

Rt Hon David Cameron MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 1AA

CC: Jeremy Heywood, Cabinet Secretary

CC: Martin Donnelly, Permanent Secretary, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

24 February 2015

Dear Prime Minister,

Potential breach of Ministerial Code: Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills attendance at anti-Heathrow expansion rally on Tuesday 3 March 2015

We wish to bring it to your attention that the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Dr Vince Cable MP has been announced as the keynote speaker at a protest rally held by anti-Heathrow expansion pressure group HACAN.

We are very concerned that the Secretary of State appears to be attending the rally in an official capacity, on behalf of the Government, rather than as constituency Member. This appears to be in direct contravention of Section 1.2 (h) of the Ministerial Code, which states:

“Ministers in the House of Commons must keep separate their roles as Minister and constituency Member”

This activity may also breach other parts of the code, including section 6.5 which urges Ministers to *“make clear that they are acting as their constituents’ representative and not as a Minister”*.

The Secretary of State’s decision to appear at a rally organised by HACAN may be in contravention of section 7.12 of the code which states: *“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.”* Coalition Government policy is to support the Airports Commission process.

As representatives of thousands of businesses in west London, we consider the Secretary of State’s proposed appearance at this rally to be highly inappropriate when the prevailing opinion within the business community is to support expansion at Heathrow. If he wishes to attend as a constituency Member that is his prerogative, but he should not attend in his official capacity as Business Secretary.

To date, more than 30 Chambers of Commerce (including both Hounslow Chamber and West London Business) have supported expansion at Heathrow, whilst national business bodies such as the EEF and the CBI have signalled support for growth at the UK’s hub airport.

Enclosed is a copy of a flyer for this event, which you will note advertises Dr Cable's attendance as a 'Cabinet Minister' and as 'Secretary of State', whilst other Members of Parliament attending as constituency Members do not feature with the same prominence.

We are asking that you investigate whether the Secretary of State has breached the Ministerial Code by allowing himself to be billed in his official capacity, rather than as a constituency Member. Copies of this letter have also been sent to Martin Donnelly, the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and to Jeremy Heywood, the Cabinet Secretary so they are aware of this matter.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,



Frank Wingate
Chief Executive, West London Business



Stephen Fry
Chief Executive, Hounslow Chamber of
Commerce