# 1.4 Pressure Groups, Think Tanks and Lobbyists in UK Politics

Total Marks

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 80 minutes · Write-in edition

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

**Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be brief but must be accurate. For levels-marked questions (questions 5 and 7) write full sentences, use developed analysis and precise examples. Time guidance: 80 minutes for the whole pack.**

**1** State two differences between sectional and promotional pressure groups in the UK context.

**(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)**

**2** List three methods used by UK pressure groups to influence government or public opinion, giving a one word label for each method.

**(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)**

**3** Explain briefly how professional lobbying operates in the UK, naming one activity lobbyists perform when representing a client's interests to ministers or civil servants.

**(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)**

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**4** Explain how direct action by an outsider group such as Extinction Rebellion might aim to influence government or public opinion. Give one concrete example of a tactic and its intended effect.

**(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)**

**5** Using the source, evaluate the claim that direct action is an effective method for outsider groups to change government policy.

**(Total for Question 5 is 30 marks)**

**6** Explain how litigation has been used successfully by a UK pressure group such as the RSPB to secure policy change or enforcement, giving one concrete example and its effect.

**(Total for Question 6 is 6 marks)**

**7** Evaluate the view that pressure groups enhance democracy in the UK.

**(Total for Question 7 is 30 marks)**

# Mark scheme · 1.4 Pressure Groups, Think Tanks and Lobbyists in UK Politics

## Question 1

one accurate difference, e.g. sectional groups represent defined social or occupational interests (trade unions, professional bodies) while promotional groups campaign for a cause — **B1**

a second accurate difference, e.g. sectional groups typically protect member benefits while promotional groups seek broader public policy change or awareness — **B1**

**Answer: Sectional groups represent the interests of a specific section of society (for example a trade union or professional body) while promotional groups campaign to promote a cause or value (for example environmental protection); sectional groups typically protect member benefits, whereas promotional groups aim for broader public policy change or awareness.**

## Question 2

one correct method, e.g. lobbying — **B1**

a second correct method, e.g. direct action — **B1**

a third correct method, e.g. litigation or media campaigns — **B1**

**Answer: Any three of: lobbying; direct action; litigation; media campaigns; petitions; research reports; public demonstrations.**

## Question 3

identifies that professional lobbyists act on behalf of clients to influence policy-makers — **B1**

identifies a concrete activity, e.g. arranging meetings with ministers, drafting briefing notes, or commissioning research — **B1**

explains how the activity works, e.g. briefing notes present client evidence or arguments to civil servants prior to consultations — **B1**

brief development, e.g. lobbyists may use contacts and sustained communication to shape agenda items or regulatory wording — **B1**

**Answer: Professional lobbyists act on behalf of clients to influence policy-makers; for example they arrange meetings with ministers or civil servants and provide tailored briefing notes that set out the client's evidence and preferred policy wording, using sustained contact and personal networks to shape consultations or agenda items.**

## Question 4

identifies direct action as disruptive public activity intended to draw attention and create pressure — **B1**

gives one concrete tactic, e.g. road blockades, die-ins, or disruption of transport hubs — **B1**

explains intended effect on public or government, e.g. forcing media coverage, raising urgency, or increasing political cost of inaction — **B1**

brief development or caution, e.g. noting such tactics can provoke public hostility as well as attention — **B1**

**Answer: Direct action is disruptive public activity designed to attract attention and create pressure; for example Extinction Rebellion has used road blockades in city centres to force sustained media coverage and create a sense of urgency that raises the political cost of inaction, although such tactics can also generate public hostility that undermines sympathy for the cause.**

## Question 5

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|---|---|
| **Level 0** No relevant material. | **0** |
| **Level 1** Basic use of the extracts with limited development; paraphrase rather than analysis; little or no contextual knowledge; no sustained judgement. | **1-6** |
| **Level 2** Accurate use of the extracts with some development; limited integration of contextual knowledge about outsider groups or examples; begins to weigh effectiveness but judgement is not well supported. | **7-12** |
| **Level 3** Clear analysis using both extracts and relevant contextual knowledge; evaluates how direct action can produce media attention and local concessions, and how it can provoke public backlash; partly substantiated judgement. | **13-18** |
| **Level 4** Detailed evaluation using both extracts and wide contextual knowledge, exploring conditions under which direct action succeeds or fails (timing, clarity of demands, combination with litigation or lobbying), with a reasoned and supported judgement on effectiveness. | **19-24** |
| **Level 5** Sophisticated evaluation that integrates both extracts with extensive, well-selected contextual evidence and analysis, considers counterarguments and long-term effects on democracy and legitimacy, and reaches a balanced, well-substantiated conclusion on the overall effectiveness of direct action for outsider groups. | **25-30** |

