

SECOND REPORT ON OPERATION OF THE REFORMED HONOURS SYSTEM

Note by the Cabinet Office

In its response to the Reports by the Public Administrative Select Committee (A Matter of Honour: Reforming the Honours System, HC212 – 1 July 2004) and Sir Hayden Phillips (Review of the Honours System, Report to the Cabinet Secretary of July 2004) the Government said (Reform of the Honours System, CM 6479 of February 2005) that it believed it would be right for a report on the honours system to be published every three years. The first report was published in 2008. This is the second Report.

The main themes of the reform programme were to create a system which is:

- Independent
- Transparent
- Accountable.

Independent Honours Committees

The new system of eight honours committees was established in 2005. The committees have now delivered 12 honours lists. Each of the committees comprises an independent chair plus a mixture of independent members and senior public servants (Permanent Secretaries and other senior officials). The independent chairs and members appointed by the Cabinet Secretary after transparent selection procedures using Nolan principles. The committee chairs are all acknowledged experts in the fields of activity covered by the committees. The independent members have a good understanding of the subject matter of their committee. In all cases, the independent chairs and members are in the majority. Membership of the committees continues to be made public on the Government Portal (www.direct.gov.uk).

Transparency

The website also gives details of the honours process, explains how to make a recommendation for an honour; gives details of the various types of honours and awards, and has videos and case studies about recent recipients of the MBE.

Accountability

The eight specialist committees are accountable to the Main Honours Committee (see below) for their recommendations. The chairs of the

committees forward their recommendations to the Main Honours Committee and explain and defend them.

The Main Honours Committee takes full responsibility for the recommendations made. It is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary. The chairs of the eight specialist committees are also members, together with the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Permanent Secretary of FCO and another senior Permanent Secretary.

The full membership comprises:-

- Sir Gus O'Donnell (Cabinet Secretary, in the Chair)
- Lord Newton of Braintree (Chair of Community, Voluntary and Local Service Committee)
- Lord Stevenson of Coddanham (Chair of Arts and Media Committee)
- Lord Krebs (Chair of Science and Technology Committee)
- Lord Coe (Chair of Sport Committee)
- Dame Mary Marsh (Chair of State Committee)
- Sir John Parker (Chair of Economy Committee)
- Sir Ian Carruthers (Chair of Health Committee)
- Sir Michael Barber (Chair of Education Committee)
- Sir David Richards (Chief of Defence Staff)
- Simon Fraser (Permanent Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office)
- Sir Suma Chakrabarti (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice)

A diagram showing the main elements of the process is at Annex 1. There are two main strands: recommendations made by members of the public and recommendations made by stakeholders to government departments. Recommendations from the public are normally handled by the appropriate government department – those for nurses go to the Department of Health; those for teachers to the Department of Education etc. Those which do not fit comfortably within the ambit of any government department are handled by the central team in Honours and Appointments Secretariat in the Cabinet Office. The majority of the latter cases are people who are active in the local community in a number of ways.

This description is about the arrangements in England, but the Devolved Administrations have similar processes in place.

Each department, and the team in the Cabinet Office, carries out a process of "sifting" the candidates to identify those who are judged to be the most deserving of an award. They are then sent forward by departments for consideration by the eight honours committees.

The Secretariat of the Committees in the Cabinet Office receives the recommendations and allocates them for consideration by one of the eight specialist committees. In an average honours round (New Year or Birthday) the honours committees will consider around 1,800 nominations (a note on the terminology used is at Annex 2).

Prime Minister's Strategic Guidance

The Prime Minister has a key role in giving strategic guidance to the honours committees. In addition to the normal criteria of excellence and achievement, the current guidance reflects the Prime Minister's desire to highlight the important link between work in support of the Big Society, and the honours system. He has indicated that increasing weight should be given to candidates who are actively engaged in work to encourage stronger and more integrated communities. The Cabinet Secretary has written to the Chairs of the independent committees setting out the guidance in more detail. A copy of his letter is at Annex 3.

