

Cross-Party & Dark Money — Overview

Cross-Party / Dark Money — UK Political Donors

This file covers money in UK politics that crosses party lines or is deliberately opaque.

Key Categories

Unincorporated Associations

Unincorporated associations are the main vehicle for "dark money" in UK politics — groups that raise and spend money on political causes without the transparency requirements of registered political parties. They are legal but have minimal reporting requirements.

Notable examples:

- **The Woodland Trust / Bearwood** — Conservative-linked but technically separate
- The **ERG's funding network** (European Research Group)
- Various **Brexit campaign groups** that continued operating after 2020

Individual Donors Who Give Across Parties

Some wealthy individuals donate to multiple parties or causes:

- **Sir Paul Marshall** — Hedge fund billionaire (Marshall Wace). Has donated to both Conservatives and pro-Brexit causes. Also funds GB News and UnHerd. Net worth estimated £1.5bn+
- **Lord David Sainsbury** — Labour donor (profiled separately) who also funds cross-party science and innovation causes

Overseas & Notable Complex Donors

- **Mohamed Mansour** (Egyptian billionaire, Conservative — profiled separately)
- **Alexander Temerko** (ex-Yukos, Conservative — profiled separately)
- Various **Russian-linked** donors and funds that have been subject to increased scrutiny post-2022

Lobbying & Influence Networks

- **The 95 Group** — Labour-aligned business group
- **Labour Together** — Centre-left think tank funded by John Mills and other Labour donors
- **Conservative Way Forward** — Thatcherite pressure group
- **Right To Buy / housing lobby** — Cross-party influence through think tanks

Notes

- The UK has relatively weak donation transparency compared to other Western democracies
- Electoral Commission reforms proposed in 2024 have been repeatedly delayed
- The 2024-2025 period saw increased scrutiny of foreign-linked donations
- "Dark money" is most active in marginal seat campaigning where national rules are weaker

Sources

- Electoral Commission register of donations
- Transparency International UK — political integrity reports
- OpenDemocracy — dark money investigations
- Who Funds You? — party funding transparency project

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