

# EVOLVEPOLITICS

## Nigel Farage's key Fundraising Advisor is a convicted fraudster who's writing a book called 'How to Launder Money'



By Tom D. Rogers 30th September 2025

Most people have probably never heard of George Cottrell. But – like Alastair Campbell to Tony Blair, or Dominic Cummings to Boris Johnson – Cottrell is a man who could be just a few years away from becoming one of the most important behind-the-scenes figures in Number 10, should Nigel Farage become Prime Minister at the next General Election.

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However, whilst both Campbell and Cummings only became publicly synonymous for dodgy behaviour within Downing Street, Cottrell already has a vast repertoire of misdemeanours and accusations to his name – including a

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In addition, Cottrell has also been accused of money laundering on several occasions, and has even been accused of funneling money through cryptocurrency to illegally fund a Montenegrin political party – accusations which he, through his lawyers, has denied.

And, as if that wasn't enough already, Cottrell has quite literally just written a book entitled: **'How To Launder Money'**.

Yes. Seriously.

Despite all of these massive red flags and huge neon flashing 'WARNING' signs against both his character and conduct, Cottrell has become arguably Farage's most trusted fundraising advisor over the last decade – with the Reform leader even going so far as to describe him as **'like a son to me'**, and being flanked by 'Posh George' at virtually every public and private event.

In the UK, it is illegal for political parties and politicians to accept money or gifts from foreign sources, and it is also against the law to accept anonymous or unidentified donations, or to take money laundered in ways that obscure the true source of funds.

So why, then, would Farage – a politician whose party is currently roaring ahead in the polls, and who will clearly want to keep his nose clean and present a professional image in order to ensure he becomes Prime Minister – keep a convicted criminal, someone who seems to be perpetually mired in allegations of murky financial dealings, so close by his side?

In this article, we'll explain everything you need to know about George Cottrell, and why – if you want the best for this country – how politics is funded really, really matters.

### **Posh George**

George Cottrell was born in 1993 into a wealthy and well-connected British family with aristocratic ties. His father, Mark, is a businessman and landowner from Gloucestershire, and his mother, Fiona, is the daughter of Rupert Watson, 3rd Baron Manton.

Cottrell was privately educated on the luxury Caribbean island of Mustique, and later attended Malvern College in Worcestershire – an exclusive private school

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reportedly offered a job raising capital for a corporate finance house, leading to him helping to set up a multibillion-pound private office in Mayfair for a well-known 'international' family.

According to the Telegraph it was here that Cottrell "*learned about the murky and complicated world of 'shadow banking', secret offshore accounts and sophisticated financial structures in such jurisdictions as Panama, Andorra and Switzerland. He did well, and was soon working as a London-based banker for an offshore private bank (which was under investigation by the US authorities as a 'foreign financial institution of primary money-laundering concern').*"

It was a smooth transition from here and into politics for Posh George, as his social connections and financial experience helped him enter the inner circles of UKIP where, in 2013, he was introduced to Nigel Farage by his aristocratic uncle, Lord Hesketh, a former treasurer of the party.

In just a few short months Cottrell became a trusted figure within the party, operating in Farage's inner circle at UKIP, helping to manage campaign finances, booking Farage's helicopters, and travelling with the party leader during events and media appearances. He was first promoted to head of fundraising, and later served as UKIP's deputy treasurer during the 2015 general election campaign.

However, in 2016, things came crashing down.

### Conviction for Wire Fraud

While attending the Republican National Convention alongside Nigel Farage, Cottrell was arrested by US authorities and indicted on 21 charges, including conspiracy to commit money laundering, wire fraud, blackmail, and extortion. However, he accepted a plea deal in which prosecutors agreed to drop 20 of the charges in return for him pleading guilty to a single count of wire fraud, for which he received an eight-month sentence, most of which he had already served pending trial.

The case arose from a long-running undercover operation by US federal authorities investigating schemes to launder money through offshore accounts and the dark web. Cottrell was recorded explaining methods by which illicit funds could be moved and concealed.