Criteria for Honours

Within the strategic framework described above, the honours committees have adopted the following broad guidelines as to the criteria for the levels of award:-

- *Companion of Honour*
A pre-eminent and sustained contribution in the arts, science, medicine or government.
- *Knight/Dame*
A pre-eminent contribution in any field, usually, but not exclusively at national level, or in a capacity which will be recognised by peer groups as inspirational and significant nationally, and which demonstrates sustained commitment.
- *CBE*
A prominent national role of a lesser degree, or a conspicuous leading role in regional affairs or making a highly distinguished, innovative contribution in his or her area of activity.
- *OBE*
A distinguished regional or county-wide role in any field, including notable practitioners known nationally.
- *MBE*
Service in and to the community of a responsible kind which is outstanding in its field; or very local "hands-on" service which stands out as an example to others. In both cases awards illuminate areas of dedicated service which merit public recognition.

British Empire Medal (BEM)

The Government announced on 29 October the re-introduction of the BEM. Its use was discontinued in 1993 when it was thought that the difference between the MBE and the BEM had become increasingly tenuous. However, recent experience has shown that the type of very local community service previously recognised by the award of a BEM is not properly being reflected

by awards of MBEs. In order to expand the honours system and encourage more people to engage with the system, it was accordingly decided to re-introduce the BEM. The honours system will continue to be based on merit and the BEM will help to ensure that the right award is given for the right level of service.

The first awards will be made at the time of the Diamond Jubilee Honours List in June 2012 and it is expected that eventually there will be up to 270 to 300 BEMs awarded in each honours round.

Political Donations

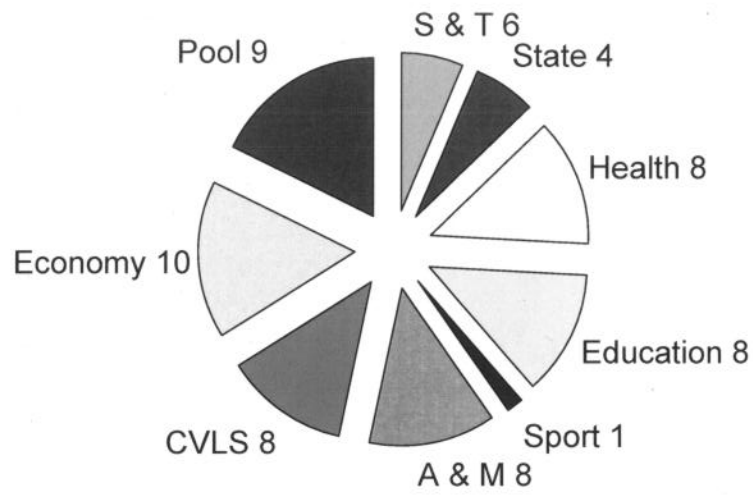
All candidates for senior awards (Knights, Dames and C-level awards) are checked against the lists of donations maintained and made public by the Electoral Commission. Details of candidates who have made any significant recent donations are drawn to the attention of the Main Committee. Donations to any political party are not regarded as a reason for disqualification for consideration for an honour. The critical question is whether the individual has made a major contribution to society. Nevertheless, the Main Honours Committee must satisfy itself that a party political donation has not influenced the decision to award an honour in any way; the Committee must be confident that the candidate would have been a meritorious recipient of an honour if he or she had not made a political donation.

Number of Awards

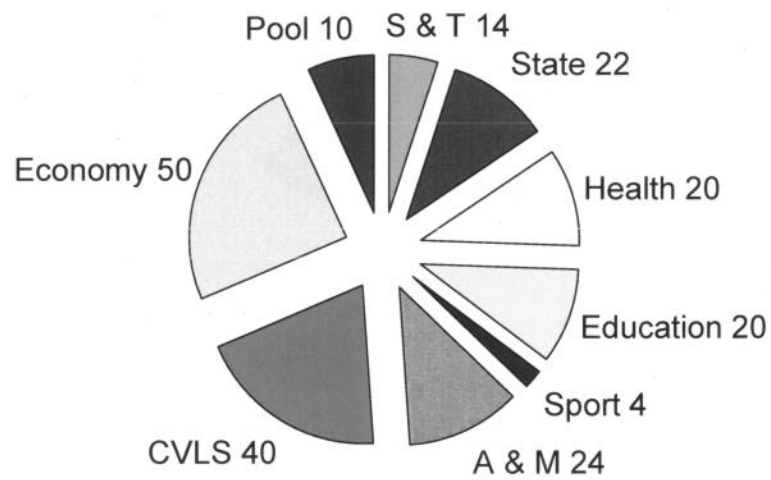
Each of the specialist committees is allocated an annual quota of available awards at each level as shown below. There is a limit of 1,000 names in each Prime Minister's List in each honours round. The quotas are established with reference to the government's priorities; the numbers of people employed in the sector and the need to be able to spread knowledge of, and access to honours widely across the community. A "Pool" of awards at Dame/Knight and Commander levels is available for use by the Main Honours Committee to enable it to include candidates who are in the lists of one or two committees but who cross boundaries between committees and are in danger of being overlooked.

