

UK DEANS OF SCIENCE

Response to the call for evidence by the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee:

Introducing a statutory register of lobbyists

1. UK Deans of Science (UKDS, www.deansofscience.ac.uk) is a national body that seeks to represent the individuals, usually formally designated as Deans, who are responsible for science in HEIs across the UK and who generally hold the budgets for science including any research budgets. Its primary aim is to ensure the health of the science base through the promotion of science and scientists and of scientific research and science teaching in the UK.
2. While individual UKDS members have clear views on the issue of lobbyists and lobbying, we feel that many of the questions asked by the Committee overlap into areas of regulation and the political agenda. As a purely scientific and non-political organisation we will therefore restrict our response to a limited part of the call for evidence. We will also make a separate submission to the Government on its consultation.
3. We believe that the Government's consultation sets out the issues and evidence in an appropriate way and asks broadly the right questions about the introduction of a statutory register of lobbyists. The proposals are expressed in a balanced way and it does not appear that the Government has already reached final and detailed conclusions. However, this leads us to have some concerns, which are explained below in relation to the definition of lobbyists, which affects all aspects of the Government's proposals.
4. The current proposed definition of lobbyists describes them as being: *'those who undertake lobbying activities on behalf of a third party client or whose employees conduct lobbying activities on behalf of a third party client. It may also include certain other categories of person following consultation. It should not mean those who engage in lobbying activities on their own behalf rather than for a client'*. We believe that the first and third sentences are sufficient and appropriate to define the type of lobbyists who would be expected to register and whose activities might be kept as part of such a register. However, we are really concerned that following the consultation the middle sentence has the potential to open up the definition to a wide range of individuals and organisations whose inclusion would stifle the democratic process. The Committee may wish to consider our own position as an example of this.
5. The primary aim of the Deans of Science Committee is the promotion of science and scientists within Universities and other Higher Education Institutes in the UK. In the words of its constitution this aim is to be achieved by:
 - seeking to secure high standards of provision of resources, including equipment
 - promoting science and science education in member institutions and other educational establishments including schools and colleges
 - raising public awareness of the importance of science and science education
 - promoting interactive links at senior level with Government Departments, Government Agencies, Funding Councils, Research Councils, the Royal Society, appropriate Professional Bodies, Learned Societies, Industrial Organisations and other organisations with a major interest in Science and Science education
 - liaising with complementary Committees such as Heads Groups in Scientific subjects;
 - collecting and coordinating data from member institutions
 - holding meetings of members of the Group to discuss particular issues, such meetings enabling members, as a result of shared experiences and information through contacts with other

bodies, more effectively to fulfil their roles as persons with prime responsibility for science and science education in their own institution.

6. In order to achieve some of these aims UKDS makes responses to numerous consultations including those from Government, White Papers, etc. It has given oral evidence to House of Commons committees and has, on occasions, proactively produced statements intended to support, or to encourage changes in, Government policy. It invites individuals, including serving politicians, to its meetings and attends other meetings (including the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, of which it is a member) where it uses the opportunity to argue the case for science and scientists.
7. What is of concern to UKDS is that what we consider as legitimate efforts to influence Government and any or all political parties could, with a change in definition following the Government's consultation exercise, put our organisation on a par with professional, paid, lobby companies, thus requiring it to register, possibly pay a registration fee and to be listed alongside those who lobby for a living.
8. We appeal to the PCRC to ensure that its advice to Government is to ensure that, for the purpose of producing a system that makes the lobbying of politicians more transparent, and however the definition of a lobbyist is expanded, it does not embrace organisations such as UKDS or charities, Professional and Statutory Bodies, universities (or groups of universities), etc, but focusses on professional lobbyists.

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