

## **All parties must be committed to a robust register of lobbyists**

Tamasin Cave, Alliance for Lobbying Transparency

Labour has pledged to repeal the Lobbying Act if it gets into power. This is welcome news. The 'dog's breakfast' of a law is not fit-for-purpose and must be rewritten.

The Lobbying Act, which was passed by the coalition in January this year, purports to introduce new transparency rules for lobbyists. The statutory register of lobbyists contained in the Act, however, is a fake. It will not allow the public to see who is lobbying the government.

Ed Miliband has now committed Labour to introducing a more robust register. Sensibly, Labour's register would cover all lobbyists. The Coalition's covers only a small fraction of the industry, (as the graphic below illustrates).

It remains to be seen, however, whether the opposition would require lobbyists to reveal enough information to allow us to know who is lobbying whom in government, and what they are seeking to influence, whether that's fracking regulations, NHS contracts, or more tax breaks for multi-nationals. The current register, as laid out in the Lobbying Act, would reveal none of this. It is merely a list of (some) lobbying companies and their clients, (as the second graphic below shows).

When Labour announced the policy last week, many in the third sector breathed a small sigh of relief. Unrelated to the new rules for lobbyists, the controversial law also threatens to gag charities by imposing caps on what they can spend on campaigning during an election year. This policy has provoked fierce criticism from an unprecedented coalition of organisations.

Campaign groups were not the only ones to welcome the announcement from Labour. Commercial lobbyists-for-hire (the only lobbyists captured by the new transparency rules) also voiced their support, having lobbied the government for a universal register, arguing that it "would be the best way to regulate and manage the industry". In a recent poll, ninety one per cent of the industry thought that the proposed register of lobbyists should include all lobbyists, regardless of whether they work for an agency or in-house.

The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency is now calling on government to recognise that its version of a lobbying register will prove to be unworkable and wholly ineffective in allowing public scrutiny of lobbying.

**We are calling on all parties to support a robust register of lobbyists that is fit-for-purpose. This must:**

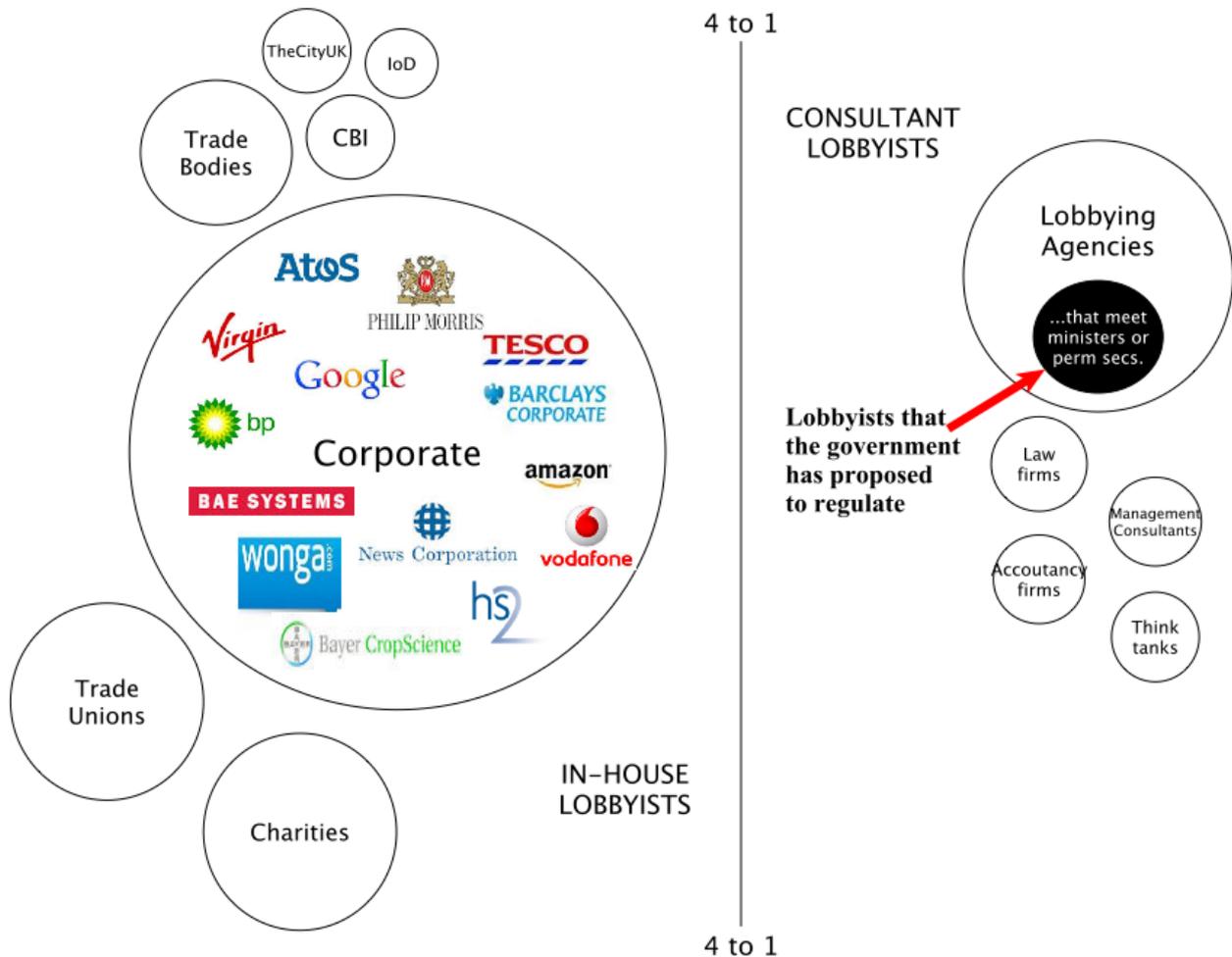
**Cover all lobbyists**, including: those working in-house, whether in a corporation, a trade union, a charity or a trade body; and all lobbyists-for-hire, whether working for a lobbying agency, a law firm, an accountancy firm, in a management consultancy or a think tank.

**Require lobbyists to reveal sufficient information**, namely: who is lobbying and for whom; what they are lobbying for; whom they are lobbying in government; and how much they are spending to influence government.

**Be financed by the public purse.** We know from other countries that have robust transparency rules for lobbyists that the costs associated with operating a register are not significant. Transparency in policy-making is the responsibility of the state, and should not be financed by the industry.

The government must now own up to the fact that its new rules for lobbyists are a sham. Any more lobbying scandals in the run up to the general election will expose them for what they are.

*A register of lobbyists must include the whole of the lobbying industry.*



*A register of lobbyists must require lobbyists to reveal their lobbying activity: who is lobbying whom, what they are seeking to influence and how much they are spending*

A STATUTORY REGISTER of LOBBYISTS

Lobbying agency: Political Consultants Inc.  
Lobbyists: John Smith  
Jean Smith (ex-Treasury)  
Jim Smith  
Client(s): Supermarkets R Us

**Issues lobbied on:**

Relaxation of planning laws  
Taxation, particularly in relation to the top rate of tax  
Minimum pricing of alcohol proposals  
Food labelling legislation  
National minimum wage increases  
Competition inquiry  
etc

**Gov department(s) / agencies lobbied:**

Treasury  
No10 / Cabinet Office  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Department of Work and Pensions  
Food Standards Agency  
Competition Commission  
etc

**Client income / lobbying expenses:**

Q1: £100,000

What the government has proposed

Lobbying agency: Political Consultants Inc.  
Client(s): Supermarkets R Us