

Lord Hill announced as UK commission candidate

Written by Tom Fillis on 17 July 2014



This nomination may prove to be the most important in UK-EU relations, and indeed in the history of the college of commissioners, given the ever-more precarious position of the UK within the European Union. The choice will speak volumes about Cameron's strategic calculations, as regards his proposed "renegotiation" (a concept as abstract as the constantly mooted, but never defined, "reform" of the EU) and the negotiating tactics he will use.

Cameron has been under pressure from the deeply Eurosceptic wing of his party to appoint a heavy-hitter who would, "not go native as soon as he got to Brussels". The first hurdle facing this group is the Lib Dems, Cameron's junior coalition partners, who would no doubt veto any candidate too extreme. Another issue was the nomination of Jean-Claude Juncker, a quattrolingual Brussels veteran.

Cameron feared that an "old school federalist" would make a re-negotiation (i.e. a repatriation of some - unspecified - powers to London) even more difficult and therefore sought, with a most brash and aggressive manner, to torpedo his embryotic presidency.

"The need for someone who will be able to establish a good personal relationship with Juncker and secure a good deal for the British government is paramount"

Worryingly for the UK, this failure, coupled with the unprecedented use of threats -Cameron told the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, that Juncker's accession would make a 'Brexit' more likely- raised the serious possibility of the UK getting a less prominent commission dossier, just at a time when the UK is seeking an influential economic portfolio.

Therefore, the need for someone who will be able to establish a good personal relationship with

Juncker and secure a good deal for the British government is paramount, for the UK as well as Cameron personally. Finally, but no less importantly, all commission candidates must be approved by the European parliament, something a firebrand Europhobe might struggle to do.

Given this low-ebb in UK-EU relations, and at times shocking policy from London, it would seem that Cameron has grasped the above concerns and selected a moderate candidate.

In the 1980's, Hill first worked for the veteran Conservative pro-European Ken Clark before serving former Conservative prime minister John Major in the 1990s. This was at the time the government was negotiating the Treaty of Maastricht (creating, among others, the euro and legal EU citizenship) as well as when Conservative hardliners almost brought down the government, the so-called 'Maastricht rebels'.

Hill also worked extensively in the business sector. Hill worked as senior consultant at Bell Pottinger Group 1994-1998, later becoming a founding director of Quiller Consultants. He returned to politics in 2010, becoming Baron Hill of Oareford (Somerset) and therefore taking a seat in the House of Lords. Since then, Hill became both leader of the House of Lords and the Conservatives in the house.

Hill's political credentials make him potentially well suited to the job as a commissioner. He understands the UK's relation with Europe, and has worked with pro-Europeans at times of great division within the Conservative Party. As a former leader of the House of Lords, he is also accustomed to the need for cross-party pragmatism and, as a Lord, his departure does not necessitate a by-election so close to a national poll. Finally, a business background chimes with the current zeitgeist of the commission, especially with some of the larger portfolios such as internal market.

For his part, Cameron said: "Lord Hill will bring an excellent combination of political and private sector experience to this role. Half his career has been spent in business, half in government at the highest levels, most recently doing an excellent job as leader of the House of Lords where he has proven a skilled negotiator respected by all parties. And having founded his own company, he also has a strong understanding of the private sector and how the EU can help businesses to generate growth and create jobs."

A pragmatic, experienced politician is certainly well placed to achieve compromise – the order of the day in Brussels – regarding the British renegotiation without sacrificing a productive British position within the college. However, if this combination is enough to convince the European parliament remains to be seen, especially given recent news that a commission too male-dominated might be voted down.

About the author

With experience in the European Institutions as well as in the private and NGO sectors across several policy areas Tom Fillis currently works in EU affairs in Brussels.

ThomasFillis@europeanpublicaffairs.eu [1]

This article was originally published on www.EuropeanPublicAffairs.eu [2] Follow EPA on Twitter [@EUPublicAffairs](https://twitter.com/EUPublicAffairs) [3]



Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [Climate Crisis](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2020](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)
[MonitoringDods](#)
[ResearchDods](#)
[EventsDods](#)
[Training](#)

Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe](#)
[HouseThe](#)
[Parliament](#)
[MagazineHolyrood](#)
[Total PoliticsPublic](#)
[Affairs NewsCivil](#)
[Service](#)
[World](#)
[PublicTechnology](#)
[Training](#)
[JournalDods](#)
[Parliamentary](#)
[CompanionVacher's](#)
[Quarterly The](#)
[European Union and](#)
[Public Affairs](#)
[Directory](#)

Dods events

[Westminster](#)
[BriefingDigital](#)
[Health & Care](#)
[ScotlandMEP](#)
[AwardsThe Skills](#)
[SummitScottish](#)
[Public Service](#)
[AwardsPublic Sector](#)
[Procurement](#)
[SummitPublic](#)
[Sector ICT](#)
[SummitCyber](#)
[Security](#)
[SummitCyber](#)
[Security](#)
[2017Training](#)
[Journal Awards](#)

Partnership events

[The Health and](#)
[Care Innovation](#)
[ExpoCivil Service](#)
[LiveCivil Service](#)
[AwardsChief](#)
[Nursing Officer for](#)
[England's](#)
[SummitWomen into](#)
[LeadershipThe](#)
[Youth Justice](#)
[ConventionSocitm](#)
[Spring](#)
[ConferenceNHSCC](#)
[Annual Members'](#)
[EventDods at Party](#)
[Conference](#)

Source URL: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/blog/lord-hill-announced-uk-commission-candidate>

Links

[1] <mailto:ThomasFillis@europeanpublicaffairs.eu>

[2] <http://www.europeanpublicaffairs.eu/>

[3] <https://twitter.com/EUPublicAffairs>