

Promise of Change?

The Reality of Political Advertising in 2025

The elections taking place on May 1, 2025, mark the first significant electoral test for the new government and an early opportunity for all political parties to show whether they have learned the lessons voters have been demanding.

Trust between Westminster and the public remains fragile. It was not broken overnight, and it will not be rebuilt without real, visible change. Central to that change must be a new commitment to honesty in how parties communicate with the electorate.

Election advertising is a litmus test for that commitment. For too long, political advertising has been a space where deliberate distortions, misleading claims, and half-truths go unchecked. It remains largely unregulated, with no rules requiring the accuracy of factual claims used in advertising, despite the critical role it plays in shaping voter perceptions.

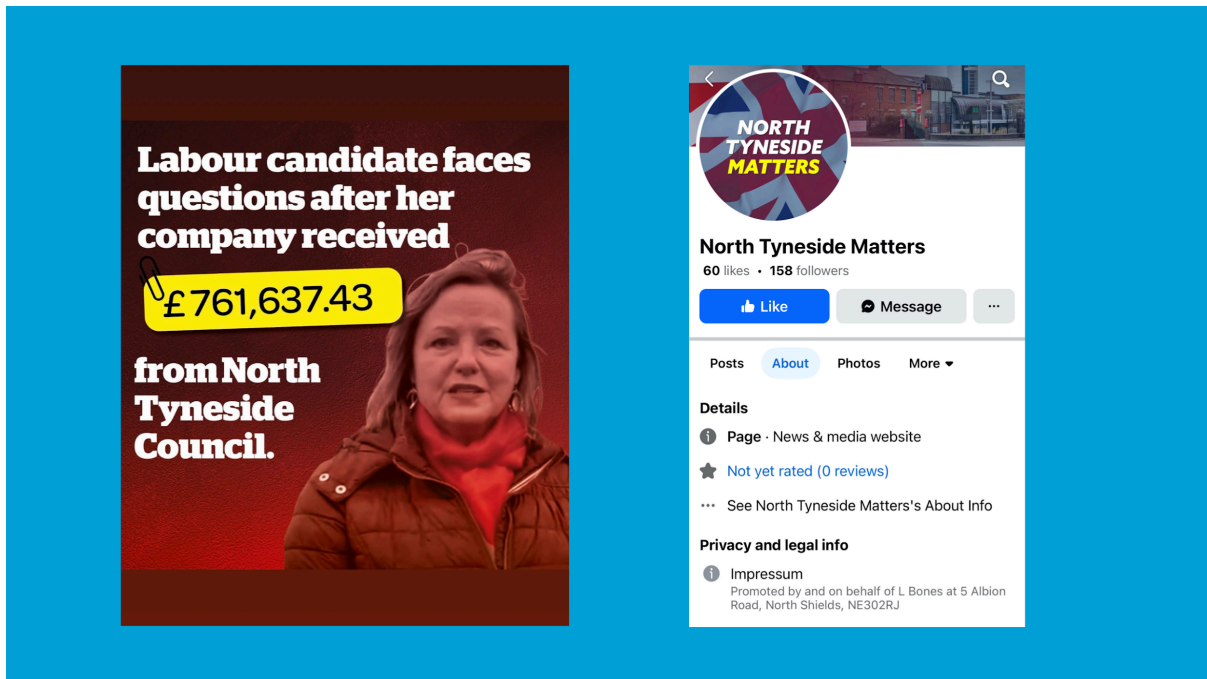
This local election campaign was a chance for political parties to turn over a new leaf, to treat voters with respect and to rebuild the essential bond of trust. Sadly, our review finds that deeply troubling behaviour persists and this report highlights three examples of how misleading advertising continues to undermine the relationship between politicians and the public, eroding confidence when it is needed most.

If the new government is serious about restoring public trust, it must recognise that communication matters and that integrity in election advertising should not be optional. The government must act to make sure that telling voters the truth becomes a non-negotiable standard in election advertising.

About Reform Political Advertising

Reform Political Advertising is an independent, politically neutral campaign group dedicated to improving the standards of political advertising in the UK. We advocate for simple, practical reforms to ensure that election advertising is transparent, honest, and accountable - just as commercial advertising is. Our work focuses on holding all political parties to the same standard, regardless of affiliation, to strengthen trust between voters and the democratic process.

North Tyneside Conservatives - North Tyneside Matters



About the adverts

North Tyneside Matters is a Facebook Page created on March 23, 2025. It is designed to look like a media publisher and is listed on Facebook as a “news & media website”.

