

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

July 2021

*Dear Constituent*

Thank you for your email about the Electoral Commission.

As you may be aware, the Electoral Commission has sought in recent years to bring criminal offences before the courts. This is not a role that has ever been agreed by the Government or by Parliament.

I am concerned that the additional powers the Electoral Commission has taken on risk creating conflicts of interest and wasting taxpayers' money. This is because the Electoral Commission is responsible for providing the advice and guidance on electoral law on which the prosecutions it seeks to bring may depend.

It is the role of the police and the prosecution services to enforce electoral regulations and the Government intends to clarify this status quo in legislation through the Elections Bill before Parliament. I can assure you that this is not about interfering with the investigative, operational or enforcement decisions of the Electoral Commission. The reforms would not affect the ability of the Electoral Commission to undertake enforcement action as it deems necessary but it would ensure greater accountability to Parliament.

Sir, now Lord, Eric Pickles' independent review into electoral fraud raised a number of concerns and made recommendations on the role of the Electoral Commission and the current system of oversight in 2016. These measures also seek to address those points in the context of wider work to protect our democracy and maintain public confidence in the electoral system.

My ministerial colleagues will, of course, consider proposals from the Committee on Standards in Public Life and from the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee which are separately conducting inquiries into electoral regulation and the Electoral Commission.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*Yours sincerely  
Peter Gibson*

PETER GIBSON MP

*Member of Parliament for Darlington*

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