

# Briefing for meeting with Leighton Andrews

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**Details:** Thursday 26 October, 12:15  
Park Plaza Hotel, Cardiff

**EC attendance:** Claire Bassett  
Rhydian Thomas

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## Key messages:

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### **DRAFT line on Twitter bots:**

Spending limits and rules on reporting spending and donations all apply to campaigners, parties and individuals if they engage in regulated campaigning around elections and referenda. We do not regulate the contents of campaign adverts.

Social media provides increased scale, speed and specificity of targeting compared with traditional campaigning methods, though the same rules on reporting spending, which we then publish, still apply. For example, if registered parties or campaigners spend money on bots to carry out regulated campaigning on social media then any spending on them must be included in its spending return.

The Electoral Commission is continuing to look into online campaigning at elections and referendums. The Electoral Commission has made a number of recommendations aimed at increasing transparency around online campaigning. These include proposing that online campaign material – like its printed equivalent – should be required in law to include an imprint stating who has published it.

We and others are also thinking about whether or not the law should be amended to make campaigners report more detailed breakdowns of spending – including breakdowns of what they spend on different types of advertising. We commented on the pros and cons of this idea after the 2015 election, and we will continue to consider this matter carefully before we decide to make any proposals.

It is for Government, and ultimately Parliament, to determine whether what changes should be made to the law in this areas.

### **So you have no problem in principle with the use of ‘net bots’ even if they mislead the public**

Our regulatory remit is around the funding of and spending by parties, non-party campaigners and referendum campaigners, not the campaigning techniques they employ. Any case for banning the use of ‘net bots’ in political campaigning would be a matter for Parliament to consider.

We do provide transparency for voters by publishing details of spending on a line by line basis making clear where digital campaigning, including the use of bots, has taken place.

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