From: FOI
To: [redacted]
Cc: FOI
Subject: FOI 196/17 Foreign Interference in Brexit - Response
Date: 08 January 2018 15:47:54
Attachments: Letter from Twitter email.pdf
ElectoralCommission_8Dec2017 (2).pdf

Dear [redacted],

Our Ref: FOI 196/17

Thank you for your email to the Electoral Commission dated **13 December 2017.**

The Commission aims to respond to requests for information promptly and has done so within the statutory timeframe of twenty working days.

Your request is in bold below followed by our response.

I wish to make a request under Freedom of Information Act for the following:

- **Records provided by Twitter to the Electoral Commission relating to foreign interference in Brexit. Please note that, while I do wish to receive these records in their entirety, that I may be willing to alter my request to cover just the list of handles which Twitter consider to have been Twitter accounts involved in foreign interference in Brexit.**

If any portion of these records is withheld, please specify which specific statutory exemptions are being relied upon under the Act. Please describe each record withheld, including its date and reason for exemption.

Our response is as follows:

We hold the information you have requested, enclose details with this response and trust that this information satisfies your request.

If you are not satisfied with this response, please note that the Commission operates a review procedure, details of which can be found on the Commission website at: http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/freedom-of-information-requests/how-do-I-make-an-foi-request.

In the event that all internal Commission review procedures are exhausted and you are still not satisfied you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner. Details of this procedure can be found on the ICO website: https://ico.org.uk/.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]
Director of Communications & Research

[redacted]

From: Nick Pickles <[redacted]>
Sent: 08 December 2017 20:04
To: Louise Edwards
Cc: Bob Posner; Craig Westwood
Subject: Letter from Twitter
Attachments: ElectoralCommission_8Dec2017.pdf

Dear Ms Edwards,

Please find attached a letter in response to your request for information.

With best wishes,

Nick

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Nick Pickles || Head of Public Policy & Government || UK & Israel.
Follow me on Twitter: @nickpickles

Twitter UK
20 Air Street
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8 December 2017

Louise Edwards
Head of Regulation
The Electoral Commission
3 Bunhill Row
London EC1Y 8YZ
ledwards@electoralcommission.org.uk

By email

Dear Ms. Edwards,

Thank you for your letter dated 16 November 2017.

In response to your request for information concerning Russian-funded campaign activity conducted during the regulated period for the June 2016 EU Referendum (15 April to 23 June 2016), Twitter reviewed referendum-related advertising on our platform during the relevant time period.

Advertising on Twitter generally takes the form of promoted Tweets, which advertisers purchase to reach new groups of users or spark engagement from their existing followers. Promoted Tweets are clearly labelled as "promoted" when an advertiser pays for their placement on Twitter. Advertisers can post promoted Tweets through a self-service model on the Twitter platform or through account managers, who manage relationships with advertising partners.

Among the accounts that we have previously identified as likely funded from Russian sources, we have thus far identified one account—@RT_com—which promoted referendum-related content during the regulated period. @RT_com spent a total $469,900 in advertising on our platform in 2016, with $44,615.87 of that amount devoted to ads that were served users in the UK. Only $1,031.99 of that amount was spent on six referendum-related ads during the regulated period. I have provided a list of the Tweets in the attached appendix.

Twitter is continuing its review and will update the Commission if and when we identify additional relevant information.

With regard to future activity by Russian-funded accounts, on 26 October 2017, Twitter announced that it would no longer accept advertisements from RT and Sputnik and will donate the $1.9 million that RT had spent

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globally on advertising on Twitter to academic research into elections and civil engagement. That decision was based on a retrospective review that we initiated in the aftermath of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Elections and following the U.S. intelligence community's conclusion that both RT and Sputnik have attempted to interfere with the election on behalf of the Russian government. Accordingly, @RT_com will not be eligible to use Twitter's promoted products in the future.

We hope this information assists the Commission's investigation. Twitter is available to meet with you regarding any follow-up questions the Commission may have upon reviewing our submission.

Yours sincerely,



Nick Pickles

Head of Public Policy
Twitter UK

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APPENDIX

@RT_com tweets promoted during the regulated period.

Tweet ID	Text
745561409660944384	#BREXIT: EU in or EU out? Together or apart? Follow RT's special coverage June 23 https://t.co/OcfW7ISvdT https://t.co/Q6Kr0oB5Ag
745943875043287040	#BrexitOrNot? Together or apart? Follow RT special coverage! https://t.co/OcfW7ISvdT https://t.co/794G22BGfc
745960413670432768	#BrexitOrNot? Together or apart? Follow RT special coverage! https://t.co/OcfW7ISvdT https://t.co/UQeuATelyp
746315885871194112	UK Decides: Goodbye EU. Follow RT's special coverage on #Brexit https://t.co/OcfW7ISvdT https://t.co/X8ool8E8nm
746316061830569984	UK Decides: Goodbye EU. Follow RT's special coverage on #Brexit https://t.co/OcfW7ISvdT https://t.co/KdpruFLqZd
746316227774013441	UK Decides: Goodbye EU. Follow RT's special coverage on #Brexit https://t.co/OcfW7ISvdT https://t.co/L4Gfz0yXH3