SPINNING THE WHEELS

A guide to the PR and lobbying industry in the UK
This booklet has been compiled by SpinWatch, a UK-based non-profit making organisation, which monitors the role of public relations, spin and lobbying in society.

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A WORD ON LOBBYING

Welcome to this guide on the normally invisible world of public relations (PR) and lobbying in the UK.

This booklet will give you a snapshot of the PR and lobbying industry, introduce you to some of the key tactics and techniques used, and provide some insight into specific sectors where PR and lobbying play an important role, like the nuclear industry. In the second half, it takes you on a walking tour of some of the key PR and lobbying firms in the UK, clustered together near Westminster.

PR encompasses a range of activities. This booklet, however, has a particular focus on PR consultancies offering clients lobbying services. Lobbyists warrant particular attention because they are so heavily involved in – and connected to – our political system and public life. What they get up to is also largely hidden from public view.

In a functioning democracy, everyone has the right to lobby – to present their case to government and Parliament in the hope of influencing their decisions. However, the majority of lobbying is undertaken by or on behalf of business. In other words, most lobbying is done to further commercial interests and to give commercial advantage. This creates an imbalance between the access and influence of business interests and other, less well funded groups.

Businesses lobby politicians and officials for a number of reasons. They may simply want to build reputation among decision-makers. Others may want to secure government funding or win public contracts. Often businesses lobby government to delay regulation or amend legislation that they believe will damage profits. In other words, they are lobbying to affect public policy.

Despite its growing influence, the lobbying industry in the UK is almost entirely unregulated, unaccountable, and largely out of sight. At the moment there is no way for politicians and the public to know who is lobbying whom, which areas of life they are trying to influence, and how much money is being spent trying to achieve their aims.

There is no way of knowing, for example, which companies have been involved in watering down regulation on junk food advertising to children. Nor what resources have gone into lobbying for new nuclear build in the UK. Nor how many private healthcare providers are lobbying the British NHS system. The list could be endless...

Given that money would not be spent on lobbying without some results, we think it is vital this information is made public. If we had greater transparency and openness in lobbying, it would be much easier to scrutinise decisions on public policy and create a government more accountable to the people it’s supposed to serve.

A significant first step in achieving this openness would be for the government to introduce a compulsory register of lobbyists in Parliament. This would require lobbyists operating in the UK to put simple, but meaningful information in the public domain on who was lobbying, the area of policy they were trying to influence, and the amount of money being spent on it (in other words, the importance they attach to it).

SpinWatch has come together with other organisations and civil society groups who are concerned about the influence of commercial lobbying to campaign for the introduction of a mandatory register of lobbyists. Members of this Alliance for Lobbying Transparency (ALT) come from various standpoints and many are lobbying groups themselves (for a list of members, please visit ALT’s website, below).

If you think that business interests have too much influence in government and on the decisions our politicians take, and think that professional lobbying should be opened up to greater public scrutiny, please join in the campaign by visiting the ALT website.

www.LobbyingTransparency.org
SPINNING IN THE UK

“The twentieth century has been characterised by three developments of great political importance; the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy.”

Australian sociologist Alex Carey in 1995

Only by knowing the PR and lobbying industry can we understand the influence it has on our lives, starting with the scale and reach of the business in the UK.

Over 55,000 people work in the UK’s £6.5 billion PR industry, making it the second largest in the world after the United States. Almost every sizeable company and public institution now has its own PR capacity. As well as these in-house practitioners, the UK is home to a large number of PR consultancies for hire, handling a range of clients in the corporate, public and charity sectors.

Many of the PR consultancies profiled in the following pages are part of huge, global communications businesses. Three of the biggest are: Interpublic, which has offices in more than 130 countries and a worldwide revenue of $6.5 billion; WPP, which employs some 110,000 people; and Omnicom, which claims it services over 5000 clients worldwide with a total revenue in 2007 of $12.7 billion.

A modern public relations campaign will include a mix of services, such as cultivating good relationships with the media, placing stories and stopping negative stories from appearing. PR campaigns will also often draw on the services of front groups, think tanks and other advocates (see Third Party Technique, page 08) to support a case. This is especially so when trying to manage public opinion of broad issues, like GM food or the food industry’s role in obesity.

Growth areas in PR include ‘investor relations’, which helps companies present themselves favourably to banks and large investors, and ‘stakeholder dialogue’. While this suggests that companies are willing to listen to those affected by their business, often ‘dialogue’ is about trying to win over critics by engaging with and then co-opting them. The PR industry has also drawn on industrial espionage and the infiltration of political or civic groups to help fight a case.

All the public relations consultancies profiled here also offer lobbying services. Lobbying falls under a sub-sector of the PR industry known as Public Affairs. This is the broad term for any activity that aims to achieve a political result. The Public Affairs industry in the UK is thought to have doubled in size since the early nineties and is estimated to be worth around £1.9 billion today.

A Public Affairs campaign will also encompass a range of activities, of which forming relationships with MPs and government officials is just one. So, when ‘who you know’ is not sufficient to achieve success, a Public Affairs campaign will call on many of the skills and techniques of the PR practitioner. This may involve commissioning supportive reports from think tanks, scientists and academics, or organising an event at one of the political party conferences. Crucially Public Affairs also involves using the media to influence public opinion. This puts pressure on politicians to act (see page 08 for more on tactics and strategies).

Successful lobbying depends greatly on people with political experience and those with contacts inside government. As such, there is a great deal of movement between the lobbying industry and the political class. Many professional lobbyists are former politicians or political staff who are employed because they understand the political process and enjoy access to their former colleagues on the inside. Surprisingly perhaps, a number of current MPs and Peers are also paid consultants to business interests and are free to act as advocates for their employers (see Nuclear Family, page 10).

