



**BANK OF ENGLAND**

**Mark Carney**  
Governor

Helen Grant MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

15 February 2019

Dear Ms Grant

Thank you for your letter dated 5 February regarding the £50 character selection process. Let me start by reassuring you that the Bank takes its commitment to diversity very seriously, and that diversity issues are actively considered at every stage of the character selection process for our banknotes.

Our banknotes are an opportunity to celebrate the UK's achievements and highlight the contributions of some of its greatest citizens. Historically, the character selection for our banknotes was made by the Governor with no direct input from the public. In 2013, a new process for choosing characters was put in place that invited public nominations but also set up the Banknote Character Advisory Committee, with significant independent representation, to help choose the nomination field and to shortlist characters. For the £50 note, they chose the field of 'science' in recognition of the United Kingdom's extraordinary scientific heritage. For the £50 note, as for the £20 note, we also held a public nomination process for eligible characters in the chosen field. This helps to ensure we are considering as broad a range of potential candidates as possible, and listening to who the UK public would like to see represented on their banknotes. We have been delighted by the enthusiastic response of the public to the character selection process. Over the 6 week nomination period we received 227,299 nominations covering 989 eligible scientists.

The list of eligible characters has now been published and it demonstrates the wealth of significant scientific achievements that deserve celebrating – including Mary Seacole's inspirational role in nursing, specifically during the Crimean war. Importantly, it also serves to highlight the huge range of individuals that have contributed to science in the UK across all dimensions of diversity.

The field of science was chosen by the Banknote Character Advisory Committee, which has a diverse and independent membership. One of the many reasons why the Committee chose this field is because there are a broad range of individuals from a variety of backgrounds within science whose work has shaped how we think about the world and who continue to inspire people today. The Committee has five core members, three of whom – Professor Sir David Cannadine, Sandy Nairne and Baroness Lola Young – do not work for the Bank. Four additional external members with expertise in the field of science have also joined the committee specifically for the £50 note character selection process. These experts are Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock, Dr Emily Grossman, Professor Simon Schaffer and Dr Simon Singh. The 989 eligible characters are now being considered by the Committee, which will draw on detailed research about each eligible character, as well as feedback from public focus groups, to agree a shortlist of candidates to appear on the £50 note. They will then discuss that shortlist with me before the final decision is made. We will announce who will appear on the next £50 banknote in Summer 2019.

The Bank takes its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, and particularly the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), extremely seriously. The members of the Banknote Character Advisory Committee are all made fully aware of the importance of consciously considering the PSED, and diversity more generally, throughout the character selection process, including in selecting the field from which character nominations will be sought. We have also made it clear in our communications that we would like to consider a diverse range of character nominations, both by asking for the views of the wider public, as well as by defining the field of science in a way that is very broad in scope.

You also note a number of other candidates in your letter, namely Noor Inayat Khan, Sophia Duleep Singh and John Edmonstone. Thank you for bringing these individuals to our attention. I completely agree that they have each made remarkable contributions to society, and would all be strong candidates to consider featuring on banknotes. We will certainly take them and their relevant fields into account in the future.

I can assure you and your cross-party colleagues that for both the £50 note and any future issues of banknotes, the Bank will properly consider all protected characteristics, and seek to represent on its banknotes characters reflecting the diversity of British society, its culture and its values.

*Yours sincerely*  
