



BONUS CASE STUDY: HANBURY STRATEGY

Events

Hanbury Strategy is a relative newcomer to the political scene having been formed in 2016 by the pro-remain Ameet Gill, who worked as a special adviser and Director of Strategy at No. 10 for David Cameron, and Paul Stephenson, the pro-Brexit former Communications Director for Vote Leave with connections to Dominic Cummings, Boris Johnson's most senior adviser. The firm is well placed to provide strategic policy advice to firms given their understanding of their political situation and direct experience of working in politics. In particular, given their Brexit credentials, Hanbury Strategy's insight was seen as increasingly important to firms in the complex and changing world between the end of the EU Referendum and leaving the EU.

Significance

The importance of Hanbury Strategy can be seen by viewing their client list on the Register of Consultant Lobbyists established under the 2014 Lobbying Act. In 2020, Hanbury Strategy registered that it worked for Amazon UK Services Ltd, Citibank, Pyser Testing (Covid antibody test firm) and Roofoods Limited (Deliveroo). Previous clients include Barclays and the Red Tape Initiative, an organisation which seeks to help UK politicians decide how to shape the country's regulation post-Brexit. Hanbury Strategy is playing a vital role in connecting government with key groups in society to make decisions going forward, for example on what the new post-Brexit world should look like. On the flipside, it is clear that the cost

of employing lobbying firms is very high, and as a result the client list of Hanbury Strategy is an elite group. The relevance of Hanbury Strategy comes from the skills and connections of its staff drawn from across different political parties and ideologies, from the original founders down. The revolving door means that Hanbury can employ staff with a direct experience of working in politics; in 2019 they employed Joe Moor, the former Director of Legislative Affairs at No. 10 under Theresa May, while in 2020 the staff included James Kanagasooriam, who headed up the Scottish Conservatives' election strategy at the 2016 Holyrood election and 2017 General Election, and James McBride who worked in the Labour Party Policy Unit. Going in the other direction, Oliver Lewis left Hanbury to work as a special adviser on Brexit for No. 10 under Boris Johnson. The revolving door is entirely legal and above board in the UK, however, critics believe a minimum 'cooling off' period of 18 months between leaving high-profile public sector jobs for the private sector should be introduced. In 2020, Hanbury Strategy was engaged by Downing Street to help recruit a new generation of special advisers to work for the government by carrying out the initial screening of candidates, although their appointment could only be made by the government's Director of Communications, Lee Cain, at that time. This has led to criticism that it was a conflict of interest for the firm to recruit advisers to a government that it was also paid to lobby, while Hanbury Strategy stated they had been fully transparent and followed the regulatory guidelines.