As **Evolve reported at the time:**

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*responded, whom the mysterious 'Banker' directed to the equally mysterious 'Bill', later outed as Cottrell.*

*"According to Cottrell's own admission to the court, he offered:*

*"Ways to transfer large amounts of cash out of the United States to avoid reporting requirements and disguising proceeds from criminal activity as legitimate business income for tax purposes."*

*"He also admitted:*

*"I falsely claimed that I would launder the criminal proceeds through my bank accounts for a fee. Rather than launder any of the money, though, I intended to retain the money."*

*"In short, Cottrell intended to defraud drug traffickers of their ill-gotten gains and hope they wouldn't take action against him. Not the safest or, frankly, smartest way to make a quick buck.*

*"Cottrell communicated with them via 'Cryptocat,' offering his money-laundering skills and met them in Las Vegas where, by his own admission, they transferred \$20,000 to an associate in Colorado who then transferred it back. Having shown his clients his system worked (deeply incriminating himself in the process), Cottrell then tried to blackmail them.*

*"He demanded they pay him 130 Bitcoin, then worth around \$80,000, to stop him revealing their drug trafficking and money-laundering to the proper authorities. Unfortunately for our aristocratic master criminal, he didn't know he was already speaking to the proper authorities."*

### UKIP's EU Funds Scandal

In November 2016, the **European Parliament found** that a political group led by UKIP MEPs had unlawfully spent over €173,000 (£148,000) of EU funds on activities related to UKIP's 2015 UK general election campaign and the Brexit referendum – a period when Cottrell was serving as UKIP's deputy treasurer. Furthermore, UKIP MEPs were also found to have unlawfully spent EU money on national campaigning purposes during 2014–2016.

**UKIP was told to repay almost £1m in total** to the European Parliament, whilst Nigel Farage, then leader of UKIP, had €40,000 docked from his EU salary to cover funds that he had misspent. Other MEPs involved included the current

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## Leave.EU Financial Irregularities

Then, in 2017, the **Electoral Commission investigated Leave.EU** and its financial vehicle, **Better for the Country Ltd (BFTC)**, over their fundraising and spending during the 2016 EU Brexit campaign – organisations for which Cottrell was said to be a **“key member of”** during the referendum.

The Commission raised concerns that some donations may have come from sources not legally permitted to contribute to UK referendum campaigns, and found that the organisations had not fully reported all services received or the value of in-kind contributions, including work from overseas companies.

They also found discrepancies between reported donations and financial records, suggesting misreporting of values or sources. Certain aspects of the case were referred to the National Crime Agency, which ultimately concluded there was insufficient evidence to bring criminal charges. However, Leave.EU was fined £70,000 (brought down to £66,000 on appeal) for misreporting donations and services, while BFTC was scrutinised but not fined.

During an interview with the Telegraph, Cottrell also admitted to using his insider knowledge to place massive bets on the referendum result after polls had closed on Brexit eve:

*“At 10pm, I couldn't believe I was still getting 9/1 [for a majority leave vote]. We were in our campaign office and I was tracking all the major stock indices, the dollar and pound currency markets. When it got to 3am, I was getting my managers out of bed to get me another 50 grand on here, another 50 grand there, to short sterling. I just couldn't help myself.”*

According to The Telegraph, Cottrell won a six figure sum that night, but he *“lost most of it the next day, on some horse running called Exit Europe or something like that. I was a compulsive, habitual, addicted gambler.”*

## The Montenegrin Crypto Allegations

Following Cottrell's conviction, he seemingly moved to Montenegro – a well-known centre for cryptocurrency and other blockchain technologies due to its lax laws and lack of regulation – travelling there more than 100 times under a passport name of 'George Co.' and conducting business activities there through a company called **'Private Family Office'**.

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However, this astonishing incident is, surprisingly, not the most controversial incident of Cottrell's time in the tiny European nation.

In 2023, Montenegrin police raided the Salon Privé casino in the coastal region of Tivat and found an illegal cryptocurrency ATM – a machine designed specifically to **convert** cryptocurrency directly into cash.

The then Montenegrin Finance Minister, Aleksandar Damjanović, **claimed** that the machine was linked to Cottrell, and alleged that he was using it to illegally fund an insurgent politician, former Goldman Sachs banker Milojko Spajić, and the election campaign of his Europe Now! (PES) movement – claims that Cottrell's lawyers have denied.

