# Parliamentary inquiry launched into Tavish Scott over alleged lobbying intimidation and transparency failures



A formal parliamentary investigation is underway regarding Tavish Scott, a former minister and current chief executive of Salmon Scotland, following serious allegations of improper lobbying and aggressive intimidation towards Conservative MSP Edward Mountain. This inquiry, initiated by Holyrood's Ethical Standards Commissioner, was sparked by a complaint from the Green Britain Foundation, an environmental advocacy group backed by renewable energy entrepreneur Dale Vince, highlighting growing concerns over transparency in the industry.

Scott, who once led the Scottish Liberal Democrats and has held key ministerial roles for seven years, continues to maintain a parliamentary pass, a troubling arrangement that raises significant questions about conflicts of interest in this already fraught political landscape.

Vince has vocally criticized the lobbying practices at play, remarking, “We’re talking about an industry already knee-deep in environmental carnage, now allegedly trying to sidestep rules that protect our democracy.” His statements underscore the urgent need for accountability, hinting that Salmon Scotland may resort to morally dubious tactics to silence dissent.

The controversy erupted over a meeting in October 2023, where Scott purportedly pressured Mountain to retract criticisms aimed at the salmon industry, which included alarming assertions about the waste involved in salmon harvesting. Mountain accused Scott of issuing threats that could jeopardize his position with the Salmon Scotland board unless he complied—an act that many would see as indicative of the dangerous alliances between politicians and industry leaders that erode public trust.

Documented in a session of the Rural and Islands Committee, Mountain alleged Scott’s behaviour amounted to a verbal assault. He recounted Scott’s alleged warning: “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.” Alarmingly, this meeting went unregistered in official lobbying records, intensifying accusations from the Green Britain Foundation about Scott’s failure to document multiple engagements.

Scott has staunchly denied any wrongdoing, claiming there has been no breach of lobbying regulations. Meanwhile, Salmon Scotland has asserted, “We fully comply with the lobbying register,” raising eyebrows amid this controversy.

As this investigation unfolds, it highlights ongoing concerns about the environmental implications of fish farming, with Scotland's £1 billion farmed salmon market facing intensified scrutiny. Issues like sea lice proliferation threaten wild salmon populations and raise fears about pollution from fish farms, casting a long shadow over the industry’s practices.

Adding to the prevailing atmosphere of distrust, Scotland’s Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon is also under investigation for not adequately reporting hospitality received from Salmon Scotland in her ministerial records. This broader examination of public officials’ ties to industry representatives underscores a critical need for reform and greater transparency within our political institutions.

The Ethical Standards Commissioner, Ian Bruce, has reached out to both Scott and Salmon Scotland regarding the ongoing inquiry, although further comments from his office remain pending. As the political atmosphere grows more charged, questions linger about the ethical conduct of those in power, along with the implications for a democracy that appears increasingly vulnerable to corporate influence.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://theferret.scot/salmon-industry-lobbying-regulation/> - This article details the salmon industry's extensive lobbying efforts to influence Scottish government policies, including attempts to relax regulations and secure public subsidies, highlighting concerns over transparency and potential conflicts of interest.
2. <https://theferret.scot/pesticide-safety-limit-industry-lobbying/> - This piece discusses how industry lobbying led to the relaxation of safety limits for the pesticide emamectin, raising questions about the influence of the salmon farming sector on environmental regulations.
3. <https://theferret.scot/wildlife-objection-to-salmon-farm-spiked/> - This report reveals that the Scottish Government's wildlife agency withdrew its objection to new salmon cages near Barra after intensive lobbying by the fish farming industry, underscoring concerns about the industry's influence on environmental decisions.
4. <https://www.salmonscotland.co.uk/about> - Salmon Scotland's official website outlines its role as the trade body for the Scottish salmon sector, emphasizing its lobbying activities aimed at influencing government policy and regulations affecting the industry.
5. <https://easyreader.org/article/page/dailyrecord/news/scottish-news/fishing-industry-chief-facing-accusations-34386870> - This article reports on formal complaints against Tavish Scott, CEO of Salmon Scotland, alleging breaches of Scottish Parliament lobbying rules, including unregistered meetings and confrontations with MSPs.
6. <https://www.undercurrentnews.com/2024/12/30/anti-aquaculture-campaign-files-complaint-over-scottish-industry-lobbying/> - This report covers a formal complaint filed by the Green Britain Foundation with Scotland's Ethical Standards Commissioner, alleging that Salmon Scotland failed to properly record lobbying activities, including unregistered meetings and confrontations with MSPs.
7. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/ex-holyrood-minister-formal-lobbying-35165953> - Please view link - unable to able to access data