



# The Kitten Heel: Progress for Women in Politics?

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# Now election, What's new girls

SHE sashayed into Downing Street, offering a glimpse of thigh-high slit skirt.

And as Esther McVey's meeting with the Prime Minister, a veteran photographer shouted 'let's have a turn' and her blonde mane was thrown backwards as in a stampede.

The Employment Minister had just been told that she will now attend Cabinet in a beefed-up role on what was swiftly becoming 'Ladies' Day' in Westminster.

David Cameron replaced a succession of older male ministers with up-and-coming Tory women in an attempt to make his top team more representative of the population.

Although former TV host Jane McVey was arguably the star turn in Downing Street, one of the biggest winners was Liz Truss, who entered the Cabinet as Environment Secretary at the age of 38, making her the

**THE new Leader of the House of Lords is to have her salary topped up by the Tory Party after it emerged she was to be paid less than her male predecessor, Lord Hill. Tina Stowell was announced as the new Lords leader, but there was embarrassment as Downing Street confirmed that she would be paid £18,891 a year, compared to £30,038 for Lord Hill. After Labour criticism, Tory sources said it had been decided to boost Lady Stowell's salary using party funds.**

youngest female Cabinet minister of all time. The ice-cool member-of-parliament tipped as a potential future Tory leader, replaced Owen Paterson, who clashed angrily with the Prime Minister as he was subjected to criticism of his handling of the horsemeat scandal, a cloud of badgers and the winter floods.

The other meteoric promotion was handed to Nicky Morgan, promoted from No 3 at the Treasury to replace Michael Gove as Education Secretary.

The Prime Minister declared his new team reflected modern Britain, but faced a backlash from some of the Tory old guard who accused him of ousting middle-aged male ministers regardless of their merits.

There's particular anger that not one existing woman minister was named in Mr Cameron's biggest clean-out since becoming party leader.

MPs had expected Helen Grant, the sports minister, who has made a series of gaffes, to be dismissed, and there were question marks over the future of Foreign Office minister Baroness Warsi after she

By James Chapman  
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to get sacked by Cameron? asked one ousted minister. No matter how hopeless or how provocative you are, you won't get sacked because he has to meet his quotas.

Another senior Tory complained: 'This really is the worst form of toxicistic gesture politics. Merit is out of the window.' The number of Tory women attending Cabinet rose to eight out of 27, just short of Mr Cameron's target of a third of his ministers being women.

The new women: Home Secretary Theresa May, International Development Secretary Justine Greening and Northern Ireland Secretary Theresa Villiers.

The new leader of the Lords, Baroness Stowell, and Miss McVey have been promoted to join Baroness Warsi in also attending meetings without being full Cabinet ministers.

In an indication of Mr Cameron's keenness to highlight the influx of Tory women, a succession of female MPs was photographed outside No 10, though some were taking up more junior roles than men whose promotions were announced on Twitter.

There were new ministerial jobs for Anna Soubry, Priti Patel, Claire Perry, Amber Rudd and Penny Mordaunt, who famously took part in TV's celebrity dining programme *Splash!* Theresa Coffey was made a Government whip.

Labour's shadow women and equalities minister Gloria De Piero said: 'The Tories have spent the last few days bragging that this would be the reshuffle which fixed David Cameron's "women problem" but it's turning into a damp squib.'

It's clear the Tories still don't match the 41 per cent of Labour's shadow cabinet under Ed Miliband.

Foreign Cabinet minister Ken Clarke, who quit the Government after four decades at the top of Tory politics, expressed support for all women shortlists as a way to further increase the number of women representing the party.

The former Tory chancellor said the party was 'going too slowly' in its efforts to boost the number of female candidates, adding: 'I would be in favour of all-women shortlists, which I didn't need to be.'

Cheryl Gillin, who was Welsh Secretary in Mr Cameron's first cabinet, said: 'Don't forget the Prime Minister only has 40 women out of all his troops to pick from. He has a finite pool from which to choose. I think he has picked some very good people who have been in the job four years and therefore have got some good political experience under their belts.'

'I wish all of those women well – not just the ones that have come in but

# ESTHER, THE QUEEN OF THE DOWNING STREET CATWALK

Formerly CATHERINE OSTLER gives her style verdict on 'Ladies' Day' at Westminster...

## DRESS

IS THIS really the same woman who stepped out on Monday in a floral, below-the-knee dress from High Street store Phase Eight, a dark jacket, thick black tights and bag worn across the chest, as if she was a student afraid of being mugged?