The number of awards available in each year is shown below:

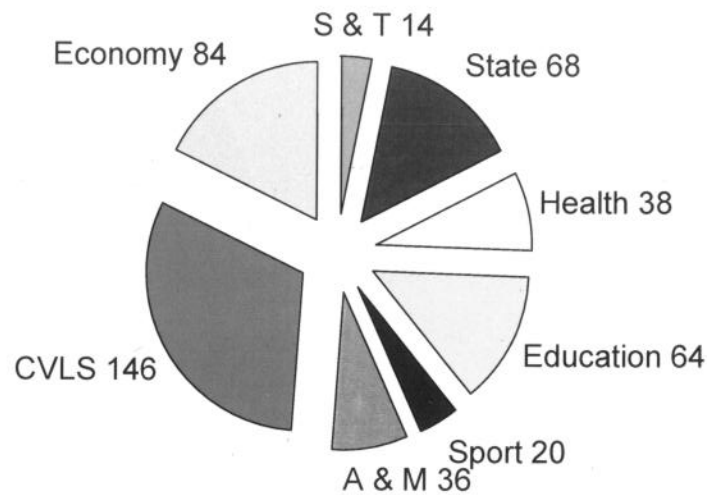
Dame/Knight



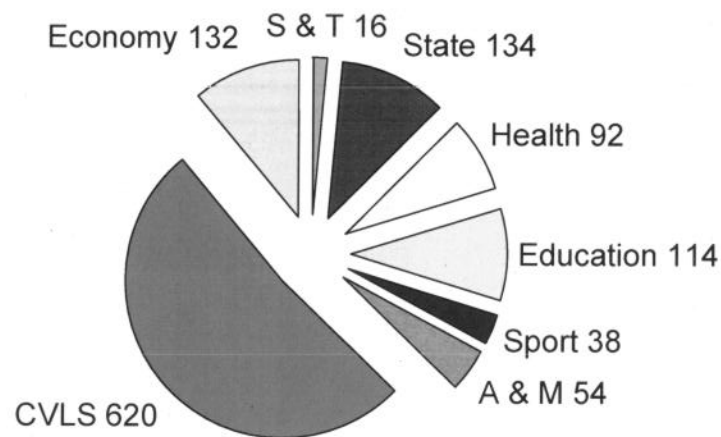
CBE



OBE



MBE



Note

A&M = Arts and Media Committee

S&T = Science and Technology Committee

One of the aims of the committees is to ensure that, within the allocated quotas, each Honours List is as representative as possible of outstanding service and achievements across the UK, in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Equal opportunities procedures are scrupulously applied in the selection of candidates. Various facets of diversity, including gender, region,

ethnicity, etc are monitored, although there are no diversity quotas (see below) and the criteria of evidence/achievement are the primary considerations.

The Emblem

In response to recommendations by PASC and Sir Hayden Phillips, a new Emblem was introduced which can be worn on everyday clothing. All members of the Order of the British Empire, at any level, are entitled to purchase and wear it. Since its introduction in 2007, some 7,500 have been sold. Sales tend to surge after each honours list and the associated Investitures.

