



**Public Administration
and Constitutional Affairs
Committee**

From the Chair
Simon Hoare MP

Rt Hon Darren Jones MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
By email

4th November 2025

Transparency Disclosures and the Lobbying Act

Following the committee's hearing with the outgoing Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists, Harry Rich, on 14th October and the pre-appointment hearing with his successor, Claire Bassett on 10th September, and given the Government's continued unwillingness to respond to our predecessor committee's fourth report of Session 2023-24 on Lobbying and Influence: post-legislative scrutiny of the Lobbying Act 2014 and related matters, it seems an opportune time to ask for an update on the steps the Government is taking to address the following questions.

Government Transparency disclosures.

Despite the modest improvements, such as extending their coverage beyond just ministers and permanent secretaries to include some other senior officials and more frequent publication of data on gifts and hospitality, serious concerns remain. The information contained in them is often too vague or generic to make a meaningful contribution to transparency. Data on meetings remains only quarterly in arrears and these have frequently been late and/or contained missing information.

1. What steps is the Government taking to guarantee the quality and timeliness of its transparency data?

Some hugely important Civil Service roles are made at SCS3/Director General level.

2. What consideration has been given to extending the coverage of the disclosures further to cover all Director General-level appointments?

Special advisers are still not fully covered. That their gifts and hospitality are deemed worthy of disclosure is recognition of significant influence they can have over policy yet only their meetings with senior media figures are included in the transparency.



3. What is the Government's view on extending the transparency releases to fully cover special advisers?

The integrated transparency platform that the previous Government promised, and which was supposed to improve the quality and accessibility of the transparency data, has now been abandoned.

4. Why? What is the Government doing to compensate for abandoning it?

Contact made via Non-Corporate Communication Channels ('NCCCs'), particularly instant messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Signal, is not covered by the disclosures, yet they have been at the heart of recent lobbying controversies.

5. What steps are being taken to incorporate communication through NCCCs in the transparency disclosures?

Lobbying Act Part One.

The Register contains only a list of consultant lobbyists' clients. It contains no information at all about who was lobbied, when they were lobbied, the means of communication, or the issue they were lobbied about.

6. Will the Government additionally require consultant lobbyists to disclose not only their clients but also who they have communicated with in Government, when they did so and the means of communication, and the purpose of the communication? If not, why not?

The Act exempts from registering those who are not eligible to pay VAT. Efforts to reduce the regulatory burden on the smallest firms are understandable. However, the registration requirements are not onerous and, furthermore, this has the unintended consequence of exempting any foreign-based consultant lobbyists from the registration requirements.

7. What plans are there to remove the VAT exemption from the registration requirements?

A further exemption applies to those engaging in consultant lobbying but for whom lobbying is not the primary purpose of their business (the 'incidental lobbying' exemption). Whilst guidance has been issued by the Office of the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists in attempting to clarify when it might apply, the aim of incidental lobbying exemption remains unclear.



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8. What steps have been taken to clarify or, failing that, remove the incidental exemption from the Lobbying Act?

I would be grateful for a response these questions by 28th November. I am copying the letter to the Chair of the Ethics and Integrity Commission.

Simon Hoare MP
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee