

POLICY
THUMBNAIL

An Aristocracy of Talent

A Stronger Meritocracy, So Ability & Hard Work Are Recognised No Matter Where We Start From



JANUARY
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THE PROBLEM

Most people feel the Honours system isn't for them: honours and titles are either inherited by very posh people or handed out by a deeply-entrenched 'magic circle' of Westminster cronies. Nominations for honours are slightly more open than they used to be, but still no-one knows why one person was successful when another wasn't. This reinforces fears that Britain is still an unjust, immobile society where impenetrable glass ceilings allow elites to hand out honours to cronies with the right connections, rather than to people who've earned their success and genuinely deserve recognition.

THE SOLUTION

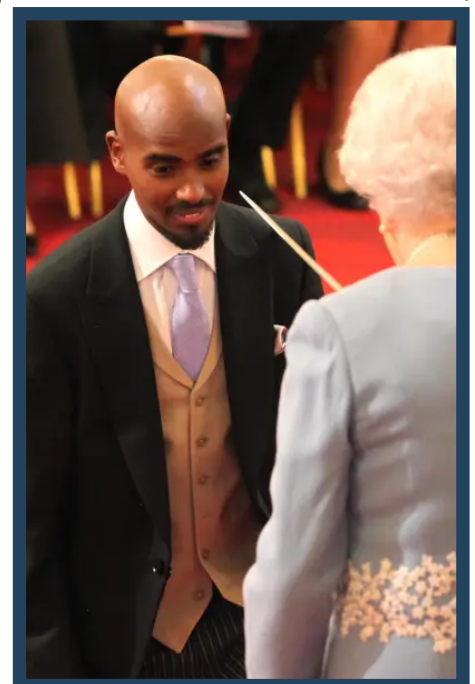
A reformed, transparent points-based honours system using public criteria to assess & recognise the country's best and brightest people. For example the top teachers might be the ones who had successfully run Britain's largest or most-improved schools for the longest time; the top businesspeople could be those who had either run the largest or fastest-growing companies for many years, or the entrepreneurs who had created the most wealth from scratch; the top philanthropists would be those who had given the biggest charitable donations over time.

These transparent, public criteria would be used to create & publish an annual UK 'Talent List' (like the UK Rich List). The top few names in each area would become Lords and Ladies. The slightly-larger next group below them would become Knights and Dames. The still-larger group below them would get OBEs, CBEs or MBEs.

Nominations to the list could be made by anyone, using an easy online ready-reckoner to work out how many points their nominee might score if they applied, and how many more points they'd need to earn if they didn't have quite enough to qualify yet. There would be due diligence checks to make sure nominees had genuinely earned the points they were claiming, and existing probity checks (for example on tax status and criminal records) would remain.

Political Honours would be subject to the same transparent & objective criteria as everyone else, to stop cronyism. And people being appointed to the Upper House of Parliament would be given a different title than 'My Lord' or 'My Lady' (perhaps 'Alderman' or 'Senator') to disentangle recognition for a lifetime's talent and achievement from constitutional questions of who should make our laws.

The new points-based system wouldn't apply to awards for bravery or valour, or to the tiny number of honours and awards that are the personal gift of the Monarch, where the existing systems wouldn't change.





THE BENEFITS

These reforms will:

- a) make British honours and titles into the fairest, most transparent & meritocratic way of recognising and celebrating talent, hard work & achievement in the world, proving that modern Britain is an open society, where what matters is where you're going, not where you're from.
- b) inspire ambition and aspiration throughout British society, by opening doors to a previously-closed, privileged club.
- c) make Britain a more attractive place for the planet's most talented people, in every walk of life, to live and work, where anyone can join an aristocracy of talent.
- d) lay to rest old caricatures of Britain as an unjust, immobile, cronyist society which rewards people because of who they know or who their parents are.

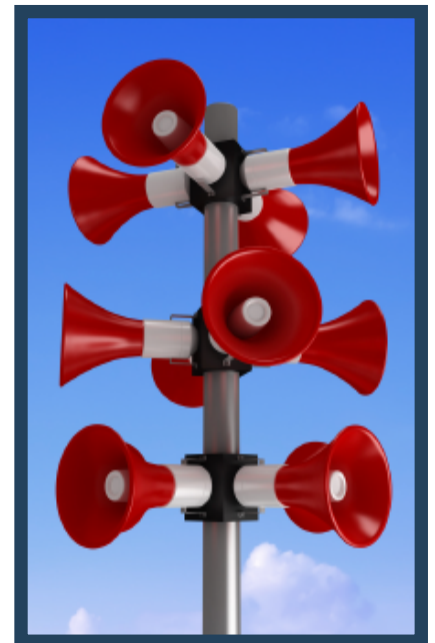
THE SOUNDBITES

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

"No-one knows why one person was given an MBE when another person wasn't, or why someone else got an OBE instead of a knighthood. It's as murky and old-fashioned as a London pea-soup fog."

"Modern Britain should be the most open, meritocratic society on the planet, where what matters is where you're going, not where you're from."

"These reforms will blow previously-closed doors wide open, so the world's best & brightest can join our aristocracy of talent."



THE REBUTTALS



1. 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, to the same high standards as ever other walk 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 others just devalue it for everyone else.

2. Why are you getting tangled up in reforming the House of Lords? Isn't it a colossal waste of time, and a political graveyard to boot?

This is about creating a new British aristocracy of talent; a meritocracy where the world's best and brightest can succeed and thrive. It wouldn't change anything about the Upper House of Parliament except what the people in it are called.

3. Won't this just destroy much-loved British traditions and heritage?

Quite the opposite. It will update and modernise our heritage so Britain can thrive & survive in the third millennium.

4. What would this mean for people like Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor?

These proposals wouldn't change anything about Royal titles, or awards for bravery and valour either. The existing arrangements for both would carry on as they've always done.