New Philanthropy Committee

The Government is keen to encourage philanthropy. It is important that individuals who show sustained and selfless philanthropy engagement are recognised in the honours system. A special sub-committee of the Main Honours Committee has therefore been formed with the specific remit of looking at all the candidates considered by the honours committees – those who have been selected for awards and those who have not – to ensure that all deserving candidates are recognised at the appropriate level of award. The Committee is made up of several members of the Main Honours Committee who consider all the candidates from all the committees whose citation includes a significant philanthropic element. The committee aims to ensure that candidates who are major philanthropists are considered carefully and those whose contribution might not be thought to make them an obvious first choice for one of the specialist committees but who nevertheless make a significant philanthropic contribution are also given sufficient consideration.

Results

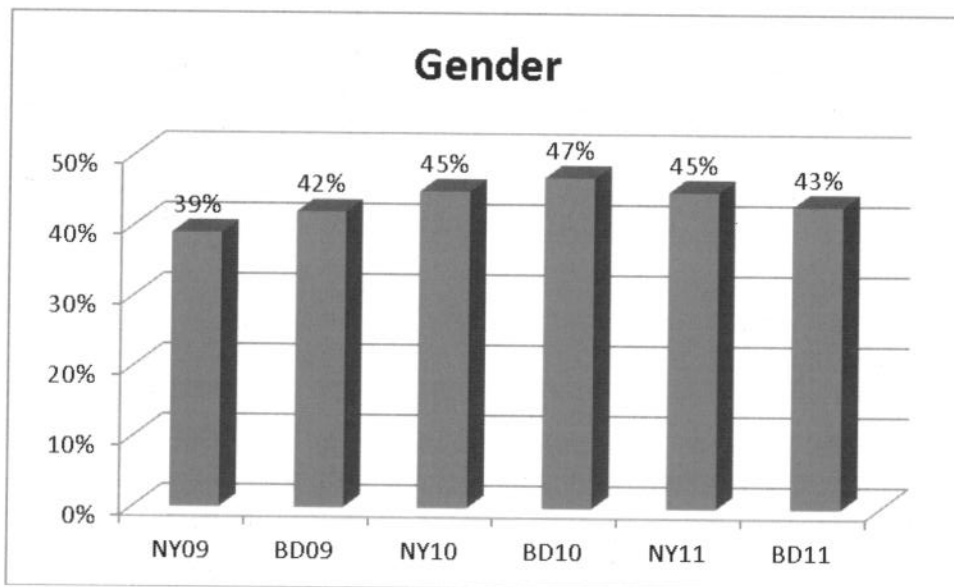
Since our last Report, 161 Damehoods and Knighthoods, and 3 Knights Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire have been published on the Prime Minister's List. There were 606 awards at CBE, 1418 at OBE and 3622 at MBE.

There was one appointment in the period as a Companion of Honour and, in the Order of the Bath, there were 2 Knights Grand Cross, 12 Damehoods and Knighthoods, and 40 CBs awarded.

Gender

As a result of sustained efforts by all government departments, while maintaining standards, there has been an increase in the proportion of successful female candidates. During the period of the last Report (2005-

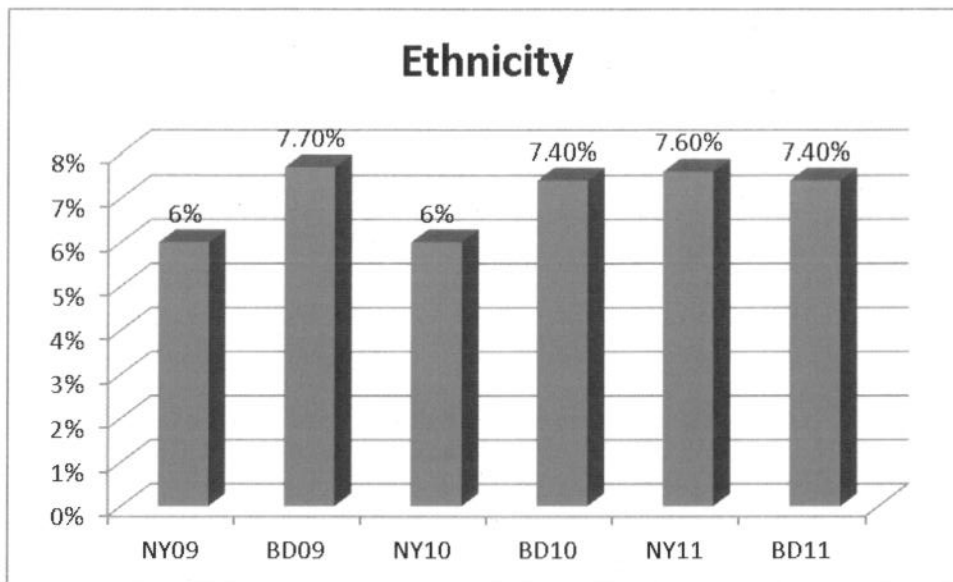
2008), on average 40% of awards went to women, with 27% of those being at CBE and above. From 2008-2011 there were an average of 43.5% awards to women in total and 28.7% of the awards were at CBE and above. This is a significant achievement, but bearing in mind that 51% of the population in the relevant age groups (30-75) are women, there is a lot more to do.



