

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS LONDON SW1A 0AA

May 2021

Dear Constituent

Thank you for your email about the renovation of the Downing Street flat occupied by the Prime Minister.

Downing Street is an historic working complex containing several buildings and two ministerial residences. The Government is legally required to maintain Downing Street buildings to standards appropriate to their Grade I and Grade II listed status. As I am sure you can imagine, their status as well as security and other factors, can lead to a significantly increased cost for maintenance and repairs.

Prime Ministers across successive governments have been provided with an allowance of up to £30,000 a year to contribute to the maintenance and furnishing of residency in the Downing Street estate. The cost of the wider refurbishment you mention has been met by the Prime Minister personally.

At all times, the Government and Ministers have acted in accordance with the appropriate codes of conduct. Cabinet Office officials have been engaged and informed throughout and official advice has been followed. Subject to advice from the new Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests, Lord Geidt, the Prime Minister will be making any necessary declaration in line with the requirements of the Ministerial Code.

I understand that the Conservative Party has put out a statement as follows: *“We believe all reportable donations have been transparently and correctly declared and published by the Electoral Commission. We will continue to work constructively with the Electoral Commission on this matter.”*

The Government has also been considering the merits of whether some or all of the work to the Downing Street estate in the future could be funded by a trust. The complex legal issues regarding this proposal mean that policy work is still ongoing but such a system already exists for other listed ministerial residences of historical significance including Chequers and Dorneywood. The previous Labour Government spent £500,000 in real terms of taxpayers’ money on the Downing Street flat and I believe it is right to examine whether such costs should be entirely borne by taxpayers.

Member of Parliament for Darlington

Constituency Office: 34 Duke Street, Darlington, Co. Durham, DL3 7AQ Telephone: 01325 711711

Email: peter.gibson.mp@parliament.uk Website: www.petergibson.org

@gibbo4darlo

The overriding aim throughout has been to reduce the need for taxpayers' money to fund the works and maintain a listed building owned by the nation. Matters concerning current works to the Downing Street estate, including residences, more broadly are covered in the Cabinet Office annual report and accounts.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

yours sincerely
Peter Gibson

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