



22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019

Dear Loan Charge APPG Member

### **URGENT - Election of Treasury Select Committee Chair**

We are writing to you as a matter of urgency regarding the election of the Treasury Select Committee Chair to urge you not to vote for recent Treasury Minister Mel Stride. This letter is on behalf of the thousands of people and families facing the Loan Charge and families of those whose loved ones tragically killed themselves facing the Loan Charge.

We find it shocking that Mr Stride is even being considered for this position given he was a Treasury Minister until recently and his refusal to submit himself to scrutiny. A key role of the Select Committee is to scrutinise and hold the Treasury and HMRC to account. The Loan Charge review underway was something that Mr Stride resisted and has only been allowed to happen after he left the Treasury.

It is inappropriate for a Treasury Minister to be elected to the Chair of the Treasury Select Committee a matter of months after leaving the Treasury. He would end up examining the financial policies, including the Loan Charge, that occurred during his time at the Treasury.

#### **We ask you to consider his record on the Loan Charge when considering who to vote for:**

- As a junior Treasury Minister, Mel Stride refused FOUR TIMES to answer before the Economic Affairs Committee of the House of Lords on the Loan Charge. He showed disrespect for Parliamentary committees and their role scrutinising Government. He was strongly criticised by the Committee for this [in their letter](#)<sup>1</sup> along with the suggestion that he was not abiding by the Ministerial Code.
  - The Committee Chair Lord Forsyth particularly accused the minister, responsible for oversight of HMRC, of not fulfilling his “**first duty to parliament**”.
  - Lord Forsyth continued the “*governor of the Bank [of England] comes to our committee at least once a year; the Chancellor comes at least once a year; and yet the junior minister in the Treasury, the Financial Secretary, Mel Stride, has now refused to come to our committee on four occasions.*”
  - Convenor of the Crossbench Peers, Lord Judge said Mel Stride had treating the Committee with “*a contemptuous disregard for serious issues*”.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/economic-affairs-finance-bill/draft-finance-bill-2018/20181022%20Chairman%20to%20Financial%20Secretary%20\(FBSC\).pdf](https://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/economic-affairs-finance-bill/draft-finance-bill-2018/20181022%20Chairman%20to%20Financial%20Secretary%20(FBSC).pdf)

- Conservative peer Baroness Noakes said in the House of Lords: *"It is little short of disgraceful for Ministers to obstruct this House from holding the Executive to account. It is also extremely discourteous. I hope that my noble friend the Minister will take back to the Treasury our extreme displeasure at the stance taken, in this instance, by the Financial Secretary [Mel Stride]."*

**Mel Stride's claim, in his application, of "working in an open and fair-minded manner" is clearly untrue. He clearly cannot paint himself as a champion of Parliamentary Committees. The fact his application he has omitted all mention of the Loan Charge, despite it being his most famous and defining policy, speaks volumes.**

Further to the above, Mel Stride has also:

- Refused to give evidence to the Loan Charge APPG Loan Charge Inquiry (and was empty chaired as a result).
- Consistently given a false impression of HMRC action against promoters of loan schemes, he refused to answer a question three times live on BBC MoneyBox live when interviewed by respected journalist Paul Lewis, who later dubbed Mr Stride 'Misleader of the House'.
- Frequently resorted to using template answers to questions asked of him by many MPs. They rarely, if ever, answered the MP's question.  
As the APPG Loan Charge Inquiry says, *"Mel Stride has given partial and misleading answers to parliamentary questions" and "given deliberately misleading answers to journalists. He systematically failed to properly answer written and oral Parliamentary questions"*.
- Ignored every single mention of (confirmed) suicides of people facing the Loan Charge, brazenly ignoring questions from colleagues on all sides of the House. The families of victims were appalled by the disrespect and lack of acknowledgement.
- Wrongly said that loan arrangements were "unlawful" in the House of Commons and failed to correct when asked to do so

***Is this really a record of someone fit to be a Select Committee Chair?*** The idea that Mel Stride could be even considered for the position, given his blatant disregard for the House of Commons, House of Lords and the Loan Charge APPG while overseeing the department responsible is frankly appalling.

So far, some 277 MPs have publicly raised concerns about the Loan Charge and with it being a very significant issue that comes under the remit of the Treasury Select Committee it is surprising that they have not yet properly investigated the Loan Charge Scandal.

Former Chair Nicky Morgan, now a Cabinet Minister, has endorsed Mel Stride for the position and this perhaps explains the lack of scrutiny of the Loan Charge previously by the Committee. She perhaps didn't want to criticise her friend when she was TSC Chair and he was a Treasury Minister but is happy to endorse him as her replacement. This kind of

personal relationship is not a good basis to have confidence that a Select Committee Chair will be impartial and prepared to scrutinise the Government.

The fact that [his business has listed Amazon as a client<sup>2</sup>](#) is something that is not compatible with someone who wants to be the impartial Chair of the Treasury Select Committee. Similarly, the undeclared conflict that his family's firm also profits [from insuring against HMRC tax enquiries!<sup>3</sup>](#), should be cause for concern.

For all the reasons stated above, and more, we urge you not to support Mel Stride – indeed to either put him last in the list of four or do not include him at all on your ballot. It would be a sad day for Parliamentary scrutiny if he got this job.

If Mel Stride became Chair of the TSC the truth of the Loan Charge Scandal and the way HMRC and the Treasury have clearly misled MPs would never be investigated; effectively buried by the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Loan Charge Action Group and the families facing the Loan Charge

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/amazon-links-tory-treasury-minister-13327387>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tax/news/treasury-minister-linked-firm-profits-tax-enquiries/>