

More lobbyists discovered gaining access to Ministers

I have to reveal today that there are around 250 privileged lobbyists nestling at Westminster who do not get enough scrutiny.

These talented individuals have managed to organise themselves passes to the Palace of Westminster.

They use their passes to loiter and linger around the corridors to get the opportunity of direct private exchanges with Ministers, to propose their plans and causes without officials present.

They even get access to some meetings where Ministers brief them and take their questions in closed sessions.

They often work with private sector companies, trade unions and charities to help them make their case and make it look better based and respectable.

They themselves receive public money, and seek to raise other money to back their campaigns.

Their latest campaign is particularly clever. It is a campaign to stop other lobbyists from access, presumably to enhance their own special access and to cut down lobby competition.

I refer of course to the 250 Opposition MPs who are on the taxpayer payroll and can lobby for much of their active day. If Ministers stopped listening to lobbying I suspect they would have some sharp words to say. Parliament is a system partly for organised lobbying for causes MPs and their constituents back. There is no reason why others cannot see or write to Ministers. There is nothing wrong with charities, Trade Unions and businesses lobbying for policies that help them. That will be obvious and declared when they make their case.

Of course Ministers need to treat all representations properly, and avoid any conflict or avoid acting where they are themselves party to a lobbyists cause or profit.