Ethnicity

Although the honours nomination form requests information on the ethnicity of the nominee, some nominators are either uncomfortable about providing this information on behalf of a third party, or do not have the information. We therefore do not have robust data on the number of recommendations for honours for people analysed by ethnic origin. But honours recipients are requested to complete an ethnicity monitoring questionnaire when they are invited to accept an honour. Therefore it is possible to provide reliable data on the ethnic background of successful candidates, but not for unsuccessful candidates.

The percentages of awards going to candidates from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities during the period of the Report are given below.



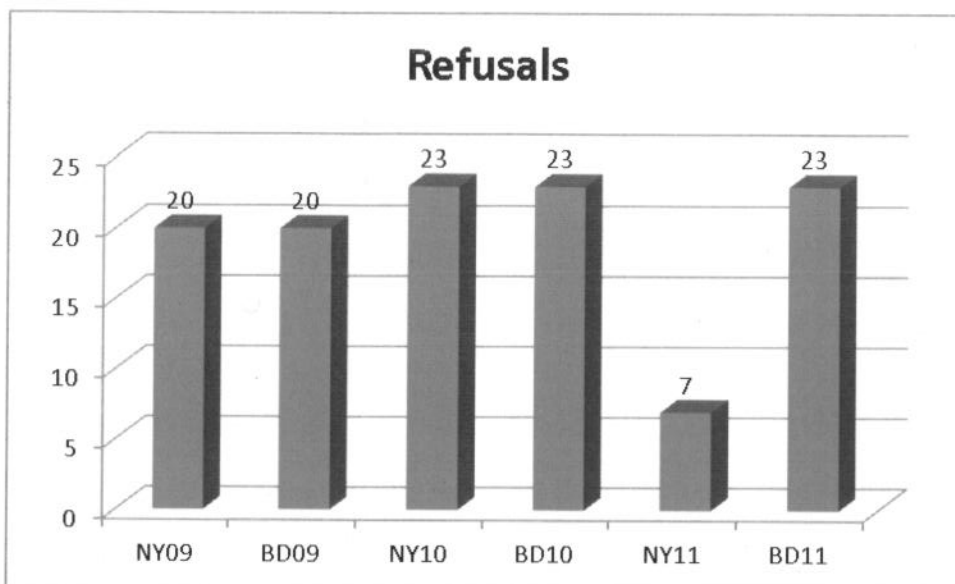
This compares with 9.3% of the working age population who are from BME backgrounds. It should be noted, however, that the BME population has a far younger age profile than the White population. In 2004, the median age for White people was 40 years, compared to 27 years for ethnic minorities.

The majority of honours are in recognition of long-standing commitment to service; they therefore tend to be awarded to older people. As the BME cohort ages equalise we would expect to see changes in the distribution of honours amongst ethnic groups.

But we recognise that additional effort is needed. Some minority communities show little awareness of, or engagement with, the honours system. We are working with the Department for Communities and the Office for Civil Society to try to spread knowledge of honours through their regular contacts and information exchanges with stakeholder groups.

Refusals

The bar chart below indicates the number of people who have refused the offer of an honour during the period of the Report. The majority do not give any reason.



Forfeiture of Honours

Forfeiture may be considered for holders of awards in civilian or military Orders of Knighthood, and for those appointed Knight Bachelor, on the advice of the Forfeiture Committee and with the approval of The Sovereign.

