

Bad people find ways round whatever rules there are

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In a letter to The Times this morning all the living former Cabinet Secretaries co-signed a letter demanding an enhanced Code of Conduct on behaviour in public life.

That they thought a statutory basis for this was required was, perhaps, unsurprising. This was more telling though:

[B]alance must be brought to the ministerial code. It must be strictly enforced, but the system in place needs ways of recognising that some breaches are more important than others. Rules, though, will only take us so far. Good people will behave well. Bad people may find ways round whatever rules there are, and we should aim to frame regulations to make cheating them harder. But ultimately we need all in positions of trust to set an example: as Lord Evans of Weardale said, our political system is a common good that we all have a responsibility to preserve and improve.

Lord Butler of Brockwell, cabinet secretary 1988-98; **Lord Wilson of Dinton**, cabinet secretary 1998-2002; **Lord Turnbull**, cabinet secretary 2002-05; **Lord O'Donnell**, cabinet secretary 2005-11; **Lord Sedwill**, cabinet secretary 2018-20

I agree with them.