

UK DEANS OF SCIENCE

Response to the Government's Consultation paper:

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 private views on the issue of lobbyists and lobbying, many of the questions asked in the Consultation Paper overlap into areas of legal regulation and the political agenda. Since UKDS is a purely scientific and non-political organisation we restrict our response to a limited part of the consultation. We have recently sent a separate response on this issue to the call for evidence by the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee.
3. The Government's Consultation Paper sets out the issues clearly. The suggested way forward is broadly acceptable. However, we have concerns that following the consultation the outcome could be more restrictive on organisations such as ours and would not be in the best interests of the democratic process.
4. In describing how a register of lobbyists might work the Consultation Paper emphasises the notion that it would be for a 'lobbying firm' and that those that would need to register would be 'companies'. It also gives a definition of lobbyists:
 - *'Lobbyists should mean 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'*
5. We believe that the emphasis on companies and the first and third sentences of the definition of lobbyists 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 extremely concerned that, following the consultation, the middle sentence of the definition has the potential to open up the register to a wide range of individuals and organisations whose inclusion would stifle the democratic process (even though the consultation is not intended to stop the flow of communication from constituents, business leaders, civic figures, community organisations, etc.). The Committee may wish to consider our own position as an example of this.
6. 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 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.

7. In order to achieve some of these aims UKDS makes responses to White Papers, consultations and announcements including those from Government and individual political parties, including the devolved administrations where appropriate. 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 ('lobby') for science and scientists. All our written responses are placed on public view on our website.
8. What is of concern to UKDS is that what we consider as legitimate efforts to influence Government and 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.
9. We appeal to the Government to consider organisation like UKDS and ensure that its final decision on making lobbying more transparent and, however the definition of a lobbyist is expanded, does not mean that such organisations would have to register. We would be happy to supply further information if this would be helpful.

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