

association of professional political consultants

NEWSLETTER

APPC Register

As you know, the Register is due quarterly on fixed dates – 28 February, 31 May, 31 August and 30 November. The portal is open for updating typically for one week around those dates. **It is each member's own responsibility to ensure that they make a Register entry accurately and on time**, regardless of holidays, staff changes, etc. The Regulations allow the Management Committee to suspend a member's membership immediately if a Register entry is not made properly. The Secretary keeps a record of Register entries and amendments, and this is reviewed by the Management Committee from time to time and disciplinary action may be taken for repeated errors.

Lobbying (Scotland) Bill

The Bill progressed through Stage 2 on 4 February, and the outcome is very satisfactory from an APPC perspective. All the relatively sensible government amendments were agreed to, whilst the others were rejected - including those increasing the scope and administrative burden of the Bill. Our Stage 2 briefing, jointly agreed with ASPA, encouraged almost exactly that outcome.

This month has seen the conclusion of Holyrood's debate and the Lobbying (Scotland) Bill will now move for Royal assent, broadly unamended from the satisfactory compromise reached after Stage 2. The government did introduce very late amendments to ensure that face-to-face meetings with the Permanent Secretary would fall within the scope of the Bill, being added to the requirement to register meetings with MSPs, ministers and special advisers. In addition, the government firmed up its exclusion of small organisations, which APPC had opposed on the basis of it being contrary to the ambition of the "level playing field".

The Act will form an acceptable compromise which will not create an unsustainable administrative or financial burden on those lobbying in Scotland, and any review of the legislation will not take place until the later months of the next Parliament. APPC has emerged well from the process, consistently advocating high standards and making the case for wide engagement between policymakers and the wider world.

I would encourage members to monitor arrangements for implementation, and to ensure that their internal arrangements for complying with the new legislation in Scotland are in place in good time.

ORCL

A number of APPC members attended the ORCL event on 21 January, with a keynote address given by the Minister, John Penrose MP. Mark Glover participated in the panel discussion together with Lionel Zetter of PRCA and Alistair McCapra of CIPR. A note was circulated to all members and, as you will have seen, there was little new.

As we had already been advised by the Cabinet Office, the Minister used the event to announce that there would be a consultation on fees this year, following the unwelcome increase (with short notice) as at 1 January 2016. The Cabinet Office is keen to examine the possibility of setting fees according to the size of the registrant. ORCL believes that graduated fees would be difficult and expensive to administer and would yield little additional income.

Whilst fees covered ORCL's running costs in the first year, the Cabinet Office is committed to recovering the ORCL set-up fees over five years, which could lead to further increases. The number of current registrants as at March 2016 has decreased to 113; given the narrow definition in the Act, this is unlikely to increase substantially.

Together with other members of the Management Committee, I have been continuing to have regular informal meetings with ORCL, the most recent on 1 March. These meetings are a useful in maintaining good relations, learning ORCL's trajectory and putting forward the industry's position on a range of issues. ORCL has recently issued the first civil penalty notice and fine, and I was pleased to learn that the organisation concerned is not on the APPC Register.

ORCL's business plan for 2016/17 includes compliance, assessing the relevance of declared codes, ensuring registration of "non-traditional" consultant lobbyists and scrutinising Ministerial diaries.

EU Lobbying Regulation

The Cabinet Office has advised that the Council of Europe is developing a recommendation to member states on lobbying regulation. Before finalising the recommendation and submitting it to the Committee of Ministers for approval, the drafting committee has invited 10 to 12 key stakeholders to present their views. The Cabinet Office has secured one place for UK lobbying organisations and I will attend to represent APPC, CIPR and PRCA at the meeting, likely to be held in Strasbourg in June 2016.

CIPR's UK Lobbying Register

Mark Glover and I had a meeting with Phil Morgan in November to discuss our concerns about CIPR's undertaking to address complaints arising from the UKLR. As a result, CIPR are preparing a protocol for dealing with complaints. Essentially, CIPR will handle complaints against its individual members and refer any concerning APPC member organisations to the standard APPC Complaints & Disciplinary Procedures.

Young Consultants' Committee

The YCC is planning two events. The first, in April, will be a joint event with YCC(S) on the impact of the May elections. The second will be in May on the impact of the EU referendum.

APPC's New Website

Work is progressing on the new APPC website, to include a new design and enhanced features. The Register will include better search facilities and will provide an improved interface for APPC members.

New Members of APPC

I am pleased to let you know that we have admitted a number of new members since the last newsletter – Principle Affairs, Remarkable Group, RLM Finsbury, TFA Ltd and Wellington Street Partners – bringing the total to 82. The Management Committee is continuing to encourage membership recruitment and a number of applications are in the pipeline.

It is interesting – and gratifying – that, regardless of the statutory register, APPC membership continues to be relevant to a broad range of lobbying organisations.

Elections at the AGM

As you know, elections will be held at the AGM on 23 May for the new Chairman and eight members of the Management Committee. The opening date for nominations will be 18 April and I would like to encourage as many of you as possible to participate. There will also be an election for the 14 members of the Young Consultants' Committee.

Iain Anderson
Chairman
18 March 2016