Following the raid, the then Justice Minister – and former Europe Now! member – Andrej Milović, **claimed** that:

*“George Cottrell, according to information from insiders in their meetings, financed and helped Milojko (Spajić). He was introduced to him by his godfather MT, who connected him with global crypto investors, some of whom are on the wrong side of the law, like Cottrell. Money “donations” were arranged in Podgorica and along the coast, meetings were held on yachts in Luštica and Porto Montenegro, with the presence of certain Arab investors, and Cottrell also visited the premises of PES,”*

Under Montenegrin law, all foreign citizens – including Cottrell, who is legally a British citizen – are banned from funding domestic politicians and political parties.

Cottrell's lawyers have categorically denied any wrongdoing, stating that he had no financial ties to the casino and had never operated the machine. They also said that Cottrell did not personally fund Spajić's campaign.

Europe Now! went on to win the election, and Spajić was made Prime Minister. Montenegrin authorities have now dropped the investigations.

### **Geostrategy – The Unlimited Company**

Cottrell has now seemingly returned in the UK on a permanent basis and is back as an advisor to Nigel Farage, having been seen accompanying the Reform leader on numerous public and private occasions – including being

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Wetherspoons in Clacton-on-sea.

And now, [OpenDemocracy](#) reports that Cottrell has just incorporated a new company purporting to conduct political strategy and polling, named Geostrategy International Unlimited.

However, whilst Geostrategy claim to conduct polling, they are not a member of the British Polling Council, and whilst its [website advertises](#) that the company conducts “Party and Candidate Management”, it does so alongside footage of meetings with Montenegrin Prime Minister Milojko Spajic, who Cottrell’s lawyers strenuously denied he worked for during the election campaign.

More importantly, though, Geostrategy has been set up as an ‘Unlimited Company’ – a rarely-used form of incorporation which means it doesn’t have to file public accounts, but can still make political donations.

Anti-corruption campaigners have warned that due to the way Geostrategy has been set up, it could act as a “*backdoor for illegal donations*” – such as money from foreign sources that has been laundered through offshore accounts but reported as donations from permissible UK citizens to the Electoral Commission.

Speaking to Open Democracy, the director of Spotlight on Corruption, Susan Hawley, said:

*“With the complete financial secrecy that unlimited companies offer, they can easily be abused by those who want to shield their accounts from secrecy,”*

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*“We would urge the Electoral Commission to keep a close eye on these sorts of arrangements to ensure they do not provide a backdoor for illegal donations in the UK”.*

Shortly before Geostrategy was incorporated, cash donations totalling £750,000 were made to Reform UK in the name of George's mother, Fiona Cottrell – one of £250,000 in February 2025, and two of £250,000 in May 2025 – seemingly the only political donations she has ever made to any political party, according to the Electoral Commission.

### The Clacton House

Reform leader Nigel Farage has also had a lot of questions to answer over his personal financial affairs lately – not least over the £885,000 house located in his Clacton constituency that he initially claimed to have bought himself, before later admitting that it was actually purchased outright – in cash – by his partner, Laure Ferrari.

Back in November 2024, after receiving significant backlash from locals who claimed he never spent time in his Clacton constituency, Farage proudly declared that he had now finally “*exchanged contracts*” on a house in the area – a four-bed detached house, complete with an outdoor heated swimming pool, located in the posh part of town, Frinton-on-Sea.

However, in September 2025, following Farage's criticism of the now former Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner's underpayment of Stamp Duty, journalists and campaigners began digging into the Reform leader's own financial affairs – at which point a rather large discrepancy was discovered: Nigel Farage hadn't, in fact, bought the Clacton house at all. Official Land Registry documents showed that his partner, Laure Ferrari, was the sole owner

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Had Farage bought the house himself, he would have been liable for the higher rates of Stamp Duty because he already owns property. However, as Ferrari does not own property in the UK, she qualifies as a first-time buyer and only needed to pay the lower rate. This arrangement effectively means Farage avoided paying around £44,000 in tax by not purchasing the property himself, according to media estimates.

The Reform leader responded to the Land Registry findings by saying that he had “misspoke” and was “wrong to say I had bought it” – before insisting that the money used to buy the property was entirely Ferrari’s, attributing the fact she somehow managed to have a spare £885,000 lying down the back of the sofa to her “wealthy family”. But subsequent reports cast serious doubt on his claims, with [a BBC investigation](#) into Ferrari’s parents’ company filings and property records suggesting little sign of substantial familial wealth.

Yet, even though Farage could have legally gifted the money to Ferrari in order to buy the property, he continues to insist that he did not provide any funds and has absolutely no financial stake in the property.