While those featured in this booklet are significant players, they are just a handful of the thousands of companies that make up the UK industry. Also omitted are the many thousands of individuals who work in-house for corporations, trade organisations, corporate front groups, unions and charities, as well as lobbyists-for-hire inside law and accountancy firms, and management consultancies. This booklet provides just a snapshot of the industry.
TOOLS OF THE TRADE

PR TECHNIQUES

“The best PR is never noticed” is an industry rule in public relations. PR firms prefer to stay out of the limelight and few outside the industry really understand what they get up to and the tactics they employ.

The PR industry has developed a number of sophisticated techniques to help in the management of perception. Below are just a few examples.

THIRD PARTY TECHNIQUE
This common tactic involves separating the message from what could be seen as a self-interested messenger, where seemingly independent people or organisations are used to spread a particular message. Its underlying philosophy is that the public is more likely to trust a third party, such as a scientist or academic, than a large corporation or government. The problem is that third parties generally do not disclose their funding or affiliations.

The use of third parties can manifest itself in many ways, such as in the funding of front groups and think tanks. For example, the International Policy Network (page 28), a think tank that was funded for a number of years by oil company Exxon for “climate change outreach” work, has routinely had its climate sceptic views quoted in the press without its funding or political ideology being revealed. Two further organisations are also profiled in this booklet, Sense About Science and the Scientific Alliance (page 12), as well as the PR company that was instrumental in setting up the Scientific Alliance, Foresight Communications (page 31).

CO-OPTING YOUR CRITICS
The PR company Edelman has been one of the leaders in the industry in the use of co-opting the opposition, by ‘engaging’ with them. Edelman explains the rationale: “You’ve got an environmental disaster on your hands. Have you consulted with Greenpeace in developing your crisis response plan? Co-opting your would-be attackers may seem counterintuitive, but it makes sense when you consider that NGOs (non-governmental organisations) are trusted by the public nearly two-to-one to ‘do what’s right’ compared with government bodies, media organisations and corporations.”

THE ‘3 D’ CAMPAIGN
Well used by the PR industry, the 3Ds stand for: deny a problem, delay action on it, and then dominate the policy response. Techniques include promoting scientific uncertainty to create an impression that the jury is still out over a particular issue, with the aim of influencing public opinion or delaying regulation.

Examples of this include the oil industry’s campaign to delay action over climate change and the tobacco industry’s campaign to deny the health risks of smoking. PR firm Hill & Knowlton (page 19) was central to the tobacco industry’s long-running 3D PR campaign. One Hill & Knowlton memo from the sixties says: “The most important type of story is that which casts doubt on the cause and effect theory of disease and smoking”. Eye-grabbing headlines were needed and “should strongly call out the point - Controversy! Contradiction! Other Factors! Unknowns!”

LOBBYING STRATEGIES
Lobbyists can be useful in that they can provide political decision-makers with information from a business perspective. However, while informing policy-making is entirely legitimate, it is not the whole story. A very different picture emerges when you examine some of the known lobbying strategies of Public Affairs firms. Below are two examples.

DIVIDE AND RULE
In 2004 Nirex, the UK government agency established to oversee the storage of radioactive waste, wrote a PR strategy to improve its image. Both “government” and “Parliament” were listed as “target groups.” The document stated that the strategy for Nirex was to: “Bolster and if possible enlist those MPs who support our policy”, “Convince those MPs who are indifferent or soft against”, and “Isolate or convince those MPs who are against.” This is the technique of divide and rule.

BATTLE PLANS
Tony Wright MP, the Chair of the Parliamentary Select Committee conducting the 2008 inquiry into lobbying, described a “lobbying battle plan” he’d seen drawn up by the trade body, the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI). In it, ABPI talked about ‘deploying ground troops’ to ‘weaken political and professional defences’, after which it planned to ‘follow through with high precision strikes on specific regulatory enclaves in Whitehall and Brussels.’
THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

Five years ago nuclear power was out of favour with politicians in the UK. Yet 2008 saw PM Gordon Brown pledging: “We will be more ambitious for our plans for nuclear in the future”, reversing Labour’s commitment to favour energy efficiency and alternative sources over nuclear to meet the UK’s growing energy demands.

So, has the lobbying industry made a difference to the change of position in the development of civil nuclear power? PR and lobbying campaigns by nuclear interests have clearly had an effect (below), as have the political links between nuclear industry lobbyists and the Government (see diagram right).

THE SOLUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE: The proponents of nuclear energy have used the message that nuclear power is the right response to climate change to win support for it in the UK. So much so that it is now accepted as fact by many politicians and civil servants.

- The PR company Weber Shandwick (page 26) worked on a “Nuclear New Build” strategy for British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL) in December 2004, part of which was focused on climate change: “Nuclear power is essential in combating CO2 emissions”, argued Weber Shandwick.
- Climate change also featured in a series of “racecards” developed for BNFL by PR company, Strategic Awareness. The cards were key messages for senior BNFL staff to use to push for nuclear in public. They also argued for the need to make the debate “personal” and “real”, using “simple, straightforward language”, while “emphasising how nuclear protects values”.

THEIR WORDS NOT OURS: Another way the industry has pushed its pro-nuclear message is through third parties including workers, MPs, academics and non-governmental organisations. As Philip Dewhurst, then BNFL’s Group Corporate Affairs Director and Chairman of the Nuclear Industry Association (NIA), told PR Week in 2006, BNFL was spreading its nuclear messages “via third-party opinion because the public would be suspicious if we started ramming pro-nuclear messages down their throats.”

