

# Appointing a Tory peer to head the Charity Commission w...

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The [Guardian has reported](#) this morning that:

*A committee of MPs has unanimously refused to endorse the appointment of a former Tory minister as chair of the Charity Commission, with a stinging rebuke to the government for selecting her despite "a complete lack of experience".*

I share MPs' concern on this appointment.

First I think think that the lack of experience Lady Stowell has makes her wholly unsuited for this task. If the supposed crisis at Oxfam suggests anything it is that the charity sector should no longer be the preserver of the enthusiastic but unskilled amateur and that appropriate skills are required. It is a failure of leadership to appoint someone without the required skills to the Charity Commission in that case.

Second, I do not believe that resigning your party membership when you have previously been appointed by that party to high political office breaks your association with a party or party politics and it is absolutely clear that party politics is not a part of UK charity activity. To have someone in charge of the sector who has been partisan to the date of their appointment and whose resignation is solely motivated by that appointment pushes the boundaries of credibility on this issue both for those who suspect that this is a political appointment and for those who want fair play to be seen to be done, as I do as someone who is very clearly interested in politics but who has very clearly not endorsed a party line and has been critical of all parties when I think it appropriate.

In that case MPs got this right.

But the government does not have to take note. It would, however, be wise to do so. In the current environment appointing a Tory peer to head the Charity Commission would send out all the wrong messages. The only wonder is that it got this far. That it has does not give me much confidence that ministers will take heed of the MPs' advice.