

# Election interference: Watchdog urged to overhaul rules urgently after fake websites uncovered

*Leading independent candidate in Mayoral race Brian Rose is targeted by fake websites linked to Russian and Tory domains*

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, May 1, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The elections watchdog is facing calls to crack down on anyone setting up fake domains to fool voters, after multiple fake websites linking to London Mayoral candidates were uncovered.

A [BBC investigation](#) found six domain names linked to London candidates that directed to the Russian government website, and two domains for [leading independent candidate Brian Rose](#) which directed users to the Conservative candidate's official campaign site.

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*Brian Rose, founder and host of London Real*



Leading independent candidate in Mayoral race Brian Rose is targeted by fake websites linked to Russian and Tory domains

Rose is calling on the Electoral Commission to take urgent action, saying its existing rules are not fit for purpose in the 21st century.

He said: ‘This is an outrageous scam, hijacking my personal name and brand, and pointing potential supporters towards the Tory campaign website.

‘Yet the rules around electoral interference don’t even appear to address this issue.

‘Online is the new frontline for political battles but the law has failed to keep up – the Electoral Commission must act, and act urgently.

'It's too late to deal with the fake London election websites, but there is a general election looming and there is clearly a threat to the integrity of that process from digital piracy of this sort.'

The BBC investigation uncovered at least two domains – brianrose.uk and brianrose.london – that redirected to Tory rival Susan Hall's official campaign website. Hall has denied being involved.

It also found six URLs for other London candidates which linked users to an English language version of the official Russian government website.

In addition, Labour has set up an anti-Susan Hall website with a URL featuring her name – Labour insists this does not break any rules.

And the Tories have denied being involved in a similar URL scam using London Mayor Sadiq Khan's name.

The Electoral Commission told the BBC there were no laws 'concerning the use of website domain names by candidates'.

Rose said: 'It's a complete mess. The Electoral Commission knows this is going on, the Government knows this is going on, we all know this is going on and yet nothing is being done to stop it.

'It is right to ask who benefits from this confusion – whether it is politicians, pranksters or state actors, the risk to the integrity of our electoral process is clear and the law is not fit for purpose.'

Rose – who [bookmakers](#) have as third-favourite in the Mayoral race, ahead of the Green and Lib Dem hopefuls – is also challenging Tory candidate Susan Hall to contact the election watchdog.

He said: 'Someone has hijacked my personal name and brand, and pointed potential supporters towards the Tory campaign website.

'If Susan Hall knows nothing about this, then she should have no problem contacting the Electoral Commission herself and asking them to act.

'The London Mayoral election is almost upon us and someone is clearly either running scared or has way too much time on their hands. Either way, it's an affront to democracy and needs to be dealt with immediately.

'In recent weeks, my team has seen other examples of behaviour that can best be described as

“dubious” on behalf of Hall’s faltering campaign.

‘They have been happy enough to appropriate policy ideas and price people out of online advertising markets – at times they appear desperate enough to try anything, happy in the knowledge their paymasters will help them if things go wrong.

‘That is yet another reason why voters should get out and support independent candidates such as me in this week’s elections.’

Howard Bowden  
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