



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy will be reviewed by the board of the Supporters Trust on an annual basis and will be amended as and when appropriate.

Date of last review: July 2023

Introduction

What is social media?

Social media is the term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create and share content (words, images and video content), and network with one another through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media include club message boards, Facebook, and Twitter.

Why do we use social media?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating the Trust's strategy, policies, decisions and activities. It is important for some directors to participate in social media to engage with members and other stakeholders, participate in relevant conversations, raise the profile of the Trust and enhance its reputation.

Why do we need a social media policy?

The difference between a personal and official opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly when discussing issues relating to the Trust. While the use of social media is encouraged it is essential to adhere to the standards set down in this policy. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

This policy consists of guidelines and best practices for Trust directors and applies to Trust-related content delivered through both official Trust platforms and personal accounts.

Setting out the social media policy

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used by the Trust and its directors to support the activities of the Trust. It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is intended to help directors support and expand the Trust's official social media channels, while protecting the Trust and its reputation and preventing any actual or potential legal threats.

Point of contact for social media

The Trust's communications officer is responsible for the day-to-day publishing and management of the Trust's social media channels. If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to the communications officer.

Which social media channels do we use?

The Trust uses the following social media channels: Facebook and Twitter.

Guidelines

Using the Trust's social media channels — appropriate conduct

1. The communications officer is responsible for setting up and managing the Trust's social media channels.
2. As all directors are volunteers, social media channels will be used whenever it is possible for posts to be uploaded or comments made. This may not always be during conventional business hours.
3. Directors should be ambassador for the Trust. Comments made on social media should reflect the Trust's values and be consistent with its strategies and policies, especially in respect of strategies and policies endorsed by Trust members,
4. All social media content **when posting in the name of the Trust** should have a purpose and a benefit for the Trust and where appropriate should accurately reflect the Trust's agreed position, consistent with members' resolutions or board resolutions.
5. Posts should add value to the target audience(s), whether answering questions, improving understanding, offering clarification or promoting further debate or engagement.
6. Facts should be checked before posting, especially when responding to hostile or aggressive posts or those who challenge the decisions, actions or inactions of the board. It should never be automatically assumed that material is accurate and it may be necessary to take reasonable steps to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics or the integrity of images ('photoshopping').
7. Posts made by the Trust and as Directors of the Trust in an official capacity must always be honest, based on known facts or confirmed by reliable secondary sources.
8. Directors should take reasonable care when offering personal opinions on matters related to the Trust,
9. The Trust is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. Directors have a right to express their own personal views on policy, including the policies of political parties, but should not tell others how to vote unless it is consistent with a position endorsed by the Trust board or sanctioned by members' resolutions.
10. If a **genuine** complaint is made on the Trust's social media channels, **the complainant should be asked to communicate with the Trust at its official email address**. Directors should be alert to situations that **in the Board's reasonable opinion** may escalate rapidly or require **early** attention and responses in order to preserve the integrity of the Trust and minimize the risk of reputational damage.

Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct

This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but highlights areas in which conflicts might arise. Directors are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with the Trust's values and policies.

1. Any information made public on social media may affect how people perceive the Trust. When expressing personal opinions, directors should make it clear that they are representing their own views and not those of the Trust with an introduction of 'personal view' or 'IMO'.
2. If a director is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to the Trust, they should talk to the communications officer immediately and not respond directly.
3. Directors have a right to their own personal political opinions and affiliations but must not imply that their views reflect those of the Trust.
4. It is necessary to exercise the utmost care when sharing one's own personal information or information relating to the privacy of others. Secondary sources may contain names, addresses and other personal information, and if shared it may be necessary to redact the content or remove information that makes it obvious that the information relates to specific individuals or organisations.
6. Differences of opinion should be dealt with respectfully.

Further guidelines

Defamation

Defamation may occur when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. **Whenever** posting content on social media as part of their **director's** role or in a personal capacity, directors should **be aware that in addition potentially to incurring personal liability when making any highly contentious comments the directors may by association cause the Trust reputational damage.**

Copyright law

It is critical that all directors abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Images or written content that may be subject to copyright protection must not be used without appropriate permission. Failing to acknowledge the source/author/resource citation, where permission has been given to reproduce content, is also considered a breach of copyright.

Confidentiality

Any communications made in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality.

Discrimination and harassment

Directors must not post content that is legally discriminatory against others, or harassment of, any individual, on an official Trust social media channel.

Protection and intervention

The responsibility for measures of protection and intervention lies first with the social networking site itself. Different social networking sites offer different models of interventions in different areas.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Participation in social media on behalf of the Trust is not a right but an opportunity, so it must be treated seriously and with respect.