal Conservative Party investigation subsequently found that there had been no intentional wrongdoing on Mr Cruddas' part.

The events in question date back eight years, and the Commission has found no suggestion of any matters of concern before or since that time. Mr Cruddas has made outstanding contributions in the charitable sector and in business, and has continued his long track record of committed political service. His charitable foundation, which supports disadvantaged young people, has pledged over £16 million to good causes through over 200 charities and he is a long-standing supporter of both the Princes Trust and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

I have given very careful consideration to the points raised by the Commission, and have weighed these alongside the mitigating and wider points I have set out here.

Mr Cruddas was born without the advantages of many of those in the House of Lords and has gone on to become one of this country's most successful business figures. His broad range of experiences and insights across the charitable, business and political sectors will, in my view, allow him to make a hugely valuable contribution to the work of the House and on this basis, it is my intention to recommend his appointment to Her Majesty in light of that benefit to public service.

I would like to reassure you and your colleagues that I see this case as a clear and rare exception. Whilst the Commission's role is advisory, I continue to place great weight on your careful and considered opinions.

It will, of course, be important to ensure the position is transparent and well understood. I will make clear when we publish the List that I have, after careful consideration of the issues, reached a different conclusion to the Commission on this particular case; in the interests of transparency, I also will place this letter in the public domain.

