

## Nick Boles MP



**Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Education**

**Constituency:** [Grantham and Stamford](#), East Midlands

Majority: 14,826

**Party:** Conservative



### Westminster

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### Relevant contributions

Nick Boles jointly founded centre-right think tank Policy Exchange with former secretary of state for education Michael Gove and Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude.

He attended Winchester College, an independent school, and studied at both Oxford University and Harvard.

### Responsibilities

As **Minister of State**, [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills](#) jointly with [Department for Education](#)

Further education, adult skills, Skills Funding Agency and skills strategy, lifelong learning and informal adult learning, apprenticeships, UK Commission for Employment and Skills and the Sector Skills Councils, workplace training reforms, qualifications reform programme

### Parliamentary career

PPS to Nick Gibb as Minister of State for Schools 2010-12;  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Planning), Department for Communities and Local Government 2012-14;  
Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Education 2014-

### Past Select committees

Member:  
Political and Constitutional Reform 2010,  
Standing Orders 2011-12, 2013-14

### All-party groups (membership)

Member, [Terrorism](#) Group

### Councils, public bodies

Westminster City Council:  
Councillor 1998-2002,  
Chair, Housing Committee 1999-2001

### Political interests

Education, local government, foreign affairs

### Profile

A very bright, "mild neo-con", Wykehamist entrepreneur, former merchant banker and policy think-tanker, Nicholas Edward Coleridge Boles was the tallest MP of the 2010 intake, and high up on the list of modernising new Conservatives.

A close Cameron ally, promoted to the 'A-list' of favoured candidates after failing to win Hove back from Labour in 2005, he re-emerged in Lincolnshire to succeed Quentin Davies, the Tory MP who defected to Labour.

He made no secret of his ambition for ministerial office, and didn't have to wait too long. After a spell as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Schools Minister Nick Gibb he was appointed junior Minister in charge of planning in the Department of Communities and Local Government in September 2012.

He soon crossed swords with conservationists by saying that more than 1,500 square miles of countryside, about 3 per cent of England needed to be built on to meet the demand for housing, and that buildings could be more beautiful than nature.

But these did not seem to include wind turbines. He wrote privately to the Energy Minister John Hayes saying the views of opponents of wind farms should not be "ridden over roughshod" and that local people had genuine concerns that wind farms were not appropriate in all settings.

Born in 1965 to a farming family from Devon, he was educated at Winchester College and took first-class honours in philosophy, politics and economics at Magdalen College, Oxford. He then won a Kennedy scholarship to Harvard where he took a master's degree in public policy.

He worked for two merchant banks, including Credit Suisse First Boston, largely in Germany, advising on business in Eastern Europe and Russia. He was in Germany when the Berlin wall came down.

In 1995 he founded Longwall Holdings, a manufacturing group supplying the DIY industry, which he ran as chief executive for five years. He continued as non-executive chairman but the company is no longer trading.

He first worked for the Conservative Party at the 1988 Kensington by-election. Ten years later he was elected to Westminster Council for the West End ward including Mayfair and Soho, and chaired its housing committee for two years.

He stood down from the council in 2002, and along with Francis Maude, Michael Gove and Archie Norman, founded Policy Exchange, the influential "modernising" Conservative policy think tank aimed at evidence-based rather than ideological research. He was its director until he stood down in 2007.

He was co-author, with his former flatmate Michael Gove and Ed Vaizey, of *A Blue Tomorrow* setting out a new vision of Conservatism, in which his essay was entitled "*Things Fall Apart, the Centre Cannot Hold*". He is a strong advocate of decentralisation and localism in government and proposed putting the London Mayor, then Ken Livingstone, in charge of the Metropolitan Police.

He was also one of the prime movers in setting up 'C-Change', Conservatives for Change, which aims to attract people of more diverse backgrounds to the Party. He is also involved in Wave Network, designed to interest young, urban people in the Conservative cause.

But Hove in 2005, even with its large gay population, was not yet ready to embrace a Tory, however

modern. The Conservative share of the vote dropped by nearly 2 per cent and he lost to Labour's Celia Barlow by just 420 votes.

Undaunted, he stood in the primaries to become his party's candidate for London Mayor in 2008, but withdrew after being diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Recovering, he took a temporary job as chief of staff to the new Mayor Boris Johnson, where he was not considered an unqualified success.

But by now he had been selected via an open primary to fight his new seat. He moved from Hove to a cottage near Grantham and began to stress his family's rural connections. He divided his time between the constituency and working for David Cameron in London.

He is interested in foreign affairs and describes himself as "a mild neo-con", keen on "spreading democracy around the globe." He is a member of the Henry Jackson Society, a think tank with links with American neo-conservatives.

In 2010 he published his first full-length book *Which Way's Up? – the Future for Coalition Britain*. Often described as an "outrider" for Government policies, he ruffled feathers on the Left by saying he preferred "chaos" to central planning in the provision of local services.

However, he outraged the Right when he came out in favour of a land tax, an historic Liberal policy. He said he might be committing career suicide, but that the tax, exempting farmland and first homes, could encourage more development on brownfield sites.

And he clashed with the Prime Minister when he called for cuts in universal benefits for better-off pensioners, such as television licences, bus passes, free prescriptions and the winter fuel allowance, in the next Parliament to help reduce the budget deficit. David Cameron roundly turned down the idea.

He once called for an electoral pact between Conservatives and Liberal Democrats but by 2013 had rejected the idea, saying the Lib Dems were now "a statist party of the soft left". Instead he suggested some liberal Conservative candidates should stand as National Liberals, revived as a sister party, to appeal to new activists and voters.

Selectively libertarian, he is in favour of repealing the hunting ban but voted against any relaxation of the smoking ban. He supported David Cameron's campaign against the availability of pornographic images to children, but said Conservatives should not lecture adults about the private enjoyment of legal pornography.

He has a theatrical side. In 2000 he was associate producer of the hit West End production of *The Mysteries*. Categorized as one of the 'Notting Hill set' of younger modernising Conservatives, he wryly accepts the label, but says he had not been able to afford to live in Notting Hill for at least 20 years.

He earned more than £45,000 a year as a fellow and consultant for the Institute for Government, writes for *The Times*, the *Guardian* and other newspapers, and commanded fees of up to £5,000 for speaking engagements.

In 2011 he entered a civil partnership with Israeli-born Shay Meshulam followed by a big celebration in Ibiza. He came in for some criticism for using an MPs' perk to take lessons in Hebrew at public expense, and paid more than £2,000 to charity to cover the amount he had claimed.

He already speaks French, German and Spanish. 6ft 6ins in height, he enjoys sailing, skiing, cinema, rollerblading and playing the piano. But he is a man in a hurry: he has said he does not intend to remain an MP indefinitely.

## Contact

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