- In 2005 the Nuclear Industry Association (NIA) and BNFL approached key academics and independent researchers to attend a media training workshop, along with staff from BNFL and NIA, to be run by Weber Shandwick. One of the recipients of an email announcing the training said: “If, as we expect, the [Government’s] Energy Review is announced before Parliamentary recess in July, we need to be well prepared to hit the airwaves confidently then”.

This diagram shows the lobbying firms, politicians and former officials (center) paid by nuclear interests (left) to influence Government policy on nuclear power.
POWER OF SCIENCE

It goes without saying that scientific evidence and advice plays an important role in government decision-making and informing the public. This is especially so on environmental and public health issues, such as on policy to tackle climate change or obesity.

The public relations industry understands the significance of science in shaping opinion and it has developed a number of ways to use it to its benefit. For example, some scientists are regularly paid to support particular interests, and industry organisations have been set up to lend credibility to a position. The PR industry has also been successful in burying scientific findings that could have a negative effect on a client.

The corporate interests involved in these debates are often hidden from view. As a result, determining sound science from junk science - and the scientist from the lobbyist - is becoming increasingly difficult. Below are some industry-funded, science organisations.

SENSE ABOUT SCIENCE
25 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1
www.senseaboutscience.org.uk

Sense About Science (SaS) describes itself as a “charitable trust to promote good science and evidence in public debates”. The evidence, however, suggests otherwise. The charity is avidly in favour of genetically modified (GM) crops and anti-organic.

SaS was created in 2002, just in time for the Government’s official public debate on GM. When the debate showed an overwhelming level of public opposition to the commercialisation of GM crops, SaS launched a media campaign.

A survey by SaS into GM “crop vandalism” was reported in The Times in October 2003 as “GM vandals force science firms to reduce research.” A subsequent article headlined “Scientists Quit UK Amid GM Attacks” included claims of intimidation by the scientists Chris Leaver (SaS trustee) and Mike Wilson (SaS advisory panellist). Another article the following week, “GM Debate Cut Down by Threats and Abuse”, sounded an even more sinister note. It spoke of “the increasingly violent anti-GM lobby”, “growing levels of physical and mental intimidation”, “hardcore tactics of protesters”, “intimidation by anti-GM lobbyists... mirroring animal-rights activism”, and a “buying mob of anti-GM activists”. The scientists claiming intimidation were once again Chris Leaver and Mike Wilson but they were joined this time by Anthony Trewavas, another SaS advisory council member.

A month later, another article appeared by SaS Chairman, Lord Dick Taverne, under the headline, “When crops burn, the truth goes up in smoke”. The article said that farmers had been “terrorised” and that “it is now clear that some anti-GM campaigners adopt the tactics of animal welfare terrorists.” However, no specific examples of violence or terror were given.

Lord Dick Taverne is a former MP, economist, PR executive and lobbyist. He is not a scientist, although he is a member of the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee. He has labelled anti-GM campaigners as “Britain’s equivalent of the religious right” and organic food as “voodoo technology”. SaS’s Director is Tracey Brown. She previously worked at the “risk analysis unit” of London-based PR company Regester Larkin, where SaS’s programme manager Ellen Raphael also worked. Regester Larkin clients at the time included leading biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies with an interest in government policy on GM.

SaS’s funders include the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications, and the bio-pharmaceutical companies AstraZeneca, Pfizer, and Oxford GlycoSciences. It has also had help from advertising giant WPP.

On the science of GM crops, for example, the views of scientists critical of GM are all but absent. Pro-GM scientists promoted by the SMC include Vivian Moses, (who is also on the scientific advisory forum of the Scientific Alliance, see over). He is quoted in the main as being a visiting professor of biology at University College London. He is also the Chairman of Cropgen, a biotech front organisation.
On the issue of nuclear power, in 2008, when the Government gave the go ahead for a new generation of nuclear power plants, the SMC issued a press release in response. It was headlined: “Major energy and engineering institutions support new nuclear build”. This prompted a group of academics to write a contradictory statement, which stated: “Despite pronouncements by several scientific bodies, there is no scientific consensus in favour of nuclear power.” One of these scientists wrote to the SMC: “Many of us (members of several of the bodies on your statement) disagree with the statement. I am intrigued to learn why SMC felt it appropriate to participate in such an obviously partisan activity, and who instigated it.”

The Director of the SMC is Fiona Fox, sister of Claire Fox from the Institute of Ideas, an organisation that claims to be “expanding the boundaries of public debate”. The Institute of Ideas has a libertarian, pro-corporate agenda and argues that society is becoming too risk averse. According to the SMC, Fiona Fox formerly worked for the National Council for One Parent Families and CAFOD, the Catholic aid agency. Throughout much of this time however, Fox also worked under the name of Fiona Foster, and was active in the ex-Living Marxism network associated with the Institute of Ideas.

THE SCIENTIFIC ALLIANCE
St John’s Innovation Centre, Cowley Road, Cambridge
www.scientific-alliance.org

“Challenging and informed scientific debate” is what the Scientific Alliance (SA) says it is about, “bringing together both scientists and non-scientists committed to rational discussion and debate on the challenges facing the environment today”. It is also pro-GM and questions the science of climate change.

The founders of SA are Mark Adams from the PR company Foresight Communications (page 31) and quarryman Robert Durward, the director of the British Aggregates Association, a client of Foresight. At the time Durward said he was “a businessman who is totally fed up with all this environmental stuff... much of which is unjustified.”

