# Former Scottish minister Tavish Scott investigated over salmon farming lobbying claims



A former Scottish government minister is currently under formal parliamentary investigation over allegations involving a verbal confrontation with a Tory MSP. Tavish Scott, the former leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats and now the chief executive of Salmon Scotland, faces scrutiny from Holyrood’s Ethical Standards Commissioner following a complaint from Dale Vince’s Green Britain Foundation. This incident reportedly occurred during an October 2023 meeting with Edward Mountain, an MSP for the Highlands and Islands.

The complaint alleges that Scott confronted Mountain regarding comments the latter made in Parliament about the salmon farming industry, specifically figures suggesting a significant number of fish are destroyed annually. Mountain stated, “some are dying when they are harvested and they still reach our tables.” The confrontation escalated when Mountain claimed that Scott threatened, “The issue and your attitude are top of the agenda for the next board meeting. The board are very unhappy with you and are willing to take action against you, unless you retract your comments in the Parliament.”

Despite Scott’s continued access to parliamentary facilities owing to his corporate role, the lobby group stresses the importance of transparency in political dealings. Vince was quoted as saying, “We’re talking about an industry already knee-deep in environmental carnage, now allegedly trying to dodge rules that keep our democracy honest.” He argued that the public has a right to know the influence of corporate interests on politicians and urged for transparency regarding lobbying practices.

Scott has denied any wrongdoing, asserting that he has not breached any lobbying regulations. He previously responded to media coverage of the allegations with threats of reporting the publication to press regulators, maintaining that the complaints lacked merit.

The Scottish farmed salmon sector, which is estimated to be worth approximately £1 billion annually, faces consistent criticism over its environmental impact. Concerns have been raised regarding the industry’s effects on wild salmon populations due to sea lice, as well as allegations of pollution linked to farming practices.

Salmon Scotland, the industry body Scott heads, issued a statement asserting its compliance with lobbying regulations. In addition, the organisation represents a sector comprising 200 fish farms, producing around 140,000 tons of fish annually, valued at about £760 million.

Meanwhile, Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon is currently facing her own ministerial code probe after accepting hospitality from Salmon Scotland to watch international rugby matches in the previous years. Reports indicate that approximately £1,500 in tickets and hospitality were not disclosed in her official register of gifts.

The controversy is not isolated, as other politicians, including Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar and Scottish Secretary Ian Murray, have also faced criticism for receiving free hospitality from Salmon Scotland during a Liverpool FC match last September.

The investigation into Scott’s interactions and the accusations surrounding lobbying practices continue to unfold, with the initial complaint raising broader questions about the ethical standards governing parliamentarians and the influence of the corporate sector on political processes.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.undercurrentnews.com/2024/12/30/anti-aquaculture-campaign-files-complaint-over-scottish-industry-lobbying/> - This article reports on the Green Britain Foundation's formal complaint to Scotland's Ethical Standards Commissioner, alleging that Salmon Scotland failed to properly record lobbying activities, including a confrontation between CEO Tavish Scott and MSP Edward Mountain.
2. <https://www.theferret.scot/salmon-industry-lobbying-regulation/> - This investigation reveals that the salmon farming industry, led by Tavish Scott, lobbied the Scottish Government at least 20 times in the last year, seeking relaxed regulations and public subsidies.
3. <https://www.theferret.scot/pesticide-safety-limit-industry-lobbying/> - This article discusses how the salmon farming industry successfully lobbied to increase the permitted concentration of the pesticide emamectin in marine sediments, raising concerns about environmental impact.
4. <https://www.theferret.scot/lobbying-loophole-scottish-government/> - This piece highlights how big businesses, including the salmon farming industry, influence Scottish ministers without sufficient scrutiny, with civil society groups rarely featuring in ministers' diaries.
5. <https://www.theferret.scot/wildlife-objection-to-salmon-farm-spiked/> - This article reports that the Scottish Government's wildlife agency withdrew an objection to proposed new salmon cages near Barra after intensive lobbying by the fish farming industry.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jan/17/scottish-government-must-do-more-to-control-salmon-farming-inquiry-finds> - This report discusses an inquiry into salmon farming in Scotland, highlighting the industry's environmental impact and the need for stricter controls, with comments from industry leaders like Tavish Scott.
7. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/ex-holyrood-minister-formal-lobbying-35165953> - Please view link - unable to able to access data