During the period of this report, three cases of forfeiture were published in the London Gazette.

There is a formal process for considering potential cases of forfeiture which is in the public domain at www.direct.gov.uk. The relevant government Department submits a case to the Honours and Appointments Secretariat in the Cabinet Office, which provides the secretariat to the Forfeiture Committee.

The members of the Forfeiture Committee are: the Cabinet Secretary, the Treasury Solicitor, the Permanent Secretary to the Home Office, and the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Executive.

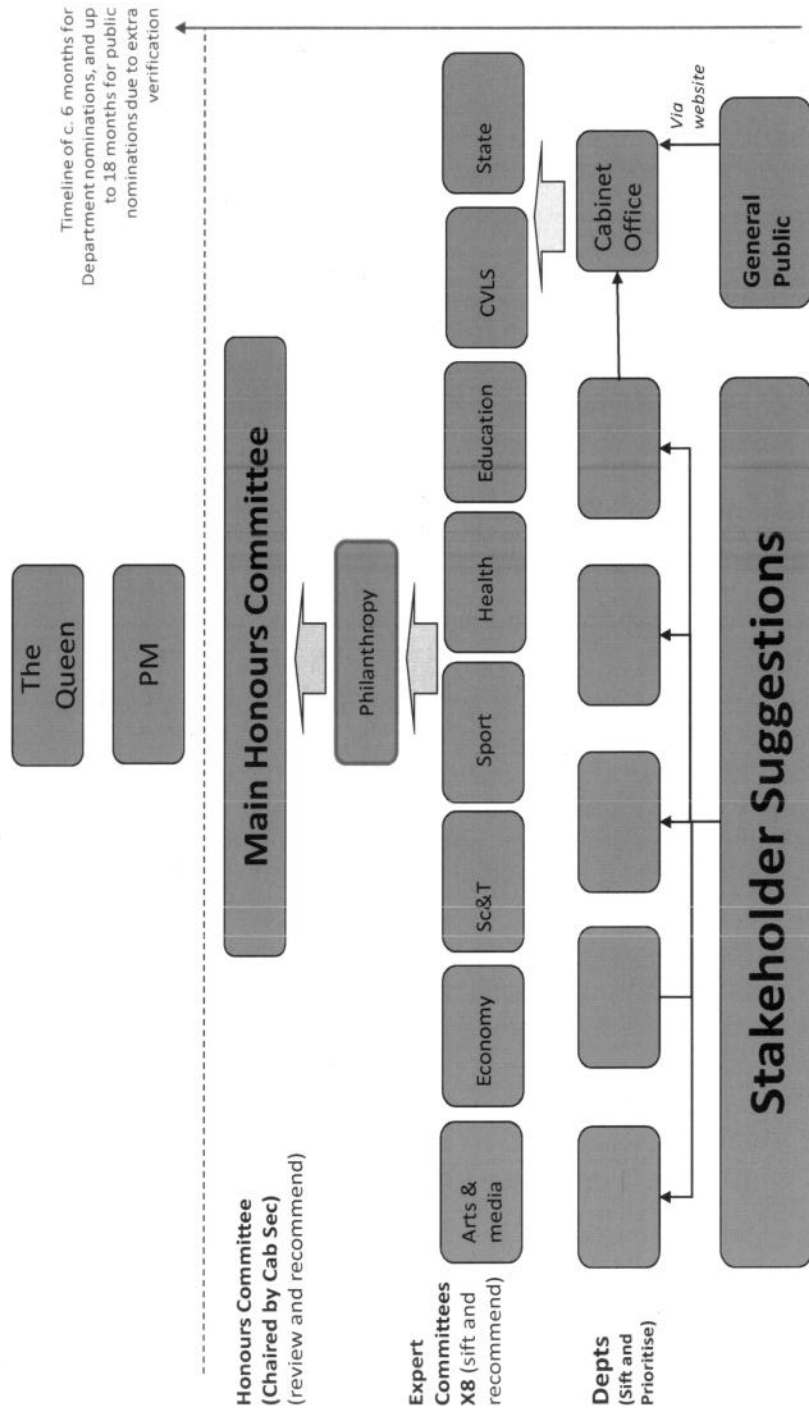
Each case is considered on its merits on the basis of objective facts. The Committee's recommendations for forfeiture are then submitted through the Prime Minister to The Sovereign. If The Sovereign gives approval a notice of forfeiture is placed in the London Gazette.