The page has been publishing attacks on The Labour Party’s Mayoral candidate in North Tyneside. A [video](#) and a [graphic](#) post make the accusation a company “run by the Labour Candidate for Mayor, has been awarded over £750,000 of Council funding” and that “the company’s accounts show £70,000 per year has also been paid out in Directors salaries.”

At the time of writing, the video has received over 30,000 views and has been shared 172 times. There has also been a [paid promotion](#) of the same video which Meta estimates has reached between 100,000 and 500,000 people. These are fairly significant numbers for regional election adverts.

There is another [post](#) which claims that “Labour councillors voted to sell public land to the company, run by the Labour Candidate for Mayor, for just £1”.

There is no mention of the Conservative Party in the Facebook posts or paid adverts, nor do they reference Liam Bones, the Conservative Party’s candidate in the Mayoral election.

However, within the “about” section of the North Tyneside Matters Facebook Page, it includes under the “privacy and legal info” headline, that the page is “promoted by and on behalf of L Bones at 5 Albion Road, North Shields, NE30 2RJ”. That is the same address as the North Tyneside Conservative Federation and Bones is their candidate in the election.

Bones is a serial offender when it comes to misleading election communications practices and was [disciplined](#) by the North Tyneside Council Standards Committee in 2023 for “deceitful and dishonest” material published during an election campaign.

Why they are misleading

The North Tyneside Matters Facebook Page should clearly state that it is a “political party” and not claim that it is a “news and media website”.

For example, the North Tyneside Conservatives state that they are a “political party” on their Facebook Page.

The Facebook Page should also make clear it is associated with the Conservative Party and their candidate.

By dressing the ads up as if they’re a third-party media organisation they give the claims a greater sense of truthfulness and make the posts more persuasive.

Conservative Party - Council Tax Claim Against Labour



Conservatives 
@Conservatives

Keir Starmer thought he could get away with his council tax betrayal.

But we kept the receipts 



09:36 · 05/02/2025 · **232K** Views

 426

 1.5K

 5.1K

 164



About the advert

The Conservative Party released a video on X (formerly Twitter) implying that Labour had promised not to raise council tax but has now broken that promise. The advert uses dramatic visuals and selective clips to frame Labour as untrustworthy on tax policy, reinforcing broader Conservative attack lines about Labour's credibility.

Why it's misleading

The advert misrepresents Labour's position. In March 2023, Labour's leadership proposed a one-year freeze on council tax for 2023/24, funded by a windfall tax on oil and gas companies. Labour did not promise a permanent freeze or commit to freezing council tax in 2025/26.

Moreover, Labour's 2024 manifesto does not mention any new council tax freeze policy. As confirmed by the fact-checking organisation Full Fact, the claim that Labour pledged a council tax freeze extending to the current year is false.

This advert is a classic example of misleading political advertising: it selectively quotes a previous statement, omits crucial context, and falsely portrays a short-term policy as a long-term promise. It risks misleading voters about Labour's actual commitments.

You can read Full Fact's full analysis [here](#).

Labour Party - Claiming Nigel Farage Opposes Nationalising British Steel



About the adverts

Labour has circulated campaign materials suggesting that Nigel Farage and Reform UK are not supportive of nationalising British Steel. These adverts imply that Farage has been indifferent or obstructive regarding efforts to bring the steel industry into public ownership.

Why they are misleading

Contrary to Labour's portrayal, Nigel Farage has publicly and emphatically supported the nationalisation of British Steel. For example, on April 8, 2025, during a visit to the

Scunthorpe Steelworks, Farage [stated](#) that the government had only “three days to save British Steel” and advocated for taking the plant “into public ownership.”

The Labour government announced on April 11, 2025, that the state would be taking control of Scunthorpe.

Farage’s stance was not isolated; he reiterated his support for nationalisation in multiple public statements and media appearances, highlighting the strategic importance of maintaining domestic steel production.

Therefore, Labour’s adverts misrepresent Farage’s position by suggesting he opposes the nationalisation of British Steel. This mischaracterization could mislead voters about his and Reform UK’s actual stance on this critical industrial issue.

While Nigel Farage’s position on British Steel nationalisation may have evolved, it’s misleading to say that Reform currently advocates for “stepping aside” - implying the steelworks should be allowed to close - or that Farage “never cared” about British Steel.

Change promised, change needed

This review shows that misleading political advertising remains alive and well in the 2025 local elections. The two major parties have published or promoted content that distorts the truth, omits critical context, or misrepresents opponents’ positions. These tactics may be familiar, but they are no less corrosive to trust in our democratic process.

The new government now has a clear choice. It can allow this culture of distortion to continue unchecked, or it can take the first meaningful steps toward reform by making accuracy in election advertising a legal requirement. Until that happens, voters will continue to navigate a campaign landscape littered with half-truths and calculated misdirection.