In 2003 SA organised a conference on GM crops called Fields of the Future. The conference chairman was Lord Taverne of Sense about Science and the majority of the speakers were pro-GM including Vivian Moses, from Croggen. SA’s activities have decreased in the last couple of years.

GLOBAL REACH

Overseas governments hire PR and lobbying firms to improve their image abroad, with PR campaigns targeted at an international audience – corporations, policymakers, and international media – rather than their own populations.

Concerns over the lack of transparency in lobbying extend to UK PR firms working for foreign governments. In 2007 John Grogan MP said: “Bell Pottinger has representatives from all our political parties working in it. The idea that they should be working for foreign governments without declaring who they are working for is an affront to our democracy.” In 2006 parent company, Chime Communications, singled out Bell Pottinger Sans Frontieres, which specialises in advising governments, as “our most successful business.”

As well as these concerns, some PR firms have a history of working for states with bad human rights records.


1970s: ARGENTINA: After a military coup in Argentina, B-M was hired to improve the country’s image. During this period an estimated 35,000 people disappeared. B-M also worked with Indonesia when it was accused of genocide in East Timor.

1980s: CHINA: Hill & Knowlton (H&K, page 19) has worked for governments with bad human rights records, including China after the Tiananmen square massacre in 1989. In the early nineties The Center for Public Integrity published a report on lobbying and PR efforts by repressive regimes. H&K topped the list of earnings, making $14m in one year from human rights abusing states.

2000s: INDONESIA, UGANDA, COLUMBIA...
APCO Worldwide (page 30) was hired by Indonesia in 2004 to spread the word that it “is a staunch US ally committed to combating terrorism”. In 2005 H&K signed a $600,000 contract with the government of Uganda, “to improve Uganda’s image with donors and to help blunt damaging reports from human rights watchdogs that have been highly critical of the government”. In 2006 political comedian Mark Thomas criticised Weber Shandwick (page 26) for accepting work with the Colombian government, whose human rights record is appalling - some 460 trade unionists had been killed in the country since 2003. “Colombia is the most dangerous place in the world to be a trade unionist,” said Thomas. “The government is found wanting. So for someone to say, ‘We’ll show you how to do good PR’ is disgraceful. Where will people draw the line?”
Unsurprisingly perhaps, many PR companies have also been involved in war propaganda.

**PAVING THE WAY TO WAR:** Hill & Knowlton played a leading role in the run-up to the 1990/91 Gulf War. The Kuwaiti government agreed a $12 million contract under which H&K represented ‘Citizens for a Free Kuwait’, a front group which hid the role of the Kuwaiti government and its collusion with the Bush administration. H&K devised the defining moment that swung American legislators in favour of war. In a now infamous stunt, it arranged for the daughter of the Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US to appear as an ordinary Kuwaiti girl in front of Congress. Her written testimony was passed out in a media kit prepared by Citizens for a Free Kuwait. It said: “While I was there, I saw the Iraqi soldiers come into the hospital with guns, and go into the room where babies were in incubators. They took the babies out of the incubators, took the incubators, and left the babies on the cold floor to die.” It was a testimony that helped drive the US to war. It was totally false.

**SPINNING FOR WAR:** Gavin Grant at Burson-Marsteller led an account for the Iraqi National Congress (INC) to persuade the world to remove Saddam Hussein (the contract was discontinued in July 2003). As the *Colombia Journalism Review* reported: “There is little doubt that influencing public opinion through the American and European media was always central to the INC’s mission.... One of the first uses for the Iraq Liberation Act funds was to hire the giant public relations firm Burson-Marsteller.”

**SELLING DEMOCRACY:** In March 2004, Bell Pottinger Public Affairs (page 25) won a $5.8m (£3.2m) four-month contract from the US supported administration in Iraq to promote the establishment of democracy ahead of the handover of power to the interim Iraqi authority. Company founder Tim Bell described his role as “masterminding the campaign in London.” However, the campaign did not work. The *Irish Times* reported: “The slick billboards vaunting the merits of the new Iraqi police force, the interim constitution and the scheduled transition to ‘sovereignty’ on June 30th do not seem to be working. The billboards are often defaced with black paint, and few Iraqis are convinced by them.”

**SPINNING THE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR:** In 2007 Burson-Marsteller and its Worldwide CEO Mark Penn were criticised after it emerged that B-M’s subsidiary Black, Manafort, Stone and Kelley was representing Blackwater, the controversial security firm accused of killing 17 Iraqis, at the same time as Penn was acting as Hillary Clinton’s pollster. After Democratic hopeful John Edwards raised the issue, B-M dropped the Blackwater contract saying that it “was the right thing to do”.

**LOCAL PERSUADERS**

While some PR firms are set up to deliver global PR campaigns, others specialise in more local matters. Companies needing to gain planning permission and the support of local politicians and communities will often hire a PR firm to head off potential opposition. This could be for a new supermarket, power station, incinerator or housing development. A campaign may involve lobbying Local Authorities and planning committees, regional media, local residents and activists. ‘Community consultation’ has grown over recent years as a way of staying off protest and it is now part of the public relations armory.

A number of the large Westminster-based firms have regional offices set up to deal with planning issues. Corporations such as Tesco also go to great lengths to sell a development locally. Tesco regularly engages with local politicians, produces marketing materials targeting local communities and even lobbies to change Local Plans in its favour. The example below gives a picture of how PR and lobbying can be used to subvert local democracy.