Honours and Appointments Secretariat

Cabinet Office

November 2011

Summary of Honours Process



HONOURS PROCESS: SOME DEFINITIONS

Nominations and Citations

It is useful to explain some of the terminology used in the processes:-

- **Nominations** are usually made by members of the public and others using the form available on the Honours and Appointments website (www.honours.gov.uk) and from government departments. Nominators are asked to provide at least two letters of support for a candidate in order to be able to develop a rounded picture. It is not possible to assess how many nominations are made each year, as they may be fed into the system in a variety of ways. The Nominations Team at the Honours and appointments Secretariat receives on average 3,500 each year. Nominations from members of the public come in throughout the year, but citations are submitted to committees twice a year.
- **Citations** are mainly produced by the honours staff in departments. They are distillations of the material provided by members of the public in their nominations, or recommendations from professional bodies and other organisation who have been invited by government departments to submit citations directly to them.

Each candidate's case goes through a number of stages before it reaches one of the central honours committees.

- Recommendations that start as *public nomination* forms sent to the Honours and Appointments Secretariat are sifted and checked by the Secretariat. Some cases forwarded to the appropriate government department for consideration. The remainder are processed by the Secretariat, and comments sought from Lord-Lieutenants, outside bodies and departments which have an interest in an aspect of the candidate's work. Only once all these checks have been undertaken are cases distilled into *citations*.
- Stakeholders such as NHS Trusts, educational bodies, the CBI and Universities are regularly asked by their sponsoring government for suggestions as to candidates for honours. Departments check and sift such candidates. Then, together with candidates who have come from the public, they send the *citations* to Honours and Appointments Secretariat for submission to one of the specialist honours committees. Departments submit only the strongest citations for consideration.

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The Lord Newton of Braintree OBE DL

02 September 2010

Dear Tony

HONOURS: RECOGNISING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BIG SOCIETY

As you will know, the Prime Minister provides the key strategic direction to the UK honours system. I am writing to let you know that he has written to Cabinet colleagues asking them to highlight the important link between work in support of the Big Society and the honours system.

The aim of building a bigger, stronger society where individuals and communities do more for themselves and others involves a culture change for us all. The Prime Minister has asked that Honours Selection Committee Chairs and Members give increasing weight in their deliberations to candidates who are actively engaged in work to encourage stronger, more integrated communities. He has specifically asked that the vast majority of honours go to individuals who have gone beyond excellence in playing their part to create a Big Society. The Prime Minister is clear that merit must remain the over-arching criterion for judging whether an individual deserves an honour but he would like to see this change of emphasis in place for the next Honours round at New Year 2011. The Secretariat is working to ensure that this point is brought out in the briefing for the Committees.

Examples of work of the sort the Prime Minister has in mind could take the form of giving particular priority to -

- People working to strengthen communities in deprived areas
- Community organisers
- People running neighbourhood groups
- People working for voluntary and charitable organisations
- Community fundraisers



ENCLOSURE 11/09/10

- People tackling any extremism which promotes violence or hatred
- People supporting green enterprise at a local level
- People working towards a zero-waste society, and
- People working to improve the natural environment

The Prime Minister has also asked that greater prominence is given in the honours system to philanthropists who are making a difference to the Big Society through a sustained personal engagement

Where awards are merited for achievement in other areas, for example in the sporting field, in business, or in the arts world, the Prime Minister would also like the Honours Selection Committees to give increasing weight to how and whether the individual in question has contributed to helping others and building a bigger, stronger society. The Committees should now give more consideration to how our top sports stars, actors, business people etc are also using their prominence and profile for the greater good through giving back to society in any number of ways.

I fully realise that you can only work with the nominations that you receive and I will be asking my Heads of Departments to ensure that a good supply of nominations, that reflect this agenda, are submitted through the independent Committee process.

I am very grateful to you and to your Committee members for your vital input to the UK honours system and look forward to your support in reflecting this change of focus in your future meetings.

Yours truly
Gus

Gus O'Donnell