Yesterday, just 24 hours later, Liverpool-born Employment Minister Esther McVey (right) was a thigh-flashing vision in grey check by Vivienne Westwood, which cinched in her waist and emphasised her bust, and a jacket by the same designer. With similar Vivienne Westwood dresses selling for around £285, and jackets for £306, she certainly didn't scrimp on her debut ensemble.

It's little wonder that Esther plumped for such an attention-grabbing dress – as a former TV presenter she is used to all eyes being on her – but she needs to tone it down a little for attending Cabinet meetings.

## BAG

THAT tiny patterned High Street clutch bag makes her look like she is heading for an exciting night out on a first date, not a serious new promotion to No 10. Work first, please, Esther.

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## HAIR

ESTHER'S had a proper turbo-charged blow-dry worthy of a Cabinet seat of its own: such polish, movement and volume!

Celebrity hair and make-up artist Donagh Connor says: 'She obviously takes good care of her hair and has lovely highlights. Far more volume has been lifted into her hair than the day before and it appears thicker. Perhaps she's had clip-in hair extensions attached underneath the hair line.'



## LIZ TRUSS

THE new Environment Secretary is very patriotic in a red, white and blue ensemble consisting of a snake-skin navy dress and red jacket oddly finished with black patent shoes. Truss, 38, MP for South West Norfolk, and the former Junior Education and Children Minister, looked bright and sensible but a little bit too Eighties air hostess.

## PENNY MORDAUNT

THE Minister for Planning and Coastal Communities was alone in braving the no-jacket look – after all she was brave enough to appear on TV in a swimsuit on *Splash!* This rather light, bright, purple dress – the £115 'Violet' by LK Bennett – makes the most of 41-year-old Mordaunt's figure. But who knows what's with the MP for Portsmouth North's wrinkle made shoes and big bag?

## NICKY MORGAN

MORGAN, 41, MP for Loughborough, and now Education Secretary as well as Minister for Women and Equalities, chose a wintry, belted black dress, low nude pumps and a brown jacket with three-quarter-length sleeves that looks like half of another suit. At least she looks as if she's going to the office.

## PRITI PATEL

TREASURY Minister Priti Patel, 42, must be the first person in that post to wear giant polka dots – her dress, from High Street favourite Wallis, costs £45 – though that navy jacket looks like Ken Clarke was his last owner and those sensible shoes could have been worn by Baroness Thatcher. The MP for Witham's bag is the more fashionable 1960s 'Hepburn' by Argenti of London.



## AMBER RUDD

THE new Energy Department Minister looks both contemporary and work-appropriate in her straight-to-work navy suit, white top and bold necktie – although the trousers are a little light.

The 36-year-old MP for Hastings and Rye, a former Whip, whose 2006 *Anya Hindmarch* tote that seems to have the kitchen sink crammed into it. The red nails and 1-mean-business glasses in her hand are a nice touch.



## CLAIRE PERRY

PROMOTED from Assistant Whip to Junior Transport Minister, Claire Perry, 30, hit the high road in a similar wedge shoe to Esther McVey and a smart navy dress, topped off by a statement necklace and a bold turtleneck jacket that looked about two sizes too big for the MP for Devon.



## LADY STOWELL

THE 47-year-old was named in the Queen and now joins the Cabinet as Leader of the Lords and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, but she's gone a little mother-of-the-bride in this blue and white, still-but-smart get-up, all by Precis Petite.

The clothing line, for women 05-11 and under, is stocked in Debenhams, where the dress retails for £129 and the matching jacket is £159.



## ANNA SOUBRY

ELEVATED from Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence, Soubry, 57, always has the air of a star Thatcher tribute performer, face, poise, voice, tough manner and everything – and here she is edging towards the velvet but not the forbidding jackets of the Iron Lady, modernised with low-cut blouse, trousers and a stonking high heeled £375 coat by Top.

The MP for Stroud's bag looks big enough to conceal a few masses.

## MAKE-UP

McVEY'S trademark 'don't mess with me' fuchsia lipstick looks striking with all that soft grey and her skin looks dewy. Her usually pale eyes were appear to have been pencilled in, while a taupe shadow has been used to make her eyes look bigger. Connor says: 'She may well have got a make-up artist to her home early to perfect her look. Her lips are shinier – possibly thanks to the addition of a gloss over her lipstick – and her eyeliner is more defined on the inside edge of the eye. Blusher brings out her cheekbones for a more cheeky look.'