**WINNING OVER THE LOCALS**

PR and lobbying firms, such as PPS (offices in London, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Bristol and Cardiff) describes itself as “the UK’s leading provider of lobbying, communications and consultation advice to the property and development industry”. Founded by Stephen Byfield, a former staffer for a Labour MP, and Charles St George, an ex-Tory councillor, PPS represents volume housebuilders, such as Barratt, Wimpey and Taylor Woodrow as well as supermarkets, airport operators, and waste companies. PPS talks about ‘community consultation’ in these terms. “Active engagement and consultation with the community is what PPS is all about.... Get it right and you can bring the community with you. Get it wrong and you will face heightened local concerns.” PPS also boasts of its ability to be able to secure “demonstrable support for planning applications from those that might not normally bother to express their views”.

In 2006 Channel 4 and London’s *Evening Standard* reported that PPS had been hired by a developer to help it win planning permission for a controversial housing project. The proposal had drawn hundreds of letters of objection. Then, suddenly, the Planning Committee “started to get dozens of letters, apparently from local residents, praising the [proposed development] and asking for it to be approved at once.” The *Standard* revealed that many of these letters “were forgeries”. It also saw a leaked PPS document, which said: “We [PPS] have created a large number of letters for projects. A campaign of this kind is labour intensive but does yield very helpful results.” Other leaked PPS documents show that the company advised an employee to impersonate a student to gain information from a local official, and a verbatim transcript of a private meeting of councillors, leading one councillor to believe they had been bugged. PPS either denied or said it had ‘no knowledge’ of these alleged tactics.
**Past record**

H&K has a track record of helping corporations manage public reaction to environmental crises, including in the aftermath of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident in Pennsylvania in 1979 and the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska a decade later. In 1991, H&K’s Australian subsidiary also helped push the blame on environmentalists for an explosion at the Coode Island chemical terminal in Melbourne, despite the lack of any evidence. H&K later let slip that it is the PR industry’s job in ‘crisis management’ to manoeuvre their clients so they are viewed as victims rather than perpetrators in order to win public sympathy. “Make sure that you are clearly seen to be in the victim box rather than the culprit box”, said the then CEO of H&K Australia.

H&K also has a history of working for governments with bad human rights records (page 15); spinning for controversial companies like biotech firm Monsanto (on its efforts to gain regulatory approval of bovine growth hormone in the US); and with disreputable companies like the disgraced Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) that was indicted in the US for conspiring to launder illicit drug trafficking profits in the late eighties. A congressional report argued that H&K “disseminated materials unjustifiably and unfairly discrediting persons and publications who were telling the truth about BCCI’s criminality”, and provided “false” and “misleading” information.

**Current political connections**

Lobbyists at H&K in 2008 include Tim Fallon, a former researcher for Tony Blair who was briefly seconded back to Blair’s private office in 1997 during the general election campaign. Fallon represented the repressive government of the Maldives, which he defended by saying: “We are working to assist the government in a process of engagement with international institutions which we believe will ultimately be to the benefit of all the people of the Maldives.” Another H&K lobbyist is Oliver Dowden who previously ran the political section at the Conservative Party Campaign Headquarters.
Who does it work for?

Grayling is one of many lobbying firms to pick up an “obesity-related” brief amid public health concerns and debates on potential regulation. In 2006 it won a contract with RHM, home of brands such as Cadbury, Mr Kipling, Fray Bentos, and Atora. Group CEO Nigel Kennedy said: “Food is increasingly political, so this account will include general advice on reputation and positioning, as well as public affairs”. Grayling is also lobbying for Mars UK, another company being forced to respond to the obesity issue.

Grayling is also heavily involved in the push for new nuclear power in the UK. In 2008 Grayling was working for both nuclear power operator British Energy and engineering giant AMEC, as well as the nuclear decommissioning group, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (see Nuclear Family, page 11). GPS is simultaneously providing public affairs advice to the Carbon Trust, a publicly-funded organisation entrusted with kick starting the low-carbon economy and Natural England, the government agency in charge of managing England’s countryside and land.

Current political connections

Chief Executive of Huntsworth is Peter Gummer, aka Lord Chadlington, a Tory Peer and brother of Conservative MP, John Gummer (who recently chaired the Tories’ Quality of Life Policy Group). Viscount Chandos, a Labour member of the House of Lords, also has Grayling on his list of paid directorships. Further down the line at GPS is Tanya Joseph, previously a press officer at Number 10 for almost five years. Moving in the other direction, Jo Moore, the New Labour spin doctor famous for suggesting to colleagues that 9/11 was “a very good day to get out anything we want to bury”, honed her skills working for Westminster Strategy prior to landing the job at the then Department for Trade and Industry.

Past record

B-M has a history of working with some of the world’s most repressive governments (see Global Reach, page 15), setting up front organisations (see below), and working with major polluters, including BP, Chevron and car makers Ford. In the eighties B-M worked with Union Carbide after the Bhopal disaster in India, which killed or injured tens of thousands of people. Union Carbide originally tried to blame the disaster on sabotage.

In 2006 B-M’s website highlighted obesity as a specialism: “Obesity... arguably represents one of the biggest public health challenges in western societies today, with enormous repercussions for a variety of industries. Some see it as the modern-day equivalent to previous macro-issues like tobacco, chemical industry and environment, GMOs [genetically modified organisms], etc.” B-M clients in 2008 affected by these issues include Anheuser-Busch (owners of Budweiser) and sugar company, Tate and Lyle.