So where did the money really come from? It’s all rather a big mystery.

### **Cottrell’s New Book – “How To Launder Money”**

And finally, and perhaps most perplexingly, we come to the very recent announcement that Mr Cottrell is writing a book, conspicuously titled – and I am genuinely not making this up – *“How To Launder Money”*.

That’s right, just six days ago on September 24th, [Biteback Publishing](#) proudly **announced** that in February they will be publishing *“a unique insiders’ guide to money laundering”* co-written by Nigel Farage’s closest advisor and long-time political fundraiser, George Cottrell, alongside the “international financial investigator” Lawrence Burke Files.

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The book claims to be a guide to aid governments and law enforcement authorities on how to properly crack down on financial crimes, and the authors say they *“aim to show the general public how it’s possible for a few hundred million to go missing without a trace”*.

However, what do they think the problem causing rampant money laundering and other financial crimes? That’s right, it’s *“overregulation”* – too many laws.

And according to the foreword to the book written by Biteback, the book supposedly shows how current money laundering regulations are *“doing more damage than ever before.”*

Yes, it genuinely appears that, through the book, Cottrell and his co-author will try to convince policymakers that relaxing laws on money laundering and other financial crimes are the real way to solve the problem.

It should also be noted that the publisher of the book, Biteback Publishing, is co-owned by the billionaire former Tory donor – who claimed non-dom status, sheltered assets in offshore trusts, lived as a tax exile in Belize, and was a star of the Panama Papers – the veritable Final Boss of tax avoidance, Lord Michael Ashcroft.

## Analysis

It’s incredibly obvious to anyone even remotely interested in UK politics that corruption, cronyism, and dirty money is still a huge issue that’s skewing and scarring our democratic process.

There are currently numerous loopholes and ambiguities built into electoral law that allow anybody with the right financial knowledge to obscure the true source of funds if they want to, and the Electoral Commission – the independent body tasked with monitoring and regulating political financing – lacks

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When you take into account the countless number offshore banking entities that are available to individuals looking to hide the source of their funds – many of which are located in British overseas territories such as the Cayman Islands and Bermuda, and UK Crown Dependencies such as Jersey and the Isle of Man – all it really takes is a bit of careful financial planning to get away with it.

UK Electoral Law also currently allows political parties to be funded via cryptocurrency – which, through just a couple of transactions, can leave the true source of funds essentially entirely untraceable. Reform UK is **currently the only British political party to accept donations in crypto.**

However, whilst Reform's website forces crypto donors to prove their identity via third party software, this only proves who made the final donation – not where the actual funds truly came from.

Speaking to **Byline Times**, the Executive Director of Spotlight on Corruption, Dr Susan Hawley, said that this practice of gifting cryptocurrency is impossible to ban unless you ban crypto donations entirely, stating: *“as long as the (crypto) donation comes from a permissible donor, it doesn't matter who gave that permissible donor the money.*

Before adding: *“Under the current regime, it seems to me that just having the identity of the last handler of the crypto, so to speak, is not really much protection for British democracy.”*

*“At the very least, consideration must be given to banning donations using cryptocurrencies that are designed to enable anonymity and mixing of legitimate and illicit funds, and those without a public or open ledger [record], and that are unsupported by a central bank.”*

When taken together, these legal loopholes mean that any UK political party or politician could be being funded by wealthy foreign individuals and organisations, or even representatives of adversaries to the UK, who have ulterior motives – such as those wanting to push potentially disastrous policies that ultimately only benefit them and their company or country, whilst damaging the UK – and the British public would simply never know.

The government **say that they will be introducing new legislation next year** that aims to strengthen electoral law and make it harder for political parties and politicians to obscure the true source of political donations.

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will force political parties to carry out enhanced checks on donors to ensure their funds do not ultimately come from foreign sources.

In addition, the Electoral Commission will be given powers to impose fines of up to £500,000 on those that break the rules with false or misleading declarations that constitutes a criminal offence.

However, the rules are not expected to impose any cap on donations, and the government is also **reportedly** not expected to ban donations made via cryptocurrency – leaving various loopholes open for potentially malicious foreign actors to exploit.

I think it's safe to say that the UK's political process may continue to be flooded with dirty money for a little while longer – all so politicians can profit, whilst our country suffers the consequences.