

Press Statement: Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists issues Civil Penalty Notices to late-paying registrants

On 28 and 29 April, the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists, Alison White, issued Civil Penalty Notices to MWW Communications UK Ltd, PHA Media and Rohde Public Policy UK. The Notices were issued due to lobbying during the January – March 2016 quarter despite late payment of the 2016 registration renewal fee. The deadline for payment of the annual fee for the Register of Consultant Lobbyists was 21 January 2016.

In order to register, and to remain on the Register, the Registrar is entitled to impose charges and to treat non-payment of the renewal fee as reasonable grounds for believing that an organisation is not (or is no longer) a consultant lobbyist, otherwise the renewal fee would have been paid when due (Section 22 (4) of the Act).

Each organisation received multiple communications from the Office reminding them payment was due; however despite this, fees were not paid until nearly two months after the renewal deadline. During this time all three organisations carried out the business of consultant lobbying, declaring clients for the January-March Quarterly Information Return period whilst being unregistered.

The Registrar said:

'One of my statutory duties is to ensure all fees set by Ministers are collected in a timely fashion so that consultant lobbyists comply properly with the legislation. It is therefore essential that when my Office communicates with registrants to assist with meeting this legal requirement, they engage with us and take responsibility for getting this right.'

All three organisations have accepted the Civil Penalty and have since paid the £300 fine.

The Registrar went on to say:

'I do recognise that these transgressions are largely administrative and urge all registrants to provide us with the correct contact details for all aspects of their interactions with ORCL. If that means providing additional contact information for finance teams so that invoices are paid promptly, then that is something I would expect registrants to take the responsibility to get right.'

END

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The Office of the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists was set up following the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014, in order to create and administer the statutory Register of Consultant Lobbyists.
2. The Registrar is an independent statutory office, established to keep and publish the Register of Consultant Lobbyists.
3. Under Part 1 of the Act, the Registrar has “a duty to monitor compliance with the obligations imposed by or under” the Act which includes a prohibition on conducting the business of consultant lobbying unless entered into the Register of Consultant Lobbyists.
4. Furthermore Section 22 (1) states, “The Registrar may impose charges for or in connection with the making, updating and maintenance of entries in the Register”.
5. The Registrar has a range of civil and criminal powers available in circumstances where it is deemed a Consultant Lobbyist has failed to comply with the Act.