



PRCA Public Affairs Board Chair Elections 2020 Candidate Statements

Emma Petela MPRCA and George McGregor MPRCA

Nominating Organisations

We are pleased to be nominated by such a wide variety of PRCA Public Affairs Board (PAB) members: large, small and specialist agencies; in-house professionals; from London and each of the UK nations.

Our nominating organisations include: Cicero/AMO, Connect Communications, Chambré Public Affairs, Deryn, GK Strategy, Hanover Communications, Incisive Health, Interel, John Lewis & Partners, Message Matters, Morrison Media, PB Consulting and Stratagem. And we are delighted to have the support from many other members.

Our Priorities

As the first Co-Chairs of the PRCA PAB we have focussed on three priorities: championing ethical public affairs, ensuring a member-led organisation and promoting diversity in our profession. If re-elected, we will continue to take these critically important areas forward.

1) Ethical Public Affairs

We have been fearless in standing up for ethical public affairs, calling out unethical behaviour wherever we see it, even if that means confronting powerful players.

When Ruth Davidson attempted to simultaneously be a consultant lobbyist and a Member of the Scottish Parliament, we condemned it and forced a U-turn. It is never acceptable to be a serving parliamentarian and a paid lobbyist at the same time.

We have been champions of the PRCA PAB Code of Conduct, seeking to ensure it is adhered to, and have recommended ways to strengthen it. It is vital that our code remains relevant and embodies the highest standards of behaviour. Our code acts to prevent harmful regulation being imposed on our sector by Government. For that reason, enforcing the code remains as important as its content.

2) Member-led

The PRCA PAB is only a year and a half old and was born out of two traditions: the APPC and the PRCA.

Working with the Board's Executive Committee, we are forging a new and better way of working which is as a member-led organisation where the members take the decisions supported by a highly professional PRCA secretariat.

Dealing with a post-merger situation was always going to be tricky. There were always going to be growing pains; but the PAB has so much potential and we are determined to fulfil that.

3) Promoting Diversity

Ensuring the public affairs sector reflects the society we live in is a personal priority for both of us. As a woman and a gay man in leadership positions we have sought to lead by example.

Working with the Executive Committee we have agreed an action plan to promote the take-up of unconscious bias training, encourage the adoption of diversity and inclusion guidelines, support the PRCA schools outreach programme and increase the visibility of public affairs professionals from under-represented groups. We have also prioritised close working with Women in Public Affairs and InterComms. We are determined to make progress. There is a lot more to do.

We ask for your support to remain as Co-Chairs so that we can continue to deliver on these important priority areas.

Emma and George

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Liam Herbert MPRCA

We have made great progress over the last twelve months as a public affairs community strengthening the Code of Conduct, publishing the first public affairs census, holding the first public affairs conference, engaging in a work programme to take forward our objectives in diversity; engaging with the regulator to make our Code the industry standard; enhancing our voice beyond Westminster, and establishing the role and function of the Public Affairs Board Committee within the PRCA. All of this proves the value that one voice for the industry has brought.

But I want to build on this success. To firmly establish the PRCA PAB as the voice and the people that represent our industry. We have a lot of work to do. We need to demonstrate that we are relevant to the professional lives of practitioners. We need to create, support and drive career opportunities in public affairs – to demonstrate the role of professional lobbying in a well-functioning democracy. To actively encourage public affairs as a career choice – the work the PRCA has started in schools is integral and we will need to support this as a PAB. We need to broaden routes into the industry and as the work on diversity has shown we need continue to work on impacts from within.

I believe we also need to actively promote membership – if we are to represent the industry with credibility and with strength then we need to expand and broaden the membership. Having agreed a new, stronger Code, embedded our position as the industry's representative voice, we need to work vigorously to engage with politicians and the media making the case for lobbying as an ethical and beneficial practice in a democracy; and making the case with non-member practitioners -particularly in-house ones- for joining us.

We need now to focus on bringing every ethical lobbyist with us. And we need to do far more than we have so far in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh, and the regions of England, because lobbying is so much more than just SW1. So, we must devote more staff and financial resource to delivering this.

Equally, we must be even more robust on standards – compliance with the Code of Conduct, training and development for teams and individual practitioners are the basics. They are not the ambition.

For those of you who don't know me – I have been in the industry for 30 years, working in PR and PA agencies as well as in some challenging in-house assignments. Currently I am CEO at Chelgate, based in London Bridge. I have been involved with the PRCA for most of my career – as a member of the PRCA PA committee and over the last few years working as part of the group of members who brought the PRCA and APPC together to create the PAB. I have always felt passionate about what I do, what we do as an industry. I am proud to call myself a lobbyist, an advocate. I want us all to be proud of what we do and to build and support a professional association that defends, promotes and protects our industry.