B-M is certainly in a position to help having previously lobbied for the tobacco, chemical and biotech industries. In the early nineties B-M helped set up the front-group the National Smokers Alliance in the US. A decade ago it set up the front group the Bromine Science and Environment Forum (BSEF) on behalf of major producers of bromine flame retardants, who feared a ban on their products on health grounds. B-M also worked for GM companies in the nineties. In a leaked memo, B-M advised one GM client that “Public issues of environmental and human health risk are communications killing fields for bio-industries in Europe”. B-M advised them to “stay of the killing fields” and instead shift to “stories-based communications” where “the benefits [of GM]” are “personified”, and that they must use “symbols eliciting hope, satisfaction, caring and self-esteem”.

Current political connections

Worldwide CEO of B-M, Mark Penn worked with Tony Blair on his third term re-election campaign and, according to Penn’s blog, Blair invited Penn to attend the exclusive 2007 World Economic Forum in Davos. B-M lobbyist Edward Staite previously worked for two Conservative shadow chancellors and was George Osborne’s official spokesman. B-M also has long links to the Liberal Democrats through UK Chairman, Gavin Grant.
Who does it work for?
Lexington provides PR and lobbying services to a slew of genetically modified (GM) crop companies: BASF, Syngenta, Novartis, the umbrella group the Agricultural Biotechnology Council (ABC, see below), as well as the Crop Protection Association, which represents the interests of the pesticides industry.

Lexington has a track record of pushing the case for GM crops in the UK. In 2002 the world’s leading biotech companies, including BASF and Syngenta and Monsanto, set up the Agricultural Biotechnology Council (ABC), the umbrella group for the agricultural biotechnology industry in the UK. Lexington then hired former Monsanto spokesman Bernard Marantelli to organise a £250,000 PR campaign for the ABC aimed at “regulators, legislators, retailers and consumer groups” to approve GM crops. Public opposition to GM crops in the UK has been high for a decade. In early 2008 it was revealed that GM food companies had lobbied the government department responsible for GM to be allowed to hide the locations of crop trials. Lexington confirmed its involvement in this as part of its work covering “all aspects of external communications” for the ABC.

Lexington is also involved in lobbying government on behalf of developers and the house-building sector, providing services to, among others, Tesco, Peel Holdings, Wharf Land Investment, Places for People Developments, BeeBee Developments and Gladedale.

Current political connections
One of Lexington’s Partners is Mike Craven, a former adviser to John Prescott MP and ex-media spokesperson for Labour. Another employee is Director Jo-Anne Daniels who previously spent nine years as a senior civil servant at the Treasury. Daniels was an advisor to Gordon Brown and managed and published the significant Barker Review on Housing in 2004. Also on the team is Richard Thomas, who joined in 2008 having previously been Cabinet Member for Regeneration on Southwark Council with political responsibility for one of London’s largest regeneration programmes. On taking the job, Thomas agreed with Lexington not to work on matters relating to his previous role with Southwark Council.

Past record
FH’s clients have included E.ON UK, which aims to become “the world’s leading power and gas company”. It wants nuclear power to play a significant role in this. Still in energy, in 1998 oil company Shell turned to FH as part of its multi-million pound campaign to rebuild its image after its reputation was severely damaged following the Brent Spar fiasco and its collusion with the Nigerian military. FH has been working for Shell ever since to deliver a “global reputation management programme”. According to PR Week, the Shell PR campaign “positively transformed its reputation among stakeholders in less than five years”.

Similarly, in 2007 Starbucks UK awarded its PR contract to FH to undertake a “corporate communications programme... working specifically on issues relating to the ethical sourcing of coffee, and the role of Starbucks in the local community”. The coffee company had faced union-busting allegations in the US, and in 2006 the international development charity Oxfam ran a campaign against it for blocking trademark applications by coffee-growers in Ethiopia. Over 90,000 members of the public sent a message to Starbucks in protest.

In 2005 the Electoral Commission hired FH for around £100,000 a year to “increase voter engagement”. Angela Salt of the Commission said at the time: “We need to demonstrate that politics is personal. People must be engaged; we need to show them why this matters”. A misguided statement perhaps given FH’s role in helping clients, like Starbucks, who have been the target of political activism.

Current political connections
FH’s public affairs team includes Jo Murray who, for the ten years before her departure in early 2008, held various press office roles at the Labour Party, including that of chief spokesperson. Rory Scanlan is another who worked in Blair’s press team during both the 2001 and 2005 general elections. FH also employs Rupert Lewis who worked for the Conservatives’ current policy chief Oliver Letwin, and Jason Nisse who “likes to keep up with energy and environmental issues, having been a former director of nuclear waste disposal body Nirex.”
For a shorter, circular tour taking in the cluster of lobbying groups in Covent Garden (starting on page 27) continue down Kingsway and take Kemble Street on the right until you reach Catherine Street. Otherwise, continue with the directions below.

BRUNSWICK
16 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, London, WC2
www.brunswickgroup.com

Cross Kingsway and down Remnant Street to the left into Lincoln’s Inn Fields for Brunswick PR. Described as the “great conduit” between Whitehall and the City, Brunswick is one of the top financial PR agencies in the UK.

Who does it work for?
Brunswick is thought to count more than a quarter of the FTSE 100 firms as clients. However, it is also one of the most invisible agencies, only publishing a website in 2001, and then not revealing its clients. The core of Brunswick’s work is financial PR, which includes media relations and crisis management. For example, in an attempt to manage the crisis over the exaggeration of its oil and gas reserves, Shell Oil hired Brunswick saying: “Brunswick has recently come on board, but we don’t really say much more about what they do”.

