



Chair
Scottish Affairs Committee

24 May 2021

Dear Chair

Evidence to the Scottish Affairs Committee, Thursday 13 May 2021 – Social Media

During our recent evidence session, I committed to look at a specific case raised by one of the Members regarding our social media use and the pre-election period. The relevant exchanges can be found at Q15 and Q16 of the oral evidence transcript.

It was claimed the Office sent out social media advertising ahead of the election period. Specifically, the member stated she had received a promoted post on 5 May, the day before the election took place. As I said in my response during the Committee session, the Civil Service takes the pre-election period rules very seriously. I have spoken to my officials who have checked the background and circumstances of this issue.

I can confirm to the Committee that no social media ads were promoted during the pre-election period. They were paused between 25 March and 6 May inclusive and did not deliver spend or social media impressions during that period. I am happy to provide evidence from the analytic reports of Facebook and Twitter accounts to support that point. The date - or timestamps - on social media assets reflect when they were created, not when they were set live. The Integrated Review advert in question was created on 5 May but was not set live until after the election on 7 May. The adverts were created in advance in order to be reviewed and approved ahead of going live, but would not have been visible to the public prior to 7 May.

I trust this response gives the Member and Committee the assurances they sought during our session and clarifies the factual position.

Yours sincerely

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