



## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

**A guide for using social media to promote the work of West Lancashire Footpath Group.**

### Contents

- What is social media?
- Why do we use social media?
- Why do we need a social media policy?
- Setting out the social media policy
- Point of contact for social media
- Which social media channels do we use?

### Guidelines

- Using West Lancashire Footpath Group's social media channels — appropriate conduct
- Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct

### Further guidelines

- Libel
- Copyright law
- Confidentiality
- Discrimination and harassment
- Lobbying Act
- Use of social media in the recruitment process
- Protection and intervention
- Under 18s and vulnerable people
- Responsibilities and beach of policy

### **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 each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

### **Why do we use social media?**

Social media is essential to the success of communicating **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** work. It is important for some members to participate in social media to engage with our audience,

participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** work.

### **Why do we need a social media policy?**

The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** work. While we encourage the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe. Publication and commentary on social media carry similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

### **Setting out the social media policy**

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of **West Lancashire Footpath Group**, and the use of social media by members. It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the charity and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

### **Point of contact for social media**

Our **Website Manager, Chris Rimmer** is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to the Website Manager. Anyone who has joined our private Facebook group can post content on West Lancashire Footpath Group's official Facebook page; the Website Manager will review all content. Any inappropriate posts or comments will be removed and the poster informed.

### **Which social media channels do we use?**

**West Lancashire Footpath Group** uses the following social media channels:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/267065369061420/>

We use Facebook to create awareness of our group. To provide information about our walk programme. To enable the general public to contact our group and to provide a narrative and photographic record of the walks we have completed. Our audience is members of the footpath group as well as others who are interested in walking in West Lancashire.

### **Guidelines**

#### **Using *West Lancashire Footpath Group's* social media channels — appropriate conduct**

1. Our Website Manager is responsible for setting up and managing **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by the Website Manager will have access to these accounts.
2. Our Website Manager checks our social media regularly and responds to comments timeously.
3. Be an ambassador for our brand. Members should ensure they reflect **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** values in what they post and use our tone of voice.
4. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for **West Lancashire Footpath Group**, and accurately reflects **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** agreed position.

5. Bring value to our audience. Answer their questions, help and engage with them.
6. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also check the quality of images.
7. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
8. Our Facebook page is private and only those who have joined the group can post. All posts are vetted by the Website Manager.
9. Members should not post content about supporters or service users without their express permission. If members are sharing information about supporters, service users or third party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from **West Lancashire Footpath Group**. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, members must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.
10. Always check facts. Members should not automatically assume that material is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation.
11. Be honest. Say what you know to be true or have a good source for. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it.
12. Members should refrain from offering personal opinions via **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking' or 'sharing'. If you are in doubt about **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** position on a particular issue, please speak to a committee member.
13. It is vital that **West Lancashire Footpath Group** does not encourage others to risk their personal safety or that of others, to gather materials. For example, a video of a stunt.
14. Members should not encourage people to break the law to supply material for social media, such as using unauthorised video footage. All relevant rights for usage must be obtained before publishing material.
15. Members should not set up other Facebook groups or pages, Twitter accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of **West Lancashire Footpath Group**. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness. By having official social media accounts in place, the committee can ensure consistency of the brand and focus on building a strong following.
16. **West Lancashire Footpath Group** is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We have every right to express views on policy, including the policies of parties, but we can't tell people how to vote.
17. If a complaint is made on **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** social media channels, members should seek advice from the Website Manager before responding. If they are not available, then members should speak to the Chairperson.
18. Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis situation because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the charity's reputation. Examples might include: **commenting on individuals or including photos without consent from people included, commenting on individual landowners or footpath routes**. The nature of social media

means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the charity.

19. The website manager regularly monitors our social media spaces so we can catch any issues or problems early. If there is an issue that could develop or has already developed into a crisis situation, the Website Manager will do the following:

- delete any offending material: arrange for an apology to be issued / posted:
- consider posting a rebuttal:
- consult with the group committee to decide on appropriate action to establish who posted the material and consider further preventative measures.

