



Any review into Greensill scandal needs to be properly independent, robust and transparent if it's going to garner public confidence

The growing concerns about high-level influence peddling, cronyism, misuse of public funds, conflicts of interest and the revolving door at the heart of the Greensill scandal require urgent investigation and it is essential that the serious allegations at their heart are properly and independently investigated.

Spotlight on Corruption called for a Parliamentary Committee inquiry into this several weeks ago. In the absence of any Parliamentary Committee stepping forward to announce a review into these incredibly serious allegations, it is welcome that some form of inquiry has been established as an initial step.

However, we have serious concerns that the Boardman investigation announced today by the government lacks sufficient independence from the government, will be insufficiently robust, lacks appropriate transparency and may be too narrow in scope.

The Greensill scandal has exposed serious fault lines in the systems and policies in place to prevent conflicts of interest and inappropriate access to decision makers and to regulate the interaction between government and business. To find out what happened and restore public trust, it is essential that the terms of reference for any review are sufficiently wide and sufficiently flexible to respond to concerns identified during the review process.

If the Boardman review is to provide any real insight into the Greensill scandal, Spotlight on Corruption believes it must meet the following criteria:

1. The investigation must be broad and comprehensive

The key questions that any review must ask include:

1. How Lex Greensill was able to develop such unfettered access to decision-makers in procurement and policy, including how and when he came to be appointed as a “senior adviser” in the Prime Minister’s Office, and how he came to be nominated as a Crown Representative.

2. What the scale and nature of representations made to the government on behalf of Greensill Capital were, including any informal communications that have not yet been published.
3. Whether the Ministerial Code and lobbying rules have been breached.
4. What reforms to the rules and powers of standards regulators are required to avoid another scandal, in particular the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments and lobbying rules.
5. What gaps in the government's current systems for managing conflicts of interest allowed Greensill such unfettered access to decision-makers.
6. What the true cost to the taxpayer from the Greensill affair has been.

2. The investigation must be independent

We have real questions as to whether the review by Nigel Boardman will be sufficiently independent. Mr Boardman, a consultant at law firm Slaughter and May, is also a paid non-executive board member of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Chair of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee. As such he is not fully independent, and he will report to the Prime Minister.

To make the process more robust, we recommend that Mr Boardman should be supported by an advisory group of former senior judges and standards experts who are independent of - and therefore not compromised by their relationship with - the government.

3. The investigation must be robust and transparent

Mr Boardman's previous review on conflicts of interest - which was also commissioned by the Cabinet Office following a scandal, involving the awards of Covid-19-related contracts - was light on detail, if strong on policy. A failure to adequately investigate and report on the detail of this case will leave the review open to accusations of whitewash.

To garner public confidence, Mr Boardman's review should hold public hearings on the key questions arising from the Greensill saga. Mr Boardman and his panel should be able to take witness testimony from those involved in the affair, including David Cameron, Lex Greensill, Rishi Sunak and Matt Hancock, and must be provided with full access to documents and communications. This testimony and any other information gathered during the review must be published in full, and any gaps or obstacles to the investigation clearly identified.