



Rt Hon Chloe Smith MP  
Parliamentary Secretary, Minister of the Constitution  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
Westminster, London  
SW1A 2AS

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**Urgent: It is in the overwhelming public interest to release the ISC report of Russian interference in UK elections today**

Dear Minister,

I am appalled to learn that the Government has today blocked the release of the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) report on the security threat posed by Russia to the UK.

Since the Chair of this Committee, Dominic Grieve has warned the report's contents have major implications for the upcoming election and sees absolutely no reason to delay its publication any further, it is clearly in the national interest for it to be in the public domain as of today

This is just the latest in a series of events that causes me immense concern about the UK's ability to hold free and fair elections. And at this moment in history – as the UK faces an unprecedented constitutional crisis and [confidence in our elections has plummeted](#) – it is more important than ever that our electorate is told the truth, that our electoral system is robust, and that all parties play by the rules.

As it stands, I do not believe this to be the case. Here's why:

**Risks of foreign interference**

In February, the House of Commons' Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Select Committee released a new report: '[Disinformation and Fake News](#)'. Your colleague, Damien Collins MP who Chairs the committee admitted that foreign countries, including Russia, pose a particular threat to our electoral system and that "our electoral regulations are hopelessly out of date for the internet age".

In response to the growing threat of foreign disinformation campaigns in national elections, the European Parliament last month [passed a resolution](#) calling on Member States to take decisive action on this issue.

Given the seriousness of these concerns, it beggars belief that the Government has [today blocked the release](#) of the ISC report which includes evidence from UK intelligence services concerning Russian attempts to influence the outcome of the 2016 EU referendum and 2017 UK general election.

There is absolutely no excuse for this report to be withheld until after the election. If the Government had any interest in upholding our democratic standards – or an iota of respect for the electorate – it would release this information today.

### **The spread of disinformation via social media**

Whilst we welcome the move by Twitter to [ban paid political ads](#), it is regrettable that there has still been no firm commitment by either Twitter or Facebook to rigorously fact check and moderate claims made by political parties.

Alarming, Mr Zuckerberg was last week [unable to deny](#) to an audience of US lawmakers that his platform can still be used to deliberately target disinformation to particular audiences.

I welcome the UK's attendance at the International Grand Committee on Disinformation and Fake News to be held in Dublin on the 6th November. However, given the Government's failure to act on the aforementioned findings of the DCMS Select Committee, I question whether there is the political will to take swift and firm action on these issues.

### **Allegations against Vote Leave**

I am also extremely concerned about the Conservative Government's apparent willingness to bend the law when it suits its own political agenda.

New allegations suggest that Boris Johnson [knew of Vote Leave's illegal overspend](#) during the 2016 EU referendum campaign, but he failed to highlight this to the authorities. Both Johnson and Dominic Cummings remain under investigation for their roles in the campaign. It is shocking that it has taken over six months for the Metropolitan Police to hand information concerning this investigation to the Crown Prosecution Service.

### **Failing to take advice from election officials**

Our democracy was once the envy of the world. After years of neglect, it has been severely undermined. It's extremely alarming, for example, that the Government failed to act on the Electoral Commission's recommendations of 2016 and 2019 which would have plugged some of the holes in our punctured electoral system.

The Electoral Commission's [report on the EU elections in May 2019](#) concludes that Government delays in enacting electoral reform prevented thousands of EU27 citizens living in the UK and British citizens elsewhere in Europe from casting a vote.

Not only were those who had chosen to exercise their right to freedom of movement and build their lives in another EU country denied a vote in the 2016 referendum, the Government failed to act to prevent them being disenfranchised three years later.

## Unsafe snap elections

The Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) recently published a report [highlighting its “genuine concerns”](#) about the expectation that elections could always be safely delivered regardless of the landscape, timing, funding, or capacity of people delivering them.

Just last week, the chief executive of the AEA also voiced fresh concerns about the [security of postal votes](#) in the upcoming election – given the short notice for these to be printed, the possibility of adverse weather conditions, a backlog of Christmas post, and potential strike action by Royal Mail workers.

As your colleague Damien Collins MP has warned: [“we cannot delay any longer”](#). For the sake of our democracy, the Government must act immediately on the recommendations of our electoral regulators and administrators. Only once we’ve fixed our broken electoral laws can we genuinely begin to build a democratic framework that restores public confidence and heals the deep divisions in our United Kingdom.

Yours sincerely,



Scott Ainslie MEP

Green Party, London