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Reform UK Invested £1.3 Million in Conservative Newspaper Ads During Election

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Reform UK, led by Nigel Farage, dedicated nearly a quarter of its campaign funds to advertising in right-leaning newspapers during the 2024 general election, a move that drew both strategic praise and criticism over media influence.

According to official records from the Electoral Commission, the party spent approximately £1.3 million of its £5.5 million election budget on prominent adverts in the Daily Mail, The Sun, and the Daily Express. The largest portion, around £906,000, was paid to the Daily Mail group via A&N Media Financial Services, covering both online and print promotions in the

final week before voters headed to the polls. The Sun received just over £308,000 in advertising revenue from Reform UK, while the Daily Express and other outlets under Reach PLC were paid about £74,400.

Many of the advertisements carried bold messaging, including strong opposition to restrictive climate policies, with one Daily Mail ad pledging to “end the bonkers net zero rules.” The push coincided with a notable outcome: Reform UK secured five parliamentary seats and positioned itself as a rising political force.

Commentators have expressed differing views on the implications of such spending. Journalist and author Mic Wright told DeSmog that the financial relationship between political parties and news outlets can blur lines of independence, stating that it poses “a distorting influence” despite assurances of separation between editorial and commercial departments.

The spending patterns also reflect broader challenges for traditional print media. With newspaper sales continuing to decline, publishers are increasingly dependent on advertising revenue to sustain operations. News Group Newspapers, a subsidiary of News UK and publisher of The Sun, reported a pre-tax loss of £18 million in the year leading up to June 2024. News UK’s broadcast division, which previously ran TalkTV before shifting to an online-only format in spring 2024, recorded losses of £50 million.

Nathan Sparkes, chief executive officer of the media reform group Hacked Off, acknowledged the influence of the press, noting that newspapers collectively reach three-quarters of the population each month. However, he cautioned that large-scale campaign advertising raises questions about the ability of the media to scrutinize politicians fairly during critical electoral periods. While the strategy of investing heavily in targeted media buys has been used by multiple political movements, Reform UK’s approach illustrates the growing importance of securing visibility in both digital and traditional outlets as part of modern electioneering.