



THE Joseph Rowntree
REFORM TRUST LTD

Alistair Carmichael MP

Following media and public interest in our recent grant to Alistair Carmichael MP, the Trust has released the following statement:

“Thanks to the perversities of the UK’s electoral system the 50% of Scottish voters who supported unionist parties at the General Election are represented by only three MPs. Had nationalists succeeded in their case against Alistair Carmichael, they would have worsened further the current misrepresentation of Scottish voters’ views in Parliament. Worse still, the effect on case law would have been to subject many more legitimately elected Members of Parliament to the risk of personal bankruptcy in defending themselves in court against vexatious and highly political claims.”

ENDS

Background Q&A

Is this the only grant the Trust has made in 2016?

No. And the grant made to Alistair Carmichael constitutes less than 5% of the £1.2m the Trust will make available to support political campaigns during 2016. An initial advance of £34,000 was made to Alistair Carmichael in January 2016, with a final further award of £16,000 agreed in March once final liabilities in the case were known.

What are the Trust’s priorities?

The vast majority of our funds go to relatively small groups who campaign for political reform, to uphold civil liberties, protect personal privacy and promote human rights.

What is the relationship between the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust and the other Joseph Rowntree organisations?

While we share a founder, the Reform Trust’s Board, governance, and priorities are completely separate from those of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Is the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust a charity?

No. Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust is a limited company, which pays corporation tax, and was set up by Joseph Rowntree with the express intention that it should act beyond the limits of charitable activity.

Where does Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust’s money come from?

The original endowment by Joseph Rowntree is now invested in an equity portfolio and in UK property. The Trust pays UK corporation tax on its income and capital gains.

Does the Trust support the Liberal Democrats?

The Trust has made grants to individuals and organisations within all three major parties. Over many decades, successive Boards of Directors have, however, believed in the importance of strengthening the one political party that has most consistently promoted democratic reform and defended civil liberties in Britain – causes that are at the very heart of the Trust’s purpose.

All donations are declared to the Electoral Commission by the recipients, and – in the spirit of openness – we also, on a voluntary basis, send the Commission an annual list of recipients of political grants. Expenditure is also shown in our audited accounts at Companies House.