

MPs' focus on lobbying puts rogue agencies under pressure

Gill Morris says last week's parliamentary motion on lobbying will make it harder than ever to ignore the APPC's code of conduct



It is a rare thing indeed for an MP to proactively support the lobbying industry. John

Grogan is blazing a trail and one that I can only support and welcome.

All too often our profession is unfairly dogged by false impressions of impropriety. Lobbying scandals of the past haunt us; therefore it is only right we confront our demons and promote the often vital role we play in the democratic process.

The fact is the APPC's code of conduct is working. APPC membership is in effect the lobbyist's licence to operate. We strive to promote honesty, integrity, transparency and openness.

Transparency and a com-

plete ban on payment of legislators, the two core principles at the heart of our code, means that clients and parliamentarians can be assured that they are dealing with consultants who have the highest ethical standards.

I believe that Grogan's Early Day Motion provides the background music for a much bigger and overdue debate. Soon, we will also find out if the Public Administration Committee plans to launch an inquiry. If it does, I hope this will further establish the benefits of self-regulation in the UK.

Government and clients should be insisting upon adherence to our code of conduct in the tender process. This can only be for the good and help to restore trust.

It will become increasingly



John Grogan MP: active support for lobbying

difficult for those outside the APPC to remain outside. There can be no justification for the payment of a legislator by a PA consultancy. Nor can there be any legitimate defence for not publishing your client list or the consultants who work for you. Those who

choose to be outside the APPC do just that. I would urge them to consider the benefits of joining the APPC and complying with our code.

Journalists never write about the success of self-regulation and the fact that the vast majority of UK lobbyists

abide by a strict code of conduct. They do, however, write about companies who remain outside the APPC. Such stories are not helpful to the industry as a whole.

Membership of the APPC is a clear signal to the outside world that you uphold our core principles. This can only be for the good. We have cleaned up our act and it is time this was more widely recognised and understood.

The APPC will work to ensure that MPs sign up to Grogan's motion. In this way we will raise the profile of APPC membership. My message to all non-members is: Come and join us.

Gill Morris is chair of the Association of Professional Political Consultants and MD of Connect Public Affairs.