

Elon Musk: First hours of Twitter reign hit by concerns over online safety

Twitter staff and users are waiting to hear more details from new owner [Elon Musk](#) about his plans for the platform, amid concerns over his support for loosening content moderation and reversing permanent bans on controversial accounts.

Mr Musk is expected to address staff at the company's headquarters in San Francisco on Friday, after completing his high-profile 44 billion dollar (£38 billion) takeover of the social media giant.

It comes after it was reported that Mr Musk is set to take on the role of chief executive at Twitter, replacing Parag Agrawal, who was one of several senior executives to be ousted as the takeover was completed, but may eventually cede the role in the longer term.

According to [Bloomberg](#), the Tesla boss also intends to get rid of permanent bans on user accounts because he does not believe in lifelong suspensions, the report said.

This means high-profile and polarising figures who had been previously banned, including former US president [Donald Trump](#), would be allowed to return, but it remains unclear when this could happen.

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That stance has alarmed online safety campaigners and many Twitter users, who have also raised concerns about Mr Musk's aim of allowing "absolute free speech" on the platform.

On Friday Mr Trump posted on his own Truth Social platform that he was "very happy Twitter is now in sane hands", but did not comment on any possible return, instead praising his own app, which was launched after his Twitter ban.

And mayor of London [Sadiq Khan](#) said any decision to allow banned users back on the site should be taken "incredibly carefully and in direct consultation with experts", given the size and importance of the platform within modern online life.

"Twitter plays an immensely important role in politics today," he said on Twitter.

"It offers many benefits to society, but the growing dangers of digitally-instigated violent extremism, racism, xenophobia, misogyny and misinformation are very real, and pose an existential threat to our democracy.

"We cannot allow kids growing up today to be exposed to the vile and violent ideologies of some users.

"Any decision about allowing suspended users to return must be taken incredibly carefully & in direct consultation with experts in countering digital hate & misinformation.

"There has been much discussion about whether Donald Trump will be permitted to return following his permanent suspension.

“If he is, Twitter should hold him accountable w/ clear and robust rules that the former President must sign up to—and those rules must be enforced.

“As Twitter begins a new chapter, I wish Elon and his team every success.

“The state of our democracy and civic life really do depend on it.”

Mr Musk celebrated the completion of his protracted takeover of the social media giant by tweeting shortly before 5am UK time on Friday: “the bird is freed”, in reference to Twitter’s bird logo.

A filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission on Friday confirmed the removal of Twitter from the New York Stock Exchange as Mr Musk took the company private.

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A US court had set a deadline of Friday for the Tesla and SpaceX boss to complete his acquisition of the platform.

Twitter has not yet published any further statement confirming the deal, but several senior figures and board members, including Bret Taylor, who had served as the company’s chairman, have changed their social media profiles to reflect that they no longer work for the company.

Meanwhile, many users have threatened to quit Twitter if Mr Musk proceeds with his plans around content moderation and restoring banned accounts.

But the billionaire has already made some moves in an effort to calm these fears.

On Thursday he posted a statement aimed at Twitter’s

advertisers, saying he was acquiring the platform because he believed it was important to have a space where “a wide range of beliefs can be debated in a healthy manner”.

He added that “Twitter obviously cannot become a free-for-all hellscape, where anything can be said with no consequences”.

“In addition to adhering to the laws of the land, our platform must be warm and welcoming to all, where you can choose your desired experience according to your preferences,” he said.

Social media expert Matt Navarra said he was not surprised by the reports and said the reversal of permanent bans to allow “some of the most polarising, controversial, trouble-making accounts” back on to Twitter was the “most likely” big change to make early in Mr Musk’s tenure.

“The reason why I think that is because it’s fairly easy to do – it doesn’t require any changing of code or building new products or features, so I think it’s quite likely that he’ll do that,” he told the PA news agency.

“It will create the most headlines and it will make a statement to the world, Twitter users and everyone else that he has arrived and he is in charge.”