

Political campaigning online to be made more transparent under new rules

- New government measures will mean political parties and campaigners must explicitly show who they are when promoting campaign content online
- Consultation launched today outlines proposals in further detail and seeks views
- This is the next step in the government's work to strengthen trust in UK democracy

Online political campaigning is to be made more transparent with [proposals launched by the government today](#).

New measures will require political parties, campaigners and others to clearly show who they are with a digital imprint, when promoting campaign content online.

Minister for the Constitution & Devolution, Chloe Smith, said:

People want to engage with politics online. That's where campaigners connect with voters and is why, ahead of elections, almost half of political advertising budgets are now spent on digital content and activity.

But people want to know who is talking. Voters value transparency, so we must ensure that there are clear rules to help them see who is behind campaign content online.

The measures we have outlined today are a big step forward towards making UK politics even more transparent and would lead to one of the most comprehensive set of regulations operating in the world today.

The move will mean that voters will get the same transparency from online material as they do from leaflets posted through their letterbox. Digital imprints will also allow the regulator to better monitor who is promoting election material and enforce the spending rules.

The proposals call for digital imprints to apply to all types of campaign content regardless of the country it is being promoted from, and across a variety of digital platforms. The regime is also intended to apply all year round, as while election periods see increased promotional activity, campaigning can happen at any time.

The imprint would be required to be displayed as part of the digital content, and where this is not possible, it should be located in an accessible alternative location linked to the material.

Rebecca Stimson, Head of UK Public Policy at Facebook said:

We have long called for updated rules for the era of digital political campaigning and so we welcome the government's consultation.

Facebook has led the way on online transparency by requiring all political ads on our platforms to have a 'paid for by' disclaimer and placing them into an Ad Library for everyone to see. We look forward to further engaging with the government on this important consultation.

The proposals suggest that digital content meeting both of the following two tests should require an imprint:

- Where the material is intended to achieve the electoral success of registered political parties and candidates, or the material relates to a referendum;
- Where digital content is promoted by either:
 - Registered political parties, registered third party campaigners, candidates, holders of elected office and registered referendum campaigners – both paid and organic digital content;
 - Other campaigners – paid digital content only.

The government has worked closely with social media platforms, the Electoral Commission, and devolved administrations to develop the technical proposals, to make sure the regime will not interfere with peoples' ability to engage in democratic debate online.

The regime has been designed to allow campaigners, voters, and our independent free press to continue making judgments based on the strength of arguments. Imprint rules will also not apply to unregistered campaigners that are not paying to promote content, so that members of the public remain able to exercise their right to free speech.

These measures will also help tackle intimidation in public life, by ensuring that campaigners are more accountable for the content they post online. Digital imprints were a specific recommendation by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in its review into intimidation.

Throughout the consultation period, we welcome feedback on the proposals and will continue to consider where the policy can be further improved – for example whether digital imprints should be expanded beyond what is considered election material, to wider political advertising.

The government is committed to ensuring our electoral framework reflects modern campaigning practices, in line with how society operates today. These proposals sit alongside wider government work to strengthen the integrity of our elections and protect our democracy.