If any members outside of the committee become aware of any comments online that they think have the potential to escalate into a crisis, whether on **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** social media channels or elsewhere, they should speak to the Website Manager immediately.

### **Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct**

This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which conflicts might arise. **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** members are expected to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** values and policies, both online and in real life.

1. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive **West Lancashire Footpath Group**. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of **West Lancashire Footpath Group**. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** work, you must use a disclaimer such as: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** positions, policies or opinions."
2. Members who have a personal blog or website which indicates in any way that they are members of **West Lancashire Footpath Group** should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with a committee member.
3. Use common sense and good judgement. Be aware of your association with **West Lancashire Footpath Group** and ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the general public and funders.
4. If a member is contacted by the press about their social media posts that relate to **West Lancashire Footpath Group**, they should talk to the Website manager immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.
5. **West Lancashire Footpath Group** is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. When representing **West Lancashire Footpath Group**, members are expected to hold **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** position of neutrality. Members who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
6. Never use **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. Permission to use logos should be requested from the Website Manager.
7. Always protect yourself and the charity. Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so do consider the content carefully. When you are using social media sites, it is important that you do so safely.

8. Think about your reputation as well as the charities. Express your opinions and deal with differences of opinion respectfully. Don't insult people or treat them badly. Passionate discussions and debates are fine, but you should always be respectful of others and their opinions. Be polite and the first to correct your own mistakes.
9. We encourage members to share posts that we have issued. When online in a personal capacity, you might also see opportunities to comment on or support **West Lancashire Footpath Group** and the work we do. Where appropriate and using the guidelines within this policy, we encourage members to do this as it provides a human voice and raises our profile. However, if the content is controversial or misrepresented, please highlight this to the Website Manager who will respond as appropriate.

## Further guidelines

### Libel

Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. Whether Members are posting content on social media they should not bring **West Lancashire Footpath Group** into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

### Copyright law

It is critical that Members abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Never use or adapt someone else's images or written content without 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 that members make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that **West Lancashire Footpath Group** is not ready to disclose yet, for example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date.

### Discrimination and harassment

Members should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** social media channel or a personal account. For example:

- making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief
- using social media to bully another individual
- posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content

### Lobbying Act

Charities are legally allowed to campaign to bring about a change in policy or law to further their organisational purpose. In most cases, spending on charity campaigns that are in accordance with charity law will not be regulated under electoral law. However, the Lobbying Act, which was passed in January 2014, states that during national elections (known as regulated periods) spending on campaigning activities may be regulated.

### Use of social media in the recruitment process

Recruitment should be carried out in accordance with the Constitution, and associated procedures and guidelines. Any advertising of vacancies should be done through the committee & AGM.

There should be no systematic or routine checking of candidate's online social media activities during the recruitment process, as conducting these searches might lead to a presumption that an

applicant's protected characteristics, such as religious beliefs or sexual orientation, played a part in a recruitment decision.

### **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. For more information, refer to the guidance available on the social networking site itself. For example, Facebook. However, if a member considers that a person/people is/are at risk of harm, they should report this to the **Safeguarding officer** immediately.

### **Under 18s and vulnerable people**

Young and vulnerable people face risks when using social networking sites. They may be at risk of being bullied, publishing sensitive and personal information on their profiles, or from becoming targets for online grooming.

Where known, when communicating with young people under 18-years-old via social media, members should ensure the online relationship with **West Lancashire Footpath Group** follows the same rules as the offline 'real-life' relationship. Members should ensure that young people have been made aware of the risks of communicating and sharing information online, and given guidance on security/privacy settings as necessary. Members should also ensure that the site itself is suitable for the young person and **West Lancashire Footpath Group's** content and other content is appropriate for them.

### **Responsibilities and breach of policy**

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

***This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. West Lancashire Footpath Group will amend this policy, following consultation, where appropriate.***

***Date of last review: 6 February 2024***