

Lord Blencathra - friend of Cayman and high Tory

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The [Bureau of Investigative Journalism reports](#) this morning that:

A former Conservative minister with close links to the Government is simultaneously sitting as a peer in the House of Lords and lobbying on behalf of a Caribbean tax haven.

Lord Blencathra, a former MP and Tory Chief Whip, is being paid by the Cayman Islands' government to represent the interests of its financial services industry — despite also being able to vote on legislation affecting the territory.

'I have been meticulous in ensuring that I have no conflict of interest between that role and my duties in the Lords. You cannot point to one single incident, speech, vote or question where I have sought to advance the Cayman Islands in the Lords'.

Lord Blencathra

Inquiries by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism and the Independent have established that Lord Blencathra has lobbied on behalf of the Caymans while claiming thousands of pounds in House of Lords attendance allowances.

In the last few months Lord Blencathra has:

- * Lobbied the Chancellor George Osborne to reduce the burden of air passenger transport taxes on the Caymans;

- * Facilitated an [all expenses paid trip](#) to the Caymans over the Easter recess for three senior MPs with an interest in the islands, including the Chairman of the influential Conservative backbench 1992 committee;

- * Followed up an early day motion in the Commons that had called for the Caymans to be closed down as a tax haven by trying to introduce the MP responsible, the former Treasury Select Committee member John Cryer, to members of a Cayman Islands delegation in London. The meeting never took place.

Lord Blencathra, who was ennobled in 2011 after standing down as an MP in the 2010 general election, has claimed up to £5,500 a month in attendance allowances in the House of Lords.

Cayman, let's be clear exists for three reasons. The first is to facilitate financial opacity within the market system, so undermining its effectiveness and efficiency by creating asymmetric risk which did, undoubtably, contribute to the worldwide crisis in 2008.

Secondly the massive and draconian secrecy it promotes must facilitate crime. We know it has in the past. I see no reason at all to assume it is otherwise now.

Thirdly, it exists to subvert democracy by undermining the right of democratic governments to tax as they will.

This is what the Honourable Lord is supporting. He brings disgrace on the House of Lords by doing so. He also reveals, all too clearly, just where Tory sympathies are on this issue - and they're with the tax abusers.

I strongly [recommend reading the report in full](#).