

SENEDD STANDARDS OF CONDUCT COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO LOBBYING

EVIDENCE

OF

DOUGLAS BAIN CBE TD, SENEDD COMMISSIONER FOR STANDARDS

I am grateful to the Committee for the opportunity afforded me to contribute to its Inquiry into Lobbying. However, as the questions posed in the consultation document are not pertinent to my role as Standards Commissioner and are about subjects of which I have no knowledge I restrict my response to some more general observations which I hope to Committee may find useful.

Since the public office of Standards Commissioner was established in 2009 not a single admissible complaint has been made against a Member in relation to lobbying activity.

There is a risk that any regulatory framework will be bureaucratic and will catch those who, through oversight, fail to comply with some minor aspect of it, such as late recording of information, but not those who simply ignore it completely and remain undetected. That risk of individuals ignoring any new scheme could be reduced, although not eliminated, by an appropriate sanctions regime.

If it is decided to regulate lobbyists, corresponding amendments of the Members Code of Conduct will be required to secure, for example, that engaging with an unregulated lobbyist is a contravention of that Code.

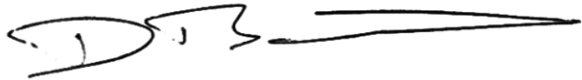
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We welcome correspondence in both English and Welsh

I note that in the Owen Patterson matter in the House of Commons no complaint was made to the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner about his conduct. The Commissioner exercised her power to initiate an investigation having seen media reports of Mr Patterson's then alleged misconduct. Conferring the power to initiate investigations on the Senedd Commissioner for Standards would increase the likelihood of action being taken against Members who, unknown to the public, contravene any new rules.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Bain', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Douglas Bain CBE TD

Y Comisiynydd Safonau/Standards Commissioner

16 June 2022