Current political connections
Brunswick enjoys close ties with the UK’s political elite, chiefly through its founder, Alan Parker. The diagram shows the links between some of the key people in this circle.

Who does it work for?
Among many others, Bell Pottinger handles the PR account for arms company BAE Systems. In 2004 Charlotte Lambkin, who had been Director of Bell Pottinger Corporate & Financial was appointed as BAE Group Communications Director. BAE was recently under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) for allegedly “bribing” Saudi generals. In 2006 the Guardian reported that “A well-orchestrated PR campaign, involving BAE’s lobbyists, veteran fixer Tim Bell [below]... was already setting up a chorus that the latest Saudi arms contract was in danger, threatening up to 100,000 jobs.” According to the article, the campaign saw MPs from all parties urging the investigation be dropped, citing fears that jobs would be lost in their constituencies. The Government blocked the SFO inquiry in December 2006, claiming it would endanger Britain’s security.

Current political connections
Chairman of Bell Pottinger is Lord Tim Bell, one of Britain’s most famous spin doctors. He helped found advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi in the seventies and ran the successful general elections publicity campaigns for the Conservative Party in ’79, ’83 and ’87.

Bell Pottinger Director, David Hill, has moved frequently between the PR industry and government: he was Labour Party Director of Communications from 1991-97, returning briefly on loan to the Labour Party as a senior press spokesman for the 2001 election. He left PR again in 2004 to become Tony Blair’s communications chief at number 10, replacing Alistair Campbell. When Blair quit Downing Street in 2007, Hill went back to Bell Pottinger. Hill’s long-term partner is Hilary Coffman, a veteran Labour official and one-time spin doctor to Cherie Blair.

Others at BPPA include Director David Sowells, who previously worked with Nick Brown MP, a backbench ally of Gordon Brown, Director Liam McClay, who worked for Chris Smith MP and Jack Straw MP, and Brussels Director, Kevin Doran, who used to be parliamentary adviser to Alan Donnelly MEP, then leader of the European Parliament’s Labour Party.
Past record
WS has a long history of involvement with the nuclear industry (see Nuclear Family, page 10). It also worked for oil company Shell for a number of years, including countering criticism over Shell’s role in Nigeria at the time of the execution of writer Ken Saro-Wiwa.
In 2004 Weber Shandwick was said to be “handling the ‘greening” of another oil company, ExxonMobil.

In the past Shandwick has also undertaken PR campaigns for the Japanese Whaling Association and for pro-logging interests. This latter campaign, in the nineties, was designed to “neutralize” environmentalists opposed to rainforest logging in New Zealand. Leaked documents showed that a central part of the strategy was to stigmatise opponents as “extremists”, who had “limited” support and who spread “misinformation”. Shandwick also spied on their green critics and infiltrated opposition groups.

Current political connections
CEO of Weber Shandwick UK, Colin Byrne has been described as a key figure in the interface between big business and New Labour. He was formerly Labour’s Chief Press Officer up to the 1992 election, working with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown on media relations. In 1997 Byrne also worked for Labour’s then election manager, Peter Mandelson as well as for Labour on the 2001 election.

Former WS employees include the Prime Minister’s brother Andrew Brown, William Hague’s former press aide, Priti Patel who is standing for the Conservatives in the 2009 /10 general election, Liberal Democrat MP Mark Oaten; and Graham Brady, a Conservative MP and Shadow Minister for Europe.

WS has also made thousands of pounds worth of donations to the Labour Party: £17,000 in 2004, £19,500 in 2005 and a further £30,000 in 2006.
what does it do?
The IPN is widely seen as a right-wing, pro-corporate think tank. In recent years it has also been recognised as one of the leading climate sceptic organisations in the UK, receiving funding from oil company, Exxon. The IPN’s activities on climate have been widely criticised, including by the Royal Society, for being one of a number of right-wing think tanks that “misrepresent the science of climate change.” Following criticism, Exxon stopped funding the IPN in 2007.

The IPN’s Communications Director, Kendra Okonski, has a history of setting up websites and counter-protests against progressive and environmental organisations. In 2002, for example, the IPN set up the Campaign for Fighting Diseases with Okonski registering the website fightingdiseases.org. A central part of the Campaign’s work concerns malaria and the benefits of DDT, a pesticide developed to counter malaria. DDT is the highly toxic chemical at the heart of Rachel Carson’s seminal book, Silent Spring, published in the sixties, which warned it caused cancer and decimated bird populations. Philip Stevens, the IPN’s Director of Policy argued that “central to any malaria control plan should be spraying the inside walls of residential buildings with the insecticide DDT.”

current political connections
Julian Morris, Executive Director of the IPN is an ardent advocate of free markets and an opponent of attempts to mitigate climate change. He arrived at the IPN from the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), a leading right-wing think tank, and is a member of the IEA’s Advisory Council. In the mid-nineties Morris co-authored an IEA’s publication called ‘Global Warming: Apocalypse or Hot Air?’ It was dismissed as “hard to take seriously”, by Sir Crispin Tickell, the Prime Minister’s chief environmental advisor at the time.

Who does it work for?
In 2003 it was reported that “Fleishman-Hillard has been getting more and more deeply involved in the biotechnology sector, helping the Biotechnology Industry Organisation and the Council of Biotechnology Information communicate the benefits of the technology to consumers and opinion leaders.” In 2004 US biotechnology firm Genzyme also appointed Fleishman-Hillard to boost its profile among British policymakers and to lobby the UK Government to commit more funding to biotech.

