



From Lord Berkeley
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Simon Case Esq CVO
Cabinet Secretary
Cabinet Office, SW1

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Dear Simon,

HS2 – Ministers misleading Parliament.

I wrote to you on 9th July requesting you to investigate allegations that ministers have failed to comply with the Ministerial Code by misleading parliament.

I have not had the courtesy of any substantive response from you and it appears from a letter received from Bernadette Kelly, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Transport, dated 4th August 2021 that you requested her to respond on your behalf.

I find her response wholly unacceptable; clearly she is seeking to defend her ministers' and her department's reputation. However, I repeat my request to have a response from you as Cabinet Secretary.

In this situation, I sought the advice of one of your permanent secretary predecessors (and a former private secretary to two prime ministers), Sir Tim Lankester KCB, who is perhaps best known for his work in upholding the integrity and independence of the civil service against overbearing ministerial interests in linking overseas aid to arms sales. Sir Tim comments to me in relation to HS2:

'Dear Tony,

Like you, I think the continuing deception over the costs of HS2 is an absolute disgrace. We had come to expect this from ministers, trying to protect their own backs and trying to protect the project's credibility against mounting evidence that it is a gigantic waste of the nation's scarce resources. But what I find utterly horrible, and in some ways even worse, is the Permanent Secretary's complicity in this deception. Her weasel words distinguishing between what she said was in the budget and what the project will cost are utterly unacceptable from a senior civil servant, or indeed from any civil servant. And this is no ordinary deception when we are talking about a project costing more than £100 billion.

Yours, Tim'

So I suggest that you owe it to your colleagues, to officials and members of parliament, as well as to members of the public, to provide a substantive response to my letter of 9 July 2021. Without such a response, supported by evidence which would enable a proper debate to take place, I fear that the reputation of this Government, supported by a professional and independent civil service, for financial probity, for transparency and general competence will be severely and adversely affected.

I look forward to your comments,

Yours, Tony

Lord Berkeley