



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

Our Ref: AL/MG
25th June 2021

Dear Chancellor,

Re: Electoral Commission

I am writing to raise concerns over the Government's plans to limit the powers of the electoral commission.

Under these plans the Electoral Commission would be unable to take politicians to court over secret donations and illegal campaigning, placing new curbs on the regulator's independence. This is a fundamental attack on a body that ensures free, democratic and independent oversight.

In a statement the Government said that, "Such reforms do not seek to interfere or inappropriately influence the investigative, operational or enforcement decisions of the Electoral Commission". Yet it seems to me that the proposed reforms will greatly diminish the powers of the Commission at a time when there have been a number of high profile investigations regarding election campaigns over recent years.

It is reported that in the last four years, the commission has completed more than 500 investigations into party donations, campaign finance and election law. Each of these investigations not only maintains public faith in our democracy but also helps to build up trust in our elections and representatives.

I would therefore like to know:

- a. On what grounds you believe these reforms are necessary?
- b. To what extent the reforms will limit the powers of the Commission to help protect our democracy?
- c. How the Government intends to maintain the independence and effectiveness of the Commission despite the proposed reforms?

If you could provide any further information you have regarding this matter I would greatly appreciate.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards

Alyn Smith MP Stirling constituency (SNP)
Office 16, John Player Building, Stirling Enterprise Park, Stirling FK7 7RP
Telephone 01786 471899
Email: alyn.smith.mp@parliament.uk □

Alyn Smith MP