

The Rt Hon David Cameron MP
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The Heritage Alliance

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Dear Prime Minister

I am writing to express my concern at the Cabinet Office announcement of an anti-lobbying clause to be inserted in all central government grant agreements. The clause could be used to stop civil society organisations like the Heritage Alliance from using that funding to influence government or parliament.

The Heritage Alliance is the umbrella body for over 100 independent heritage organisations working in England. It represents the independent heritage movement to policy makers to ensure a supportive policy and funding framework in which to operate and thrive. The size of our membership helps to demonstrate to government and others that the heritage cause is a long-standing grassroots movement that has the support of millions. We celebrate in particular the contribution made by volunteers at all levels within the sector.

The UK is fortunate to have a strong tradition of independent, responsible civil society organisations that is the envy of many other countries. You yourself recognised in The Compact 2010 that 'getting citizens more engaged, involved and responsible for the communities around them will only be possible in partnership with the sector; improving and delivering better, more responsive public services can only be done with the help of the sector; and empowering communities can only work where the skills, enthusiasm and commitment of the sector is harnessed'.

The Compact firmly states the first undertaking from Government: *1.1 Respect and uphold the independence of CSOs to deliver their mission, including their right to campaign, regardless of any relationship, financial or otherwise, which may exist.*

Our membership organisations, many of which receive grants from central government, play a much needed role in policy development. Their knowledge and expertise is a huge resource freely and generously given which we put at the disposal of government. We are regularly called upon by officials to bring the real-world experience of beneficiaries and evidence-based expertise into public policy debate. We have used our extensive networks to answer queries on Landfill Tax, accessibility, volunteering, the operation

Our members are non-government, voluntary and private organisations that promote, conserve, study and involve the public in **our heritage.**

The Heritage Alliance is an operating name of Heritage Link. Heritage Link is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales Registered No: 4577804 Registered Charity No. 1094793 Registered Office: Clutha House 10 Storeys Gate London SW1P 3AY

of the Leader programme and many other issues. At government request, we respond to formal consultations designed to influence the final outcomes of policy and delivery mechanisms to ensure they are efficient and effective. We discuss these same issues with parliamentarians through the All Party Parliamentary Groups and in one to one meetings, always mindful of charity commission guidance that we must be even handed in our approach to political parties.

It seems therefore that government can request our help when it wishes, but that civil society will only be able to respond, not initiate change.

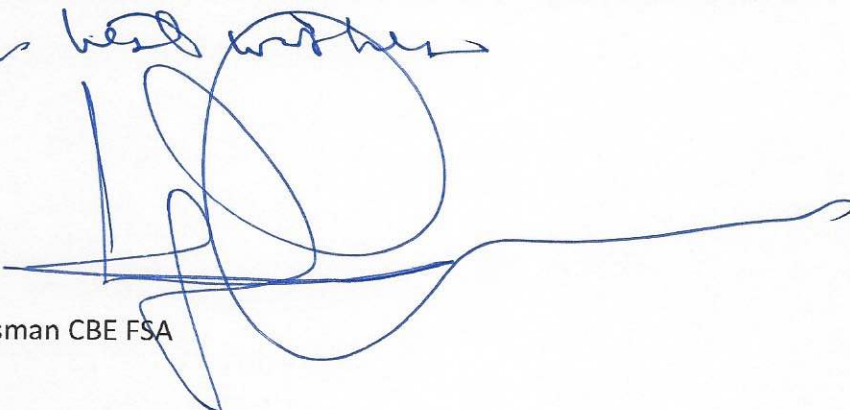
This clause weakens the consultative ethos of government. Evidence-based policy making has been the norm for some thirty years but shorter consultation deadlines such as the DCLG consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (now extended) make it difficult for civil society to make its contribution. We believe there is legitimate role of civil society in informing government policy and in using its experience and research to influence legislation, policy and public service delivery. Trying to prevent civil societies from playing this role could have a 'chilling' effect on public discourse in this country.

Turning from principle to practice, the words 'influencing' and 'lobbying' appear to be conflated in the Implementation Guidelines for Departments. We do not consider we are guilty of the excessive lobbying portrayed by the Institute of Economic Affairs. We are concerned that in inserting this clause in grant agreements, the Government will deter responsible organisations and find itself operating in a vacuum, dependent on office-based civil servants without the practical input of external stakeholders who have public benefit at the top of their objectives.

Our own grant of £61k via DCMS and Historic England under the National Capacity Building Programme will cover 42% of our £140k core costs in 2016-7. Clearly other sources can fund our so-called 'lobbying' but defining what is or isn't eligible across a spectrum of activities from 'informing' to 'influencing' and 'lobbying' is out of proportion to the scale of the grant and enforcement action will only add an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy, not only for us but for all our members, large and small.

We suggest that instead of that one-size-fits-all clause, it would be much simpler if the purpose of each grant was clearly expressed on the face of the agreement.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Loyd Grossman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Loyd Grossman CBE FSA
Chairman

cc

The Rt Hon John Whittingdale, Secretary of State, DCMS.

Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive, Historic England

Sir Stuart Etherington, Chief Executive, ncvo.