



Alyn Smith MP
Member of Parliament for Stirling

House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Richard Earley
Public Policy Manager
Facebook UK

19th January 2021

Dear Richard,

I write to you on behalf of my constituents in Stirling, who together with their friends and families make up part of Facebook's huge global audience and user base. Social media giants play an increasingly important role in people's lives, acting as both a source and a filter for important news, information and facts.

Much can be said about Facebook's own efforts to contain the spread of hate speech, disinformation and bad actors on its platform.

Despite what I am sure are good intentions and warm words, numerous scandals and the continued appearance of false and deliberately misleading content would suggest Facebook continues to struggle with content moderation and murky political advertising money - all of whom seek to influence debates within Scottish politics, with varying degrees of success.

I've been made aware by constituents regarding a particular campaign which seeks to undermine the Scottish Government's vaccination efforts - @ScotVaxFacts. This Facebook page has paid for advertisements appearing in the feeds of my constituents, making dubious claims in relation to Covid-19 vaccinations in Scotland and purporting as a 'service'.

It has been reported that individuals involved in this campaign have ties to prominent UK political parties. Moreover, information regarding the paid-for-ads from said Facebook page point to details of a public relations firm, further muddying the waters as to the true origin of this seemingly 'astro-turfed' campaign.

Alyn Smith MP
Office 16, John Player Building, Stirling Enterprise Park, Stirling FK7 7RP
01786 471899
alyn.smith.mp@parliament.uk



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What comfort can my constituents gain from Facebook's continued promises, when delivery continues to fall further and further behind the curve of increasingly sophisticated attempts to poison online civil discourse?

For good or ill, platforms such as Facebook now occupy and have responsibility for huge swathes of Scotland's online 'town square', and must step up efforts to counter disinformation campaigns and advertising - especially as our fight against COVID-19 enters the crucial vaccination stage over the next few months.

I would welcome any further comments you may have on these matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alyn Smith'.

Alyn Smith
SNP Foreign Affairs Spokesperson
MP for Stirling

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