

PCG hires political heavyweight to bring parliament round to contractors' cause

Contractors will benefit from a greater voice in the halls of Westminster, as Simon McVicker, the new Head of Public Affairs at the [Professional Contractors Group](#) (PCG), prepares for a renewed campaign to ensure legislators listen to contractors' concerns.

"PCG has completely re-invented itself from a single platform tax pressure group into the only national body that represents contractors and freelance professionals in the UK," McVicker tells ContractorCalculator. "I am fortunate in having very solid foundations on which to build new stakeholder engagement strategies."

McVicker, who joins PCG from his former role as External Affairs Manager of the Manufacturing Technologies Association, has made a career of political lobbying. He has served in prominent strategic policy and public affairs positions with the Conservative Party, the Independent Schools Association and directly for Members of Parliament.

Highlighting contractor concerns

The Head of Public Affairs is a newly created position at PCG, and McVicker explains the reason for the new role: "Public affairs is how we project our policies into the public arena. Our priority is to put contractor issues in front of the decision-makers in government and parliament."

McVicker plans to build on the groundbreaking work already completed by newly promoted Policy and External Relations Manager John Kell, who has successfully put the contractor agenda on the map in both Westminster and Brussels.

"My first months with PCG have been spent carefully assessing and evaluating its role in the public arena," continues McVicker. "We have now developed a public affairs strategy that will build on PCG's existing strengths and explore new areas of stakeholder engagement."

In addition to its relationship with the political arena, McVicker wants to heighten the profile of contractor issues and develop complementary lobbying strategies with groups such as the [Confederation of British Industry](#) (CBI), the [Institute of Directors](#) (IoD) and the [Federation of Small Businesses](#) (FSB).

Communicating key messages

"Many of PCG's issues are quite technical, and so fall below the radar of many of our target political operators," continues McVicker. "Our key messages need to be understood by everyone, including the benefits to UK PLC of supporting a vibrant contractor and freelance workforce."

According to McVicker, the abolition of [IR35](#) remains one of the core tenets of PCG, and he sees his role as establishing the demise of IR35 in the manifestos of those political parties likely to be in a position to make that change happen.

"We want to see fairer taxation in the UK," says McVicker. "Although this is only one of the four or five primary messages we are looking to communicate, particularly to government, it's the most important," says McVicker. "An equitable tax regime for small businesses is and will remain our strategic imperative."

Ten more years

Had PCG been in existence before IR35 was formulated and launched, would the legislation have made it to the statute book? McVicker thinks it unlikely: "Contractors are strong when they come together and PCG is the focal point for concentrating the efforts of some of the most valuable knowledge workers in the UK."

McVicker, with his fresh eye, considers that the flat and democratic structure of PCG is one of the key reasons that it works so well on behalf of contractors, most of whom are the cream of the UK's freelance talent.

"PCG has a critical mass of over 18,000 members now. They have unique needs that differ from, say, the constituency of the FSB or the IoD," says McVicker. "PCG is the only organisation that truly represents the UK's knowledge workers, who will form a vital element of the solution to the current economic woes. They deserve the recognition and credit due for their efforts."

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