**Indicative content:**

- Use of Extract A: direct action generates media coverage and can force local institutions to respond, but may not translate to national policy change and can reduce public sympathy if too disruptive.
- Use of Extract B: direct action can change politicians cost-benefit calculations, especially when timed around votes or events, and is more effective when combined with clear demands and legal strategies.
- Contextual knowledge: examples include Extinction Rebellion causing local council briefings and delays to transport but limited national legislative change; the 2011 London student protests secured media attention but limited policy reversal on fees.
- Contextual knowledge: success where direct action combined with other tactics, for example Stonewall combining campaigning with litigation and lobbying to achieve policy shifts on equalities over time.
- Evaluation of factors: timing, clarity of demands, public sympathy, media framing, capacity to sustain pressure, legal avenues and the political salience of the issue influence effectiveness.
- Counterargument: direct action can backfire by alienating the public or prompting legal restrictions, reducing political space for the group's demands, as Extract A suggests.
- Conclusion possibilities: direct action is sometimes effective in shifting local policy and agenda setting and can be effective when integrated into a broader strategy, but on its own it rarely guarantees major national policy change and risks reputational costs.

## Question 6

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| identifies litigation as a method for forcing legal or regulatory compliance | **B1** |
| names a pressure group that uses litigation, e.g. RSPB cao | **B1** |
| gives a concrete example, e.g. RSPB legal action over habitat protection or challenges to government licences | **B1** |
| explains the legal outcome, e.g. courts quashed a licence or required a stricter assessment under environmental law | **B1** |
| explains the policy effect, e.g. forcing regulators to tighten permits or undertake further environmental assessment | **B1** |
| brief evaluation of limits, e.g. litigation is costly and success depends on legal standing and the law's content | **B1** |

**Answer: Litigation can force regulators and government to act within the law; for example the RSPB has brought legal challenges over licences and habitat assessments that led courts to require stricter environmental assessments or quash unlawful licences, resulting in tighter regulatory enforcement. However litigation is expensive and depends on the legal framework and the group's standing.**

## Question 7

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| **Level 0** No relevant material. | **0** |
| **Level 1** Basic knowledge of pressure groups with little analysis or evaluation; limited use of examples; judgement is absent or unsupported. | **1-7** |
| **Level 2** Clear knowledge and some developed analysis of how pressure groups may enhance or damage democratic processes, with some relevant examples; evaluation present but may be one-sided or partial. | **8-15** |
| **Level 3** Detailed, accurate knowledge and analysis that engages with a range of arguments and examples on both sides; evaluation is balanced and supported, leading to a reasoned judgement. | **16-23** |
| **Level 4** Sophisticated and wide-ranging discussion that integrates precise knowledge, multiple well-chosen UK examples and theoretical points, evaluates strengths and weaknesses of pressure group influence on participation, representation, pluralism and accountability, and reaches a clear, well-supported judgement. | **24-30** |

**Indicative content:**

- Arguments that pressure groups enhance democracy: they increase pluralism and participation by enabling citizens to organise around issues, provide specialised knowledge to inform policy-making, hold government to account through monitoring and litigation, and give voice to minorities or dispersed interests that might be ignored by parties.
- Examples supporting enhancement: Stonewall's long-term campaigning combined lobbying and legal strategies to secure changes in equality law and policy; RSPB litigation and research have strengthened environmental protections; trade unions historically amplified worker voices and shaped labour market regulation.
- Arguments that pressure groups can damage democracy: unequal resources produce unequal influence, professional lobbyists and wealthy corporate groups may have disproportionate access, outsider disruptive tactics can undermine legitimacy or alienate the public, and opaque lobbying can reduce transparency and accountability.
- Examples supporting democratic harm: corporate lobbyists with large budgets shaping regulatory outcomes in ways criticised as privileging business interests; high profile disruptive protests that reduce public sympathy and lead to tougher restrictions on protest.
- Analytical points: distinguish between pluralist benefits and elitist critiques, examine the role of regulation (Transparency of Lobbying, non-statutory registers) in mediating influence, and consider whether pressure group activity supplements or substitutes for party-based representation.
- Evaluation: weigh evidence on participation and representation gains against concerns about inequality of access and the need for regulation; a balanced judgement may conclude pressure groups enhance democracy when they increase informed participation and pluralism and operate transparently, but they can undermine democracy where resource imbalances and secret lobbying distort policy in favour of narrow interests.