Damian Collins MP
Chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

17 January 2018

Dear Mr Collins

I wrote to you in December to share the results of Facebook Ireland's investigation, at the request of the Electoral Commission, into campaign activity funded from Russia during the EU Referendum regulated period. We focused this investigation on a cluster of accounts that had already been identified as being run by a group known as the “Internet Research Agency” based in Russia. We had discovered this cluster after receiving intelligence related to allegations of illegal activity connected with the US Presidential election.

This seemed to be the most likely area for us to find evidence of activity of interest to your investigation, given that this cluster is known to have been engaged in political disinformation and that we did not have any specific intelligence from the UK pointing to other people of concern. The outcome of this investigation, as you know, was that we found a minimal amount of UK-related activity.

You expressed a view that there may be other similar coordinated activity from Russia that we had not yet identified through our investigation and asked for us to continue our investigatory work. We have considered your request and can confirm that our investigatory team is now looking to see if we can identify other similar clusters engaged in coordinated activity around the Brexit referendum that was not identified previously.

This work requires detailed analysis of historic data by our security experts, who are also engaged in preventing live threats to our service. We are committed to making all reasonable efforts to establish whether or not there was coordinated activity similar to that which was found in the US and will report back to you as soon as the work has been completed.

We would like to carry out this work promptly and estimate it will take a number of weeks to complete but the timescale is very much dependent on any findings during the course of the investigation which can affect the complexity of the task and therefore the time needed to complete it.

We would be very interested in receiving any information, including intelligence assessments or reports, that you and the UK government may have that is relevant to this work. This would help us to target our work and conclude the investigation more quickly.
I hope that this is a welcome development in allowing your committee to develop recommendations that are informed by the information we are able to provide.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Simon Milner
Policy Director, UK