



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Lord Geidt
Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
SW1A 2AS

Sunday 12th November 2021

Letter sent via email to:

independent.adviser@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

pm.post.int@no10.gov.uk

cabinet.secretary@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Dear Lord Geidt

Cc: Prime Minister, Cabinet Secretary

I am writing to you regarding the conduct of the Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps. Even by the standards of Boris Johnson's corrupt government, media reports regarding the Transport Secretary's conduct represent what appears to be not only a breach of the Ministerial Code but a complete and total breach of any standards of integrity and decency in public office. On a daily basis the actions of Boris Johnson's Ministers bring shame on our democracy and corrode public trust in our politics.

According to media reports the Secretary of State for Transport has set up, and channelled taxpayers' money into, a new body within the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) called the Airfield Advisory Team (AAT).

The purpose of this body includes lobbying to prevent development on private airfields, including airfields the Transport Secretary himself uses, and opposing plans proposed or supported by the government. These plans include blocking the building of thousands of much-needed homes and campaigning against a £2.5 billion giga-factory which would help us to meet our climate obligations and deliver thousands of jobs. This is consistent with Mr Shapps' keen support for the Light Aircraft Association and Flyer magazine, which campaigns to block development on Britain's private airfields.

The Transport Secretary has also reportedly used taxpayers' money to set up an Airfield Development Fund, which provides airfield operators, owners and pilots access to consultancy services – including paying for guidance to be provided to them on how to lobby against and object to planning applications. This fund appears to be a secret unit of lobbyists, paid for by taxpayers, lobbying against the government. Mr Shapps is also reported to have lobbied against a planned phase-out of a highly toxic and dangerous substance – tetraethyllead – which forms part of the fuel used in planes similar to his own private plane.

Taken together, this appears to be a concerted lobbying campaign – involving lobbyists who are hired to work within government, and lobbyists funding by taxpayers' money – against government policy and in favour of his own personal hobby horse. The Transport Secretary is clearly acting and using taxpayers' money and the resources of government for his own personal interests not the public interest.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

I seek your guidance on whether he has broken the Ministerial Code, including but not limited to the following clauses:

- 1.1: Ministers of the Crown are expected to maintain high standards of behaviour and to behave in a way that upholds the highest standards of propriety;
- 1.3.f: Ministers must ensure that no conflict arises, or appears to arise, between their public duties and their private interests;
- 1.3.j: Ministers must uphold the political impartiality of the Civil Service and not ask civil servants to act in any way which would conflict with the Civil Service Code as set out in the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010;
- 7.7.2: It is the personal responsibility of each Minister to decide whether and what action is needed to avoid a conflict or the perception of a conflict, taking account of advice received from their Permanent Secretary and the independent adviser on Ministers' interests;
- 7.7.12: Ministers should take care to ensure that they do not become associated with non-public organisations whose objectives may in any degree conflict with Government policy and thus give rise to a conflict of interest.

What steps has the Transport Secretary taken to consult you and the Department for Transport's Permanent Secretary regarding these conflicts of interest, and what steps have you taken to discuss with the Permanent Secretary regarding the question of whether the Transport Secretary has undermined the impartiality of the Civil Service and of civil servants? Can you confirm that these actions do represent a conflict of interest, or give the appearance of a conflict of interest, between the Transport Secretary's public duties and his private interests? Can you confirm that this behaviour falls below the standards of propriety expected of Ministers, and that the Transport Secretary's association with organisations whose objectives conflict with Government policy give rise to a conflict of interest?

Will you therefore be investigating the Transport Secretary for breaching the Ministerial Code?

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP
Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Deputy Leader of the Labour Party