

Immediate Release 04/01/07

86% OF MPs SUPPORT CHARITIES' RIGHT TO LOBBY

- **THREE IN FIVE (58%) OF PUBLIC BACK CHARITY SPEND ON LOBBYING**
- **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ALZHEIMER'S DRUGS CRAM MP IN-TRAYS**

86% of MPs polled back public opinion in supporting the right of charities to campaign to change laws and government policies relevant to their work; and 1 in 4 (27%) MPs disagree with existing guidelines which limit such activity – according to a parliamentary poll out today.

Leading not for profit sector think tank and research consultancy nfpSynergy's latest Charity Parliamentary Monitor surveyed a representative sample of 150 MPs, exploring their awareness of, and attitudes towards, charities and their campaigns over the last six months. The study follows on from previous twice-yearly waves of research dating back to January 2002.

Other findings are that 7 out of 8 (87%) of all MPs think charities should bring important issues to the public's attention even if that means offending some people – with *all* Lib Dem MPs polled believing this; that over a quarter (27%) of all MPs recall (unprompted) receiving correspondence about climate change over the last 6 months - followed by 1 in 5 (21%) re the Alzheimer's Society / NICE agreement; and that the BBC's *Newsnight* and *Today* programmes top the league of MPs' current affairs broadcast media viewing habits.

nfpSynergy's Driver of Ideas, Joe Saxton, said:

"This research shows that MPs absolute back public support for the campaigning role of charities, both vis-à-vis changing government policies and changing public attitudes - despite significant unease about current limits imposed on the sector in official guidelines. Other findings of our twice-yearly Charity Parliamentary Monitor suggest charities can, in the eyes of MP, be even bolder in bringing important issues to the fore, even at risk of causing public offence; and that the sector can doubtless learn a thing or two about wooing MPs from a high-impact environmental and healthcare lobby."

Ian Leggett, Director of People & Planet, which has been working to change the guidance on charities' campaigning, said:

"This is good news. In recent years the campaigning role of charities has become more evident and more eagerly embraced and this survey confirms that attitudes towards campaigning by charities are changing. Both MPs and the public recognise that campaigning is an important and valuable role of charities. It goes to the heart of what makes us different - our independence of analysis and action. If we are to build on that strength in the future, we need to harness the goodwill that this survey reveals and create a more enabling and less restrictive environment."

nfpSynergy's latest Charity Parliamentary Monitor: selected highlights...

- **86% of MPs polled think charities should be able to campaign to change laws and government policies relevant to their work** – rising to 90% amongst Labour MPs; and 95% amongst Lib Dem MPs. Even three quarters (74%) of Tory MPs agree. And female MPs are significantly more inclined to agree *strongly*.
- **This MP poll mirrors existing recent (July 2006) nfpSynergy research into public attitudes to campaigning** which found that three in five (58%) people back charities' spend on lobbying government - with half (50%) even ranking the latter as the most cost-effective charitable activity.

- Well over a quarter (27%) of MPs polled disagree with existing **Charity Commission guidance that charities can only campaign to change government policies or the law providing such work is ancillary or incidental to their main activities** - 2 in 5 (39%) Lib Dem MPs disagree with this restriction; as do almost a third (31%) of Labour MPs and 1 in 7 (14%) Tory MPs. **3 in 5 (60%) of MPs agree with current guidelines.**
- 7 out of 8 (87%) of MPs polled think **charities should try and bring important issues to the public's attention** (eg through advertising) **even if that means offending some people** – with 100% Lib Dem, 95% Labour and 70% of Tory MPs believing this.
- The majority (54%) of MPs polled claim (unprompted) to **regularly watch** BBC2 *Newsnight*, followed by 17% citing the BBC in general; 16% Sky News; 15% BBC1 *10 O'Clock News*; and 12% BBC1 *Question Time*.
- 3 in 5 (59%) of MPs polled claim (unprompted) to **regularly listen to** BBC R4 *Today*, followed by 13% citing BBC R5 Live; 12% BBC R4 (in general); 10% BBC R4 *World at One*; and 9% BBC R4 *PM*.
- Over a quarter (27%) of MPs polled recall (unprompted) **receiving correspondence** (letter, email, fax etc; either in Westminster or their constituency) about climate change over the last 6 months; followed by 1 in 5 (21%) re the Alzheimer's Society / NICE agreement; 12% re the Friends of the Earth's *Big Ask* campaign; 11% re the pensions-earnings link; and 11% re post office closures.

nfpSynergy conducts a whole raft of syndicated, cost-effective monitors, delivering subscribers with regular insights into key stakeholders including politicians, business leaders, health professionals, journalists, young people and the wider public.

For more information about nfpSynergy, or its Charity Parliamentary Monitor:
www.nfpsynergy.net

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MEDIA INTERVIEWS: To interview nfpSynergy's Joe Saxton about the research findings - available in full on request - please contact:

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Notes to editors:

• nfpSynergy

nfpSynergy (www.nfpsynergy.net) is the UK's *only* think-tank and research consultancy dedicated to the charity sector and not for profit issues. It provides ideas, insights and information to help voluntary and community organisations thrive in an ever-changing world. Regularly harvesting the social and charity-related views of public and parliament, media and business - not to mention not for profit organisations themselves - *nfpSynergy* has a vast and ever-growing knowledge pool from which to extract and deliver insights.

• Joe Saxton

Joe Saxton co-founded *nfpSynergy* in 2002 after fifteen years experience in the voluntary sector, including as a director of the RNID (Britain's largest charity for deaf and hard of hearing people) and as a trustee of the RSPCA.

He is Chair of the Trustees of the Institute of Fundraising (www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk) and also Chair of People & Planet. Joe was recently named one of the hundred most influential people in UK social policy by *The Guardian* and has been repeatedly voted one of the ten most influential people in UK fundraising by *Professional Fundraising*, weighing in at the Number 1 slot for the last two years in a row.

A well-known and respected voice within the charity world and frequent face at sector conferences, Joe has contributed - via original research, opinion pieces and interviews - to a wide range of specialist and mainstream media, both print and broadcast, from *Third Sector* and *The Guardian* to *BBC Breakfast* and *BBC Radio 4*.

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