Back in the United States, in 2004 F-H also helped PepsiCo with a campaign to respond to concerns about rising levels of obesity by launching a “major consumer education effort”. As one of PepsiCo’s subsidiaries said in Canada: “It’s not only about having better-for-you products, but also about communicating effectively to consumers.” PepsiCo is also actively courting legislators in the UK, although not through F-H. Former Health Secretary Alan Milburn MP is paid up to £25,000 to sit on PepsiCo’s Nutritional Advisory Board, alongside Tony Blair’s one-time polling and image guru Lord Gould.

Current political connections
Top of the tree at F-H is Margaret Thatcher’s former advisor, Kevin Bell, described as a one of the “great and the good” in the PR industry. Head of Public Affairs at F-H is Nick Williams who was an adviser to the Labour Party from 1993-97 and part of Tony Blair’s media team during the 2001 and 2005 general elections. F-H boosted its ranks in 2007 with Home Secretary Jacqui Smith’s former special advisor, Simon Benson, and David Cameron’s former operations manager, Sophie Pim, who is described as bringing “first hand experience of the inner workings of the Cameron team.”
APCO
90 Long Acre, London, WC2
www.apcoworldwide.com/uk

Head east along Long Acre to the London office of APCO, one of the largest privately-owned PR and lobbying firms in the world.

Past record
APCO Worldwide has a history of working for overseas governments (see Global Reach, page 15). It also has many clients in the health business, such as the pharmaceutical firm Bristol-Myers Squibb, private healthcare company, AXA/PPP Healthcare, and industry associations the British Association of Pharmaceutical Wholesalers and the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America. In 2006 it was also reported to be working for the pharmaceutical company Merck on its controversial arthritis drug Vioxx, which was found to increase heart attack risk in patients.

APCO has also helped set up a number of corporate front groups. For example, in the nineties APCO Worldwide was paid by cigarette manufacturer Philip Morris to launch and run The Advancement of Sound Science Coalition (TASSC). The purpose of TASSC, as described by one APCO memo, was “to link the tobacco issue with other more ‘politically correct’ products”. In consultation with Burson-Marsteller (page 21) and Philip Morris, APCO also helped put together a second- European front group that later became the (now-defunct) European Science and Environment Forum. ESEF billed itself as “an independent, non-profit-making alliance of scientists… whose aim is to ensure that scientific debates are… founded on sound scientific principles”. As with TASSC, it argued that regulations were not based on “sound science.” The plan was to broaden the attack-front against the regulators by placing tobacco regulation into a larger bundle of corporate “sound science” issues.

Current political connections
Managing Director of APCO UK, Darren Murphy, is a former adviser to the Blair government and before that a special adviser to former Health Secretary Alan Milburn MP (he advised on both the content and delivery of the 10-year NHS Plan). Other APCO staff with first-hand knowledge of Westminster include Dudley Fishburn, who was a Conservative MP for 10 years and worked in the governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major; Razi Rahman, who advised Tony Blair on political, policy, legislative and Labour Party matters; and David Clark, one time special advisor at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who also worked for John Reid MP.

Who does it work for?
In 2001 Foresight helped launch the corporate front group the Scientific Alliance (page 14) with Richard Durward, the controversial Scottish quarry owner and Director of the British Aggregates Association, a Foresight client. The two men also teamed up to launch the New Party for Britain (also known as the People’s Alliance) in 2003. It was seen as so right-wing that the Tory leader in Scotland, where it operates, called it “fascist and undemocratic”.

Foresight’s clients include aerospace and defence company EADS, which holds a stake in missiles business MBDA (alongside BAE Systems and Finmeccanica). Foresight also conducts lobbying and PR for the consortium (EADS, BAE Systems, Finmeccanica and others) building the £20 billion Eurofighter jet.

When it was announced in 2006 that Foresight was employing former Defence Minister, Ivor Caplin, Adams was at pains to point out that Caplin “would not be assigned to any client or project where he would be required to make inappropriate use of knowledge gained as a Minister.” Six months after taking the job, Caplin was criticised by a Whitehall vetting committee for accepting the job as a defence industry lobbyist without seeking official permission. Caplin had not only taken a lobbying job with Foresight but also MBDA Missile Systems. The committee ordered Caplin to not “become personally involved in lobbying ministers or officials for 12 months”. Under Caplin’s entry on Foresight’s website today it says he “is able to offer clients genuine insights into the workings of the Government.”

Current political connections
Managing Director, Mark Adams, has been described as “the most senior former civil servant in public affairs consultancy.” Adams worked for both John Major and Tony Blair as a private secretary at No.10 for nearly four years. As well as Ivor Caplin, former Defence Minister and Labour MP until 2005, Foresight also employs Patrick Nicholls, who was a Tory MP for nearly a decade, and Sarah Pearce who worked in the Private Office of Jack Straw MP.
Who helped sell us the Iraq wars? Who has tried to align anti-GM campaigners with terrorism? And who is attempting to persuade us that nuclear power is essential to combating climate change?

Many of us won’t have heard of companies like Hill & Knowlton, Burson-Marsteller and Weber Shandwick. But as part of the UK’s £6.5 billion Public Relations industry, they have a direct impact on the way our world is shaped, from what we read in the press and the manipulation of public opinion, to the policies taken by our politicians.

This guide is an introduction to the commercial PR and lobbying industry in the UK. It takes you on a tour through central London of the major players, reveals some of their common techniques and tactics, and shows you just how close their lobbyists are to UK politics.

If you’ve had trouble believing what you’re told, or suspect that someone else really has the ear of Government, this guide will provide some answers.